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The Room

by
Jim Inman

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THE ROOM

by Jim Inman

THE CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance.)

SNOOKY; 18, a Flapper (*A Figment of Michael's Imagination; an Apparition*)

CARLOTTA; 59, the Landlady, an Ex-Stripper

MICHAEL; 65, a Retired Stage Manager for a Major Broadway Producer

MADDIE; 18, a Disillusioned Recovering Addict

PEG; 39, Michael's Alcoholic Daughter

THE SETTING

TIME: *Late 60's'; late afternoon and early evening; Autumn*

PLACE: *The living room/kitchen of Michael's third-floor walk-up on Washington Square Park in New York City.*

ETC

Properties List at End of Script

THE ROOM
by Jim Inman

ACT I

(AT RISE: It is late afternoon and early evening in the fall of 1965 in the living room/kitchen of MICHAEL'S third floor walk-up on Washington Square Park. The ceiling is high. Ornate molding seems to support it. Theatre posters cover the grey walls; shelves are crammed with plays, playbills and production scripts. Photographs of MICHAEL, posing with various stars dot the room. And plants are everywhere, complimenting the furniture which is old, traditional and comfortable. Upstage, large windows dominate the wall. Through them one can see the tree tops in the Park and lights from buildings beyond the park. The front door is Up Right. The BEDROOM door is Down Left, and just below the door, on the left wall, is a desk on which there is a telephone and a framed photograph of MICHAEL'S daughter, PEG. Down Right, directly across from the bedroom is a small kitchen, separated from the living room by a sit-down counter. So this would be a typical Washington Square brownstone apartment, except for one aspect. It seems to have more nooks and crannies than are usually found in buildings of this style and period. And there are no apparent reasons for them, making their presence somewhat disquieting. Not only are they aesthetically and architecturally out of order, they suggest dark secrets and hidden rooms. The feeling of the apartment is one of warmth, cluttered theatrical charm and serenity... [NOTE: If possible, the set should also incorporate at least two Escape Hatches; one in the living room area and the other in the kitchen area behind the counter.] The curtain opens on a room dimly lighted by the dying rays of the sun. There is silence for many moments. Then SOUNDS of VOICES and VEHICLES are heard coming from the street below. A BEATLES SONG (or any familiar song from the period) IS COMING FROM ANOTHER APARTMENT BELOW. Suddenly, an agonized scream comes from behind the BEDROOM door. The door is flung open and SNOOKY charges into the room. She slams the door behind her, but it doesn't catch and remains partially, though barely noticeably, open.)

SNOOKY

(From the depths of her Soul.) God! I'm bored!!!

(She takes a number of deep breaths, holds each for a moment, and then expels it into the room. She waits a moment to see if this has achieved the desired result. It has. She is serene, again. She smiles.)

SNOOKY, *Continued*

There!

(SNOOKY is the typical flapper. She is a girl of not more than 18. She is blonde and petite and effervescent. Her eyes are a glorious blue. Her energy is outlandish. In a word, SNOOKY is adorable. Her clothes are the most typical of the Flapper Era -- the headband, the long waist, the rolled hose, the rouged knees. And everything is pink; shocking pink. SNOOKY defines the ultimate, outrageous fashion of the period. Pleased with herself, she bounces across the room and goes into the kitchen area where she flings open the refrigerator door and begins sorting through the refrigerator's pitiful selection of items: a can of coffee, a sticky, near-empty jar of grape jam, a container of Parmesan cheese, and three of four pieces of Wonder Bread in a crinkly wrapper. She is grumpy once more.)

SNOOKY, Continued

Oh, Michael, why don't you ever get anything I can eat!

(She slams the door, turns, and peruses the room. She is restless, again, and wanders to the desk, flips through a TIME magazine that is resting on it, quickly loses interest and drops it back onto the desk, but it misses its mark and falls to the floor. She continues to wander. There is absolutely nothing for her to do in the room. The MUSIC from the apartment below appears to become LOUDER. SNOOKY is exasperated.)

SNOOKY, Continued

Ooooggghhh, I hate that music! *(Stomps on the floor)* Will you turn that awful music down! Pleeeeeze!!! *(MUSIC continues)* Ooooggghhh!! *(Glances around the darkening room; a tantrum is rapidly approaching)* And I hate this room! *(Moves through the room and turns lamps on arbitrarily)* There! That's better!

(She is pleased, but is still quite restless. She sighs and wanders to the front window, looking out impatiently, wondering when MICHAEL will be home. But this holds her attention for little more than a few seconds.)

SNOOKY, Continued

Phooey!

(She wanders back into the room and finds herself at the foot of the sofa. Suddenly, she executes a little pirouette and leaps backwards onto it, squealing with a kind of child's delight as she lands, face up, directly in the middle of it. She stretches, crosses her legs at the ankles, puts her hands behind her head, sighs deeply, and lets herself settle into it. There's little to do but wait. She doesn't have to wait long. Very soon, there is a LOUD POUNDING on the door, and then silence. ANOTHER POUNDING.)

CARLOTTA (O.S.)

You might as well open up, Michael! I know you're in there! *(Pause)* Michael!! *(Pause; another pounding)* Okay, then! I'm comin' in!

(A KEY IS HEARD being inserted into the lock.)

SNOOKY

Oh, boy!

(SNOOKY hops up and hurries behind the sofa so that, from the front door, only her eyes and the top of her head can be seen peeking above the back of the sofa. She waits, gleefully. CARLOTTA enters. She is a well-preserved woman of zaftig proportions who is in her late fifties. She has an ebullient spirit and an earthy demeanor. She is a hard core realist, takes no crap and is dedicated to 'telling it like it is.' Her sense of humor has been her salvation and her laugh could fill the Astrodome. Once in the room, CARLOTTA stops and surveys it. SNOOKY is still 'hiding' behind the sofa.)

CARLOTTA

Michael...? I know you're in here, I heard you walking. *(Nothing)* Michael?!? *(Moves to the kitchen area and peers over the counter)* Let me tell you somethin', Sonny. If you're hidin', you're waistin' your time. You owe me, you're gonna pay me, that's it, let's get on with it! *(Glances toward the bedroom, and is taken aback when she notices that the door is slightly ajar.)* Well...I don't believe it...! *(Takes a cautious step towards door)* Michael...? *(Beat)* Are you in there...? *(Beat)* Hummm...???

(At first, she appears to be ambivalent, but then she makes a decision and, with determination, crosses directly in front of the sofa as she approaches the bedroom. SNOOKY giggles as CARLOTTA is becoming a bit disconcerted, even irritated.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

Michael, what the hell are you up to! *(Nothing; moves on to the bedroom and pounds on the door frame.)* I know you're in there, Michael, so you either come out by the count of five or I'm comin' in! *(Beat)* One. Two. Three. Four. I mean it, Mike. Five! *(CARLOTTA pushes the door open and charges into the room. As she enters...)* If you're bare-assed, Buster, cover it up, or get laid! *(Roars with laughter)* Bet that one threw a scare into you, huh? *(Laughs, again but it is cut short suddenly. There is a moment of suspended silence, then...)* Holy Jesus!!!

(CARLOTTA hurries from the room. Giggling gleefully, SNOOKY moves to the front of the sofa, and sits, perfectly poised.)

SNOOKY

He told you never to go in there.

CARLOTTA

Huh...?

(Enjoying herself thoroughly, SNOOKY hops off the sofa. She is, basically, a very precocious girl.)

SNOOKY

I said, he told you never to go in there.

(CARLOTTA still doesn't see SNOOKY, but she senses her even more strongly now.)

CARLOTTA

This place is gettin' too goddamned weird. *(Calling out)* I'm not having fun anymore, Michael. And if you are, YOU'RE SICK!! *(Hurriedly, as she heads for the door)* You either pay me that rent, or get the hell out of here! Ya got that!

(But before she reaches the door, MICHAEL'S VOICE is HEARD as he comes down the corridor. He is humming 'My Melancholy Baby', but it is up and bright and rhythmic. It has a happy lilt. CARLOTTA is about to be caught with her hand in the cookie jar.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

Oh, shit!

(Simultaneously, SNOOKY becomes alert...)

SNOOKY

Oh-Oh...

(...hops off the sofa, dashes about the room turning off the lamps, hurries toward the bedroom, sees that the Time magazine is on the floor, quickly picks it up and places it carefully on the desk, dashes to the bedroom, flings open the door, darts inside, and slams it after her. Meanwhile, CARLOTTA, who has reached the front door, and is only beginning to become aware that all the lights have gone out, looks sharply back at the door as it slams.)

CARLOTTA

Sweet Jesus, you're goin' over the hill, girl!

(CARLOTTA lunges for the front door, but MICHAEL is already putting his key in the lock. He seems to be having some difficulty as he jiggles the key, locking, then unlocking, then locking the door, again. Panicked, CARLOTTA presses herself against the wall just upstage of the front door, so that when it is opened, she will be hidden from view by whoever comes into the room. MICHAEL enters, carrying one small house plant and as many paper grocery bags as he can handle. He is humming happily, and even dancing a bit, holding his bags and singing to them as if they were a woman, "...you know dear, that I'm in love with you." MICHAEL is a tall, solid, craggy man of 65, and though he is not particularly handsome, he is disarmingly appealing. He is vital and energized, with intense, flashing eyes and a melting smile. He exudes sensuality, and has a subtle magnetism that women find attractive despite his years. MICHAEL kicks the door shut, exposing CARLOTTA, who is pressing her large body tightly against the plaster, as if hoping to be absorbed by it, but his focus is on the kitchen as he puts the bags on the counter, opens the refrigerator, flips on the kitchen lights, and begins to unload every kind of TV dinner imaginable. TV dinners seem to be all that he has purchased, but one of the bags does hold a quart of milk, a fresh package of Wonder Bread, a newspaper, and various sundry items. As he goes through his ritual, CARLOTTA attempts to sneak

out of the apartment, and is stealthily opening the front door and planting one foot into the corridor, when...)

MICHAEL

(Continuing to unload the groceries, without even glancing in her direction) Hello, Carlotta. I made a deposit today. The check'll clear by Thursday. You'll have the rent by Friday. Is there anything else?

CARLOTTA

You sonofabitch.

MICHAEL

I was ever thus. *(Looking at her for the first time; studying her)* What would you do if you ever got the rent on time?

CARLOTTA

Get on my knees and thank God!

MICHAEL

You don't believe in God. *(Goes back to his groceries)*

CARLOTTA

You payin' the rent on time? There'd have to be a God!

(MICHAEL laughs. It is clear that they have a warm and friendly relationship.)

MICHAEL

Come on in. You want a drink?

(CARLOTTA glances uncertainly toward the BEDROOM, still severely shaken, but covering...)

CARLOTTA

Aw, what the hell! Why not?

MICHAEL

How's a 7-Up?

CARLOTTA

I like 7-Up.

(MICHAEL takes one out of its holder and pitches it across the room to her as she moves toward the sofa, where she sits.)

CARLOTTA

(Catching it while being thrown somewhat off guard by the 'missile') Thanks, a lot. You're a real gentleman.

MICHAEL

A lady deserves the best. You inspire me.

CARLOTTA

(Laughing) God, are you full of it!

MICHAEL

(Laughing) Want a glass?

CARLOTTA

Naw. Stays colder in the can.

MICHAEL

Whatever you say. I like to keep my women happy.

CARLOTTA

That word's gotten about!

(MICHAEL smiles, takes a 7-Up for himself, abandons the groceries and begins to move toward the BEDOOM.)

MICHAEL

Excuse me. And hit the floor lamp for me, will you? *(With trepidation, she turns it on.)* Thanks.

CARLOTTA

(Urgently) Where're you goin'?

MICHAEL

To get my slippers. My feet hurt.

(Wanting to delay him, she points toward the kitchen.)

CARLOTTA

Aren't you gonna put that stuff away!

MICHAEL

When I get to it. I have company, now. Which brings a question to mind. Why do I have company?

CARLOTTA

You asked me to stay!

MICHAEL

The better part of valor. You were already here.

CARLOTTA

I have expenses, Michael. It helps when I get my money on time.

MICHAEL

But then you wouldn't have a reason to sneak in here when I'm not home.

CARLOTTA

I don't 'sneak in.' I knock. I give you a chance to answer. If you don't, I come in. And you've always been here. Hiding. But here.

MICHAEL

I only do that because you like the game.

CARLOTTA

It's not a game. And I don't like it!

MICHAEL

Yes, you do.

CARLOTTA

I'm a business woman. I run a tight ship!

MICHAEL

And you like it.

(Beat; she smiles. It is an unusually vulnerable, almost sweet, moment for her.)

CARLOTTA

Okay. I do. A widow-woman gets lonely once in awhile.

MICHAEL

(Uncomfortable with her honesty) Hey! What's this folksy talk? I thought you were all show-biz tough.

CARLOTTA

(The old Carlotta) Even ex-strippers get lonely, prick!

MICHAEL

Atta' girl! I thought we'd lost you there for a minute.

CARLOTTA

You're all heart.

MICHAEL

All heart and sore feet. I'll be right back.

(He starts for the bedroom, again, but as he reaches for the door knob...)

CARLOTTA

(An urgent whisper) Michael!

(MICHAEL stops and looks at her. She hurries to him.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

Michael, don't go in there!

MICHAEL

Wha(t)...?

(Whispering more urgently as she pulls him gently toward the front door.)

CARLOTTA

Don't go in there!

MICHAEL

(Bemused) Carlotta. Why are you whispering?

CARLOTTA

There's something going on in that room...

MICHAEL

(Showing concern for the first time, but covering) ...like what...?

CARLOTTA

(Waffling) I...I don't know...

MICHAEL

(As casually as possible) You were in there?

CARLOTTA

Greatgodamighty no!

MICHAEL

Then what makes you think someone is?

CARLOTTA

That's not what I said...but if you weren't here earlier – and you weren't – then somebody else was.

MICHAEL

(Becoming concerned) How do you know?

CARLOTTA

I heard him walking.

MICHAEL

In there.

CARLOTTA

Out here.

MICHAEL

Well...? Who was it? You don't appear to have been mugged.

CARLOTTA

I don't know! I thought it was you. That's why I came in. I thought you were hiding, again.

MICHAEL

(Looking toward the bedroom again) Oh... *(Beat)* And you think he's in there now.

CARLOTTA

Well, the bedroom door was open. Just a little...but it was open...

MICHAEL

(Suspicious) It was...?

CARLOTTA

Yes. And all the years you've been my friend, I've never once, not once, seen that bedroom door open.

MICHAEL

(Studying the door) No. You haven't.

CARLOTTA

But I closed it for you!

MICHAEL

Thank you. *(Beat)* You...uh...really didn't go in there...? I mean...that could have been dangerous...

CARLOTTA

If you think I'd go into a man's bedroom without his permission, then you don't know this lady!

MICHAEL

I know this lady.

CARLOTTA

I've never, never once been in a man's bedroom without being asked.

MICHAEL

(A gentle smile) I remember.

CARLOTTA

And don't get me started on that!

(They exchange a look for just a moment, then MICHAEL breaks it.)

MICHAEL

Maybe I'd better take a look, huh?

(He starts for the bedroom again. Not liking being left alone, and wanting to check out the bedroom, again, she follows him.)

CARLOTTA

I better go with you...

MICHAEL

No. Get over there by the door...just in case...

CARLOTTA

I don't think you should go in there alone, Mike...

MICHAEL

Goddammit, Carlotta, do what I tell you!

(CARLOTTA hurries to the front door and waits. MICHAEL approaches the bedroom door, listens for a moment, opens it carefully, looks inside, and then enters the room closing the door quietly behind him. There is a long silence. CARLOTTA is holding her breath; one hand is on the front door knob. In a few long moments, MICHAEL enters from the bedroom and closes the door behind him. He is wearing slippers.)

MICHAEL

Good news! No one's there.

CARLOTTA

(Still focusing on the bedroom door) No one?

MICHAEL

(Moving to the kitchen area and noticing the little house plant sitting on the counter)
Hey! You want another plant?

CARLOTTA

(Moving slowly toward the bedroom, preoccupied) No. I'm running out of space. You can keep this one.

MICHAEL

Hell, I'm running out of time. *(Gestures to the abundance of plants of all sizes that grace his quarters)* How many plants can you water in a week, for Christ's sake? *(Continues to unpack his TV Dinners)* Oh! I've been meaning to tell you, I need a larger freezer.

CARLOTTA

How about a few less TV dinners? How about no TV dinners?

MICHAEL

My system couldn't handle the shock.

CARLOTTA

Hell I wouldn't want you to go cold turkey. Maybe if you just tapered off?

MICHAEL

Why?

CARLOTTA

TV dinners suck.

MICHAEL

Now that's clear communication.

CARLOTTA

But my lamb stew, that's somethin' else. What you could do is, you could make a big pot of it the first of the week, load it down with fresh vegetables, freeze it. You could live on it for days. And it'd be a helluva lot healthier than those... [TV dinners]

MICHAEL

We've been through this.

(Just having a brilliant idea, she snaps her fingers.)

CARLOTTA

I'll tell ya what...

MICHAEL

You're going to tell me you just made a fresh batch of lamb stew. Right? You're going to offer to bring me some for my dinner. I'm going to tell you, again, that I hate lamb stew. And you're going to bring it up, anyway.

CARLOTTA

And you're gonna eat it. Ha! *(Starts for the door)* See ya!

MICHAEL

Where're you going?

CARLOTTA

To warm up the stew. I wouldn't want to screw up the routine!

MICHAEL

Carlotta...!

CARLOTTA

(Pleased with herself) Too late! You win! Bye! *(But just as she reaches the door, the downstairs BUZZER RINGS.)* Don't you let anyone in here without knowing who it is first.

MICHAEL

(Going to a window) Maybe if you'd have the intercom fixed, I wouldn't be tempted. *(Opens the already partially open window and yells down)* Who is it?

MADDIE (O.S.)

(From three stories below) Michael! It's me! Maddie!

MICHAEL

Go away, Maddie! I don't want to see you!

(MICHAEL slams the window down but unbeknownst to him, it eases up again. The BUZZER RINGS once more.)

MICHAEL, *Continued*

AGGGG! That girl!

CARLOTTA

Is that the way to treat a child?

MICHAEL

(Extremely agitated) That one's no child. And yes, it is. And furthermore, it's none of your business.

CARLOTTA

(In no way offended) Oh, I know that.

(At that moment, PEBBLES ARE HEARD PITCHED AGAINST THE WINDOW SCREEN.)

MADDIE *(O.S.)*

Michael! Please let me in!

(MICHAEL, again, ignores her pleas as pebbles continue to bombard the screen.)

CARLOTTA

The window's still open. I feel a draft.

MICHAEL

Weren't you about to leave? *(Goes to the window and slams it; no more pebbles are thrown)* If this decrepit old firetrap weren't sinking, there might be a right angle left in it somewhere. Windows need right angles, you know, to remain in proper alignment, which explains why this particular window keeps opening itself in the first place!

CARLOTTA

If the building was...askew...Michael, as you suggest, the window would jam, not float freely as it tends to want to do, so your observation is quite incorrect. The building is not sinking.

MICHAEL

It's sinking. *(TELEPHONE RINGS, again.)* Christ! *(Goes to it)* Hello! *(Pause)* Maddie, I told you a month ago, standing in front of this very building, that I didn't want to see you, again. You know why. I told you the same thing last week when you called the shop. And I'm telling you now. I don't want to see you again. Maddie. It's called tough love! Goodbye!

(He hangs up.)

CARLOTTA

There are gentler ways of dealing with people, Mike. After all, she is almost family. *(Pause; then gently)* I've been wondering what's been going on with you lately. It's got to do with Maddie, right?

MICHAEL

That's none of your business.

CARLOTTA

Right!

MICHAEL

I want to get off this, Carlotta!

CARLOTTA

Right. You're off...

(TELEPHONE RINGS. It RINGS, again. He goes to it.)

MICHAEL

Hello! *(Pause)* Peg...? Hey, little Peggy! What a surprise! I was just thinking about you. How're you doing, hon? *(Pause)* You have? Well that's great! What is it? *(Pause)* Of course, you can come over! The sooner, the better. But can't you just give me a little hint what it is; something for me to think about while you're on your way? *(Pause)* Okay, so I have to wait. You're the boss, kid. How long will it be? *(Checks his watch)* Great! Great! I'll be right here. See you, then, honey. *(A sudden thought)* Oh! Peggy. I know this is a silly question, but...you didn't happen to come by here an hour or so ago, did you? I mean, you didn't come into the apartment earlier or anything – not that you're not always welcome – but... *(Pause)* No, I was sure it wasn't you. *(Pause)* Well, it's nothing to be concerned about, but...just before I got home from the shop, Carlotta thought she heard someone roaming around up here, and me living alone and all she was just a little worried that maybe I had a burglar. *(Pause)* No. Nothing's missing. And you know Carlotta! *(Razzing CARLOTTA)* Kind of old; let's her imagination run away with her on occasion. *(Flashes a wicked smile at CARLOTTA; she gives him the 'finger')* Happens to the best of us. Don't give it another thought, hon. *(Pause; he turns away slightly, and lowers his voice)* Oh! One more thing. I really hate to ask you about this, Peggy, but... Carlotta's on the warpath, again. I'm sure you've probably already sent it, but if you haven't, do you think it's possible you could bring my rent check with you? *(Pause)* No, no, no, it's all right. You don't have to be sorry about anything. I'd just kind of like to get the old girl off my back, if you get what I mean. *(Pause)* Sure! I know you'll take care of it. You always do. I love you, honey. Bye. *(Hangs up, very pleased)* Peggy's coming by.

CARLOTTA

Good! I'll bring enough for the both of you! *(Starts for the door)*

MICHAEL

(Calling after her) She hates lamb stew, too, Carlotta. *(She ignores him as she goes out the door.)* It's a genetic thing! *(But the door has slammed in his face. He laughs.)* Goddamn, I love that old broad!

(MICHAEL locks the door and turns and looks toward the bedroom. His demeanor changes slightly. There is the tiniest frown on his face, a bemused look, as he begins to move toward the mysterious room. He stops for a moment in front of the door, and is just reaching for the knob, when...)

SNOOKY

(From behind the counter in the kitchen area having entered through the escape hatch)
Hi!

(Very gradually the LIGHTS in the ROOM CHANGE SUBTLY: A WARM, ROSY GLOW permeates it. MICHAEL is only a bit startled by the sudden appearance of this child/woman, and is completely oblivious to the change in the mood of the room.) A curious smile comes to his face. Regardless of what this woman does, she enchants him.)

MICHAEL

What are you doing over there?

SNOOKY

(Referring to the TV dinners) You haven't put those awful 'things' away, yet. If they melt, they'll spoil and you'll get sick. And I'd feel just terrible if you got sick.

MICHAEL

You're getting very precocious, you know that?

SNOOKY

Because I don't want you to get sick?

MICHAEL

No. Because you keep... 'popping up.'

SNOOKY

(Innocently) I've always just popped up.

MICHAEL

Yeah, but I used to have something to do with it!

SNOOKY

Are you going to fuss at me? And if you are, will you please put these awful things away, first. And then will you hug me? I've missed you.

(She runs from behind the counter into his arms as he hugs her ferociously.)

MICHAEL

(Laughing) I've missed you, too, you little devil.

(They kiss, lovingly at first, and then more passionately, but then...)

MICHAEL

(Pushing her away gently) But before you use your wiles to sidetrack me here, I have to ask you something. And I need you to tell me the truth.

SNOOKY

(Hurt) Have I ever, ever lied to you?

MICHAEL

No, but...

SNOOKY

(Beginning to pout) Then why would I lie to you, now?

MICHAEL

I don't think you would, but very strange things are beginning to happen around...

SNOOKY

I don't think I would, but...

MICHAEL

All right! I know you wouldn't. Forget I said it. But have you been in this room today?

SNOOKY

Why?

MICHAEL

Just answer me.

SNOOKY

(Coyly) I have to know why first.

MICHAEL

Don't get coy, Snooky. While I was out, were you in this room? Did you come in to this room, for any reason at all?

SNOOKY

You old silly, of course not! Why would I?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Why would you just suddenly pop up in the kitchen without my calling you?

SNOOKY

Because you wanted me to. You just didn't know it. *(Changing the subject)* Now put those things away, Michael. I told you I just couldn't bear it if you got sick!

(She gives him a quick peck on the cheek and glides into the center of the room where she begins to hum the same rhythmic rendition of 'MY MELANCHOLY BABY' that MICHAEL was humming when he came into his apartment. MICHAEL shakes his head, smiling, and moves to the kitchen, where he continues to empty the grocery bags. SNOOKY is

dancing now, with complete abandon, and when she gets to the lyric, "You know, dear, that I'm in love with you," she sings the words with all her heart, looks at MICHAEL, blows him a kiss, which he returns, and then continues to hum and dance. (MICHAEL returns to his TV dinner reading the label of one.)

MICHAEL

Hummm... Red cabbage and pork. Didn't know I'd gotten that one. *(Decides to give it a try and takes it out of its box. He turns it over and squinting, tries to read the label.)* Preheat oven to... *(Becoming irritated)* Damn! *(Digs into a pocket for his reading glasses, puts them on, and continues to read)* ...450. Right!

(MICHAEL puts down the TV dinner, opens the stove, takes a match from a match holder on the counter, and lights the oven. All the while, SNOOKY continues to dance.)

SNOOKY

I do wish you wouldn't bring those things home, Michael. Why don't you get yourself something nice? Like a steak, or chops?

MICHAEL

I like them.

SNOOKY

But a TV dinner is such a lonely thing, don't you think?

MICHAEL

Nope. If I were a lonely man, it would be a lonely thing. But then, if I were a lonely man, a banquet would be a lonely thing, wouldn't it?

SNOOKY

(A little sigh) I suppose anything would be lonely, if you were lonely anyway. *(Giggles)* Do you think Carlotta knows you throw her stew out?

MICHAEL

Probably. *(Studies her for a moment; she is the epitome of youthful verve, ease and grace as she continues to hum and move to her own music.)* Hey! Stay right where you are!

(MICHAEL puts the TV dinner on the counter, and hurries across the room to the phonograph. He turns it on, pulls out an old triangular wire record holder, takes out the first record, puts it on the turntable, drops the needle arm, and up comes a light and lilting arrangement of 'MY MELANCHOLY BABY'. It is very old and scratchy. He removes his glasses, jams them into a pocket and turns to SNOOKY.)

MICHAEL

May I have this dance?

SNOOKY

(As a shy and appreciative little wallflower) Why...? Yes! Thank you!

[NOTE: The following effects may be simplified.]

(They laugh as they come together and begin to dance. And as they do, the walls of the room become transparent. MICHAEL and SNOOKY are suddenly surrounded by stars. It is as if they are dancing in the Milky Way. Instantaneously, an unseen Rose Land mirrored ball begins to rotate somewhere high above them, casting dots of moving light all about. And then, the MUSIC begins to CHANGE. Very gradually, the SCRATCHINESS of the RECORDING fades into a rich, full SOUND of the finest fidelity. They do the two-step, the fox trot, the double-dip. They are having a marvelous time as they dance simply and beautifully all around the room. They dance for many moments, MUSIC SWELLING all the while, and then MICHAEL, becoming inspired, decides to elaborate. He spins SNOOKY out and back in, again. They do more turns, a dip or two, and out she goes once more. Early on, the magical, romantic LIGHTING of the room has begun to DIM very slowly, except in the area where they are finally dancing—the area immediately around the sofa. The rest of the room is in total DARKNESS. And now, MICHAEL spins SNOOKY out, again, this time releasing her completely. But at that moment, MICHAEL'S NAME is HEARD being called from a far distance. And the record sticks. As for SNOOKY, she has not spun back into his arms. She has disappeared, [Through another Escape Hatch]. The spell is broken. MADDIE continues to call from the street and the mood is clearly lost, the stars have faded, the walls have lost their transparency, the skyline reappears through the Up Stage windows. The natural LIGHTS of the room are restored. And MICHAEL is alone. The room is silent, except for the stuck record, which he immediately removes and slides into its perfect place in the record holder.)

MADDIE (O.S.)

Michael, I'm going to see you tonight if I have to get a ladder to do it! Are you going to let me in or not?

MICHAEL

Damnit! *(At the window)* No!

(He slams the window, locks it, and goes to his radio/phonograph. He flips on the radio; the MUSIC is SOFT, GENTLE. He spins the dial until it rests on a ROCK STATION. But MADDIE can still be heard calling from the street, three stories below, and once again, pebbles are bouncing off his window. He turns the VOLUME UP as HIGH as it will go. He then goes back to the kitchen and starts to put his TV dinner into the oven, but has a thought...)

MICHAEL, *Continued*

Hummm... *(Looks at the package; squints)* Forty-five minutes. Too long. I'll eat later...

(He turns the oven off, shoves the TV dinners into the refrigerator and begins to look around for something to do while he is waiting for PEG to arrive. He is still irritable, agitated, restless. He goes to the sofa; sits; drums his fingers on an arm of it. He glances at the bedroom, smiles, swings around and flops down on his back, facing the bedroom. He puts his fingers to his lips and emits a long, sharp whistle. In an instant, the ROSY GLOW fills the room, again, as the bedroom door is flung open, and SNOOKY tears through it, flying to the end of the sofa, leaping into the air, and landing soundly on top of MICHAEL, pushing herself against him, kissing his neck, nibbling his ears, mussing his hair. They are happy, giggling children playing Roughhouse and they could play into the night, except that MICHAEL begins to tickle SNOOKY, which she hates—while loving it. And she goes into paroxysms of little cat-like sneezes while he roars with laughter.)

SNOOKY

(Sneezing and giggling) Stop it, Michael! Don't do that! You know it makes me sneeze! Michael, stop it!

(Finally he stops tickling her, and she hugs him tightly.)

SNOOKY

No wonder so many women are so madly in love with you. Do they really love you as much as I do? Do they?

MICHAEL

They couldn't possibly!

SNOOKY

And you don't love them, either, do you!

MICHAEL

I couldn't possibly!

SNOOKY

(Beaming as she snuggles into him) Oh, Michael, you always say the nicest things. And you make me so happy! *(Beat)* I adore being happy. *(Beat)* ...except that it makes me scared.

MICHAEL

Scared? Of what?

SNOOKY

I don't know...

MICHAEL

Give it a try.

SNOOKY

(Furrowing her brow) Of losing you...?

MICHAEL

Ah! Wishful thinking.

SNOOKY

(Hitting him playfully) That's not funny!

MICHAEL

I thought it was.

SNOOKY

You know I want to be with you always, Michael.

MICHAEL

You will be.

SNOOKY

I will??

MICHAEL

Of course!

SNOOKY

(Eagerly) Then you'll marry me!?!

MICHAEL

Ohhh, no you don't!

SNOOKY

But it's not nice living together like this and not being married. It simply isn't done!

MICHAEL

Don't get into this, again, Snooky.

SNOOKY

But it isn't!

MICHAEL

We're doing it.

SNOOKY

My parents would just die.

MICHAEL

Then let's not tell them.

SNOOKY

(Slugging him) You're awful!

MICHAEL

So I've been told.

SNOOKY

But...but what if I get pregnant?

MICHAEL

Snooky, I'm an assistant stage manager, now. I'm on my way. Give me three years, I'll have a show on the boards with my name above the title: "MICHAEL MCGILLICUDDY PRESENTS!" I'll be Broadway's youngest Producer. I'll be Broadway's hottest Producer!

SNOOKY

(Becoming excited) And then we can have as many children as we want to!

MICHAEL

I love you, Snooky. I want a family, too. I want you to be the mother and I want to be the father. It's as simple as that.

SNOOKY

(Slowly thinking it through) And if we had a little baby, we'd have to feed it, and...

MICHAEL

And we just couldn't do it with the money I'm making now.

SNOOKY

We probably couldn't even feed a cat.

MICHAEL

(Smiling) Then maybe we'd better not get one.

SNOOKY

(Rationalizing) And besides, I'd lose my figure. And I'm too cute to lose my figure. You wouldn't want me to do that, would you?

MICHAEL

You could waddle like a walrus and I couldn't care less.

SNOOKY

That's what my father said until my mother began to waddle.

MICHAEL

I'm not your father.

SNOOKY

And I'm so young. And adorable and totally irresponsible and...well...I really don't think I should be a mother yet. I want to stay young and silly – just for a little while – and sing and dance and eat millions of gold fish if I want to, and drink oceans of gin if I want to, and stay up forever and ever if I want to, and do all the things that years and years from now people will look back on me with envy and contempt. *(Laughs and strikes a pose)* "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow ye shall..."

MICHAEL

(Overlapping her) ...ye shall eat, drink and be merry, again! My God, you're exhausting!

SNOOKY

And you adore me for it!

MICHAEL

(Cradling her as if she were a small child; quietly; lovingly) And I adore you for it.

(He begins to stroke her hair gently. She closes her eyes.)

SNOOKY

Oh, thank you, Michael. Thank you for understanding. I don't know what I'd do if...

(There is KNOCK on the DOOR—and not a polite one.)

MICHAEL

Wait a minute! SSSshhh!!!!

(SNOOKY freezes. Long, long moments pass. There is ANOTHER LOUDER KNOCK, and then a KEY IS HEARD BEING INSERTED into the DOOR. MICHAEL bounds off the sofa, catapulting SNOOKY off it with him. As he hurries to the door, the LIGHTS IN THE ROOM BUMP BACK TO NORMAL.)

MICHAEL, *Continued*

What are you up to now, Carlotta?

CARLOTTA *(O.S.)*

Oh, just thought I'd surprise you with a little stew!

(She roars with laughter. MICHAEL turns and is stunned to see that SNOOKY is still in the room.)

MICHAEL

(An urgent, panicked whisper to SNOOKY) What the hell are you still doing here!?!

(MICHAEL throws himself against the front door just as it begins to open, and SNOOKY, frightened and bewildered, drops behind the sofa. CARLOTTA crashes into the room, pinning MICHAEL to the wall behind the door.)

CARLOTTA

I outdid myself with this one! Sweetie, are you in for a treat!

(Not closing the door, she moves to the kitchen, flings open the refrigerator, and begins moving things about.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

Michael? ('Sing songy') Come out, come out, wherever you are! *(Naturally)* I'd like to play, too, Mike, but I can't stay. Oh, and there's plenty here for Peg. I know how she looovvves lamb stew! Michael...?

(CARLOTTA slams the door. MICHAEL is still pressed against the wall. His nose is bleeding.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

Oh, my God, Mike, what happened! Did you get mugged? *(Rummaging through drawers)* Is he still here! Didn't I tell you? Didn't I tell you!!! *(Comes forth with a large, menacing butcher knife)* Where is he? I'll kill the sonofabitch! Where is he!

(MICHAEL is not amused. He digs into a pocket and brings out a clean handkerchief.)

MICHAEL

You're abusing your key rights, Carlotta. One more entrance like that, and I'm off limits for you.

CARLOTTA

(Perplexed, but only for a moment) I did that???. *(MICHAEL glowers at her as she breaks into shingle-shaking gales of laughter.)* Oh, God, Mike, I'm sorry! Come over here. I'll fix you up.

MICHAEL

You already have!

(But CARLOTTA has opened the ice compartment, and is pulling out cubes of ice, which she quickly throws into the handiest dish towel, and is moving toward the sofa.)

CARLOTTA

Come over here. We gotta stop that bleeding. Come on, now.

(MICHAEL is frozen in horror as CARLOTTA flops down on the sofa. Only the back of it is between her and SNOOKY.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

Come on, Mike. It won't hurt, I promise. (*MICHAEL doesn't budge, so CARLOTTA starts to get up.*) Okay. If Mohammed won't come to the mountains.

MICHAEL

I'm coming. I'm coming!

(*He dashes to the sofa and plops down next to her.*)

CARLOTTA

(*Taking full charge, presses the 'ice towel' into the back of MICHAEL'S neck*) Okay. Now lean back. We gotta' work against gravity here. Lean back against the sofa. Look up at the ceiling. Thaaaat's it. I'll just hold the pack here; you keep the hankie over your nose... (*Beat*) You okay...?

MICHAEL

(*Pinned to the sofa, with CARLOTTA practically on top of him and SNOOKY hiding just behind him*) Oh, yeah, great! I'm just great...

CARLOTTA

Good. You have many of these?

MICHAEL

Only when I'm smashed in the face by a goddamned door!

CARLOTTA

Follows. (*Beat*) This is kinda nice, huh?

MICHAEL

You are putting me on?

CARLOTTA

Naw. You know Carlotta. The stripper with the heart of gold. I should'a been a nurse.

MICHAEL

That would have been an option.

CARLOTTA

Yeah. Mortimer used to tell me that. (*Beat; with a kind of affection*) I took good care of that sonofabitch. (*Beat*) Yeah. Mortimer. How'd you like to be born with a name like that?

(*Referring to the bleeding and wanting to get CARLOTTA out of the room, he looks at his handkerchief.*)

MICHAEL

I think it's stopped. Yeah. It's stopped. Thanks, Carlotta. Thanks, a lot!

CARLOTTA

You sure?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Sure. Real sure! *(Starts to get up)* Well...

CARLOTTA

'Mortimer.' Now think about it. They pop out of the womb; you take one look at 'em and ya' know. Right off, it's all over their squashed little faces. 'Mortimer.' And they gotta' live with that for the rest of their lives. *(A sweet smile)* What a prick!

(MICHAEL is touched, despite himself. He smiles at her. She looks at him.)

CARLOTTA, *Continued*

(Beat) Hey, Stud Muffin!

MICHAEL

Stud Muffin! I haven't heard that one for a while!

CARLOTTA

(Beat; studies him) You ever thought about us gettin' back together? No big commitment or anything like that. Just...give it a little try, ya' know...?

MICHAEL

No... No, I guess I haven't. *(A big smile)* We had a helluva time, though, huh?

CARLOTTA

Yeah. *(Beat)* Oh, yeah... *(Beat)* Well... Just thought I'd ask. *(A sudden change in mood)* Okay, fella', it looks like you're gonna' live.

(She hops up, moves to the kitchen, and is emptying the towel in the sink, when...)

SNOOKY

(From behind the sofa) AAAaaachooo!

(This is followed by a barrage of little cat sneezes.)

CARLOTTA

(Not even looking around as she hangs the towel on a hook to dry) Gesundheit! You wanna be careful you don't start that bleeding, again.

SNOOKY

(More little cat sneezes) Aacheee, aacheee, aacheee!

(CARLOTTA looks around. MICHAEL has only now recovered enough from the shock of what's happening, and begins to sneeze, imitating the SNOOKY sounds to the best of his ability.)

CARLOTTA

Are you all right?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Sure. I'm fine. Just a little...reaction...here. Thanks for everything, Carlotta. Thanks for everything.

(He takes CARLOTTA by the arm and ushers her to the door.)

CARLOTTA

The stew's in the fridge. The towel's hung out to dry. Oh. One more thing...watch out for movin' doors!

(She is laughing as MICHAEL closes the door behind her; hard and fast. He spins toward SNOOKY, who has crawled to the far side of the sofa, so that now MICHAEL can't see that she is still in the room.)

MICHAEL

SNOOKY! *(Beat)* Snooky, get your butt in here!

(A tentative SNOOKY emerges from behind the far side of the sofa.)

SNOOKY

Hi...

MICHAEL

What's going on with you! What! What!?! You don't just hang around, Snooky. You come; you go; BAM! Just like that. You don't hang around for Christ's sake! What's going on with you!!

SNOOKY

(Frightened) Don't yell at me, Michael. Please. I didn't do it on purpose.

MICHAEL

No? Who do you think did??

SNOOKY'

I...I don't know? She just came in, and I was still here and... I didn't mean to be... I just... I'm sorry...

(The door bursts open and CARLOTTA sticks her head in. SNOOKY freezes directly in CARLOTTA'S line of vision, but CARLOTTA pays no attention to her whatsoever.)

CARLOTTA

(Moving through the apartment as she searches, and never once being aware of SNOOKY) Did I leave my glasses in here? I swear to God, I don't know where my mind is half the time. I musta had 'em when I came in. Crap, I'm beginning to think I don't even need the buggers. If I really needed 'em, I'd remember to wear 'em, wouldn't ya' think? Seems like a pretty good assumption to me. *(All of this has been on one breath. She heads for the open door.)* If you find 'em, gimme a call, Stud. Thanks.

(She is gone. In a daze, MICHAEL closes the door slowly, moves like a somnambulist to the sofa, and sinks it.)

MICHAEL

Jesus! *(Beat)* Jesus!

SNOOKY

(Moving to him cautiously) It won't happen, again, Michael. I promise... *(MICHAEL doesn't respond. He is deeply concerned about what's going on in his own home.)* And she didn't see me...

MICHAEL

She sure as hell heard you! "Gesundheit!" Good, God, Snooky!

SNOOKY

I didn't know I was going to do that. It was left over...from before... *(Beat)*
I should have gone away, huh...?

MICHAEL

Yes, you should have! You always have. When anyone comes by. Even when the phone rings! Just...automatically! Poof! You've never just...hung around like this!

SNOOKY

I tried to hide...

MICHAEL

(Calming down, but still despairing)
I just wish you hadn't been here.

SNOOKY

(Afraid of the answer) Should I go away, then...?

MICHAEL

(Panic sweeps over him) God, no! I don't want you to go away ever! I didn't mean that. I just don't want you to keep changing the rules...

SNOOKY

We never made any rules, Mike...

MICHAEL

Let's just forget it, okay? I'm...I'm just a little...upset ...about some things right now. Other than his. I'm just... (*SNOOKY is beginning to cry.*) Dammit, Snooky, I can't stand to see you do that. Stop it! Just stop it! (*SNOOKY turns away and tries to stop, but can't. MICHAEL is remorseful.*) I'm...I'm sorry.... (*Beat*) I'm sorry... (*Beat*) Come here.

(*MICHAEL gets up and takes her in his arms.*)

SNOOKY

That's okay. (*Long silence*) Michael...?

MICHAEL

What?

SNOOKY

Why is this happening?

MICHAEL

I wish I knew. Oh, God, I wish I knew...

(*They continue to hold each other for a few moments longer, and then, TELEPHONE RINGS. Loudly.*)

MICHAEL

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! (*Pulls himself together and goes to the phone*) Hello! (*Pause*) Maddie, no! I've hung up on you already once tonight. I yelled it out the window twice. Will you please just leave me alone! (*Pause*) I'm sure you've got something to tell me. You always have something to tell me, and in the past few weeks, it's always been something I didn't want to hear, so take it to your boyfriend, or whatever-the-hell he is these days, but get off my back. (*Pause*) No, I am not being an ass hole as you so lyrically put it. I'm being courageous. I'm being strong. I'm being a fuckin' GIANT! You're my friend. And I love you. And it hurts like hell. But if you're determined to dive back into your pit, then dive away. I got no intention of helping you. Or of going with you. I know those games, Maddie. I mastered them. But no more. So go cry on some other sucker's shoulder. Goodbye, Maddie. (*Starts to hang up; stops*) What? (*Pause*) You've what? (*Pause; then suspiciously*) When...? (*Pause*) I don't believe you. I've heard it all before. Why should I believe you this time? (*Pause; then with unbridled sarcasm*) Because it's true. Suuuuure! Yeah, sure... (*Pause; protectively*) All right, so now I'm a smart ass. I can't trust you, don't you understand that? (*Pause*) No, you cannot come up...

SNOOKY

(*Urgently*) Be very careful, Michael. Please...

MICHAEL

And don't start crying on me, Maddie! I hate that! (*Mumbling to himself*) Goddammit! (*Pause; having a difficult time of it, then...*) Ah, what the hell! All right, come on up. But I'm warning you, if you're lying to me, again, I'm pitching you out. The window! Got it? (*Beat*) Good. Goodbye.

(*He hangs up. There is a long pause. Finally...*)

SNOOKY

I'm afraid of her, Michael.

MICHAEL

Maddie?

SNOOKY

She lying to you, again?

MICHAEL

(*Trying to convince himself*) No.

SNOOKY

She is.

MICHAEL

Not this time.

SNOOKY

(*Desperately*) Michael...!

MICHAEL

(*Unwilling to hear any more*) I want you to go to our room, now, Snooky.

SNOOKY

NO! I don't want you to be alone with her, Michael!

MICHAEL

Damnit! You get that spoiled-brat butt of yours into that bedroom right now and don't you come out until you're called!

SNOOKY

(*Adamantly*) I have never come into this room without your permission!

MICHAEL

Twenty minutes ago? Thirty minutes ago? You didn't just...pop up...over there by the TV dinners!

SNOOKY
I told you before—you wanted me to!

MICHAEL
I did not!

SNOOKY
You did!

MICHEL
I did not.

(The downstairs BUZZER RINGS.)

SNOOKY
Is that her already?

MICHAEL
It must be.

SNOOKY
That's not possible.

MICHAEL
She was at the corner booth.

SNOOKY
It'd still not possible. *(Goes to the window)* I just can't believe this!

MICHAEL
Snooky! Go!

(He rings MADDIE into the building.)

SNOOKY
You really want me to?

MICHAEL
You know damned well I do! Stop fighting me, Snooky!

SNOOKY
(Walking sadly, petulantly to the bedroom door; turns) What's happening to us, Michael?

MICHAEL
(Extremely upset, and not yet understanding any of it himself) I don't know. I don't know, but I do know that Maddie's on her way up the stairs right now.

SNOOKY

It used to be safe here. And now...I'm afraid. Please don't let's ever do this, again.

MICHAEL

(Wanting to be gentle) We won't. I promise.

SNOOKY

Me, too.

MICHAEL

(Holding his arms out to her) Come here. *(She runs into them. He kisses her tenderly.)*

I love you, Snooky.

SNOOKY

I love you, too.

MICHAEL

You're shaking.

SNOOKY

I'll be all right.

MICHAEL

Sure you will.

SNOOKY

(Beat, then with a certain reserve) Mike...?

MICHAEL

Hum...?

SNOOKY

When Maddie's gone, can we play some more?

MICHAEL

Yes! *(Slaps her on the fanny)* Now, git!

SNOOKY

Okay! In the meantime, if you want me for anything, you know where I'll be. *(Waves)*
Tah tah.

(SNOOKY turns, kicks up a heel like a Corrine making an exit, and disappears into the bedroom, closing the door after her. In a moment, there is a knock on MICHAEL'S door. He takes a deep breath and goes to open it. In the hallway stands MADDIE. She is 18 and 'hippie' to the core; but a failed, angry down-and-out hippie. Peace, love, joy and brotherhood are no longer words in her vocabulary. She is restless, agitated, reaching

for balance.)

MADDIE

You're one bullheaded sonofabitch.

MICHAEL

(Coolly; looks her up and down disapprovingly) Come in, Maddie.

(She kisses him perfunctorily on a cheek, moves into the room, shivers.)

MADDIE

It got cold out there.

MICHAEL

(Closing the door) You're practically naked.

MADDIE

The wind came up when the sun went down. Thanks for letting me in.

MICHAEL

I hope I can let you stay.

MADDIE

That's a threat.

MICHAEL

That's a threat.

(MADDIE looks at him, as if trying to ascertain how far he can be pushed, and then she glances around the room.)

MADDIE

I thought you were gonna' have it painted.

MICHAEL

Carlotta had other ideas.

MADDIE

Tight twat, huh?

MICHAEL

I wouldn't know.

MADDIE

You wouldn't know...?

(She sneezes one nice, normal, healthy sneeze.)

MICHAEL

You caught a cold.

MADDIE

Unless you've got a cat.

MICHAEL

I haven't. Do you want an Alka Seltzer?

MADDIE

I'll live. How about a drink.

MICHAEL

Goddamnit, you told me you'd stopped all that!

MADDIE

(Disdainfully) Juice, Michael. Or soda. Anything. No ice.

(MICHAEL goes to the refrigerator and pours MADDIE a glass of 7-Up. MADDIE is pacing. She goes to a group of photographs on a wall; studies them; laughs.)

MICHAEL

What's the matter?

MADDIE

(Indicating the photographs) God, I still can't believe these guys are for real?

MICHAEL

Those pictures go back a long way. You know that.

MADDIE

That I can believe!

MICHAEL

(More proud than defensive) Every one of them was a star, Maddie.

MADDIE

You want stars? Put some Janis Joplin on the wall. Jimi Hendrix. Liven the place up.

MICHAEL

My work was in the theatre.

MADDIE

So where do you think those guys work? Church basements?

MICHAEL

I meant the legitimate theatre. Not sports arenas.

MADDIE

Which makes them nobodies, right?

MICHAEL

(Referring to MADDIE'S 'boyfriend') I know one of their kind that could fit into that category, yes.

MADDIE

(Looks at him, knows exactly to whom he is referring, then...) You got some new plants.

MICHAEL

A few. Does he still want you to have an abortion?

MADDIE

(Ignoring the question) They look good. Yeah. This whole place looks real good. Except those walls. They still need paint. *(Wanders a bit more, looking around, touching things here and there)* You're still not sure about me, are you?

MICHAEL

No.

MADDIE

You're determined to play it safe.

MICHAEL

Wouldn't you be cautious, if you were me?

MADDIE

I don't know. I'm not you.

MICHAEL

(Bringing her the 7-Up) Here. *(She takes it.)* Peg's coming by. We don't have much time.

MADDIE

I gotta' split when she gets here, right?

MICHAEL

Yes.

MADDIE

What's the matter? Ashamed of me?

MICHAEL

Of course, not. I know what you are behind the stuff.

MADDIE

Don't give me the lecture, Mike. I couldn't stand the rush. (*Sips the 7-Up*) God, a shot of vodka'd be fantastic in this!

MICHAEL

How long has it been?

MADDIE

Three weeks, four days, and some hours.

MICHAEL

Pills?

MADDIE

Nothing.

(MICHAEL is studying her.)

MADDIE, *Continued*

I am telling the truth Michael. (*Beat; somewhat sheepishly*) This time...

MICHAEL

Then...I'm proud of you.

MADDIE

I wanted you to be. Nobody else gives a shit, that's for sure.

MICHAEL

Your grandparents do. Have you told them?

MADDIE

No. How are the old folks?

MICHAEL

(Pointedly) Giving a shit.

MADDIE

Good. When you go in tomorrow, tell 'em hello. (*Pulling a drying leaf off a plant; obviously uncomfortable with the conversation*) They don't mind you stealing these things.

MICHAEL

They give them to me. Got another one today. (*Hopefully*) You want it?

MADDIE

I'd kill it. You keep it.

MICHAEL

I'm getting a little plant heavy around here.

MADDIE

So tell 'em that.

MICHAEL

It'll hurt their feelings.

MADDIE

Then, don't. Yeah. Give 'em my regards. Tell 'em the good news.

MICHAEL

They'd be happier hearing it from you.

MADDIE

(Snapping) No lectures, Michael! *(MICHAEL only looks at her.)* I'm sorry. *(Beat; a complete change of attitude)* Hey, you got anything to eat?

MICHAEL

(Allowing himself to lighten up a bit) Have I got anything to eat! Have I got anything to eat! Where do you think you are, girl? *(Mumbling humorously as he goes to the refrigerator)* Let's see here. There is...uh...Swiss Steak, and...oh...Fried Chicken. Roast Beef. Here's a Chinese Dinner. A Mexican Dinner. Another Swiss Steak. A Turkey. How about Turkey? No. Wait. Let me read all of them, then you can...

MADDIE

(Recoiling) Forget it. I'm not hungry.

MICHAEL

I thought you just said you were.

MADDIE

I changed my mind.

MICHAEL

Is that a woman for you!

MADDIE

What do you want from me? I don't eat shit!

MICHAEL

(Playing at being stung, hurt) You're referring to my TV dinners as... You don't eat television dinners! Now, just a minute. You wait just one damned minute... Ah! Here's a good one! Franks and Beans...?

MADDIE

(Beginning to laugh despite herself) You're a nutty, old guy, you know that!

MICHAEL

You don't eat television dinners? I can't believe this!!

MADDIE

(Laughing even harder) Will you bury it!

MICHAEL

(The 'long-sufferer') No, that's all right. You're not the only one. Carlotta won't eat them. Snooky can't eat them. Even Snooky, for Christ's sake!

MADDIE

Snooky...?

MICHAEL

What...? *(Suddenly aware of what he has said)* But that's their problem. Let's see what else we got!

MADDIE

Who's Snooky?

MICHAEL

Huh...?

MADDIE

(Beginning to tease him) Are you holding out on me?

MICHAEL

You mean Snooky! No, I haven't seen Snooky for years. *(Almost babbling now as he distractedly begins putting the TV dinners back into the refrigerator)* In fact, I'm not even sure they had TV dinners the last time I saw Snooky. I'm not even sure they had TV! Ha! But if they had had 'em, she'd have had an opinion on 'em, I can promise you that!

(SNOOKY'S VOICE overlaps MICHAEL'S last words, and it comes from no particular area. Rather, it quietly fills the room and seems to echo faintly.)

SNOOKY (V.O.)

A TV dinner is such a lonely thing, don't you think?

MADDIE

(The previous moment registers) Wait a minute. Who was that?

MICHAEL

(Panicked; trying to pretend the moment didn't occur) How's your 7-Up? You got enough ice?

MADDIE

Michael! Who was that?

MICHAEL

I forgot! You don't use ice!

MADDIE

(Beginning to panic) Who was it!!

MICHAEL

What? I...uh...what? Who was what...?

MADDIE

Someone just said... *(Pause)* Didn't you just hear someone say...? *(Pause; studies him)* No. You didn't. *(Pause, her panic growing)* Oh, my God... *(Begins to tremble)* Oh, my God, Michael!

MICHAEL

(Very quickly concerned) What's the matter?

MADDIE

It's happening, again. The voices are coming and the bugs are crawling... Oh, Christ! *(Wraps her arms around herself and claws at her skin)* What if I can't make it, Michael?!? These weird things keep happening and I'm scared. I don't know how long I can take this shit. Oh, Christ!!!

MICHAEL

(Carefully) What...things...? What are you talking about...?

MADDIE

Little things! Crawlin' all over me. Oh, God, help me!

MICHAEL

It's part of the detox, honey. It'll pass. I promise. It's tough, but you've got to expect it. For a little while. Just for a little while.

MADDIE

Jesus! It's been almost a month!!!

MICHAEL

Doesn't matter. Take a deep breath. Take five. Take as many as you need 'til they stop crawling. (*MADDIE begins to breathe deeply.*) Deeper! Really fill 'em' up!

MADDIE

Jesus! How long do I have to do this?

MICHAEL

'Til you think you're going to pass out, if necessary.

MADDIE

I think I'm gonna' pass out now.

MICHAEL

Then you've had enough. (*She stops. He studies her for a moment.*) How're you feeling?

MADDIE

(*Reeling slightly*) I think I'd rather have the bugs.

MADDIE

Better sit down. (*She does.*)

MICHAEL

Are they still with you?

MADDIE

Sort of, but at least, they're not crawling as fast. (*Trying to make light of it*) And what are a few old bugs crawlin' around, anyway, huh?

MICHAEL

Hell, yes! Didn't I tell you it would work?

MADDIE

Yeah. (*Beat; bemused*) Yeah. It did work.

MICHAEL

Would I lie to you! (*MADDIE only smiles at him and for the first time, the scared little girl inside shows through. Behind the tough facade, MADDIE is nothing but vulnerable.*) I know it's rough, honey, but you've got to believe me. The worst is over.

MADDIE

I hope so.

MICHAEL

Well...have you heard the voices before?

MADDIE

One for every bug sometimes.

MICHAEL

Then...this wasn't the first time...

MADDIE

Oh, God, no!

MICHAEL

Then you've got to believe this, too. *(As if he were willing them away)* The voices will go with the bugs.

MADDIE

I've got to make it, Michael. I can't go back on the dope and stuff. I'll be goddamned if I'll poison my baby!

MICHAEL

(Carefully) You're going to have it, then...?

(There is a long Pause.)

MADDIE

I don't know... But if I do, I don't want her poppin' into the world on a high, for Christ's sake. God, what a rotten thing to do to a kid. *(A beat; then letting anger up from a very deep place)* Those selfish sonsofbitches!

MICHAEL

(Wanting to keep her as calm as possible) Let me get you some more soda.

(He goes to the kitchen area.)

MADDIE

(A genuine sadness) Why couldn't you have been my parents? Both of 'em.

MICHAEL

If I'd been your parents, you'd be solidly into your middle years right now. Would you like that?

MADDIE

That would have to be better than this. *(Glancing at her watch)* How much time have we got?

MICHAEL

Before what?

I have to leave.

MADDIE

Oh! As much as we want.

MICHAEL

You said I have to go when Peggy gets here.

MADDIE

I'm reconsidering.

MICHAEL

(*Smiles, looks at him for a moment, then...*) Did you ever think I'd turn out like this?

MADDIE

Whoever knows how anybody'll turn out?

MICHAEL

You didn't answer me. Did you?

MADDIE

No. But on the inside you're still who you always were.

MICHAEL

(*A sardonic laugh*) Ha! Still clinging to that one, huh?

MADDIE

Let up on yourself, will you, hon?

MICHAEL

(*Has to look away for a moment, then turns back*) When you used to baby-sit...was I just awful?

MADDIE

You were an angel. Where is all this coming from?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Just being here. With you. Feeling sort of safe, again, for a minute... It got me to thinking about things, I guess.

MADDIE

Follows.

MICHAEL

Those were happy times, weren't they?

MADDIE

MICHAEL

Yes. They were.

MADDIE

Brother, could I use a happy time about now.

MICHAEL

You going to start feeling sorry for yourself?

MADDIE

Naw. I did like it, though, a long time ago, when you used to come around my grandparents' shop. I know you were kinda' unhappy then, your divorce and everything, but...I don't know...you were just great to be with. You made me feel like I really belonged somewhere.

MICHAEL

It's funny. That's the way they make me feel. They're good people, your grandparents. Good neighbors. Good friends. The best I've got.

MADDIE

Yeah, I guess they are. *(Long pause, then becoming excited, like a child)* Michael. Guess what?

MICHAEL

What?

MADDIE

The circus is coming to town!

MICHAEL

(Having difficulty following her) Is it...?

MADDIE

Yeah! You remember the time you took me to the circus? They weren't in Madison Square Garden then. They were in big tents! And I ate popcorn and cotton candy, and got to ride a pony!

MICHAEL

Are you aware you're becoming somebody else?

MADDIE

Like I'm schizoid?

MICHAEL

No! Your voice, your manner, everything. You're like the little girl I took to the circus. You're like my old buddy, again!

(There is a pause as MADDIE sinks back into her reality.)

MADDIE

Too bad things change.

MICHAEL

Yes. It is.

MADDIE

You don't like Rick, do you?

MICHAEL

I've never seen the man. Do you like him?

MADDIE

No. I did until he told me to have an abortion. Now I hate him. Considering what a mess I've become, it'd probably be a good idea to have one, though.

MICHAEL

An abortion? I'm not going to listen to that stuff, Maddie.

MADDIE

Can you imagine me raisin' a kid!

(MICHAEL doesn't answer. They sit quietly. The TELEPHONE RINGS. MICHAEL doesn't respond. It RINGS again.)

MADDIE

Phone's ringing.

MICHAEL

I don't have to answer it.

MADDIE

The hell you don't! I get crazy not answering telephones. How would you ever know who's on the other end?

MICHAEL

(An indifferent laugh) I guess I wouldn't. *(Goes to the phone and picks up)* Hello...? *(Pause)* Oh, Peg! Where are you? We were just talking about you. *(Pause)* Maddie. *(Pause)* Maddie. My friend, Maddie...? *(Winks at her; she smiles back.)* Yeah, she'd like to meet you. You're still coming, aren't you? *(Pause)* Good. Good! When? I thought

MICHAEL, *Continued*

you'd be here by now. *(Pause)* What...? *(Pause)* Oh... *(The sparkle goes out of his eyes. A dark concern comes over him, though he tries to cover it.)* Oh. Okay... *(Pause)* No, hon, take your time. We'll be here. We'll be here. *(Pause)* So long. *(He hangs up, tries to make light of it.)* She's on her way. There's been a slight delay, but that's all right.

MADDIE

(Aware of the change in him) Is anything wrong?

MICHAEL

Oh, no...uh...she'll be here. Eventually. She ran into some...people...and is going to be delayed for a while, but... *(MADDIE simply looks at him knowing that he's hurting. His bluster fades. His honesty is painful.)* Knowing her delays...she may not come at all.

MADDIE

I'm sorry.

MICHAEL

No. That's all right...that's all right...

(A long silence follows.)

MADDIE

(Having difficulty saying what she has to say) I'm not telling you the truth, Michael. I'm not telling you the whole truth. I don't want to lie to you anymore. I love you, and I know you love me, and...

(She stops.)

MICHAEL

(Gently) Go on.

MADDIE

I'm gonna' try to make it with the drugs and the booze. I swear to God. I'm really gonna' try to do that, but... *(MICHAEL sits quietly through the long silence.)*...but I am gonna' have the abortion.

MICHAEL

Why?

MADDIE

Because I can't handle a kid! I want to be able to. I already love the little bastard. I know I do, but...but I'd make a lousy mother.

MICHAEL

And...?

MADDIE
And what?

MICHAEL
(Anger rising) And what's the rest of it!

MADDIE
(Exploding) He'll leave me, that's what! If I don't have an abortion, he'll leave me. I love him, Michael.

MICHAEL
And he loves you.

MADDIE
Oh, yes. Yes, he really does...

MICHAEL
(Rage building) So much that he wants you to kill his own kid! Great! "A greater love hath no man!" Great!

MADDIE
(Frightened) Michael...don't...

MICHAEL
He's an ass hole! He's a cruel, self-serving, unmitigated ass hole!

MADDIE
I won't let you talk about him like that! You don't even know him!

MICHAEL
Don't I? I know him to the core. He's scum!

MADDIE
Goddamn you, Michael! Goddamn you!

(She starts for the door.)

MICHAEL
(Grabbing a wrist as she hurries away) Come back here!

MADDIE
(Struggling fiercely) Let go of me!

MICHAEL
Sit down!

MADDIE

No! Michael, let go of me!

(He flings her across the room and onto the sofa, and before she can respond, he is beside her, holding her in place. But, once recovered, she begins to fight. Hard.)

MICHAEL

Maddie, if I have to hog tie you and gag you with a sheet, I will, but by God, you're going to listen to me whether you want to or not!

MADDIE

Nnnnnnnnnnn!!!

MICHAEL

(Shaking her fiercely) Maddie, shut the fuck UP! *(MADDIE is suddenly silent. MICHAEL begins.)* Now... *(Beat)* I don't want to say this. I never wanted to say this to anyone. You don't want to hear it. But you're going to. And I don't want you opening your mouth. I don't want so much as a twitch out of you, until I'm through. *(Beat)* I know your guy. I've never seen him; I don't want to. But I know him. And I don't think too highly of a man who loves a woman and wants to kill their own kid.

MADDIE

Michael...

MICHAEL

Shut up! *(Long Pause)* Once. I loved somebody once. *(Beat)* And I was loved once. Once... *(Beat)* And I killed her. She wanted only one thing in the world for me. For me to be happy. That's what I wanted for me, too – for me to be happy. She wanted a kid. I didn't. I thought we couldn't afford it. She was sure we could. She got pregnant. I demanded she have it aborted. *(Beat)* She did. *(Beat)* She died. *(Beat)* I killed Snooky...and our kid...as surely as if I'd pushed that pure, ivory knitting needle right into her gut. *(Pause)* I can't say how you feel about yourself, Maddie. But I do believe you love that kid. And I believe you think you love its father. If you do, then don't listen to the sonofabitch. Don't help set him up for what he's gonna' have to live with for the rest of his life. Oh, I hear myself. I'm not asking you not to do it for you. Or even your kid. I'm asking you for him. And I hate the bastard. You could die, you know. Your baby surely will. *(Beat)* He won't! *(Pause)*

MADDIE

(Profoundly touched; softly) Oh, Michael...

(MICHAEL is choking on his feelings, but is pathetically unable to release them.)

MADDIE, *Continued*

You can cry, if you want to, Mike.

MICHAEL

(Shaking his head slightly) No. *(Beat)* No, I haven't cried in 40 years. *(A sad smile)*
I wouldn't want to break my record.

MADDIE

(Taking his hand) No. I guess not.

(They sit quietly for many moments. And then, a LOUD SNEEZE IS HEARD. It seems to come from everywhere and nowhere, and reverberates throughout the room. But this is only the beginning. It is followed by a myriad of squeaking, little cat sneezes that swirl around them for a few moments, begin to focus on the bedroom door, and then seem to move right into the BEDROOM, where one more little cat sneeze is heard, followed by...)

SNOOKY (O.S.)

Oh, darn! Darn!darn!darn!darn!darn!

(The bedroom door flies open and SNOOKY bursts into the room.)

SNOOKY

Excuse me Michael. Did you get any Kleenex at the store? We're out in the bathroom.
(Stops, noticing MADDIE) Oh! Hi! You must be Maddie! I'm Snooky!

(BLACKOUT.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

(AT RISE: It is the next moment. MADDIE is attempting to form a word.)

MADDIE

...Snoo...Snoo...Snooky...?

SNOOKY

(Pleasantly) Uh huh.

MADDIE

...hi...

SNOOKY

Michael, did you get some Kleenex?

MICHAEL

(Numbed) Uh...uh...I'll look...

(He starts to get up.)

SNOOKY

That's all right. I can look. I'm sorry to have interrupted you. *(Starts for the kitchen, sneezes on the way)* Oh, darn!

(Once in the kitchen, she begins her search for the Kleenex.)

MADDIE

(An urgent whisper) Who is that???

MICHAEL

Uh...Snooky! That's Snooky...

MADDIE

(Feeling the panic begin to rise) Snooky... You don't mean like the girl...who died...?

MICHAEL

No, no, no! Snooky's an...an actress! An actress friend of mine. She...

MADDIE

But she frightens me! I'm frightened, Michael!

MICHAEL

(Quickly) It's the drugs! That's all it is. The drugs!

MADDIE

It's not the drugs! You're afraid of her, too! Who is she? *(Demanding)* Who is she, Michael! *(Shivers and begins to clutch at herself, as if the 'bugs' are beginning to crawl, again)* Oh, my God! Jesus!!

(Needing to be alone with SNOOKY, while also being concerned that MADDIE is bordering on a breakdown, MICHAEL pulls her toward the front door.)

MICHAEL

Maddie. You've got to do something for me. Get Carlotta up here. Quick!

MADDIE

(Bewildered) Why...? What can she do...?

MICHAEL

(A command) Get her! *(But MADDIE stands; paralyzed.)* Look. You've been hearing voices. You've been seeing things. You've had bugs crawling on you. You're detoxing, honey. That's all. Get Carlotta up here. She'll know what to do for you!

MADDIE

For me! You can see her, too!

MICHAEL

Yes, I can! Now, GIT!!!

(MADDIE stumbles out of the room. MICHAEL breathes deeply a number of times, then turns, ready to confront whoever or whatever is there.)

SNOOKY

Hi there.

MICHAEL

I don't know what the hell you're doing, but I don't like it!

SNOOKY

(Sweetly, as if he hadn't spoken) Thank you for sending her away.

MICHAEL

What...!?!

(SNOOKY moves towards him. He withdraws, but she hooks an arm around one of his and holds it gently.)

SNOOKY

I wish I weren't so insecure, Mike. I know you love me. I've always known that, but sometimes I get so afraid. Can you forgive me?

MICHAEL

Snooky, you're scaring the shit out of me!

SNOOKY

Come over here. Let's sit down and get comfortable. *(Draws him to the sofa; they sit. Neither speaks for long moments, and then...)* Carlotta will see me, too, Michael.

MICHAEL

How! How! She was here before; she danced around you like you were a bloody May Pole, for Christ's sake! She couldn't see you then!

SNOOKY

She heard me.

MICHAEL

That was me! She heard me sneeze.

SNOOKY

She said "Gersundheidt" to me.

MICHAEL

All right, but she didn't see you then! What makes you think she'll see you now?

SNOOKY

Maddie saw me. (*Very simply*) And there's more at stake now.

MICHAEL

What! For God's sake, what!

SNOOKY

You.

(*MICHAEL recoils, pressing himself tightly into the sofa.*)

MICHAEL

You're frightening. You are very frightening...

SNOOKY

(*Sweetly*) I don't mean to frighten you, Mike. I love you. But you shouldn't have told Maddie about us. You shouldn't have done that. You betrayed me.

MICHAEL

I betrayed...

SNOOKY

What you told her...that was our secret. No one ever needed to know about that. It was ours. I died with it. You promised to live with it.

MICHAEL

(*Hardly audible*) Who...are you...?

SNOOKY

(*As if he hadn't spoken*) But you didn't. You lied to me. You betrayed me. You betrayed us. When you told Maddie the truth, you took away every reason you ever had for wanting me here. I'm very angry about that, Michael. And I'm very hurt.

MICHAEL

(*Pause*)...you're...dangerous...

SNOOKY

(*So very simply*) No. Desperate. (*Pause; then with defiance*) I don't want to be sent away! Don't you understand that! I like it here! (*Beat; then so genuinely one could only believe it's true*) Because I love you Michael. I love you.

(This is followed by a long pause.)

MICHAEL

(In hideous conflict as he begins to reel under her spell) Yeah... *(Beat)* That's the hell of it... *(Beat)* I love you, too...

(There is a long silence. They just sit. Neither speaks. Neither moves. CARLOTTA bursts into the room followed by MADDIE.)

CARLOTTA

What the devil's goin' on up here? This child's a wreck. Have you been mean to her, Michael? *(Sees SNOOKY)* Oooooops! Sorry. I didn't know you had company. *(Aside to MADDIE)* You didn't tell me he had company.

MADDIE

...No...

CARLOTTA

And what an adorable creature she is, too. Hi, honey. I'm Carlotta.

SNOOKY

(Graciously) Hi, Carlotta. I'm Snooky.

CARLOTTA

Snooky! *(Referring to the name)* Perfect! *(Noticing the attire)* I love your drag!

MICHAEL

(Sinking) My God...

SNOOKY

Thank you.

CARLOTTA

So! What's the problem?

MICHAEL

Oh...?

CARLOTTA

Maddie was beside herself. I thought you'd had a stroke!

MADDIE

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean you to think that!

MICHAEL

No, everything's fine. Uh... Did you meet Snooky?

CARLOTTA

I just did... (*Beat; studies everyone*) What's goin' on up here?

SNOOKY

I'm an actress. Michael told me you were in show business, too. (*Spins around, displaying her outfit*) Do you like my costume?

CARLOTTA

I told you! I like it! (*To MICHAEL*) Michael, I need to get something straight here. You're not having a stroke, right? Fine. Is a fire raging somewhere on the premises? Is a pipe broken? Did you find the mugger? Why is Maddie chalk white and breathing hard? Why did she drag me up here just when I was putting the leash around Harriet's neck? (*No one responds.*) Are these foolish questions, or am I losing my mind? (*Still no response*) In that case, my dog still has to pee! (*Starts for the door*)

MICHAEL

No, no, they're not foolish questions, at all. Stick around. How about something to drink? Anybody want a 7-Up? Or something to eat! A TV dinner? Anything?

CARLOTTA

I loathe TV dinners!

SNOOKY

Oh, so do I. Maddie does, too.

(*MADDIE looks sharply at SNOOKY.*)

CARLOTTA

That's invaluable information, Sweetie. Harriet's still got to pee. (*Puts hand on doorknob to leave, stops, turns to SNOOKY*) Have you known this man long?

SNOOKY

Oh, yes!

MICHAEL

(*Quickly*) We did a show together!

CARLOTTA

Does he seem strange to you?

SNOOKY

Oh, my, no!

CARLOTTA

Do you seem strange to you?

SNOOKY

(A cheerful little laugh) My goodness, no.

(CARLOTTA looks questioningly at MADDIE who shakes her head, 'No.')

CARLOTTA

Then it must be me. *(At door)* If you want me for anything...don't whistle. Don't call. Don't drop by. Okay? *(Shaking her head as if it's full of bats)* Jesus! *(Exits and slams the door.)*

SNOOKY

(Calling after her) Bye bye, Carlotta. It was nice meeting you!

(SNOOKY goes back to the kitchen area as if nothing out of the ordinary has just occurred and stoops down behind the counter, looking under the sink, out of view of the audience as she continues to search for Kleenex, moving things around. MICHAEL and MADDIE watch her in utter amazement.)

SNOOKY, *Continued*

Comet. Windex. Draino...

MICHAEL

Come here, Snooky. *(Silence)* You can get the Kleenex later. I want to talk to you. Now!

MADDIE

(Eager to get out of the apartment) I'd better go, too, Michael...

MICHAEL

No! Please. I want you here. I want to be absolutely certain this is happening.

MADDIE

(More to herself) It's happening...

MICHAEL

(A command) Snooky! *(Silence)* Snooky! *(Silence...MICHAEL charges to the kitchen area.)* Goddamnit, when I call you, I... *(Stops; looks all about; SNOOKY is gone.)* My God, she's gone again. She's gone...

(Very close to passing out, MADDIE sinks onto the sofa. There is the sudden RINGING of the DOORBELL. It is long, sharp, obtrusive. MICHAEL and MADDIE are badly shaken by the sound. Neither moves. It RINGS again.)

MICHAEL, *Continued*

My God! Peg...

MADDIE

Doesn't she have a key?

MICHAEL

Two. She likes entrances.

(MICHAEL goes to the door, and opens it. PEG is standing in the doorway.)

PEG

Surprise! I bet you thought I wasn't coming!

(PEG would appear plain if she were not so fashionable. At the moment, however, she is disheveled. She is quite high, but is well controlled, and exudes what would appear to be a genuine warmth and charm. There is little doubt, however, that PEG is a terribly vulnerable woman, and that more than anything in the world, she wants to be liked.)

MICHAEL

I hoped you would.

PEG

Have I ever disappointed you? *(Beat; she obviously has)* Nevertheless... *(Suddenly brings a bottle of champagne from behind her back)* A little love token from me to us. We're going to celebrate!

(PEG kisses MICHAEL on the cheek, but holds onto the bottle.)

MICHAEL

...good. Good!

PEG

May I come in?

MICHAEL

Yes! Yes, of course.

(She starts in, but then stops.)

PEG

Are you all right?

MICHAEL

Sure. Sure.

PEG

You seem a bit...discombobulated.

MICHAEL

(Blustering) Well, I'm not. Get yourself in here, girl!

PEG

(Laughing) Righty, ho! *(Seeing MADDIE for the first time)* Help. I didn't know you had company. I'd have brought her something, too.

MICHAEL

I told you Maddie would be here.

PEG

(Not hearing, starts across room toward MADDIE, hand extended) Hello. I'm Peg. Michael's daughter.

MADDIE

Hi. I'm glad to meet you...finally...

PEG

And you're...?

MADDIE

Maddie. Michael's friend.

PEG

Ah! You have the grandparents!

MADDIE

Yes.

PEG

I'm glad to meet you, too. I've been hearing about you for years.

MADDIE

Me, too. About you...

(There is a long, awkward silence.)

PEG

(Studying MADDIE and MICHAEL) Something is wrong, isn't there?

MICHAEL

Of course, not! What makes you think that?

PEG

I don't know... You were so...up...on the telephone, and now you're... Am I interrupting anything?

MICHAEL

Not at all.

MADDIE

No. Really. We've been looking forward to your getting here.

PEG

Well that's just perfect because I've been looking forward to coming. (*Noting the champagne she is carrying*) Aht! There you are! Now, then. Let's get on with it. Everybody's going to drink with me. I'm celebrating!

MADDIE

Why, that's...wonderful... What...?

PEG

Father didn't tell you...?

MICHAEL

I didn't know. I knew you were happy about something, but...

PEG

I told you on the... Aht! No I didn't. (*Giddy laugh; to the champagne*) You ol' devil. See what you do to me? (*To the others*) I've been on this since early this morning, and it does have a way!

(*MICHAEL is uncomfortably aware of how inebriated she really is.*)

MICHAEL

Uh...honey...why don't we all have some coffee first, huh?

PEG

Like maybe I've had enough? And I have! For now! Why don't we have coffee?

MICHAEL

Great! Anybody else?

PEG

(*Charges on before anyone can speak*) Now! Let's all get to be friends. (*To MADDIE*) Tell me about yourself.

MADDIE

Uh...there's...really not much to tell...

PEG

Well, I think that's sad. A beautiful, young girl, in her prime? Surely there's something!

MADDIE

I guess not.

PEG

But Father thinks so highly of you. You are the one with the diapers?

MADDIE

Wha...(t)?

PEG

(To MICHAEL) You baby sat her or something like that. *(With innuendo as she looks her over)* And my, how you've growed!

MICHAEL

(An uncomfortable false laugh) Yeah. Like Topsy!

(Despite PEG'S efforts to be ingratiating, she is becoming increasingly irritating.)

PEG

Like Topsy! What do you like about him most?

MADDIE

Pardon me?

PEG

My father. What do you like about him?

MADDIE

All of him.

PEG

Other than that.

MADDIE

(Thinking of his honesty regarding SNOOKY) His...honesty...I guess...

PEG

(Caught off guard) My father's honesty!?!

MICHAEL

(Lightly, but defensively) And why not!

PEG

(A delicious dig) Really, father! *(Giving it time to sink in)* And other than that. Is he good to you?

MADDIE

Peg, please...

PEG

Is my father good to you?

MADDIE

I think he's the nicest man I've ever known.

PEG

(Battling with her true feelings) So do it.

MICHAEL

(Beat; changing subject) The coffee'll be ready in a minute.

PEG

Do you know what I liked about him the most? His voice. When he read to me. I loved it when he read to me. He didn't do it often. I had to be recovering from something or other, a cold, an upset stomach, something...but I didn't care. Oh, and the stories he told! And the dreams! The dreams we had together. *(To MICHAEL)* You would produce great plays and I would star in them! *(Pause; a sudden awareness of where each life has gone)* But that never happened...did it, Daddy? Dreams are monstrous, I think! *(Quietly to herself)* I wish we'd never had them. *(Too quickly)* Nevertheless! You did read well, Father.

MICHAEL

...thank you...

PEG

...yes...

(Not wanting to become trapped by memories, again, she looks at him for a moment, turns away from her feelings, sighs a deep sigh, and abruptly takes the subject back to MADDIE.)

PEG, *Continued*

Now then, back to you. I know you don't like to talk about yourself, but what do you do?

MADDIE

Well...I...I love music, and I hope that someday... Right now, I'm not doing anything... *(Quickly, to change the subject)* What do you do?

PEG

(With an edge) I gather Father hasn't said much about me...

MADDIE

Oh, yes, he has! I know you're in fashion, but...

PEG

After all, I'm only his daughter. Fabric.

MADDIE

Pardon me?

PEG

I design it. At least I did. (*Suddenly and acidly*) This is boring. I want a drink.

MICHAEL

One coffee coming up! Black, right?

PEG

I've changed my mind. (*Holding up the bottle*) I want this. Where's a glass?

MICHAEL

Peg, please don't.

PEG

I won't do an 'ugly.' I've promised myself. We're going to have a party!

MICHAEL

I...don't think I have the right kind of glasses for that...

PEG

We don't need glasses. We'll pass the bottle.

MICHAEL

(*Starting toward the kitchen*) I'll find something.

PEG

No! You sit down. This is my party. How many do we need? (*Counting*) One. Two. Three... Oh, dear...doubles. I'm lost. How many are we?

MICHAEL

Come on, honey. Sit down. I'll do it.

PEG

Wouldn't think of it. Three glasses coming up. Where are they?

MADDIE

(*Moving to the kitchen*) Right up there. Can I help?

PEG

No. (*Reaching for the glasses*) You seem to know your way around here rather well.

MADDIE

Not really. I just come once in awhile.

PEG

And you know where the glasses are! I've been coming forever and I still don't know.

MADDIE

We had a little drink together.

PEG

You and Father!

MADDIE

Well, not actually. He doesn't drink, you know. (*An embarrassed little laugh*) Of course, you do. I didn't mean to be presumptuous.

PEG

Don't be silly. But you did give me a start. Father hasn't drunk for years. (*To MICHAEL*) How long has it been?

MICHAEL

Oh...

PEG

But you will have a little champagne tonight, won't you?

MICHAEL

I don't think so...no...

PEG

(*Pouting*) Father. Please. To celebrate?

MICHAEL

I still don't know what we're celebrating.

PEG

When I tell you, will you?

MICHAEL

I don't think so, hon.

PEG

(A 'chubby baby' pinch on the cheek) Ooooo, so strong. *(Naturally, to MADDIE)* Now, you go away. I want to do this. *(MADDIE starts away)* Where are the napkins?

MADDIE

I...don't know.

PEG

(Playfully) See? You're not so smart, after all.

(MADDIE attempts a laugh.)

MICHAEL

I'll show you.

PEG

Don't you move! *(Sweetly)* Please.

MICHAEL

They're under the sink.

PEG

Under the sink! *(Starts to lean over, is suddenly very dizzy, and straightens up quickly)* Oh-oh. That was a mistake. Where was I? Naht! Don't tell me. Napkins! *(Bends down slowly and easily)* Easy, girl. Easy.

(MICHAEL and MADDIE are watching her as if she were an aerialist on a high wire. She gets them, straightens up slowly and flings her arms open to the others, napkins in hand.)

PEG, *Continued*

Voila! Now, then! I think we're ready. If I can maneuver all...this...to...that...table.... *(Somehow manages to pick up the champagne, three glasses and the box of napkins, and starts carefully across the room. MADDIE moves forward as if to help her. PEG'S response is a stern command.)* No! *(MADDIE backs away and PEG continues lightly.)* Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope! *(To MICHAEL)* Have you seen Mother, this trip?

MICHAEL

What...?

PEG

(Still focused on and aimed at the table) Mother.

MICHAEL

I haven't seen your mother in 12 years, Peg. I didn't even know she was in town. Where did that come from?

PEG

(Intimidated; a hurt child) I don't know. When we're together, I think of her. Isn't that natural?

MICHAEL

Of course, it is. I'm sorry.

PEG

She looks marvelous.

MICHAEL

She always did.

PEG

Still does.

MICHAEL

That's...nice to hear.

PEG

Maybe she'll call you before she leaves.

MICHAEL

I doubt it.

PEG

She seems to be mellowing.

MICHAEL

I'm afraid it would take more than that...

PEG

You loved her very much, didn't you?

MICHAEL

(Embarrassed that this is happening in front of MADDIE) Peg...

PEG

And she loved you.

MICHAEL

I'd rather not go into this now, honey.

PEG

Father! Her husband's not with her this time! Why don't you call her!

MICHAEL

I don't want to talk about it, Peg.

PEG

But wouldn't it be nice if we could all be together, again? We did love each other once. Oh, please, Daddy.

MICHAEL

Goddamnit! I don't want to talk to your mother!

(This stops her. She can only look at him; hurt, disappointed, angry.)

MICHAEL, *Continued*

I'm...sorry, honey... I didn't mean to yell at you.

(She becomes frightened, ashamed. MICHAEL has always been able to do this to her.)

PEG

No... That's all right. I shouldn't have brought it up.

(Suddenly, the BEDROOM door opens and SNOOKY comes into the room. The door closes behind her. It is almost as if she has walked through it.)

SNOOKY

Oh, I'm sorry, Mike. I didn't know you had company. *(To PEG)* Hi! *(To MICHAEL.)* What do you want?

MICHAEL

(Stunned) Jesus...! *(Beat)* ...nothing...

SNOOKY

But I thought you called.

MICHAEL

No... No, I didn't.

SNOOKY

I'm sure I heard you. *(Bringing forth a Kleenex and dabbing her nose)* Oh! I found a Kleenex.

MICHAEL

(Feebly) Good...

MADDIE

(Feeling shaky again) Oh—good...? That's good...

SNOOKY

(To PEG, lightly, conversationally) I must be allergic to something or other. I guess. I can't imagine what other reasons it could be. I have these silly sneezing spells. But don't have a cold!

(All the while, PEG has been studying SNOOKY.)

PEG

(Striking back at MICHAEL, without even really being aware of it) Ahhh! No wonder!

MICHAEL

'No wonder' what...?

PEG

No wonder you don't want to see Mother. *(Beginning to laugh)* Ha! You'll never change, will you, Father?

MICHAEL

What are you talking about!

PEG

(Coyly) What kind of place are you running here?

MICHAEL

These are my friends!

PEG

Uh huh... You certainly like 'em diversified. And young!

MADDIE

I am his friend! And only his friend!

MICHAEL

And this is Snooky. Another friend!

SNOOKY

(As if nothing out of the ordinary is occurring) And you're Peggy. Hi!

(PEG can't help but withdraw a step as SNOOKY approaches her.)

PEG

How do you know who I am?

SNOOKY

How could I not know? I've heard so much about you. And I've seen your picture.

PEG

You...won't be offended that I...haven't heard about you...

SNOOKY'

Oh, no. I'm Snooky.

PEG

'Snooky.' What a cute name. My father knew another Snooky once, didn't you, Father?

MADDIE

Snooky's an actress! (*To MICHAEL*) Isn't she?

MICHAEL

Yes! An actress! Yes!

PEG

And dressed for a part, I gather. (*Slaps at her mouth*) Oh, I am so bad! (*Suddenly confused, bewildered*) Where was I? (*Beat*) Ah! Celebrating! (*To SNOOKY*) Will you have a drink with us? We're celebrating.

SNOOKY

No, thank you.

PEG

Maddie?

MADDIE

I'd like to, but...it makes me sick.

PEG

Champagne! Oh, come on. Just a little?

MADDIE

I'd better not.

PEG

You know best. Father?

MICHAEL

You know I can't, hon...

PEG

Silly ol' me! But you will open it for me, won't you?

MICHAEL

Yes...I will...

PEG

(Sing-songy) We're having a partee! *(Sings as MICHAEL opens the bottle)* 'It's so nice to have a man around the house. *(The cork POPS!)* Magnifique! *(Kisses MICHAEL, perfunctorily on the forehead)* Merci! *(Pours herself a quick one and kills it)* Now, then! A toast! *(Refills the glass and lifts it high)* To Peg! Who... *(Falters)* Who... *(Beat)* I feel like an idiot! *(Kills it, then...)* Somebody drink with me, goddamnit!

(She flings the glass across the room. She is rapidly going to pieces. Tears begin to flow. She hurries away from the others, mumbling to herself.)

PEG, *Continued*

Oh, my God! Not again! Stay together, Margaret. Stay together!

MICHAEL

Peg...

PEG

Keep yourself together, Margaret.

MICHAEL

Peg...honey...wouldn't you like to sit down...?

(But PEG is quickly under control.)

PEG

Nope! *(Beat)* I have to pee. Where is it?

MICHAEL

(Deeply disturbed and not quite knowing what to do.) Through there. You know, honey...

PEG

Ah! *('Gaily' as she moves toward the bedroom)* You know, I've never been able to do it on a bar... *(Roaring with laughter)* NO! IN a bar! Not even in the ladies room. Hummm...? ...strange...!

(PEG gets to the bedroom, flings open the door, stops suddenly, takes a beat, seems to withdraw without actually moving, and then walks into it, leaving the door wide open behind her as she flips on the bedroom light.)

MICHAEL

Peg! *(Starts toward the room)* Peg! Close that door!

(PEG sticks her head out of the room.)

PEG

OOOoooooooooppps! Pardon, Pandora! *(Slams the door)*

MICHAEL

Jesus... *(To MADDIE)* I'm sorry you have to see her like this. I'd hoped tonight would be different. She was doing so well...

(SNOOKY hasn't taken her eyes off the bedroom door since PEG went through it.)

SNOOKY

What did she mean by that?

MICHAEL

She's not like this usually. Not often. She's really very...nice.

MADDIE

It's all right, Michael.

SNOOKY

What did she mean by that?

MICHAEL

Hummm...?

SNOOKY

'Pandora.' What did she mean by that!

MICHAEL

(Trapped and embarrassed) Oh, it's...just a little...joke of hers. It's not important.

SNOOKY

Yes. It is, I think.

(He would rather not talk about it. Ever. But the events of the evening are so strange, he is so off-balance, that he continues, attempting to be casual.)

MICHAEL

Well...you know the story of Pandora and...well...the ugly things in that box and... Well, I used to read to Peg when she was little...like she said...and...that was her favorite story. And...sometimes she kids me about...me being Pandora and my BEDROOM being...a...a place of...dreams. Or something like that. *(Badly shaken)* It's pretty silly, really...

(Nothing; SNOOKY just stares at the door. Fascinated. PEG enters and slams the door behind her.)

PEG

God! That room gives me the creeps! Daddy's little incubator! EEEeeuukkk!!!

SNOOKY

Incubator...?

PEG

Oh, yes! He breeds things in there. Didn't you know?

MICHAEL

(To the others) You see?

SNOOKY

Things...?

MICHAEL

I don't like what you're doing, Peggy

PEG

Oh, come on, I'm only playing, for heaven's sake. We all have our little breeding grounds.

(She reaches for the bottle of champagne.)

SNOOKY

What things!

PEG

(As if SNOOKY hadn't spoken.) God knows, I do!

(A raucous laugh as she pours herself another drink.)

SNOOKY

What things!

MICHAEL

Leave it alone, Peg.

PEG

He doesn't like me to talk about it. We'd better not. I'm sorry, Father.

SNOOKY

(A plea) Mike...?

PEG

(Willing to drop the subject as she swills her drink) Party! Party! Party!

MICHAEL

It's just a game.

PEG

It's a game.

SNOOKY

(Demanding; forcefully) WHAT! THINGS!

PEG

(Lightly, as she pours another drink) Lies.

MICHAEL

I won't go through this with you, again, Peg.

PEG

Lies, and more lies. *(Toasting)* Cheers!

MICHAEL

Memories!

PEG

The things people dream up for themselves so they can get out of bed in the morning.

MICHAEL

Memories, damnit!

PEG

The things they use to keep from whipping themselves to death with the truth of what they are. *(A 'delightful' realization)* God, that was brilliant!

MICHAEL

What's the matter with you!

(PEG only looks at him with glazed, happy-drunk eyes, and shrugs a little shrug. There is a long silence. SNOOKY is looking at the bedroom door again.)

SNOOKY

(Softly) Things. Ugly things. *(Beat)* Is that what you think of me? A Thing...?

MICHAEL

God no!

SNOOKY

We were so content. So happy...

MICHAEL

Yes, we were! We are!

MADDIE

Michael! What are you saying!

SNOOKY

Playing, playing, playing. And then Maddie came and... *(Pause)* There's no place for me here, now, is there? You are going to want me to go, now, aren't you?

MADDIE

(Whispering urgently to MICHAEL) Michael, be very careful. She's up to something.

SNOOKY

I have to go, now, don't I?

MADDIE

(Shouting) Yes!

MICHAEL

No!

SNOOKY

Yes. I think I do. I have to go. I want to go...

MICHAEL

(Panicking) But you said you didn't want to. You said you liked it here! Just a little while ago, right over there, you said...

SNOOKY

No. I do want to go. Now.

MICHAEL

You can't!

SNOOKY

(Building more emotionally; an act) Yes, I can. I don't know how this happened, and I won't question it, but I can go. I never believed that I could want this. But I do. I'm free of you, now, Michael. Just like that. Isn't that funny? I didn't think I wanted to be, ever, and then... I guess I'm not what I thought I was to you. And so I do want to go. I want to be free of you. I don't want to hold you and kiss you and roll with you on the floor, anymore. I don't want to pretend that I'm young and adorable and don't want to have a child. I don't want to pretend anything. Anymore. And I may even learn to like that. I hope so. I don't blame you for what happened all those years ago. I made my decision loving you and I died loving you. Please don't make me hate you, now. Please don't insist that I stay and play your games anymore. Please just remember what we had when we had it and know that I loved you then.

MICHAEL
Snooky...

MADDIE
Let her go, Mike. Please let her go!

MICHAEL
I can't!

SNOOKY
(Pleading; beginning to 'cry') I want to, Mike. I truly do.

MICHAEL
Snooky, I...

SNOOKY
('Pleading') Please???

MICHAEL
Noooo!!!

(MICHAEL rushes to her and takes her in his arms. There is a long, suspended silence, and then SNOOKY begins to laugh. She has won.)

SNOOKY
(Finally...and so very simply) You devil. You always get your way.

MADDIE
Michael, don't let her do this!

SNOOKY
(Smiling at MADDIE as she nestles deeply into MICHAEL'S arms) Shush, Maddie.

PEG
(Backing away in disbelief) My God. You're one of...them! *(Another pause, then to MICHAEL)* I must say I never dreamed you did them so well! All those years of experience, no doubt.

MICHAEL
Shut up, Peg!

PEG
So you're Snooky. Daddy's adorable little flapper. *(To MICHAEL)* You used to say I reminded you of her. So cute, so spunky. *(To SNOOKY)* So you're Snooky.

SNOOKY

Yes.

PEG

Amazing.

MICHAEL

(At a total loss for something to say) Look, Peggy, I know this seems a little... I mean, it's... *(Beat)* Look, let me get us all some coffee...

PEG

She said she died. She made a decision and she died. She said she doesn't blame you.

SNOOKY

And I don't.

PEG

You stay out of this! *(Beat)* For what, Father? *(Beat)* For what! *(Beat)* Did you knock that little girl up? *(Beat)* Did you make her kill it?

MICHAEL

You shut your filthy mouth!

MADDIE

Michael!

PEG

(With horror and contempt) And you've kept her around all these years just to amuse yourself!?!

SNOOKY

I wanted to be here!

MICHAEL

Goddamn you!

(He lunges at PEG. MADDIE stops him.)

MADDIE

Michael! No!

MICHAEL

You're getting out of here, goddamnit!

PEG

(Gesturing toward the bedroom) You're not gonna' pitch me in there, surely!
(To MADDIE) Let him go. He's all bark. *(Goes to the bedroom door)* Amazing... Well, at least, there's hope! The 'Ol' Incubator' can do them in, too, right? *(With feigned sympathy)* It'd be a shame, though, wouldn't it, to kill something that makes it all so much easier?

MICHAEL

(A plea) Stop it! Please!

PEG

Even if it is a lie.

MICHAEL

(Desperately) It is not!

PEG

As I see it, it is, Father.

MICHAEL

From one who knows so much about the truth!

PEG

Bullshit.

MICHAEL

That's enough!

PEG

(Spitting it out) Bull! Shit!

MADDIE

Stop that, Peg! Please!

PEG

So you've got yourself the best of all possible worlds. The Perfect Wife. The Perfect Lover. The Perfect THING! All rolled into the Adorable Little Snooky. Snooky!
(Bitterly) Too bad Mother never made it!

MICHAEL

You mother didn't even try!

PEG

Now isn't that a shame. I'm sure this one does. *(To SNOOKY)* By the way. You'd better watch it, Sweetie. He's volatile. One of these days you just might get yours! *(Beginning to laugh riotously)* Oh, my God! What a riot!!!

MICHAEL

Stop this, Peg! Now!

PEG

How is she, Father? Truly perfect? Unlike my dear, sweet mommy? Huh? I bet she's always here when you want her, isn't she? I bet she doesn't complain about the money you didn't bring home because you were...

MICHAEL

There wasn't enough money in the world for your mother!

PEG

...because you were too drunk to get to the theatre half the time!

SNOOKY

I love him!

MICHAEL

I haven't had a drink for 12 years...

PEG

(To SNOOKY) Ah! You love him!

MICHAEL

...and, by God, I want some credit for that!

PEG

(As if he hadn't spoken) Then you don't demand new clothes and fancy perfumes and dinners at the best clubs. You probably settle for those crappy frozen dinners of his. *(To MICHAEL)* Or does she eat at all!

SNOOKY

(A menacing tone beginning to slip into her words) I want you to stop this, Peg. Now!

PEG

(Ignoring her) I bet she doesn't even 'cat' around on you. Though, God knows, Mother had every right to!

MICHAEL

She did not!

PEG

(Laughing again) By God! I bet she even dances with you.

MICHAEL

Your mother couldn't dance!

PEG

(Viciously) My mother wouldn't dance!

MICHAEL

All right! Goddamnit! She wouldn't dance! She wouldn't do anything. For me OR you! So get the hell off that high horse.

PEG

High horse! I love it! As if she's to blame! Nobody could live up to your insufferable demands!

MICHAEL

Snooky could! And did!

PEG

(Going for the viscera) Is that before or after she died!

(A cup of acid in the face couldn't have shocked MICHAEL more. But he soon recovers, and very quietly, out of a blind, hurting rage...)

MICHAEL

All right, Peg, that's it. You've done it now. You have really done it.

PEG

Oh, you're going into another rage. So what else is new?

MICHAEL

For me to want you to come down here year after year for the purpose of tearing me apart in your insidious little ways doesn't make any sense, at all!

PEG

As one alcoholic to another, we made the rules, Pappy, and we've played by them! Perfectly!

MICHAEL

Not anymore!

PEG

You want to be a victim? Be one! God knows, you left enough of 'em behind!

MICHAEL

All right, that's it. I'll be goddamned if I'll let you do this in front of my friends. Now get out of here!

PEG

Your friends!

MICHAEL

My friends!

PEG

Now isn't that interesting. Once again, your friends! Your friends, your work, your booze, your *everything* is more important to you than I am!

SNOOKY

Go home, Peg. Just go home. Nobody wants you here!

PEG

What! Whose place is this, anyway!

SNOOKY

Mine!

MICHAEL

(Overlapping) Mine!

PEG

Oh, my! Polly Parrots! Let's have that, again. *(Directing them)* Mine! Mine!
(With furious defiance) I'll go when I'm goddamned ready!

MICHAEL

Which is now!

(He starts after her. She runs from him. He follows her around the room, attempting to grab her. As he chases her, she begins to laugh.)

PEG

Come on, Daddy! Come and get me! Just like old times, huh? Only you're not doing so well these days!

(PEG crashes into MADDIE who steadies her.)

PEG, *Continued*

Are you getting the picture? I grew up with this! Only it was the other way around. He was the drunk one!

MICHAEL

You're damned right! Now get the hell out of here!!!

(He grabs her and drags her across the room, where she breaks away from him.)

PEG

I DON'T WANT TO!

(MICHAEL freezes in the presence of her sudden authority. PEG becomes very soft; she is pleading.)

PEG, *Continued*

Please don't make me go, Father. I... I shouldn't have said those things. I... I apologize. Maddie, I do. *(Beat)* Please let me stay. *(Beat)* I'll be good. I promise. *(Pause; She seems far, far away.)* I was so happy when I called you tonight. For the first time in so long I can't remember, I really wanted to see my father. And when I'm frightened – which is most of the time – I...need a little help.

(MICHAEL can hardly bear another moment.)

MICHAEL

Not now, Peg, honey, please. Not now...

PEG

(Not having heard him) And when I get it, I get angry. I don't know why. Something makes me want to destroy the people who love... No. Who tried ...at least, tried...to love me. They never could, but they tried...

MICHAEL

I did love you.

PEG

I don't want to hear it, Father.

MICHAEL

You want me to listen to you, though, don't you? Peggy, there are two of us here. And you're going to listen to me, for a change. You may not approve of the way I love you, but it's all I've got, and it's real!

(There is a brief moment of joy for PEG, but then she is suddenly staring blankly at MADDIE.)

PEG

You love her, too?

MICHAEL

Yes, I do. She's my friend.

PEG

(Caustically) And there's so much luuvv to go around. *(Moves to MADDIE and circles her in wonderment, then gasps.)* Oh, my God, you're one, too, aren't you?

MADDIE

(Frightened) What...?

PEG

(More rage coming up) You're not here, either. You're Daddy's little version of a perfect little me! Aren't you!

MADDIE

NO!

PEG

You're just another THING!

(PEG is nearing hysteria, and MADDIE takes charge. She grabs PEG firmly by the shoulders and talks to her as she attempts to penetrate a mind that is barely clinging to consciousness.)

MADDIE

I am not! I'm MADDIE! I'm Michael's friend. I have a boyfriend. His name is Rick. We live on Fourth Street. Near the movie house. Do you understand that!

PEG

(After a dazed moment, referring to the bedroom) You...don't live in there...then...?

MADDIE

No.

PEG

(Childlike) Honest...?

MICHAEL

Peg, she's telling you the truth!

PEG

(Studying her) Well, then. If you're Maddie, you couldn't very well be Peg, could you.

MADDIE

Not very well.

PEG

Good. *(Beat)* Oh, good. *(Beat)* It would...hurt me...very much...to think that he'd... whipped up another...Peggy. *(Looking at MICHAEL with unguarded affection)* We're not so hot together, Daddy and I, but...he is my Father and... *(Unable to complete the thought with "I love him"; changes the subject.)* Oh! When you and Rick, or whatever his name is, get married, or whatever...young folk...do these days...if you have a kid, love it. Love it, a lot. It'll never make it, otherwise.

MADDIE

(Having been hit hard)...we will... Thank you.

PEG

Don't mention it.

(PEG sits, spent and numb. MICHAEL goes to her.)

MICHAEL

(Gently) Let me take you home, Peggy.

PEG

(Snapping out of her daze.) ...huh...? Oh! I...came here for something... What...?
(Beat) Aht! Of course! Father. I have news! Good news. Good news, hell! I have great news! *(For all the apparent joy of it, there is an almost desperate need behind her words.)* Father! I've made it! After all these years of working my ass off, I'm finally going to Paris. And I will never design another fabric as long as I live. I'm the boss, now. I'm telling everybody else what to do and how to do it, because I'm the best! And they know it! They know it. *(Rushes to her father and clings to him)* Oh, Father! Tell me you're proud! Please tell me you're proud!

MICHAEL

(Holding her; stroking her hair) Oh, Peg. Peg, my little girl. I am so proud.

(SNOOKY begins to bristle and moves closer, so as not to miss a moment.)

PEG

Are you really? I've been so bad today, but... Oh, Daddy, are you really?

MICHAEL

Honey, you know I am. *(Pause; simply)* I love you, Peg.

(PEG clings to him as if he is the last breath of life. The moment is one of joy and ecstasy for her.)

PEG

Oh, Daddy!

(She is sobbing as MICHAEL gently continues stroking her hair. It could be the closest and happiest moment of their lives, if PEG didn't suddenly see SNOOKY hovering over them. She tenses. Then whispering...)

PEG, *Continued*

Daddy...?

MICHAEL

(Very contented) Yes?

PEG

(Fearfully) Daddy, will you do something for me...?

MICHAEL

(Tensing) What...?

PEG

Prove it to me.

MICHAEL

(Shaken) Prove what?

PEG

(It is almost pathetic) That you love me.

MICHAEL

(Fearfully) Are we into another game, Peg? Is this a game I don't know about?

PEG

No.

MICHAEL

(Carefully) All right... I'll try. What do you want?

(PEG indicates SNOOKY...and with great reticence, she points to the bedroom.)

PEG

Put her in that room. And never let her out, again.

SNOOKY

(With a nervous little laugh, but with great control) That's the silliest thing I ever heard. Make her leave, Michael. She's drunk.

PEG

(Urgently) She's crippled you, Father. She's crippled you and kept us apart. Your goals, your dreams, your...things. Things like her have always kept us apart!

MICHAEL

That's not true!

PEG

Oh, God, Father, listen to me! Please! Maybe it was losing Snooky all those years ago that turned you into what you became. I don't know. It doesn't matter. But I do know that Snooky is dangerous. If you've come this far and all you've got is a drunken daughter and...and *that*...then you're in very serious trouble.

MICHAEL

(Panicking) Wait a minute. I have Maddie! I have...

SNOOKY

But how much time can you spend with her, Michael? Her life doesn't really include you.

MICHAEL

Yes, it does!

SNOOKY

(To MADDIE) And for how long? What about this Rick? What about your future? How often are you going to drop in on Michael, really?

MADDIE

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

SNOOKY

(To MICHAEL) I'm here all the time.

PEG

He needs you like I need this crap! *(Indicates the champagne)* They're both deadly, Father.

MICHAEL

(A life fear creeping over him) ...I'd be alone....

PEG

No! You'd have me!

SNOOKY

The drunk.

PEG

(Ignoring her) Oh, please put her away, and I'll put that... *(Indicating the champagne)* ...away. I promise. You stopped. I can stop. We'll have each other then. And we can help each other. We've always wanted that. I have!

SNOOKY

You're going to Paris.

PEG

(To SNOOKY) Stay out of this! *(Back to MICHAEL)* Father, I'll call you. Every day if you want me to. And I'll come visit you. Often. I'm not going away forever.

SNOOKY

You can't depend on her to come downtown. Do you really believe she'd cross an ocean!

PEG

You're damned right I would.

MADDIE

I know she would!

SNOOKY

I know she wouldn't. I've known her too long. She's nothing but a reeling, destructive, self-absorbed bitch!

MICHAEL

Snooky!

SNOOKY

('Genuinely' sweetly) I say only what you want me to say, Mike.

(The room is suddenly swept with a chill. PEG has gotten the powerful implication; she shivers, and looks at her father. She is rapidly becoming more sober, now, and is frightened.)

PEG

Does she, Father? Are they...your words?

MICHAEL

NO! No, they're not!

PEG

Are they, Father! You created her. You manipulated her. Are they your words? Is that what you think of me?

(MICHAEL can only shake his head, unable to speak.)

MADDIE

Oh, Peg, don't please! Michael needs you. You need each other.

SNOOKY

Who could possibly need that foul mouth lurching around our home!

MICHAEL

Snooky! Stop it!

SNOOKY

Whatever you say, Mikie. *(To PEG)* You see?

PEG

(Awed) You do control her, don't you? Everything about her...

MICHAEL

(Dazed)...no...

SNOOKY

Yes. He does. And if he wants me gone, I'll go. But I'm here for him. Every moment of every day. Can you say the same? *(To MICHAEL)* Shall I go, Michael?

(MICHAEL cannot speak. There is an interminable silence.)

PEG

(Softly) Snooky asked you a question, Father.

SNOOKY

Shall I go? You know I'm willing. If that's what you want.

MICHAEL

(Pathetically) She...is...with me all the time, Peg. Why, I haven't been alone for...years... Not for years...

(A painful silence. PEG already knows his decision and is shattered.)

PEG

Is that your answer?

(The silence has become unbearable. PEG and MICHAEL only look at each other.)

SNOOKY

Answer Peggy, Michael. Shall I go?

(But MICHAEL can't answer.)

PEG

(So very quietly) God. How sad. For just one...beautiful...moment, I thought we might just be able to... But, no. Years ago, you went far away from me. And you'll never come back. But I'm still here. And I'm going to let go of you. I'm going to let go of even the parts of me that I've always loathed, because I don't want to be like you. Ever. And because I know I can. Now. But first, I'm going to say everything I've ever thought about you. Right or wrong. And no more games. *(It is difficult for her; takes a deep breath, and begins)* I know that you have suffered. And I'm glad that you have suffered. I am glad that your career was shot to hell, and what wasn't shot, you took care of in your own inimitable way, Mr. Jellyfish.

MADDIE

I'm not going to let you talk to him like that. He may be your father, but he's my friend. He's the best friend I've ever had, and if you really mean what you're saying, then you don't even begin to know him.

PEG

You bet your ass I don't know him. Nobody knows him. Not even you, Sweetheart. *(Nodding toward SNOOKY)* Not even that...thing...over there. *(Looking at MICHAEL)* Oh, yes, he's a jellyfish, all right. He's just proved it one more time.

(It is as though MADDIE hasn't spoken. MICHAEL and PEG are locked in, PEG waiting for his permission to proceed.)

MICHAEL

(Quietly) Go on.

PEG

I am glad that Mother left you and ran off with a real man. I am glad that you are alone. And I am glad that you are nowhere. Some career, Mr. Shubert!

MICHAEL

Are you through?

PEG

Not quite. And I've practiced this part. You are nothing but an alcoholic old man, living on social security, a pittance from a plant shop, and pathetic distortions of a pathetic past. *(Looking at SNOOKY)* And speaking of pathetic distortions, I was wrong about you getting yours. As you must have always known, he's too weak. You had to win.

(PEG looks back at MICHAEL once more, then goes to the front door, opens it, and turns back to him. She is calm now; dispassionate.)

PEG, *Continued*

I will never see you, again, as long as I live. *(Simply, as if she were saying au revoir, but possibly with more love than she has ever felt)* I hate you. *(She goes.)*

MICHAEL

(After a stunned moment, starts for the door) Peg...! Peggy!

(SNOOKY steps in front of him.)

SNOOKY

Let her go, Michael.

MICHAEL

She's my daughter!

SNOOKY

Of course, she is. And she'll be back. You know that.

MADDIE

No, she won't, Michael, I know she won't as long as Snooky's here!

SNOOKY

(Menacingly) You stay out of this! *(To MICHAEL)* You're upset, Mikie. Let me pour you a little champagne.

MADDIE

God, no!

MICHAEL

(Startled) A drink...? You want to give me a drink? It's been 12 years, for God's sake!

SNOOKY

Just a drop, dear. To relax you.

(She starts for the bottle.)

MICHAEL

(Suddenly seeing her in a different light, but not wanting to believe it) You want me to drink. You want me to drink...?

MADDIE

Yes, she does! You have to get out of here Michael! Now!

MICHAEL

My daughter does hate me, Maddie.

SNOOKY

(Soothing him) Of course she doesn't. She was just a little angry.

MICHAEL

(To himself) Everything she said was true.

SNOOKY

It couldn't be. You couldn't have been like that. Ever.

MADDIE

I'm sure it was true, Michael. Then, not now!

SNOOKY

She was drunk. She didn't mean any of it.

MICHAEL

But I am selfish. I am demanding.

MADDIE

Does a selfish man do what you did for me tonight? You may have saved my baby's life. You may even have saved my life! Could a selfish man do that?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

SNOOKY

Stop that right now! You're confusing him. *(Handing him a glass of champagne)* Here you are, darling.

MADDIE

(Slapping the glass out of her hand) Don't you dare! *(To MICHAEL)* Michael, you're in danger. You're in danger and I'm frightened...

MICHAEL

You mustn't be.

MADDIE

For you!

(MICHAEL turns and looks at SNOOKY. She smiles 'lovingly', but he doesn't acknowledge it. He only continues to gaze, as thoughts whirl through his mind. Then he looks back at MADDIE.)

MICHAEL

Don't be. I'll be alright...

MADDIE

But Michael, she's...

MICHAEL

You do trust me, don't you, Maddie?

MADDIE

Of course I do...

MICHAEL

Then you mustn't be afraid.

MADDIE

If you'd only leave with me... Just for a while...

MICHAEL

No. We'll talk later.

MADDIE

(Pause) All right. *(She goes to him)* You are a very courageous man, Michael. I hope you're doing the right thing... *(Hugs him awkwardly)* Thank you for being my friend. *(SNOOKY's looking directly into her eyes from across the room.)* And please be careful. *(Kisses him on a cheek)* I love you.

(MADDIE hurries to the front door, goes out it, and is gone. MICHAEL looks after her for long moments, and then, as if he were alone, he moves to the door, and leans against it, praying that when he turns, the apparition will be gone. Finally, he does turn.)

SNOOKY

(As the 'adorable' SNOOKY) Hi!

(MICHAEL just stares at her, and then begins to move about the room, straightening things as if the 'party' had just ended. He passes SNOOKY on a couple of occasions, but never gives her so much as a glance as he moves to the sink with PEG and MADDIE'S glasses, and the half-full bottle of champagne.)

SNOOKY, *Continued*

(A cute little laugh) I always loved the way you did that. Always putting things in their proper places like the whole world would just stop if anything was ever for a moment out of order.

(Beat; he doesn't acknowledge her.)

SNOOKY, *Continued*

I used to say, "Mike, you're like a prissy old lady. If the dishes aren't cleaned today they'll get cleaned tomorrow!" And you would say you couldn't help it, that you were anal retentive, and I would say, "Michael. You shouldn't talk like that." And you would say, "It's a clinical term, Snooky." And I would say, "It's dirty." *(A delightful child's laugh)* And you'd look at me and smile and say, "You're cute," and I'd say, "I am aren't I?" And you'd hug me. *(Softly)* And we'd make love. And it was wonderful. *(A whisper)* It was wonderful. *(MICHAEL doesn't respond.)* Talk to me, Michael! *(He continues to ignore her.)* You're ignoring me because of what they said, aren't you? *(Beat)* I'm ugly to them. But not to you. I'm right for you, Michael, and that's all that matters. You and me. Us. We're together, again. Life is beautiful, again. Don't take that away from us...

MICHAEL

They said...

SNOOKY

(Fiercely) To hell with them! Listen to Snooky!

MICHAEL

(Staring at her long and hard) Snooky's dead.

SNOOKY

No! Snooky never died. Not in your heart. I was always in your heart. You can't deny that. And now I'm here! With you!

MICHAEL

(As if he were chanting) I killed Snooky. I killed Snooky.

SNOOKY

(Riding over him as she moves to him very slowly) We work, Mikie. We're a team. We can't live without each other. Oh, please don't spoil the first real happiness either of us has had for so very long. Please don't take that away from us, again. We need each other. We love each other.

MICHAEL

That's the pity. We do need each other... *(Beat)* We...do...love each other...

(Very carefully, SNOOKY presses herself against him and puts her arms around him.)

SNOOKY

(A whisper...) Yeeesssssss. We love each other.

(In just a short while, MICHAEL, sinks into the embrace. They hold each other tightly for many moments, and then, very slowly, and hardly noticeably, at first, SNOOKY'S hips begin to move in a circular motion against MICHAEL'S pelvis. His eyes close, his breathing becomes more rapid; he is responding exactly as SNOOKY intended him to.)

SNOOKY, *Continued*

(Smiling in ecstasy; whispering) Make love to me, Michael. Please. Please. Make love to me.

MICHAEL

(Moaning as he begins to manipulate her) Oh, Snooky...!

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

Properties List Following Page

Properties

1. Two packed Grocery Bags containing 10-15 TV Dinners, a Newspaper, etc.
2. Theatre Posters, Play Manuscripts, Playbills, etc.
3. Photos of Michael with various Stage Stars of the period.
4. Numerous house plants of all sizes.
5. Butcher knife
6. Covered bowl of 'Lamb Stew.'
7. One bottle of Champagne.
8. Five 8 oz. Glasses.
9. 3 cans of 7-up

Furnishings with Props

1. Chair and Desk on which are a Telephone and Framed Picture of his daughter, Peg and a Magazine of the period.
2. Refrigerator holding few items such as Jams, Butter, Dried-out Cheese, Near Empty Milk Carton, etc.
3. Sofa and one End Table with Lamp.
4. Coffee Table.
5. Table on which is an Old Phonograph.
6. Record Holder holding a few old 78 records.

Production Notes

The Light and Sound Plots may be simplified depending on available equipment. Concurrently, escape hatches are not essential to the producing of the script but are instrumental in staging Snooky's appearances and disappearances.