

# STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Stuart Spencer

Each of these plays has a slightly different tone, ranging from drama to romantic comedy to farce. But all of them require the same essential sense that they are both emotionally sincere and stylistically heightened. They should not, in other words, be designed, directed, or acted as realism, but they must be played truthfully.

The five plays are cast as follows:

Actor 1: George III, Mr. Dickinson, J.P. Morgan

Actor 2: George Washington, Wilbur Wright, Lee Harvey Oswald, Jeff

Actor 3: Washington, Frederick Douglass, Orville Wright

Actor 4: Emily Dickinson, Marina Oswald, Tonya Harding

Actor 5: Susan Dickinson, Lizzie Borden, Marilyn Monroe

1: "The Georges"

A bedroom in the Georgian style.

A large bed upstage center,  
covered in a mound of bed sheets  
and blankets and pillows.

Over a nearby chair is thrown a  
complete set of clothes with a  
pair of tall leather boots sitting  
beneath.

In the bed, a well-fed man in his  
forties sits up. He wears a  
nightshirt. Another human form is  
buried beneath the covers, a bare  
foot jutting out at an odd angle.

GEORGE III

(In that plummy tone of British royalty)

All right, I'm sorry.

(Beat)

George, please. I said I'm sorry.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(From beneath the covers, a southern upper-  
class American accent ...)

You're not sorry.

GEORGE III

My dear boy, you must believe me. I truly am.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Don't call me dear boy.

GEORGE III

It's just that I don't want you to leave. It's that  
simple. I couldn't bear it if you went back to  
America. You belong here. You belong with me. I love  
you, don't you understand?

(Annoyed, he pokes the covers.)

I'm talking to you.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Sticking his head out)

Where I come from, people who are sorry don't go  
pokin' other people in the kidneys.

GEORGE III

(With infinite patience)

Please come out where I can see you. You're acting  
like a child.

(George Washington throws back the covers  
and sits up. He is 20s, bare-chested,  
tousled hair, pouty, and reasonably dishy.)

Now I'm sorry I got angry.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

No you aren't.

GEORGE III

Why do you say that? You know that I mean it.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Why did you yell at me?

GEORGE III

Because I love you.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You do not.

GEORGE III

It's madness the way I love you. Really, sometimes I  
feel I might be losing it.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

When I start squawkin' - it's the only time you pay  
any attention at all.

GEORGE III

I can't believe you'd say that.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You ignore me so much that you don't even know you  
ignore me. You ignore that you ignore me.

GEORGE III

I'll do better, I promise. The thought of you leaving

me, going back to America, that awful place – hooligans writing pamphlets and giving speeches that I'm a tyrant -- *me*, a tyrant! – the very thought of you among them is heartbreaking.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Grudgingly...)

You really mean that?

GEORGE III

I do. I swear on the graves of all my ancestors, on every king and queen of Europe. Now promise me you'll stay no matter what they say in those letters they write.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I'll think about it.

GEORGE III

You do that. You think about it. That's a dear boy.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

And don't call me dear boy. I'm not your dear boy.

GEORGE III

You are, but no quarrels. I shall be sure to always call you George. I rather like that we have the same name, actually. A strange and beautiful twist of fate, don't you think? The two Georges, destined to have their names entwined like twin olive branches on the crown of history.

(George Washington gets out of bed. He is naked, and slips on a pair of under shorts.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Lightly)

All right already. You can knock it off.

GEORGE III

(Picking up on his turning mood)

All by myself? I was hoping you'd help me.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You never get enough, do you.

GEORGE III

Flatterer.

(George Washington is crossing to the door)  
Where are you going?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I want to check the morning mail. A ship came in on  
the tide last night.

GEORGE III

(Despairing...)  
Oh God ...

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Calling out the door)  
Hey Washington!

GEORGE III

Dear boy, your volume -- please.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Sorry.

GEORGE III

There are people about.

(Washington, about George Washington's age,  
has already appeared at the door. He has,  
for the moment, an old-fashioned 'Southern  
Negro' accent and a grinning, 'happy Negro'  
manner.)

WASHINGTON

Yes *suh*, Massa George! Ah hears your voice and Ah says  
to myself, 'Washington, that's good Massa George  
calling you. Now why would good Massa George be  
calling you at this time of the mornin'?' An' ah sets  
my mind to figuring -- and lo! ah comes up with the  
answer. Massa George wants his morning mail!

(He produces a salver on which rests a  
single letter.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Thanks, Washington. You can go.

WASHINGTON

Yes, suh.

(George Washington takes the letter and tears it open.)

GEORGE III

Oh! Uh, Washington ...

(Washington turns to address the George III. He suddenly has a clipped, purely professional mid-Atlantic accent and the manner of a dignified manservant.)

WASHINGTON

Your Majesty?

GEORGE III

Some hot water, please. I'd like to have a wash.

WASHINGTON

Very good, Your Majesty. Will there be anything else for you or Mr. Washington?

GEORGE III

Mr. Washington is too busy reading seditious letters from one of his American friends, I'm afraid. I think that will be all.

WASHINGTON

I won't be a moment.

(He turns to George Washington and is 'happy' again. This pattern remains in force throughout the play -- one way to George Washington, the other to the George III.)

And Ah be sure to bring some for you as well, Massa George. Ah knows Massa George like to scrub up real good in de mornin' time!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Distracted, reading the letter)

Real well, Washington.

WASHINGTON

Right you are, Massa George! Ah thanks you for

educatin' me jes like you would a human bein'!

(Washington exits. George Washington reads on, a look of growing concern on his face. George III tries a peak over his shoulder but he snatches the page out of view.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Hey!

GEORGE III

Who's it from?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

None of your business.

GEORGE III

Mr. Jefferson, I'll wager. That annoying red head. I never trust red heads. Go ahead, read it out loud.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

It's none of your business.

(He stuffs the letter into his pocket of his coat, which is on the chair. But there is a second, larger piece of paper that remains out.)

GEORGE III

And what is *that*?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Having a quick scan)

It's a thing he wrote.

GEORGE III

What kind of thing?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Some kind of a -- a declaration of some kind.

GEORGE III

May I ask *which* kind?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(He's getting the gist of it now)

... I don't think you want to know.

GEORGE III

(Dismissively)

Well, anybody can write a declaration. I write them all the time.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

This one is a declaration of independence, though. And they all signed it.

GEORGE III

Who did?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

All of them.

GEORGE III

All of whom?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

All the colonies.

GEORGE III

When?!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

A couple weeks ago.

GEORGE III

Good God!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Fourth of July.

GEORGE III

A date that will live in infamy!

(George III springs out of bed, pacing and gesticulating furiously.)

This is it. This is really it! This is the final straw!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Now don't get all worked up.

GEORGE III

Don't get worked up?! My dear boy, how would you like it if you were king and a bunch of roughneck hotheads went and signed a declaration of independence from you? Eh?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Well, not very much, I guess, but —

GEORGE III

But nothing! This is an outrage! It's treason! Self-evident truths, my royal bum! I never heard such a preposterous argument in my life.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Hold on here. How do you know he said that?

GEORGE III

What?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

How do you know what Tom wrote in that thing?

GEORGE III

(A beat, then with great confidence)

Well, I can only imagine. That's just the sort of overheated prose that snake would whip up just to make me look bad.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

That's *exactly* what he said, though.

(He points to the coat pocket)

"We hold these truths to be self-evident." You didn't just *imagine* that. You've been spying.

GEORGE III

Now, that's a very ugly word.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You have been, haven't you -- !

GEORGE III

Certainly *I* haven't. Perhaps people in my *service* ...

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Don't mince words with me!

GEORGE III

Dear boy, put on a shirt. You have me at an disadvantage. I'm finding it quite difficult to focus on anything but your nipples.

(George Washington grabs his shirt and yanks it on.)

They come to me with reports, you see. I don't ask for reports. But when they arrive and fall into my lap, what am I to do? Ignore them?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You could have the decency to tell me.

GEORGE III

I suppose I didn't want to believe them.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

But you believe them now.

GEORGE III

And with good cause!

(Washington enters with a basin of steaming water, speaking to George III.)

WASHINGTON

Your Majesty's bath.

GEORGE III

On the table, please, Washington.

(Washington sets the basin on the table, then stands aside with a towel folded over his forearm.)

GEORGE III

Thank you so much.

(George III begins to plash about in the basin. Washington remains nearby with a towel over his arm. Meanwhile, George Washington retrieves the private letter from his coat pocket and studies it.)

GEORGE III

(As he plashes ...)

Yes, I have spies. Yes, I already knew that your friend Tom was revolting – in every sense of the word – but none of that matters to me, don't you see? It's you I care about. You must believe me.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Absent-mindedly, as he reads ...)

You don't care about me one bit. You never did.

GEORGE III

(To Washington, aside)

Help me.

WASHINGTON

Tell him you'll take him surveying.

GEORGE III

Take him what?

WASHINGTON

Surveying. He loves to go surveying.

GEORGE III

(Utterly bewildered)

You mean ... with the tripod and the little spy glass ...?

WASHINGTON

Exactly.

GEORGE III

You're pulling my leg.

WASHINGTON

Trust me on this one.

GEORGE III

Um ... George ...

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(George Washington has been reading the letter, which he now folds. Whatever was in it has made him a bit surly.)

What?

GEORGE III

How would you like to go ... surveying?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Like a dog offered a biscuit)

*Surveyin'?!*

GEORGE III

(Taken aback by how easy that was.)

Yes ... uh ... surveying.

WASHINGTON

Massa loove his surveyin'!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Really? You mean it?

WASHINGTON

Oh, yes he do.

GEORGE III

Why would anyone joke about that?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Where're we gonna go?

GEORGE III

(At a total loss ...)

Wherever you want. Where does one go to ... survey?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You need a nice big piece of raw timberland stretchin' out as far as the eye can see - that hasn't been surveyed yet.

GEORGE III

Oh. Well, I'm not sure we have a lot of those here in England but I'll get someone on it right away, this morning, and you and I'll go off and have ourselves a nice ... surveyin' party very soon. Tomorrow. All right?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Can Washington come with us?

GEORGE III

Is that necessary?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Of course it is! Anyway, he loves to go surveyin'.  
Don't you Washington.

WASHINGTON

Ah loves hangin' de plumb line and lookin' through dat  
spy hole!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(He must have said this 1,000 times)

You are *not* looking through the spy hole!

WASHINGTON

But Massa George, you knows Ah loves to look through  
dat spy hole!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I am the only one who looks through the spy hole and  
you know it! Your job is to carry my equipment, and  
make my meals, and groom my horses, and make sure the  
Indians don't kill me, and sing and dance for me at  
night around the fire, and – *if* I say so – hang the  
plumb line. And that's *it*.

WASHINGTON

(To George III, with a shrug)

He does have his needs.

GEORGE III

Yes, I can see.

(George III takes a towel off Washington's  
arm to dry off.)

Would you leave us, Washington?

WASHINGTON

Your majesty.

(To George Washington)

Massa George, you jes holler if you wants somethin'!

(George III has donned a loose dressing  
gown. Washington exits.)

GEORGE III

Come sit down.

(He sits on the bed and pats it for George Washington to sit)

Now listen, dear boy. Is it really necessary to bring Washington when we go -- surveyin'?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Sitting)

What's wrong with Washington?

GEORGE III

Nothing's wrong with him. It would be nice to be alone, though.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You've always got your servants around. Why can't I have mine?

GEORGE III

Well, for one thing, my servants get paid. And if they wish to leave my service, they may.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Instantly defensive)

What are you saying?

GEORGE III

I'm saying Washington isn't exactly a *servant*, now is he.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Again defensive)

Look, that's the way we do things in America.

GEORGE III

Yes, I know but we're not in America now and -

GEORGE WASHINGTON

See, you're criticizing me again. All you do is criticize!

GEORGE III

I'm only saying that -

GEORGE WASHINGTON

That I'm not allowed to do things my own way. No, I have to do them *your* way.

GEORGE III

But George, really -- even the fact that your last name is his first name? Doesn't that make you uncomfortable?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Why should it?

GEORGE III

Well, it seems to me that --

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Washington!

(Washington instantly appears at the door.)

WASHINGTON

Yes suh, Massa George!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You like your name okay?

WASHINGTON

Ah likes it jes *fine*, suh!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

See there?

GEORGE III

I wasn't suggesting he didn't like it.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Where'd you get that name, Washington?

WASHINGTON

Why Massa George, you foolin' with me. My dear old Mammy, she named me Washington after *you*, Massa George. You knows that!

(George Washington turns to George III with an "I told you so" look.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You can go, Washington.

WASHINGTON

Yes suh, Massa George!

(Washington exits.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You were saying?

GEORGE III

It just seems as if you always need so *much*. You always need Washington, even if there's nothing for him to do. You always need another suit of clothes even if you have plenty to wear, or another horse you have to ride, or another exotic food you have to taste. Is there anything you can't do without?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You should talk.

GEORGE III

I wish that it was enough just to be with me.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The King of England is asking *me* to give things up!

(George III sighs, turns away, begins to make the bed. George Washington is pretty exercised now, and he says what's been on his mind since reading the letter.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Why don't you give up something?

GEORGE III

Like what?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Like me.

GEORGE III

How can I give you up? I *love* you, I don't possess you.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

That's not what Tom says.

GEORGE III

(Sobered)

Oh?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Tom says I'm a kept boy.

GEORGE III

(Trying to laugh it off)

Oh *nonsense*.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Is it? Everybody in America says I'm a kept boy.

GEORGE III

Oh nonsense. You're *mine* – but not like that.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I should have known. I should have *known*! All those presents, all the food, those long afternoons on your barge going up and down the Thames. Why, I hardly had any need for Washington at all. You did that deliberately. You pulled the wool over my eyes! You drowned me in luxury just to keep me here like your pet, your toy.

(He grabs his pants off the chair and puts them on. They're white with buttons up the sides.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Well, maybe I was. But I'm not going to be that anymore! I'm my own man! I'm an American!

GEORGE III

My dear boy – *George* – this is silly. What are you doing?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

What does it look like? I'm getting dressed.

GEORGE III

You're not going anywhere.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Just watch me.

GEORGE III

Please don't listen to this nonsense. Tom is only telling you that so that you'll do exactly this. He's manipulating you. If you don't like the way we live, we'll live another way. Simply, plainly.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

It's too late for that. I've made up my mind.

(Calling out)

Washington! Washington, come in here!

(Washington instantly appears at the door)

WASHINGTON

Yes suh, Massa George!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Get my horse saddled and pack my bags. We're getting on the next ship back to Virginia.

WASHINGTON

(A song of joy)

Sweet Baby Jesus! Carry me back to ole' Virginny! My oh my, how my heart has grown sore for the sight of my old plantation home!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Washington ... !

WASHINGTON

My, how Ah do pine for de days of backbreakin' labor in de merciless sun and the squalid livin' conditions!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Washington ... !

WASHINGTON

Why as Ah live and breathe -- I can almost taste de inadequate portions of barely nutritious food!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

That horse better be ready by the time I get back!

(George Washington exits.)

WASHINGTON

(Calling after him)

We're a slow-moving people, Massa George. You knew that when you boughts me. Ain't nothin' I can about it no how.

(He finds himself alone with George III. The silence is deafening.)

GEORGE III

He doesn't really hear you, but I do.

WASHINGTON

You're a good listener.

GEORGE III

You don't like him much, do you.

WASHINGTON

How would you like him, if you were in my position?

GEORGE III

(Soberly)

It's hard to imagine your position.

WASHINGTON

Why don't you try. Might be good for a laugh. Sport of kings.

GEORGE III

I've got a better idea. How about imagining that you aren't in this position at all?

WASHINGTON

You're referring to my present occupation?

GEORGE III

Exactly.

WASHINGTON

And just what are you suggesting?

GEORGE III

If you go back to America, there's ... well, you know what there is. But suppose you stayed here.

WASHINGTON

He's not about to leave me behind. Who's going to handle the plumb line?

GEORGE III

But suppose he stayed too. Suppose you convinced him.

WASHINGTON

Me?

GEORGE III

You can do it. You know you can and so do I.

WASHINGTON

Why should I though?

GEORGE III

Once you're here, permanently, I'll see to it that you're ... unemployed, so to speak.

(Washington thinks about that for a moment and casts a dubious eye on George III.)

WASHINGTON

I'm supposed to believe that you're really in love, aren't I.

GEORGE III

Is that so hard to imagine?

WASHINGTON

I'm still working on it.

GEORGE III

But it's true, I quite fancy him. I don't understand it myself but the moment I saw his picture in the official army portrait, I had to meet him. And now that he's here, I can't bear to let him go. Crazy, but true.

(Washington again eyes and appraises him.)

WASHINGTON

You know, you don't look much like a king in that robe.

GEORGE III

What do I look like?

WASHINGTON

Like a lunatic. Like a man driven mad by his own schemes and plots.

GEORGE III

(His face darkens)

Look, I'm only trying to help you.

WASHINGTON

Oh, you're concerned with my well being.

GEORGE III

Yes. I am an abolitionist.

WASHINGTON

Then why don't you start right here and now. You want abolition, go ahead, start abolishing. You're the king -- abolish at will.

GEORGE III

It's not that simple.

WASHINGTON

No, it's not, is it. Because you want something first.

GEORGE III

Yes, and I told you so. I've opened my heart to you.

WASHINGTON

You're not in love. You did see his army portrait, yes. But you read his army *report* too and it didn't make you fall in love. It made you wise up. He is the best, after all. A genius on the battlefield. Say whatever else about the man, but that much is true.

So: An invitation to court, passage on the next ship to England, and the next thing he knows, he's the favorite of the king. Who would want to go back home and fight a war when he's got all this?

GEORGE III

Is that what it looks like to you?

WASHINGTON

Not that I'm feeling sorry for him, but yes.

GEORGE III

I suppose it would, from the outside. But the fact is, I'm quite sincere.

WASHINGTON

Maybe you think you are.

GEORGE III

I'd be the one to know, wouldn't I? I realize I've done it all wrong. I made a great mistake. I was the one person who could give him whatever he wanted. Draw on my own wealth to satisfy his every whim, indulge his grotesque craving for earthly pleasure in the hope that something higher, something nobler might come of it.

And that's what it was — a mistake. But the reasons for it were true and decent. I love him.

WASHINGTON

And the fact that they want him back home for a general, that doesn't figure into things?

GEORGE III

You're a smart one, aren't you.

WASHINGTON

(With the slightest accent)

Oh, I'm just a poor black man doing the best he can with what little he got.

GEORGE III

It doesn't figure, actually. If they don't have George, they'll find someone else. Either way I know I'll lose. Oh, I intend to fight them but people who want to be free will be free in the end. You can't stop them. Which brings us back to you.

GEORGE III (con't)

No matter what my motives, it doesn't change what I could do for you.

WASHINGTON

But I don't trust you.

GEORGE III

You're certainly not telling me you trust *him*.

WASHINGTON

Oh yes I do. I know exactly what he is - a hypocrite to his dying day. He doesn't know it, but I do. You're a hypocrite too, but you *do* know it and that makes you more dangerous. You talk pretty now, but who was it started this little trading operation? England, wasn't it. It's just as legal for him to own me here as it is there.

GEORGE III

So you'll go with him. Just like that. Back 'home'.

WASHINGTON

You don't quite get that, do you.

GEORGE III

No, I don't.

WASHINGTON

Well, it's like this. There's this letter he just got, and that paper that came with it. That paper is a promise. It's just a promise, that's true. Promises don't mean much if they're not kept. But at least it's something. It's a beginning. That's what America is right now, just a promise. And I'm an American. Not by choice, that's for sure. And I'm not even saying I like it much right at the moment. But that's what I am. Just like you are the king. It's not a question of whether you like it. That's what you are.

GEORGE III

Maybe you're not as smart as I thought. If I were you, I'd think again.

WASHINGTON

But you're not me. You can't even imagine being me, remember?

GEORGE III

(An edge of desperation)

He'd stay if you talked to him.

WASHINGTON

Probably.

GEORGE III

So what you're telling me is it's better for you over there!

WASHINGTON

No sir, Mr. King, sir. What I'm saying is -- I'll go with the devil I know.

(George Washington enters)

Massa George, you smell clean like a daisy!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Did you get my horse saddled?

WASHINGTON

No suh, ah most certainly didn't. Ah been talking to his most royal highness majesty the king here and answerin' his royal majestical type questions.

GEORGE III

True. It's entirely my fault.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Well, never mind. Help me on with these.

(He sits in the chair and Washington kneels to help him on with his boots.)

GEORGE III

So you're really going then.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I'm putting on my boots, aren't I?

GEORGE III

And it won't make any difference to say I love you.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Some, just not enough.

GEORGE III

I mean that little to you?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

No, but I love freedom better.

GEORGE III

Poppycock! You don't love freedom.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Yes I do. Don't I Washington?

WASHINGTON

Massa George, he love his freedom.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You see? And Washington here knows me as well as anyone.

GEORGE III

You don't notice a word he says, do you.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Of course I do.

GEORGE III

You don't pay any attention. He's smarter than you think he is.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I happen to think Washington is very smart. Don't I Washington.

WASHINGTON

Massa George, he teach me everything ah knows.

GEORGE III

What he said was, Master George loves *his* freedom. That's different from loving freedom. Isn't it Washington?

(The second boot is on. Washington slaps it

with satisfaction, indicating George Washington can stand.)

WASHINGTON

Them sho is fine looking boots, Massa George! Ah bet you gonna walk all over me in them fine boots!

GEORGE III

I asked you a question.

(George Washington stands and Washington helps him on with his coat.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON

He doesn't understand.

WASHINGTON

Ah don't understand dat question.

GEORGE III

You meant he loves *his* freedom – not *freedom*, just his own! Admit it. That's what you really meant.

WASHINGTON

You sho is a sly one, Mr. Royal Highness Majesty King, sir.

GEORGE III

He's mocking you! Can't you see that?!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Washington'd never mock me. He loves me.

WASHINGTON

Tha's right Massa George. Jes' the same as his royal kingness.

(Looking at George III)

I loves you jes the same as him.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You see? How do I look?

GEORGE III

Ridiculous.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You're just jealous. Washington, get that cloak and my hat.

(Washington hands George Washington his tall tricorne hat and he places it on his head. Then his cloak, which he swirls around shoulders and clasps together. He looks ready to cross the Delaware at a moment's notice.)

WASHINGTON

You look mighty fine, Massa George.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You're darn right I do.

(To George III)

You never should have said that word.

WASHINGTON

What did his royal majesty highness say to you, Massa?

GEORGE WASHINGTON

He said *kept*.

WASHINGTON

Oh Lawsy!

GEORGE III

I said *they* said.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

No American, no real American, is going to stand for that kind of talk for very long. Isn't that right Washington?

WASHINGTON

(With the clipped, proper accent)

I couldn't possibly agree more, Master George.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

What's that? You know I can't understand it when you talk like that.

GEORGE III

He said he agrees.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

You bet he does. That's because Washington's a real American!

(To Washington)

Come on! Let's get on that ship. We've got a lot to do!

(Washington goes to the door and opens it. George Washington strides halfway through, then turns back with one arm raised dramatically in the air.)

Let freedom ring!

(And he exits. Washington waits just long enough to say ...)

WASHINGTON

I've got to give the poor fellow a chance, don't I? He might turn out all right, eventually. And like my dear old mother always said, you've got to start somewhere.

(And he exits. George III goes to the copy of Declaration and begins tearing it up as the lights fade.)

2: "Fred And Em"

An austere furnished woman's bedroom. Circa 1850.

A large 'four poster' bed upstage. Some chairs, a small writing desk. A door to the hallway outside and one to a closet. Two windows.

At rise, EMILY and SUSAN, both in their twenties and quite attractive though coiffed in the severe style of the time, stand near the door. They are both in nightclothes, though Susan is wrapped in a shawl and carries a lit candle in a holder.

EMILY

It was nothing, Susan.

SUSAN

Are you sure.

(Even when Susan asks a question, it always comes out a statement.)

EMILY

Very sure.

(Susan comes into the room on her own.)

SUSAN

I heard such a terrible scream.

EMILY

It was only a nightmare, really.

SUSAN

You poor dear. What sort of nightmare.

EMILY

Lots of chasing around, not getting anywhere.

SUSAN

Who was chasing.

EMILY

Lions, I think.

SUSAN

You think. You don't know.

EMILY

Lions. Definitely lions.  
(Susan is unconvinced)  
And tigers.

SUSAN

It must have been the jungle.

EMILY

That's exactly right. It was the jungle.

SUSAN

Oh, you poor dear.

EMILY

It was a dream, Susan. Just a very bad dream.

SUSAN

They can seem so real, though, can't they. I heard you all the way across the yard. I thought you were being attacked. I thought it was murder.

EMILY

It wasn't murder. Just a dream.

(Susan closes the door.)

SUSAN

I do worry about you, Dickie.

EMILY

But you mustn't Susan.

SUSAN

You've been acting so strangely all this week. Perhaps I should stay the night.

EMILY

Oh no, really.

SUSAN

I wouldn't mind.

EMILY

No, I couldn't have that, really.

SUSAN

But I can't have you screaming in the middle of the night like that.

EMILY

Father is here.

SUSAN

But he doesn't wake up. What good does it do you? Here you are, screaming with nightmares, with Mr. Dickinson sound asleep. I can't have that. I can't bear the thought of it.

EMILY

Susan, dear, really, you mustn't stay. I'd never sleep with you here.

(Slight pause)

SUSAN

Oh.

EMILY

I don't mean that.

SUSAN

No, I quite understand.

EMILY

And the whole point is that I need to sleep.

SUSAN

You're quite right.

EMILY

I'm completely exhausted.

SUSAN

Yes of course. I had forgotten.

EMILY

And it's not that I don't appreciate //

SUSAN

Please, no. I - I was being selfish.

EMILY

Not at all Susan, dear.

SUSAN

It's just ... I used to love the nights we spent together.

EMILY

They were divine.

SUSAN

I knew I'd miss them after I married. Do you miss them? Do you miss them, even a little?

EMILY

Oh yes, Susan. I do. There's no question.

SUSAN

It was so pure, so beautiful. Not at all like marriage.

(Emily looks taken aback)

I didn't mean that. Not like that.

EMILY

I know you didn't.

SUSAN

I do love Robert, you realize that.

EMILY

Of course I do.

SUSAN

I've learned to love him. But Emily dear, you know it's true: I should never have paid him any attention were he not your brother, bound to you in flesh and spirit as only a brother and sister //

EMILY

Susan, please, we mustn't.

(A knock at the door.)

SUSAN

Oh!

EMILY

Who is it?

MR. DICKINSON (O.S.)

Open this door.

SUSAN

It's your father.

(Emily goes to the door and opens it. Mr. Dickinson is revealed. He is middle-aged, the very picture of propriety, though he is not a prig and his moral sense is genuine.)

MR. DICKINSON

Susan, what are you doing here?

SUSAN

Good evening, Mr. Dickinson. I heard a scream.

MR. DICKINSON

That's not an answer to the question.

EMILY

She was concerned about me, father.

MR. DICKINSON

What are you screaming about.

SUSAN

She had a dream.

MR. DICKINSON

What kind of dream?

EMILY

I'm all right now, father.

SUSAN

Someone ought to stay with her.

MR. DICKINSON

It won't be you. You've got a husband.

SUSAN

At least I wake up when she screams.

MR. DICKINSON

My son didn't marry you so you could come scurrying over here in the middle of every night.

SUSAN

Mr. Dickinson!

EMILY

Father, really.

(He finds a book on the desk.)

MR. DICKINSON

What's this?

EMILY

My diary.

MR. DICKINSON

It's locked.

EMILY

I always keep it locked.

MR. DICKINSON

What are you writing in here that has to be kept such a secret?

SUSAN

Her own private thoughts.

MR. DICKINSON

You be quiet.

EMILY

My own private thoughts.

MR. DICKINSON

What sort of private thoughts?

SUSAN

What business is it of yours?

MR. DICKINSON

Answer me.

SUSAN

It's none of your business what she does in that book.

MR. DICKINSON

It's all this writing down all these private thoughts of yours that's making you scream at night.

EMILY

You're wrong.

SUSAN

How ridiculous!

EMILY

It couldn't be, father. My private thoughts remain just where they are, in my mind. Look, I'll show you.

(She takes a key and opens the diary.)

Blank. Every page, completely blank. Do you see? Not a word anywhere.

MR. DICKINSON

Well ... good. That's healthy I dare say.

SUSAN

Oh Emily ... my poor Emily ...

EMILY

Don't feel sorry for me. I can't stand that.

SUSAN

You talk of nothing but your writing.

EMILY

Any writer who always talks of her writing isn't writing very much.

MR. DICKINSON

There's no point in you writing. It's a good thing you're not doing it.

SUSAN

Because she's a woman I suppose.

MR. DICKINSON

Because there are better things to do. This is America. Americans are doers, not writers.

EMILY

It wouldn't have to be that way.

MR. DICKINSON

It is that way. There's no point in fighting it.

EMILY

I don't know about that. I don't seem to be the one to fight it, though - that much is sure.

MR. DICKINSON

You should both go to bed now.

EMILY

Yes father.

MR. DICKINSON

There are things to *do* in the morning. Tomorrow is an important day in our lives. I have a speech to give. You have plum pudding to make. And you, my dear, have a husband to attend to.

(He exits.)

SUSAN

Dickie, I'm so sorry.

EMILY

Father's right. I should content myself with doing. I do make a very good plum pudding.

SUSAN

You're a writer. I know you are.

EMILY

Thank you, dear Susan. But you really must be going now. I must get my sleep. I'm utterly exhausted.

SUSAN

If you insist.

EMILY

I do insist, Susan, dear. I must. For my health.

SUSAN

For your health, then. I'll do it for your health. I'll return to my own bed for your health.

(Beat)

May I kiss you good night?

(Emily turns her cheek to Susan. Susan, disappointed, takes what she can get.)

If you scream again, I shall be back.

(And Susan turns and exits.)

Emily breathes a sign of relief, pressing herself against the door as she shuts it behind Susan.

From under the bed emerges Frederick. He wears only a pair of undershorts and a black woolen overcoat. He is African-American and about the same age as the Emily, )

FREDERICK

I don't like that woman. I don't like anybody who calls you 'Dickie.'

EMILY

She's always called me that.

FREDERICK

Your name is Emily.

EMILY

You don't call me Emily. You call me Em.

FREDERICK

I knew she'd come over if you screamed. Didn't I say that? Didn't I say we'd have half the neighborhood in here?

EMILY

It was your own fault.

FREDERICK

My fault.

EMILY

Yes, you should know better than to ... do that thing you do.

(He is at the bed now. They kiss long, deep, and hard.)

You're wearing father's coat.

FREDERICK

I took it from the closet.

EMILY

I don't know if I like you in father's coat. If you were a poem, that would be a mixed metaphor.

FREDERICK

But I'm not a poem.

EMILY

But you are.

(This is all they need to kiss again. And they do, with fervor.)

Get out of that coat. I'll keep you warm.

FREDERICK

No, Em. I should go.

EMILY

Not yet. It's the middle of the night.

FREDERICK

We spoke of this already. I have obligations. They cannot wait. I have stayed a week already. That's far too long.

EMILY

But there's nothing you can do.

FREDERICK

There is. I know there is.

EMILY

It's a wicked, wicked thing – but you're one man. How can one man possibly affect so great and terrible a thing as the enslavement of an entire people?

FREDERICK

I have to try.

EMILY

You wouldn't really – go *back*, would you?

FREDERICK

If I had to.

EMILY

But you might be captured. You might never return.

FREDERICK

It's a chance I must take if I would free my brothers and my sisters.

EMILY

I won't let you.

FREDERICK

You can't stop me.

EMILY

I'll think of a way to keep you here so you'll never, ever leave.

FREDERICK

I broke free once in my life – it was a prison more terrible than anything you can imagine. I can certainly do it again.

EMILY

Do you liken me to your former master?

FREDERICK

It was you made the comparison.

EMILY

I allude to the chains of love! If I wish to make you love's slave, it is only because I am myself in his manacles! We are both servants of the same master. I beg you with all my soul to stay. I love you!

FREDERICK

(Wavering...)

And I love you.

EMILY

Then don't go.

FREDERICK

But Emily, my darling - there is a higher thing than love ... there is duty to one's fellow man.

Don't turn away.

EMILY

Those aren't the words of a man in love.

FREDERICK

My love is divided. I have more than one love.

EMILY

How like a man to say such things.

FREDERICK

I have no alternative but to speak as a man. A man is what I am.

EMILY

You have no alternative, but neither do I.

(She goes to the window to look out across the yard.)

FREDERICK

You toy with me.

EMILY

I deal honestly with you. It is quite another thing.

FREDERICK

Honest? Really. Yet there's always something – someone you don't want to talk about.

EMILY

(Confessional)

A woman needs love. Only a fool is particular whence it comes! I too am torn – yet I throw my lot with you. That's not as it *must* be – for me, it could be other ...

FREDERICK

Then go to her!

EMILY

Perhaps I will!

FREDERICK

You wouldn't!

EMILY

How will you know, after you are gone?

(She goes to her diary and searches for a pen.)

FREDERICK

What are you doing?

EMILY

I thought you were leaving.

FREDERICK

I asked you a question.

EMILY

I'm going to write now.

FREDERICK

I thought you weren't able to write.

EMILY

Perhaps I only need practice.

FREDERICK

You need much more than that.

EMILY

What do you imply?

FREDERICK

Have you ever thought that the reason you have nothing to write is that you have nothing to say?

EMILY

My days are very full. There is no dearth of events on which to report.

FREDERICK

Yet there is nothing to write.

EMILY

There is much to write but I cannot write if I cannot concentrate. Be quiet. I'm thinking.

(Pause.)

You're disturbing me.

FREDERICK

If I were disturbing you, you might have something to write.

EMILY

You talk in riddles.

FREDERICK

Stop trying to write of daily events. Your churned butter, your half-finished needlepoint, your scrubbed floors, your plum pudding, your walks round the village green. They are nothing, nothing to you.

EMILY

They are everything.

FREDERICK

Then write them!

(She clutches her pen in futile anguish.)

You see?

EMILY

(Nearly in tears...)

What do you want of me?

FREDERICK

You, that is what I want of you.

EMILY

How can you be so cruel!? You say this, yet you tell me you're leaving!

FREDERICK

I want you in poetry.

EMILY

What about it?

FREDERICK

Have you ever tried writing verse.

EMILY

I can't write poetry. Poetry is for others. We don't write poetry in America.

FREDERICK

Not yet. You could be the first.

EMILY

You're being silly.

FREDERICK

Not so silly as a book full of blank pages.

EMILY

I never heard of such a thing. Who am I to write alongside Shakespeare and Pope? - Racine and Goethe? - Wordsworth and Chaucer? - their great sinuous lines cascading one over the other. I would feel foolish.

FREDERICK

You wouldn't be beside them. You'd be by yourself. Short little lines - tight and simple, but piercing to the heart. Like you. Americans don't have time for long poems, anyway. They're too busy *doing*, just as your father said.

EMILY

But still - I couldn't ...

FREDERICK

Why not?

EMILY

I have nothing more to say in poems than any other way. It's simply ridiculous. Stop talking about it. I insist.

FREDERICK

Very well.

(He goes to the closet to retrieve more clothes.)

EMILY

Where will you go?

FREDERICK

(A slight beat ...)

I can't tell you.

EMILY

You're afraid to tell me.

FREDERICK

(Getting dressed)

That would be understandable, wouldn't it?

EMILY

Why? Because I am a woman? I'm made of tougher stuff than you think.

FREDERICK

Are you?

EMILY

I am. I'm not afraid of you, after all.

FREDERICK

You were when you met me.

EMILY

That was a week ago. It's been eternity since then.

FREDERICK

You have no concept what eternity is like.

EMILY

It's not whether you're afraid, it's whether you forge ahead anyway. That's what courage is. Forging ahead. I forged ahead. I conquered my fear of you.

FREDERICK

Just as I'm doing now. I'm conquering my own fear. I will return to the land of eternal night.

EMILY

But I knew what I was doing, where I was going. What I might gain.

FREDERICK

Did you?

EMILY

Better than you know what you're doing right now. You have no idea. Admit it. You haven't any idea how to go about this. "Free my people," you say. But how? There are millions of them, spread out across half a nation. And more millions of men who would gladly hang you if you so much as step back across the line.

FREDERICK

This isn't working.

EMILY

I want you to see reason.

FREDERICK

Why? What has reason ever done for me?

EMILY

But you must have a means. A method.

I'm trying to help.

(Pause.)

FREDERICK

You would help me, even if it meant that I left, never to come back?

EMILY

Yes. Don't ask me why. Reason has never been a faithful friend to me.

FREDERICK

You have an idea then? Of what I should do?

EMILY

I didn't say that.

(The door opens and Father enters.)

MR. DICKINSON

What is this?

EMILY

Father, go away ...

MR. DICKINSON

Who are you? What are you doing here?

EMILY

This is Mr. Douglass, Father.

MR. DICKINSON

What is he doing in your room?

FREDERICK

I am saying good bye.

MR. DICKINSON

Have you lost your mind. What is this - this - this ...

FREDERICK

- Negro -

MR. DICKINSON

- thank you ... doing in your room in the middle of the night?

EMILY

We are friends.

MR. DICKINSON

That hardly explains the matter. Emily, do you find nothing better to do than entertain - *guests* in your bedroom all night? This is an outrage.

FREDERICK

I have run away, sir. I have broken the chains of bondage and come to your town to find sanctuary. I knew this was a place where abolitionist sentiment ran high. And I was right. Your daughter has given succor.

EMILY

I saw him on the town green a week ago. He was lost, forlorn, hungry, afraid. My heart went out to him. He has come to my window every night and I have - given him food and ...

FREDERICK

And succor.

EMILY

And succor.

MR. DICKINSON

I see.

EMILY

You will agree it was the proper thing to do, father. You would have done the same yourself.

MR. DICKINSON

Perhaps not in my bedroom - but still, you have done right. I concede the point.

EMILY

Thank you, father.

MR. DICKINSON

(Drawing himself up with transcending  
dignity.)

How long do you stay?

FREDERICK

In fact, I was saying my farewells.

MR. DICKINSON

That is very brief of you. You should stay at least until tomorrow.

FREDERICK

I must not delay.

MR. DICKINSON

But tomorrow we have the great celebration on the town green.

EMILY

Of course!

MR. DICKINSON

You had forgotten what tomorrow is?

FREDERICK

I did not forget.

EMILY

But you must stay now.

FREDERICK

It would better if I bade you farewell.

MR. DICKINSON

I will not hear of it. You shall spend the night. I will make room in the woodshed.

EMILY

Father!

MR. DICKINSON

What's wrong?

EMILY

We cannot make a man sleep in the shed.

MR. DICKINSON

Why not?

EMILY

He is a man, father.

MR. DICKINSON

Of course he's a man. I am well aware of it. That is precisely why he shall sleep in the woodshed.

FREDERICK

Do not argue the point. I will not stay.

EMILY

You're offended.

(To Mr. Dickinson)

You've offended him, father.

(To Frederick)

He doesn't mean it. He's not thinking.

FREDERICK

It is nothing. Trust me. It does not compare.

EMILY

(To Mr. Dickinson)

I am embarrassed, father. You have shamed me.

MR. DICKINSON

You shall sleep where you like, then.

EMILY

Of course he shall.

MR. DICKINSON

Within reason.

EMILY

And tomorrow we shall celebrate Independence Day on the village green.

MR. DICKINSON

You cannot argue how fit that would be, Mr. Douglass. Your own independence as well as that of the nation, celebrated on one glorious day. Our little town of Amherst conducts a very fine festival indeed. Our local bands plays patriotic tunes, the ladies of the town proffer a delightful repast of healthful foods - Emily here will be cooking her famous plum pudding - and then there are the speeches of course. I myself am

to deliver a speech in the afternoon on the nature of freedom. You really must attend. I think you may find my ideas intriguing - and certainly relevant to your own life.

FREDERICK

With all respect to your powers of rhetoric - and I presume they are great - I will not attend your speech. I will not attend your celebration.

MR. DICKINSON

Why ever not?

EMILY

Yes, Mr. Douglass, why not? It has been a week - what is another day?

MR. DICKINSON

Why do you refuse my invitation?

FREDERICK

I appreciate irony as much as the next man, Mr. Dickinson, but this would be irony too thick and too bitter for my taste. With all respect - it would not be suitable.

EMILY

But Mr. Douglass - what could possibly be more suitable. It is a day of independence, and here you are, newly independent, newly sprung from your dark prison cell.

FREDERICK

It means nothing to me.

MR. DICKINSON

How can you say that?

FREDERICK

Because I am haunted by the millions of souls who remain behind. Who have not had the good fortune to live so near the north that they may jump over the line and run until they are free. Who did not have the luck to gain some small shred of education - education to shed light into the pitch black night that is their life. How can I celebrate, knowing I alone am free,

while others are in shackles?

EMILY

Then let tomorrow be a beacon - a beacon of hope, of possibility.

FREDERICK

Is that what you think it is?

EMILY

I know it is.

FREDERICK

That is not what the Fourth of July is to the slave, Mr. Dickinson. The Fourth of July to the slave is a day that reveals more than all other days in the year the injustice and cruelty of which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham. Your boasted liberty is an license for crime. Your national greatness is mere vanity. Your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless. Your denunciations of tyrants are impudence, nothing more. Your shouts of liberty and equality ring hollow, they are a mockery of the actual things. Your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to the slave no more than bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than those of the United States at this very hour.

MR. DICKINSON

I never thought of it quite that way.

FREDERICK

And so I will not attend.

EMILY

Oh my goodness ...

(She sits on the bed - not 'fainting' but struck by an idea running through her head.)

FREDERICK

Are you all right?

MR. DICKINSON

Emily ...

EMILY

I believe I am. At long last.

MR. DICKINSON

You're suddenly pale.

EMILY

I'm only thinking, father ...

MR. DICKINSON

She's like this when she wants to write a poem ...

EMILY

This is not a poem I'm thinking of.

MR. DICKINSON

... not that she ever writes one.

FREDERICK

Not yet, Mr. Dickinson.

EMILY

I'm quite all right.

(She stands up.)

Really, I'm perfectly fine. You must admit that Mr. Douglass makes a very good point, Father. He really can't stay for the celebration. It would be awful for him.

MR. DICKINSON

Yes, I see. Of course.

EMILY

And it is time now. Time for him to go. Time for us to go to bed.

MR. DICKINSON

Yes, very well. I shall show you to the door.

EMILY

No, Father. I want to speak with Mr. Douglass first. I will show him to the door when I am finished.

MR. DICKINSON

But Emily ...

EMILY

There shall be no discussion, Father. I must be alone with Mr. Douglass when I say good bye. My happiness depends upon it. You would not wish me to be unhappy, would you?

MR. DICKINSON

Of course not.

EMILY

Then good night.

MR. DICKINSON

Good night, Emily. Good night, Mr. Douglass. I shall remember what you said. And not just that. I shall repeat it as well. I do not believe I could say it quite so well as you have just now, but in my own way, I shall do my best.

FREDERICK

You honor me, sir.

MR. DICKINSON

The honor is mine. I bid you good night.

(He exits.)

FREDERICK

And so I must go.

EMILY

It will not be easy for me - without you.

FREDERICK

Nor for me.

EMILY

I thank you for saying so.

FREDERICK

It is the truth.

EMILY

Yet I wish you to go. For now, there is hope. There is reason. You know what you must do.

FREDERICK

Would that I did.

EMILY

You must do just what you have done, just now, in this room.

FREDERICK

But I did nothing.

EMILY

You spoke.

FREDERICK

But that was nothing. Speaking is nothing.

EMILY

It is everything. When you do it, it is the only thing. You could not hear yourself, but I heard you for both of us. You were clear as the stars on a cold winter's night and hot as the sun's fire. You were brilliant.

FREDERICK

You exaggerate.

EMILY

No, Frederick. I would give anything to find myself exaggerating. Then I would have reason to keep you here with me. But the truth, Frederick, only the simple truth: you brought him around. In a moment, you had him in your grip. He was yours.

Think of what you can do if you speak in such a way to hundreds, or to thousands. That is your fate, Frederick. That is your destiny. You must not go back to the south and drag your brothers and sisters back across the border one by one. You must free them all with one great cleansing tide of truth. You must speak until the entire nation hears you and is ready to do your bidding. You must turn their minds just as you

turned my father's mind just now. If it means there is a great war, then so be it. It will be a war in the greatest and noblest of causes.

FREDERICK

Yes - I see ... I did not even know. It's a weapon.

EMILY

It is a great and powerful weapon. Oh! What I would not give to be there, to follow you, to hear you speak and watch the soft, complacent masses slowly turn to vessels of wrath and indignation. Oh to see that sight! Oh to hear those words!

FREDERICK

Then come with me.

EMILY

No, I can't. I mustn't.

FREDERICK

Why not?

EMILY

I have my own words to which I must attend.

FREDERICK

But you don't, Emily. You've tried so hard, yet there is not a single page you can point to.

EMILY

But I have found my subject. My subject is life. My subject is loss, and it is joy, and fear, and love. My subject is you. Everything that you have taught me Frederick. You have taught me to listen to myself, just as I have taught you the same. And just as you must free the soul of America, I must free its heart.

FREDERICK

You are my Emily. I shall miss you.

EMILY

You shall hear from me.

FREDERICK

Letters?

EMILY

No, they would only be a tally of my daily chores. You have told me they are nothing - and you were right to say so. No, Frederick, my love - you must stop in every city to which you journey and you must look in the magazines, the newspapers, the journals and the books, and there you will find my poems - the poems I shall write. They will be my thoughts of you, of the things that you have taught me, of the world to which you have awakened my senses. They will be my letters to you.

FREDERICK

I shall stop in every city. I will search through every newspaper and every book.

EMILY

And so, we shall be together after all.

(They kiss.)

We have so much to do. Good bye.

(She goes and opens the door ...)

FREDERICK

No, the window.

(He throws open the window and climbs out.)

Whence I came, thus I go ...

(And he is gone. She goes immediately to the desk, sits, and begins to write.

The door opens. It is Mr. Dickinson.)

MR. DICKINSON

Is he gone?

EMILY

(Concentrating on her writing...)

He has gone, Father. Please don't interrupt me.

MR. DICKINSON

Are you all right?

EMILY

More than that, Father. You may go to bed.

(He goes to the window.)

MR. DICKINSON

I was waiting in the hall ...

(Silence...)

He makes me tremble, that man. He could start wars. He could make me fight in them.

(Silence again. She writes...)

This was unlike you, Emily. This was strange. Not that I judge. I do not judge. I only hope we will return to normal now. No more midnight guests, I do hope.

(She finishes.)

EMILY

No, Father. No more midnight guests. There will be no need.

MR. DICKINSON

You've begun your diary.

EMILY

In a sense - yes.

MR. DICKINSON

I wish you all happiness my dear.

EMILY

Thank you, Father, but I won't have happiness.

MR. DICKINSON

Don't say that, Emily.

EMILY

I will have something better. Good night, Father.

(She kisses him on the cheek.)

MR. DICKINSON

Good night.

(He exits. She goes back to the desk and

picks up the book she has written in. She studies it a moment, then reads it aloud, as though testing its worthiness...)

EMILY

Heart - we will forget him  
You and I - tonight  
You may forget the warmth he gave -  
I will forget the light

When you have done, pray tell me  
That I may straight begin -  
Haste, lest while you're lagging  
I remember him ...

(She closes the book as the lights fade.)

Part 3: "Elizabeth and John"

The bedroom of a well-appointed city mansion. Circa 1890. Afternoon in summer.

Elizabeth – about 30 years old, pretty, and full of rage – is on the phone, an early model wooden box with a speaker horn and a hand-held earpiece.

Two youngish men sit in chairs on the side of the room, very proper and sober, their bowler hats in their laps. One is a black man, the other is white.

ELIZABETH

Yes, I hear you. I can hear you fine. Can you hear me?

I said can you hear me?

I *am* speaking up.

Yes, I am. Don't start with me.

No, I am not coming home.

You're not my mother, you're my stepmother.

No, that's not why I'm not coming home. I'm not coming home because if I came home, I'd die.

Of banality, that's what. Of boredom. I'd die of little rooms full of stingy little people like you.

No, it's not like that here. The rooms are very big.

I don't know.

I don't know.

I don't know.

Yes, he likes me.

I like him all right.

Well, I like him better than I like you, how's that?

Go ahead, laugh. If you weren't such a penny pinching old miser, I wouldn't have to be here at all, would I.

You *are* a penny pincher, and so is Father, and you both know it. You've both got little minds and tight purses.

You'd better hope I *don't* come home.

I told you why. You don't even listen.

Go ahead, have a good laugh at my expense. Don't blame me when you have a corpse on your hands.

(She hangs up, turns as sees the two men in the chairs as if she'd forgotten they were there.)

ELIZABETH

What are you two looking at?

(Both men are utterly deadpan throughout.)

WILBUR

Nothing, ma'am.

ELIZABETH

Were you listening to that?

ORVILLE

No, ma'am.

ELIZABETH

You better not have been. That was a private conversation.

WILBUR

Yes, ma'am.

ELIZABETH

I didn't bring you in here to listen in on my private conversations. Couple of bicycle repairmen. You ought to be grateful I got you in to see him. Not everybody gets in to see Mr. Morgan like this.

ORVILLE

My brother and I appreciate your help.

ELIZABETH

Your brother?

ORVILLE

Yes ma'am.

ELIZABETH

What are you talking about? What brother?

ORVILLE

Well, my brother here ...

WILBUR

(Nodding)

Ma'am.

ELIZABETH

You never said you were brothers.

ORVILLE

You never asked.

ELIZABETH

You don't look much alike.

(A beat while they look at each other.)

ORVILLE

All we want is to do is inquire on a matter of business, then we'll go.

ELIZABETH

Well, if you came for business, you came to the right place, that's for sure. He'll like the sound of that. God knows there's nothing but business going on around here. Dull, dreary business. But you'd better get one thing straight, boys. My business comes first, understand? Otherwise, you and your - brother - get

tossed out with the trash. Some of us have pressing issues that need to get resolved.

(John enters. He is middle-aged, vital, energetic, and very focussed. He's all business.)

JOHN

Gentlemen, let's get down to business. I have the heads of several railroads downstairs who want me to solve the transportation crisis in this country. I only have a few moments to spare.

WILBUR

We're ready, Mr. Morgan.

ELIZABETH

Excuse me, John, darling.

JOHN

Not now, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

I need to talk with you, John.

JOHN

I don't like being interrupted when business is being conducted.

ELIZABETH

You haven't started, John.

JOHN

Gentlemen, you will pardon this distraction. You find yourselves in the middle of a lover's quarrel.

ELIZABETH

Don't tell them our private affairs.

ORVILLE

We don't mind.

ELIZABETH

I mind!

ORVILLE

It won't take long, Mr. Morgan. If you'd allow us to present our plan, you'll see we've got our feet very much on the ground.

WILBUR

But our eyes on the stars!

ELIZABETH

Excuse me, *gentlemen*.

(To John)

Would you mind *terribly* if we took first things first around here?!

ORVILLE

I do apologize.

JOHN

Business is always first, Elizabeth. You know that.

(She takes him aside, whispering fiercely.)

ELIZABETH

I just talked to my stepmother on the ... the ...

ORVILLE

Telephone.

ELIZABETH

Thank you.

JOHN

And?

ELIZABETH

I was supposed to come home after the Fourth of July. She's been calling me on that thing every day. What am I supposed to tell her? We've either got to come to some sort of ... agreement .. or not.

JOHN

(Turning to the brothers.)

Gentlemen - if you don't mind. There's a sitting room across the hall.

WILBUR

Mr. Morgan, we have a very long ride back -

ORVILLE

(Interrupting)

We don't mind at all.

(He rises, but Wilbur hesitates...)

Wilbur? Come.

(He gestures for Wilbur to go ahead. Wilbur hesitates still, looking back and forth between the his brother and the other two, then gets up and exits, followed by Orville.)

JOHN

Elizabeth, you asked me to see these men and now you won't let me speak with them.

ELIZABETH

You can't bring yourself to call me Lizzie, can you.

JOHN

Your name is Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

But I prefer Lizzie. You know that. I've certainly told you. It's suits me. Elizabeth does not capture my essence.

JOHN

I was introduced to you as Elizabeth and Elizabeth you shall remain.

ELIZABETH

Until we're married.

JOHN

If we were married, then you should be Mrs. Morgan.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean if?

JOHN

(Pained)

Elizabeth ... not now, I beg of you -

ELIZABETH

We shall never be married. That's what you mean, isn't it.

JOHN

Elizabeth, please ...

ELIZABETH

The name is Lizzie.

JOHN

Must you be so stubborn about everything?

ELIZABETH

A name is not a small thing. A name is important. I call you John because I despise that other name.

JOHN

J.P. suits me perfectly.

ELIZABETH

It doesn't. It's awful. It's hard and brutal.

JOHN

Money is hard and brutal, and the name suits me just as Elizabeth suits you - a proper young lady from Massachusetts who would make a very nice wife if she so desired.

ELIZABETH

And she does.

JOHN

Does she really?

(She approaches him, suggestively.)

ELIZABETH

Yes. She does.

JOHN

You mustn't stand so close.

ELIZABETH

Why not? Is it wrong?

JOHN

It is, actually.

ELIZABETH

But you do so many things that are wrong. It lubricates the machine of your soul.

JOHN

I don't know what you mean.

ELIZABETH

You in your - what do you call them? - business arrangements, your *transactions*, your *deals*, the little *killings* that you make - you do that, don't you? - make killings? - perform ... killings? And isn't that wrong? To kill?

(She has, metaphorically at least, her tongue in his ear.)

JOHN

What I do isn't wrong. It's necessary -

ELIZABETH

Sometimes they're the same thing, aren't they. Necessary and wrong. Those railroad men downstairs - they've come to you for help, but you'll kill them off and you'll take over the railroads yourself, won't you. And then you'll say that you saved them.

(Like a serpent hissing in his ear ...)

John, darling, this is me. It's Lizzie. Confess. I don't hate you for that, I admire it. It draws me to you. My temperature rises when I think of it. I *feel* it. Every day, in so many ways, you murder people in cold blood ...

JOHN

Lizzie!

(Triumphant, she springs up and away.)

ELIZABETH

Ah! There, you said it. A small victory, but it's mine.

JOHN

Whatever I do is simply sound business practice.

ELIZABETH

You've got that carved into your bedpost, don't you - do you read it before you go to sleep at night? Shall I check?

(She clambers onto the bed, inspecting the bedposts.)

JOHN

Whatever is on my bedpost is not yet any of your business young lady! The fact you are here alone in my private chamber is bad enough.

ELIZABETH

Marry me.

JOHN

I can't.

ELIZABETH

Why not?

JOHN

Because I love you. And because you don't love me.

(She turns from her bedpost inspection, stung with the bitter truth. She climbs off the bed with as much dignity as possible.)

ELIZABETH

In my own way, John, I do.

JOHN

When you came here I thought you were a ... a woman. A good, simple, honest, decent woman. A woman of the honest middle class.

ELIZABETH

Upper middle, if you please.

JOHN

A loving woman.

ELIZABETH

A housewife is what you mean.

JOHN

Yes.

ELIZABETH

A domestic companion.

JOHN

Yes.

ELIZABETH

And is that what you want?

JOHN

Yes.

ELIZABETH

Is it really?

JOHN

I fell in love you for it. Then, slowly, I saw ... what you really are. Even then I couldn't stop loving you. But I'll tell you this, Elizabeth - Lizzie. I'm smart enough not to marry you.

ELIZABETH

You think I only want your money.

JOHN

It's true. You do.

ELIZABETH

What I want, John, is for you to allow me to dream a little. A man like you, a man of such greatness, has to want to do something with his money other than simply make it. Otherwise, it *is* only money. Why do you think I keep bringing these men to see you? Men with visions of tomorrow, visions of what might be. Dreams, John - the greatness of them. They're worth a little homicide now and then, aren't they?

It's not so much that I want your money, John, darling. I just want what your money can buy.

(A knock at the door.)

JOHN

Come in.

(The door opens. Wilbur and Orville appear.)

ELIZABETH

We're not done!

WILBUR

It's a long ride back to Ohio, Mr. Morgan.

ORVILLE

If you don't mind.

ELIZABETH

We do mind.

WILBUR

We must start back if we are to reach home safely.

ELIZABETH

Can't you two wait?

JOHN

Elizabeth, please - this was your idea. If you want me to listen to them, you'll have to stop talking.

ELIZABETH

Very well. My instinctive generosity has once again been my downfall.

(As she is halfway out the door.)

JOHN

Where are you going?

ELIZABETH

To chop wood.

JOHN

Whatever for?

ELIZABETH

(Again, smiling sweetly)

You want a simple hardworking woman, don't you? Your sweet and unaffected domesticated animal? I'm going to need tidy pieces of chopped up wood to cook your dinner.

(She goes.)

JOHN

Gentlemen, I apologize. Please sit.

(They do. John remains standing, perhaps pacing before as if this is his method of business interrogation. He produces a letter from his pocket.)

According to your letter, I am supposed to meet with two brothers. Where is the brother?

ORVILLE

He is my brother.

JOHN

I see. Nevertheless, proceed. What is your business?

ORVILLE

(He exchanges a look with Wilbur, then firmly, straightforwardly.)

Flight.

(Silence.)

JOHN

Flight?

ORVILLE

We intend to fly.

(Silence.)

JOHN

I don't think I understand.

ORVILLE

In the air.

JOHN

Gentlemen, I was given to understand you were men of purpose.

ORVILLE

We will build a aeroplane.

JOHN

A what?

ORVILLE

An aeroplane. A flying machine.

WILBUR

Wait, Orville, let me.

JOHN

Gentlemen, please, I cannot spend my time on nonsense.

WILBUR

It's not nonsense, Mr. Morgan! It's physics - air pressure, lift and drag, weight-to-speed ratios. We've done very careful calculations. We believe that we will be the first men to fly in the air.

JOHN

You actually sound serious about this.

WILBUR

We're very serious.

JOHN

And you want money, I suppose.

WILBUR

An investment.

ORVILLE

Not a gift.

WILBUR

An investment for which you will receive great dividends.

ORVILLE

As will the nation.

WILBUR

As will the world.

(Elizabeth re-enters, carrying a hatchet.)

ORVILLE

Mr. Morgan, Americans are meant to fly. Americans are intended not to be tied forever to the ground, forever crawling in the dirt, but rather high in the air, swift as swallows, conversing with angels. We will see that they do so.

JOHN

Sounds like hogwash to me. Sounds like a way to pry money out of my pocket.

ORVILLE

Mr. Morgan, you insult us.

JOHN

I don't mean to, gentlemen, but so be it.

ORVILLE

You question our integrity.

WILBUR

We will fly, Mr. Morgan, you can be sure of that. With or without you - we will fly.

JOHN

What if you do? What does it get us? Swift as swallows, conversing with angels? I'm content to converse with my fellow man, gentlemen, and men don't need to fly. Not American men anyway. There's too much to do down here on the ground. Don't you people know - it's railroads! The rails of this nation will soon be sown into one seamless web connecting north to south and east to west, connecting all points in between. What, gentlemen, will we care about flying after *that*?

ELIZABETH

(Outraged, confounded ...)

Are you blind?

JOHN

Lizzie, for God's sake.

ELIZABETH

Now he calls me Lizzie! - see that? Like it was nothing!

JOHN

You must forgive her manners, gentlemen.

ELIZABETH

I'm your domesticated animal! Cows don't have manners!

ORVILLE

We won't take any more of your time.

(He stands and prepares to go.)

Wilbur, come.

WILBUR

We will fly in the air, Mr. Morgan.

ELIZABETH

Listen to them! They will *fly in the air*! I want to fly in the air!

WILBUR

(Still to John)

You shall live to see it.

JOHN

I hope you do, sir. You're certainly not doing us any good down here.

ORVILLE

Wilbur, come!

(They exit.)

ELIZABETH

(Dull, flat)

You sent them away.

JOHN

I certainly did.

ELIZABETH

I found them, you know. I brought them here. They were interesting. Why can't you see that? Where is your sense of possibility? They want to fly!

JOHN

Not with my money! Dream merchants or con men, it doesn't matter which to me.

ELIZABETH

(Screaming)

Oh, you little man! They know of physics and air pressure! What do you know, you mean, petty, grubbing little man! Oh God! - why am I left to depend on tightwads for my happiness? Why does it all hang upon the whims of short-sighted, unfeeling skinflints and money-grubbers!

JOHN

I am what I am, Lizzie! What am I to do? What am I to be except myself? I do not dream, it's true. I labor and I produce. That is all. I am not ashamed of it. It is good, what I do. I do not destroy, I do not kill. I create. I leave behind me riches where before there was nothing but dust. And whether you like it or not, Elizabeth, it is my riches that would pay for your dreams. That's what you're really here for. Admit it.

(She approaches with the hatchet still in her hand.)

JOHN

(The hatchet ...)

Put that down.

ELIZABETH

(Almost to herself, contemplating the hatchet)

I don't think I will. I like the way it feels. It's got some heft to it. The cook said it would go through bone just like butter. I asked her.

(To John)

It's a lucky thing for you that I love you, John. Otherwise, this could all end very badly between us. As it is, though, I'm going home.

JOHN

Lizzie ...

ELIZABETH

You say my name now so easily.

JOHN

Lizzie ...

ELIZABETH

No, you're right, I'm afraid. About the money. It's more than just than just that. You'd never understand but *your* money is not the only way, John. I can go home, instead. When my parents die, whenever that may be, I shall inherit all their money. It won't be a fortune, that's true. Nothing like yours. Oh, what I could do with a fortune like yours! But father is a banker – and in Fall River he's quite something. When he dies, it will be all mine. I won't have to share it with anyone. Not even you, John. Or should I call you J.P., now that our romance is over? Or would you prefer, simply, Mr. Morgan?

JOHN

I love you.

ELIZABETH

And I love you. I really do. But it wasn't meant to be.

JOHN

I feel we'll always be together, in our hearts. We are ... perhaps – alike in that way.

ELIZABETH

I'm touched.

JOHN

May I kiss you good bye?

ELIZABETH

You may.

(He kisses her on the cheek. He looks at her, then to the door. He is awkward,

embarrassed ...)

JOHN

I have ... there are ...

ELIZABETH

People waiting. Yes, of course. The railroads. More meetings. More business. Go. Commit your killings. I'll show myself out. It's easier that way.

(He exits. She picks up the hatchet, goes to the phone and turns the crank.)

ELIZABETH

Fall River, Massachusetts, please. The Bordens. They're the only Bordens in Fall River with a telephone.

Hello? It's Lizzie. Can you hear me? I'm coming home. That's right. Tell Father also. I'm coming home.

(The lights fade.)

(Intermission.)

4: "Marilyn and Lee"

A bedroom in a small, slightly rundown house. Circa 1960.

Before the lights rise we already hear knocking on a door, and a female voice, heavy with Russian accent.

MARINA (O.S.)

Lee? Lee, you are late for work.

Lights rise on the bedroom.

A door to the rest of house, another to an adjoining bathroom, and a third to a closet. All three are closed. There is also a window.

A single bed. The bed sheets are rumpled.

On the bed is a forlorn-looking man in his mid-20s. He is thin, pursed-lipped, pale, droopy-eyed. As we will soon see, he is also paranoid, dyspeptic, sarcastic, and arrogant.

At the moment he is sitting, slumped-shouldered, on the bed.

LEE

I ain't ready yet.

MARINA (O.S.)

You lose job if you are late.

LEE

I ain't goin' 'til I'm ready and I ain't ready! Now go on.

MARINA (O.S.)

They call me at house and ask for you. They don't know where you are. If you lose job, is not good.

LEE

Don't you worry about what's good and what ain't. You let me worry about that.

(Silence)

You hear me?

MARINA (O.S.)

Okay, Lee. I wait out here with Mrs. Karshon. I wait until I see you go to work.

(Silence. Tentatively, he unlocks the door and peers out, looking both ways. Nothing. He closes the door and locks it.

Now he turns and glowers at the closed bathroom door with renewed resolve. His voice drips with sardonic bile ...)

LEE

Oh, Miss Mortenson! I wonder if you might consider moving your fancy ass out of there sometime before noon.

Miss Mortenson, I'm speaking to you!

(From within, we hear "Miss Mortenson's" voice - breathy and girlish but with exacting diction.)

MARILYN

I'll thank you to lose that tone.

LEE

And I'll thank you to get your tail-end out of the crapper. I got a job. I'm late.

MARILYN

I'm not coming out until you speak to me politely.

(He gets up and goes to the door.)

LEE

Now you listen to me, Miss Mortenson. I've had about enough of your shenanigans. You hear me? You get your can out of the can before I break down that door and remove you all by myself.

MARILYN

Go ahead and try it, big boy.

(He grabs the door knob and rattles it.)

LEE

I ain't got time for this, Miss Mortenson. I gotta get to work and I intend to give you the ol' one-two before I go.

MARILYN

And just what makes you think I want your dumb-ol' one-two? Maybe today I want the ol' three-four. Or maybe the five-six. You have no idea what I want.

LEE

Will you get outta that damn bathroom?!

(He rattles the doorknob again, this time ferociously.)

MARILYN

You need to control your anger, little man. I don't appreciate people talking to me that way. I associate with a very high class of people - professional athletes, politicians, literary people. I was married to a playwright once, you know, and he certainly never talked to me the way you do.

(Lee slumps against the door in resignation. Arguing with this infuriating woman is futile. She wears him out.)

However, the lock on the door clicks and the door starts to open. Lee is slumped against it and it can only open an inch or so. Through the crack we get a glimpse of Marilyn: blonde hair, red lipstick, an ankle-length dressing robe, loosely drawn together with a belt.

MARILYN

Well, get out of the way, ya big lug.

(She shoves against the door again and he steps out of the way.)

MARILYN

Don't look so pitiful, I'm out aren't I?

(She goes to a suitcase and proceeds to select a dress, shoes, jewelry, etc.)

LEE

Now you listen here. Ain't nothin' pitiful about me. If anybody's pitiful around here, it's you. You hear me Miss, Mortenson?

MARILYN

I wish you'd stop calling me that.

LEE

It's your name, ain't it?

MARILYN

No, it 'ain't'.

LEE

Don't you mock me, pissy missy. Anybody mocks me, they get this —

(His fist)

— in the kisser. Pow. Just like that.

MARILYN

The name is Monroe.

LEE

Not to me it ain't.

MARILYN

To you and everybody else.

LEE

It's Mortenson.

MARILYN

Not anymore. I changed it a long time ago.

LEE

Mortenson is your name and I plan on calling you by it. That's a privilege I reserve for myself. The rest of the world can call you Monroe if they want to. I call you Mortenson because I know you like nobody else knows you. Isn't that right, Miss Mortenson?

(He takes her face in his hand and pivots it towards him.)

MARILYN

You're mussing my face.

LEE

Isn't it!

MARILYN

Yes!

(He releases her. She looks back into suitcase and continues making her selections.)

If you insist.

(This was meant as a retraction, but he refuses to take it as one. He's too busy strutting now, the cock of the walk.)

LEE

I do insist. Because you have a lot to learn and it's about time you learned it. I only know you two days but I already know you better than you know yourself. And you know what I know. There's only one man who can give you the business – and I mean really give it to you so you stay right here for two full days. And that man would be yours truly. And the sooner you admit that, the better off you're gonna be.

(It occurs to him now, however, that she has no apparent intention of repairing to the bed.)

MARILYN

Do you like this one?

(She holds up a silver lamé gown.)

LEE

What're you doin' that for anyway? You don't have to put on all those fancy clothes for me to give you the business. I'll give you the business any ol' which way.

MARILYN

The one-two. The business. Maybe you're not giving me either one.

LEE

What're you talkin' about? What the hell else am I gonna do? That's what you came here for, ain't it? You said so.

MARILYN

Maybe I lied. I like this one.

(She means the lamé gown. She puts it aside and goes on making more selections.)

LEE

That's all you wanted for two whole days now. You can't get enough of it.

MARILYN

Sometimes I think you don't know anything about me at all.

LEE

What's that supposed to mean?

MARILYN

You silly little man. You really thought that that's what I wanted? From you?

LEE

Do not call me a little man. I AM NOT LITTLE!

MARILYN

Well, you're not exactly big.

LEE

You shut your mouth! That's not what you been sayin' for two days!

(Knocking at the bedroom door.)

MARINA (O.S.)

Lee? Who is that? Who is it you talk to?

LEE

What do you want?

MARINA (O.S.)

Who is there with you?

(Sotto voce to Marilyn; meaning the bathroom)

LEE

Get back in there.

MARINA (O.S.)

Who do you talk to?

LEE

Nobody! Myself!

(He's shooing Marilyn, with all her clothes, etc., through the bathroom door.)

MARILYN

Stop shoving me.

LEE

Go on, get!

MARINA (O.S.)

Lee, let me inside door!

(The door knob rattles again.)

Let me inside!

(He closes the bathroom door, goes swiftly to the bedroom door, unlocks it. Marina, also 20s, pretty definitely not glamorous, confronts him.)

MARINA

You are late work, Lee.

LEE

I am not late.

MARINA

You are late work.

LEE

I know when I have to be at work. What do you know about when I have to be at work?

MARINA

They call the house. Why do you think I come here? *You are late work!*

LEE

You're like a God damn cuckoo clock, you know that?

MARINA

What is cuckoo clock?

LEE

You, that's what! Cuckoo cuckoo cuckoo!

(She gives him the gimlet eye and begins to poke around the bedroom as if she might find someone hidden.)

MARINA

Who do you talk to in here?

LEE

I told you, I was talking to myself. Beats trying to make out what you're saying to me.

(She's busy snooping. This doesn't get to her, not anymore.)

MARINA

You are mean to me when you say this kind thing.

LEE

Kind of thing, for Christ's sake. Why you can't learn the damn language like everybody else.

MARINA

I am here one year. I learn plenty in one year. I learn more English in one year than you learn Russian in two.

LEE

That's 'cause Russian don't make no sense.

MARINA

Russian make plenty sense. It's you don't try hard. You always want everything easy.

(She is at the bed. He hurries to stop her.)

LEE

Don't mess with that bed.

MARINA

Why not?

LEE

There ain't nothin' in the bed, you can see that.

MARINA

I am to *make* bed, you idiot. You live in boarding house, maybe, but I am still wife.

LEE

I don't want you makin' the bed. I'll make the bed.

MARINA

You never make bed in whole life.

(But she gives up on the bed and really looks at him for the first time since she entered.)

MARINA

Lee, who is with you? Who do you talk to?

(He's silent, sullen.)

What is this? What happens here?

(A pause. He looks at her.)

LEE

I'll tell you on one condition. You don't open your mouth about it to nobody. Nobody, you hear me?

MARINA

I hear very good.

(Another slight pause. Lee speaks more softly so as not to let Marilyn hear.)

LEE

I'm gonna be famous.

MARINA

How do you be famous?

LEE

Gonna go to Hollywood.

MARINA

What do you say to me? What does this mean?

(He's actually been thinking along these lines, so it's not completely improvised, though he's never said it out loud before.)

LEE

It means I'm gonna go to Hollywood and be famous and you're gonna be sad about the day you ever left me.

MARINA

What do you do in Hollywood?

LEE

Lotta things. I could be a script writer. Gotta lotta stories up here.

(He taps his temple.)

I was playin' some of them out. That's what script writers do. They act it all out before they write it down. Or a director. You know, I was practicin' sayin' 'action!' and tellin' everybody to act the way I tell 'em to.

MARINA

Lee, what do you say? You are not Hollywood person.

LEE

Not yet. But I been meetin' some Hollywood type people lately. Been makin' some pretty nice contacts. It's all about who you know in that business. And I been gettin' to know some pretty tip-top people.

MARINA

How do you meet Hollywood people?

LEE

That's for me to know and you to find out.

MARINA

Lee, you know how to make up story all right. But not in Hollywood.

(She pushes past him, heading for the bathroom door. He leaps ahead of her, blocking the way.)

Get out of way.

LEE

You can't go in there.

MARINA

I have to use.

LEE

Go use the other one. They got two bathrooms here, just like civilized folks. Americans all got two bathrooms, even cheap-ass boarding houses -- not like Russians.

MARINA

I want I use this bathroom.

LEE

Well you can't.

(Slight beat.)

MARINA

Someone is in bathroom.

LEE

No.

MARINA

Who is inside bathroom?

LEE

Nobody.

MARINA

Then why do I stand out here and have to pee.

LEE

I can't tell you that.

MARINA

I find out you cheat on me, Lee – I go home to Russia.

LEE

Don't you worry about that –

MARINA

I am meaning what I say. I go home to Russia. I don't care about all this Texas, *Texas*. Big stinky thing, this Texas. Is hot, everybody smile all time. Smile smile. Is fake. Give me Russia. People frown. Is honest. Not nice – but honest. I not trust people who smile all time. I go home like this –

(She snaps her finger.)

– if I see you with woman. You and I married, Lee. Maybe we not live together now. But to me, is no difference. You do not forget this. Russia is old-fashion country, I am old-fashion girl.

(This has made her a little sad, and she tries a new approach – softer, sentimental.)

Do you remember how I meet you?

(She's hit a tender spot, even if he's doesn't like to admit it.)

LEE

'Course I remember.

MARINA

At trade union dance. Old fashion. Not fancy.

(The strains of a Russian waltz are heard, thinly, distantly ...)

They are facing each other now, almost touching.)

MARINA

You ask my friend about me. She introduce us.

LEE

You want to dance with me?

(He may be re-enacting what he said then.)

MARINA

I think you are from Estonia, with funny accent.

(He smiles, they step into a light, easy waltz. The music is faint and tinny, far away. She is smiling at last. He seems more saddened by the memory.)

MARINA

You dance one dance with me, then you want phone number.

LEE

Well you gave it to me, didn't you?

MARINA

(Mock indignant.)

I did not give you!

LEE

Well how the heck did you end up here in Texas then?

MARINA

Lee, I did not give you phone number.

(He breaks off the dance and the music fades. He's suddenly full of rage again.)

LEE

You know, you are a piece of work. You gave me your phone number and you know it, and there ain't no point in sayin' it ain't so. I don't know what's wrong with you God damn lying bitches that you can't admit something like that!

MARINA

(Steely, unafraid)

Lee, I did not give you phone number because I did not *have phone!* You remember? When we start to go together, you have to come by, leave note!

(Beat. He is non-plussed by this. But it depresses her, and she is back to her former, more melancholy self.)

We see each other again with friends. I want to see you, Lee. I like you from start. But I do not give you phone number.

LEE

(Humbled, softly under his breath.)

That's right I ... I remember.

MARINA

It all feels like long time ago. Too far, Lee.

LEE

(Suddenly vulnerable ...)

Honey, I don't know why we can't live together again. I hate living in this house – all's I got is a single room, and Mrs. Karshon's a bitch, and her food is crap, and I miss the girls. And you.

We'll get our own house again. Live together, like we should. I want to be with my girls.

MARINA

Is not possible, Lee.

LEE

Why not?

MARINA

Is not ... is not same. When I meet you in Russia, you are sweet, gentle man. We laugh, we go to park, we dance, go to coffee house. We have ... good time, Lee. We have such good time. Now you are angry all time, you have all kinds idea in head. You hate Russia, you hate America, you hate this one, you hate that one.

LEE

That's all gonna change, baby. Now I'm gonna be famous.

MARINA

Lee, you work in warehouse. Nothing change.

LEE

Forget it then. You don't understand.

MARINA

You are right, Lee. I not understand anything no more. Nothing. I miss home.

LEE

What are you sayin'? You want to go back to Russia?

MARINA

I want to go to where you are. But I don't know where this place is.

LEE

What are you talkin' about? I'm right here. What's the matter with you?

MARINA

Lee, look at me. You know is not true.

(He allows her to come closer, to touch him.)

You go somewhere, disappear, like rabbit in hat – gone. Poof. Lee I meet at trade union dance, Lee I marry, Lee who is father of my girls – he is gone. And here am I, in Texas, United State. Is no one here for me. Is lonely Lee. I want you ...

(She thinks about the proper verb.)

... to come back.

(He appreciates the effort about the verb and he's moved by it even if he doesn't speak.)

MARINA

You see? I try. Because I want to be real American, Lee. Just like I want to be real wife.

LEE

I know you do and we're gonna get there, baby. I'm the realest kind of American there is. Once I get to Hollywood, I'll send you for. You stick by me and you

won't have nothin' to worry about.

MARINA

Is too late not to worry.

LEE

We're gonna be just fine, you and me. I took you out of that cold-assed snowball of a country and I put you down here where the grass is green and the air is sweet and the warm breezes blow all year long. Didn't I now?

MARINA

You did this, Lee, yes — is true. But I am honest with you now when I tell you — is November and I like when November is cold. November is cold month. I do not like so much the warm breeze all year long. Sometime I like the cold wind also.

LEE

You know sometimes there's just no pleasin' you. You're just like all the rest. I give and I give and I give and it only makes you want more, something different. Well, to hell with you. Go on, go back to Russia if that's what you want so bad.

MARINA

Is better than this, Lee.

LEE

Yeah, well you go ahead. But if you do, you're gonna find out you made the biggest mistake of your life. Cause I am gonna be big. I'm gonna be the biggest thing you ever saw.

MARINA

I go now. You want say good bye to the girls?

LEE

The girls are here?

MARINA

Of course. I bring them with. I not leave them at home.

(This affects him deeply.)

LEE

You tell 'em Daddy's busy. I'll see 'em again soon.  
Everything's gonna be different by then.

MARINA

You not say good bye to them?

LEE

I just told you what! Now go on if you're goin'! Go  
the hell back to your own house!

MARINA

Don't be yelling at me.

LEE

You all jes' get the hell out of here and don't come  
crawling back when you find out what a mistake you  
made! You hear me?

MARINA

I tell them Daddy not feeling like self. I say Daddy  
sick. Is truth. But I also wait for you to leave.  
Because you say good bye to girls – if you like or if  
you don't.

(She exits.)

Marilyn emerges from the bathroom, now  
sheathed in one of her voluptuous, clinging,  
shimmering silver lamé dresses.)

LEE

Jesus Henry Christ. I don't know what kinda movie  
you're makin' but that's sure one hell of a costume.  
Anyhow, you win. I gotta get ready for work.

(He goes into the bathroom, stripping off  
his shirt and leaving the door open.)

As she assembles the rest of her outfit –  
shoes, jewelry, etc., she poses a question  
that's been on her mind a long time, though  
she disguises as idle musing.)

MARILYN

Lee – what would happen – I mean, what would you say – if you found out – that I'm not really in town to shoot a movie like I told you?

LEE

Why else would you be in this shit hole?

MARILYN

Oh there's a reason.

LEE

Well, what is it?

(Lee appears in the bathroom door rubbing himself with a wet washcloth.)

MARILYN

It's another man.

(Lee slowly stops his rubbing.)

LEE

Who the hell do you know in Dallas, Texas? You said yourself you never been here before.

MARILYN

Nobody. Isn't that funny?

LEE

You got me in stitches.

MARILYN

It's like a riddle. I'm here to see a man I know who's in Dallas, but I don't know anybody in Dallas!

Who could it be? You want to guess?

LEE

How am I suppose to guess something like that? Don't even make sense.

MARILYN

Oh, go ahead. Put your mind to it. Start supposing.

LEE

I don't got time for that. I got a job.

(He goes back into the bathroom.)

MARILYN

You're always late for that job. You've been late every morning for the past two days.

LEE

That's 'cause for two days I had better things to do than stack books. Unlike this morning.

MARILYN

You don't want to guess because you don't want to know. Do you, little man?

LEE

I am not little.

MARILYN

You go on and stack your books all day like a good little man.

LEE

Stop callin' me little!

MARILYN

You don't like that?

LEE

I ain't little, pissy missy!

MARILYN

So why don't you guess.

LEE

Maybe I don't want to guess!

MARILYN

Go on, little man, just one guess.

LEE

STOP CALLING ME LITTLE MAN!

(He stands there in a fury, then seems to

remember he doesn't have a shirt on. He takes another swipe at his torso, then throws the washcloth aside. He goes to a chest of drawers and takes out a white undershirt which he slips on over his head.)

MARILYN

If you don't guess, you won't find out. And I know you want to know.

(Lee, still burning with anger, is nevertheless hooked.)

LEE

Gimme a hint.

MARILYN

You want a little hinty-poo? Why didn't you say so?  
(She stands up, holding the hand mirror as if it were a microphone, and sings breathily ...)

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday ... Mr. President, happy birthday to you.

(Lee stands, shirt still untucked, not knowing whether to be doubtful or enraged.)

LEE

What are you talkin' about?

MARILYN

He's comin' here today. Just for one day. But that's all I need.

LEE

You can't get near him. You may think you're big stuff out there Hollywood but he's got all kinds of ways to keep people away from him. All those secret service agents and assistants and brothers. Hell, you couldn't even get past just the brothers, so damn many of 'em.

MARILYN

Oh, didn't you know? Maybe I forgot to say. We're already friends. Good friends. The best kind of friends. We've been friends for years now.

LEE

How the hell did you swing that?

MARILYN

Oh, *I* didn't swing it. He swung it. But he sort of wanted to keep me on the side, so to speak. And I don't like to be on the side. I like to be right square in front. So I decided to do something about it.

LEE

He don't even know you're here, does he.

MARILYN

(Shakes her head no impishly.)

No, but trust me, he'll be very glad to see me. Every time he sees me he's very glad. Of course, what he doesn't realize is that, this time, he's going to take me back to Washington with him. I'm going to be his wife.

LEE

Are you *crazy*? Girl, you got the craziest ideas. You ever notice he's already got a wife?

MARILYN

I know. And I feel bad about that. And I know he'd never just leave her for me — not without some reason. But I'm going to give him a reason. He's going to give a speech at the Trade Mart today. I'll be waiting for him there, dressed like this, and when he gets up to give his speech I'm going to run up to the podium and throw my arms around him and tell the world all about him and me — right into the microphone. After that he won't have any choice but to make me an honest woman.

LEE

Damn you're one crazy bitch. He ain't never gonna fall for that. And even if he wanted to, he'd never pull off marryin' you.

MARILYN

He can do anything he wants. A man like that — he doesn't pull the strings that make you jump. He gets somebody *else* to pull them. And people don't even know he's pulling their strings. They think they're doing

their own jumping.

LEE

Never gonna happen.

MARILYN

For all you know, he's pullin' your strings right now.

LEE

Nobody's pulling any o' *my* strings.

MARILYN

Not that you know of. But you see — you wouldn't know if he was or if he wasn't.

LEE

Nobody is pulling my strings.

MARILYN

(Taunting ...)

Mmm-hmmmm.

(He comes back towards her again — as he does whenever he's flailing.)

LEE

I said nobody's pulling my strings!

MARILYN

If you say so.

LEE

I do say so!

(Pause. They stare at each other. She is unimpressed.)

MARILYN

Anyway, there's not much to talk about, is there. I have to fix my hair. Get myself to the Trade Mart.

(She goes into the bathroom but leaves the door open. He talks loudly enough for her to hear.)

LEE

I'm gonna admit something, Miss Mortenson. You've got the ability to tick me off. You know that? You have got that power, I'll give you that.

You hear me? I'm talking to you.

You've got the power to piss me off and someday you're going to go too far and I'm going to do something you won't like much!

(As he speaks he goes into the closet and retrieves a rifle and ammunition belt. He takes a shell and loads the rifle.)

Marilyn appears in the bathroom doorway. She remains in the doorway, framed and delicious, and knowing it.)

MARILYN

And what would that be?

(He lifts the rifle to his shoulder and aims it at her. She is never, not even for a moment, in the least bit intimidated by this.)

MARILYN

I believe that is what my psychiatrist would call a phallic symbol.

LEE

You know what, Miss Mortenson, I had about enough o' you for one day. And maybe for a lifetime. You ain't goin' nowhere. No Trade Mart, no Washington D.C. Nowhere. Dead or alive you're stayin' right here.

MARILYN

(Her best breathy seduction voice)

It's so ... *big*.

LEE

Big enough to put you six feet under. Now, you gonna stay here the hard way or the easy way?

MARILYN

(Moving towards him)

You don't want to hurt me. You like me.

LEE

That's why I'm asking you nice.

MARILYN

But you need me, baby. You couldn't live without me.

LEE

I don't need you.

MARILYN

Why don't you just go ahead and pull the trigger then?

LEE

Who says I won't?

(With one finger she pushes the barrel away and down. He lets her do it. She was right, he couldn't pull the trigger on her.)

As a consolation, she does plant a very big, very wet kiss on his mouth.)

MARILYN

Poor Lee. Everybody seems to be leaving you, just when you want them to stay. Even your wife is leaving you.

LEE

She ain't doin' any such thing. You heard what she said. She said she wants me back.

MARILYN

That's not what I hear. What I heard was another woman who can walk away from you anytime she wants. She might not want to. But she can. And she will.

(He goes to her, takes her face in his hands.)

LEE

Now you listen, pissy missy. Maybe you walk out that door, and maybe I can't stop you, but you ain't gonna go with a lie on those slutty red lips of yours. You

know I am the only one for you, and I know you know it, and that's all there is to it.

MARILYN

You're hurting my face.

LEE

Good. Maybe that'll make you face facts.

MARILYN

I think it's you who needs to face a few things, Lee. It's over. That's what I've been trying to tell you.

(She makes a final collection of her things but she has no plans to take her suitcase.)

LEE

Ain't nothin' over! It's *me*. I am the one. I am the one who's ... who's ... who's nobody else is ... is like ...

(Tangled in his own syntax, he breaks out of it in a fury.)

IT'S ME, GOD DAMN IT!

MARILYN

Lee, honey, in some ways, I wish it was. Life could be simpler with you. Everything is so ... *complicated* with him. All those important meetings, all those Secret Service men, all those brothers, all that *power*. But it's a price a girl has to pay. For a man who can truly *satiate* her.

LEE

I'll kill you.

MARILYN

No you won't, Lee.

LEE

What makes you so sure?

MARILYN

Well, you had your chance, didn't you. And you couldn't even make that gun go bang.

(She goes to him and busses him on the nose.)

MARILYN (CON'T)

I always liked you. But let's face it. There's really no comparison between you and the president of the United States of America. He's the most powerful man on earth, and you, you're ... well, you're just Lee. And there's nothing much either one of us can do about that now, is there.

Now I have to get downtown. I have an appointment to keep. Fortunately I have a little time because there's going to be a motorcade all through downtown. It's going to pass right by where you work in fact. Isn't that a funny coincidence? Right there in front of your nose. I'll bet you could almost reach out and touch him if you wanted to. Except that's my job.

(Her purse is all packed up and she's put together. She looks fabulous.)

Good bye Lee. I really am sorry it had to end like this. But you don't blame me, do you? You're not really angry at *me* I hope.

LEE

I love you.

MARILYN

Aren't you the sweetest thing. I don't love you, Lee. We had a good time but it wasn't love. I'm already in love with someone. I just needed a place to stay for a couple days. I hope you're not too angry.

(She crosses to the bedroom door.)

I certainly hope no one recognizes me.

(She exits.)

He watches her go. He struggles with himself over some decision. Then with a deadly calm, he reaches for the rifle, already loaded with one bullet. He takes two more shells from the box and puts them in his pocket.

He goes to the window, opens it, and goes out.

After a moment, we hear ...)

MARINA

Lee? Lee, who is this woman? She look like movie star.  
Who is this ...?

(Marina appears in the door, sees that the  
room is empty.)

MARINA

Lee?

(She sucks her teeth and sighs)  
You don't even say good bye to girls.

(She goes to the bed and begins to  
straighten the covers. She finds a shell,  
looks at it curiously, and sets it on the  
bedside table. Then she finishes making the  
bed until it is tidy and neat.

She goes to the bedside table, takes the  
shell, puts it in her pocket, and leaves the  
room.

The lights dim, until only the bed is lit in  
a isolated glow. Then that fades also.)

5: "Tonya's Lament"

In the dark, we hear the thunder of applause and cheers. A narrow spot of light rises on Tonya, 20s, who wears her garish, sequined ice skating uniform, too much make up, and her ice skates, and holds a baton in one hand. She is far downstage, acknowledging her fans. She is radiant, and seems to be absorbing their cheers through her skin.

TONYA

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you so much!

(The audience roars)

I love you too!

(More shouting, stomping, applauding)

Oh, listen to you!

A MAN'S VOICE

(From the dark...)

Tonya?

TONYA

(Over her shoulder)

Go back to sleep!

(To the audience, which is really going nuts now...)

It's too much! I don't deserve this! Well, no - I do, actually ... but still! You're all so kind!

THE MAN'S VOICE

Tonya, what are you doing?

TONYA

Leave me alone! I'm busy.

(To the audience.)

Am I everything you wanted me to be? Am I?

(They roar their approval.)

Oh, I love you too! You're everything I wanted too!

THE MAN'S VOICE

(From the dark)

There's nobody there, Tonya. You're not at the rink.

(Then, in one sudden moment: the noise of the audience cuts, and the lights come up full on a modern bedroom.

JEFF, 20s is in the bed. It was his voice. He is the most ordinary of ordinary guys.)

JEFF

Jesus Christ. A person can't even sleep through the night around here.

TONYA

I told you not to pay any attention.

JEFF

Like I can help it.

(He gets a look at her.)

Your skates're on.

TONYA

And what's wrong with that?

JEFF

You're gonna tear up the carpet.

TONYA

I don't care.

JEFF

You better care. You don't have the kind of money to go tearing up your carpet.

TONYA

After I win, I'll have plenty of money. I'll get endorsements. I'll be famous. I'll be ... I'll be one of those people you talk about.

JEFF

I don't talk about any people. That's why I get along okay.

(He buries his head under the pillow.)

TONYA

You don't believe that.

JEFF

Sure I do.

TONYA

I'm going to take my place in history. Right up there with ...

(She gestures vaguely...)

...a lot of other people.

JEFF

(Still under the pillow.)

Uh huh.

TONYA

Significant people.

JEFF

Gotcha.

TONYA

Oh, I don't get any support around here!

JEFF

(Head out from under the pillow...)

Not at three in the morning you don't!

TONYA

I need support. Great people need support!

JEFF

You say that to me everyday, Tonya, but you never tell me what I'm supposed to do.

TONYA

You're supposed to just *know*. That's your job.

JEFF

I quit that job, remember? Same day we got divorced.

TONYA

Why don't you just go ahead and say it? You don't believe in me. You never did. You didn't believe in me

when you were married to me, and you don't now. You never thought I was supposed to be up there in the hall of fame right alongside ... alongside ...

JEFF

Alongside who?

TONYA

I'm trying to think! Gimme a second!

JEFF

You think. I gotta take a leak.

(He disappears into the bathroom.)

TONYA

I am destined for greatness, mister, and don't you forget it!

(The SL door clicks shut and the SR door opens. George III pokes his head inside.)

GEORGE III

(Lasciviously)

Did someone say greatness?

TONYA

(Familiarly)

Get in here, I need you.

GEORGE III

Anything you say, you delicious little minx.

(He goes to her and they make out. She pulls away from him, tottering a bit on her skates.)

TONYA

Knock it off. I don't have time for that!

GEORGE III

I like it when you fight like a filthy little ferret, you fabulous slut.

TONYA

I'm sick of you pawing at me. Does it ever occur to you that a woman might have her own needs?

GEORGE III

What are you talking about?

TONYA

I am the greatest ice skater that ever lived.

GEORGE III

The greatest what?

TONYA

Ice skater. Skating -

(She points to her skates.)

- on ice. Get it?

GEORGE III

What a strange ambition.

TONYA

It's not strange! You're the one who's strange. I want to win! Nothing strange about that.

GEORGE III

And you think I can help you.

TONYA

You've got your ways. Your spies, your lackeys!

GEORGE III

I've got my common sense, that's what I've got. And you're never going to win dressed in that ridiculous piece of underwear, I don't care how much glitter you put on it. You look like a slut. That's fine with me. I like sluts. But sluts don't win ice skating contests.

TONYA

Oh what do you know, you never even heard of ice skating! I like my costume!

GEORGE III

Of course you do. You're a slut.

TONYA

I'm not changing the costume.

GEORGE III

Exactly what a slut would say.

TONYA

You're nobody! You're nothing! You're a has-been, a used-to-be. I'm the one who's something around here.

GEORGE III

If I'm nothing, then why are you asking me for help?

TONYA

Because I want action. I want something done. You're a king, get on it!

GEORGE III

I thought I was a has-been.

TONYA

You're a has-been king but you're still a king!

(A toilet flushes off stage.)

He's coming. Back ... back!

GEORGE III

Only for the likes of you, you magnificent hussy.

(George retreats back through the US door.  
The SL door opens and Jeff re-enters.)

JEFF

I really wish you'd take the skates off. I'm not making alimony payments just so you can spend it on new carpeting.

(He goes to the SR door.)

TONYA

Where are you going?

JEFF

I'm hungry.

TONYA

Does it ever occur to you kiss me?

JEFF

(Confounded - not snide)

I thought that's why we got divorced. So we didn't have to do that.

(He exits.)

Frederick slides out from under the bed.)

FREDERICK

My darling.

TONYA

Frederick! Thank God you're here.

(She totters to him, he kisses her. She likes it. Swoons a bit - as much as her ice skates will allow.)

FREDERICK

I don't want to leave you like this.

TONYA

You're not leaving ... ?

FREDERICK

I must.

TONYA

Then take me with you!

FREDERICK

Your destiny is here.

TONYA

No, it's not. I'm giving up. I don't care anymore! I don't want any of this.

FREDERICK

That's because you haven't found your truest self. But I have found it. I understand the great void in your life!

TONYA

You do?

FREDERICK

And I have the solution. This may sound strange to your ears, but you must trust in me. I know this is true.

TONYA

What Frederick?

FREDERICK

The answer to your fate, the thing you are destined to become ... now don't laugh.

TONYA

I'm not laughing.

FREDERICK

You must become an ice skater!

TONYA

... what?

FREDERICK

Don't fight it, my dear. I see it all. It shall be beautiful!

TONYA

I'm already an ice skater!

FREDERICK

It shall be hard work, Tonya, my love, but it will all come true.

TONYA

What do you think I do now?

FREDERICK

I don't care what you are. I love you despite everything.

TONYA

Despite *what* everything? I need your help.

FREDERICK

My dear, no one can skate on the ice *for* you. You must do it on your own!

TONYA

Oh God ...

FREDERICK

Do not despair. The road is long and difficult for the true skater. You must become one with the ice.

TONYA

I just need to *win*, you idiot!

FREDERICK

Win?

TONYA

I'll never be one of you if I don't beat her first!

FREDERICK

I didn't know one could win at ice skating. I thought one just ... sort of ... *did* it.

TONYA

There are judges! Prizes! Endorsements! Eternal fame!

FREDERICK

Oh my.

TONYA

And the judges don't like me because I don't have breeding.

FREDERICK

I see. Well. Do you know what I think?

TONYA

What?

FREDERICK

I think it may be the costume.

TONYA

There's nothing wrong with my costume!

FREDERICK

It doesn't really sing, does it.

TONYA

Stop it with my costume! I like my costume! I have a destiny, you said so yourself! I am part of the great tide of time. And you're right, I can't run away from it. And I won't. I feel the weight of history on me and either I'm going to lift it up and carry it on my shoulders or it's going crush me and I'll be dead and gone and no one will remember me.

FREDERICK

Well said.

TONYA

Thank you.

FREDERICK

But it occurs to me now, at this moment, for the first time, that you may be mad. Do you think you may be insane?

JEFF (O.S.)

Hey Tonya!

TONYA

Get back under there.

(She means the bed.)

FREDERICK

You are, aren't you.

JEFF (O.S.)

Ya got any beer?

TONYA

You heard me.

FREDERICK

I shan't. You've got dirty socks under there.

(He goes to the SL door.)

JEFF (O.S.)

Never mind I found some!

FREDERICK

I'll believe I'll try the indoor privy.

(Frederick exits through the SL door. Jeff enters SR door with a sandwich and a bottle of beer.)

JEFF

Man, this hits the spot.

TONYA

I don't know how you can eat at a time like this.

JEFF

What time *is* it?

TONYA

That's not what I mean, you idiot!

JEFF

Okay, okay! Jeeze.

(He belches and takes a bite. Pause)

TONYA

Why don't you love me?

JEFF

I ...

(He realizes his mouth is full. He chews. Swallows.)

I do love you.

TONYA

No you don't.

JEFF

Yes I do.

TONYA

Then why don't you care about me?

JEFF

I ...

(Again, he's taken a bite. He chews. Swallows.)

I do care about you. I just don't know how to help you. You're not telling me what you need. See that's the problem. A woman never says what she needs. She thinks a man is just supposed to know.

TONYA

Maybe that's because a woman doesn't always know herself.

JEFF

Maybe that's why a man has to ...

(He stops himself...)

TONYA

Has to what?

JEFF

I just remembered. We're divorced. I don't have to do this.

(He goes to the US door.)

TONYA

You see? You don't love me! Where are you going?

JEFF

If you could just say it, Tonya. Maybe it'd all work out.

TONYA

Say what?

JEFF

I'm going to get dressed and get outta here. I can't take this.

(He exits.)

TONYA

You're selfish! That's the problem. Men are selfish! None of you can stop for one moment and think of me!

(Lizzie appears at the window, hatchet in hand.)

LIZZIE

Then what, may I ask, do you keep asking them for?  
(She hops through the window, buries the hatchet in the window sill, walks right up to Tonya and plants a fierce kiss. Tonya goes for it.)

Men can't help you. They don't understand dreams, not like we do. Don't you know that by now?

TONYA

You're right. My God - you're so right!

LIZZIE

Of course I'm right.

TONYA

You understand - ! About doing great things, about being who you have to be! Don't you!

LIZZIE

You better believe it.

TONYA

Then tell me. What am I going to do?

LIZZIE

Well first of all, lose the teddy.

TONYA

This is my costume!

LIZZIE

I know. Lose it.

TONYA

I like this costume!

LIZZIE

In that case you've got one other choice.

TONYA

What is it?

LIZZIE

See this?

(She pries the hatchet out of the window sill.)

You chop her up into little bits. Tough to win a skating contest when you're all chopped up in little pieces.

TONYA

Oh my God.

LIZZIE

He's got nothing to do with it.

TONYA

I can't do that.

LIZZIE

Then get somebody else to do it. That's even better.

TONYA

I couldn't. That's not right.

LIZZIE

Did you say right? You want to do what's *right*?

TONYA

Yes. Of course.

LIZZIE

I guess you don't mind coming in second place then, do you.

TONYA

I didn't say that.

LIZZIE

It's one or the other, sweetheart.

TONYA

That's not true.

LIZZIE

You better face up to it. You either chop up that snotty little goodie two shoes into bite sized bits or you kiss all those dreams good bye.

TONYA

I don't believe this. You're a woman. Women don't think like that!

LIZZIE

That's your whole problem! You buy into the whole nice-girl thing. The hell with the nice girl thing. You're a woman now, baby. You wanted to know what a woman's got to do, I just told you. Get that weasly ex-husband of yours to do it.

(George appears at the US door.)

GEORGE III

There's somebody else in this closet.

JEFF (O.S.)

Hey Tonya!

GEORGE III

I tried to hide but it's not easy to avoid detection in a four by four closet.

TONYA

Both of you - out! Right now!

LIZZIE

I will not.

TONYA

(To George)

Get her out of here!

GEORGE III

With pleasure, my dear. Come with me, you little strumpet.

LIZZIE

Keep your hands off me!

(George picks her up despite the swinging hatchet.)

GEORGE III

Ah, playing rough eh? That's all right. I'll let you

spank me now that I've been naughty!

(He hauls her out the SR door. She manages to get a swipe at him with the hatchet.)  
Ouch! That's not funny.

(Jeff enters from the US door.)

JEFF

What did you do with my clothes?

TONYA

I didn't touch your clothes.

JEFF

Well, they're not in there. I looked through the whole closet.

TONYA

You probably left them in the bathroom, like always.

JEFF

Oh. Right.

(He goes to the SL door.)

TONYA

No! Not in there. I'll get them.

(She shoves him back to the US door.)

JEFF

What are you doing?

TONYA

I said I'll get them. Just wait in there.

(She closes the US door as the SL door opens and Frederick enters.)

FREDERICK

May I say that I am shocked!?

TONYA

You may not. Get back under that bed.

JEFF (O.S.)

Hey!

FREDERICK

What for?

TONYA

Never mind what for. Get under the bed.

JEFF (O.S.)

Let me out of here!

FREDERICK

The dignity of my race does not permit hiding  
beneath ...

(She claps a hand over his mouth and shoves  
him under the bed.)

(The US door opens and Jeff emerges.)

JEFF

What's going on here?

TONYA

Just go in the bathroom and get your clothes.

JEFF

You're really losing it.

TONYA

I don't need you telling me that!

(Jeff goes into the SL door and closes it.  
Lizzie appears at the window.)

LIZZIE

Woman power!

(She climbs through the window.)

TONYA

Please go away. I don't want you here anymore.

LIZZIE

Of course you do.

TONYA

I don't. I really don't.

LIZZIE

That's the nice girl talking. You're not a nice girl anymore!

(She is inside now. George appears at the window also.)

GEORGE III

Get back here you little vixen!

TONYA

Please get her out of here!

(George comes through the window also.)

GEORGE III

Doing the best I can, my dear!

(Frederick comes out from under the bed.)

FREDERICK

I cannot stand by and watch a woman's virtue be stained!

(He stands in front of Lizzie, protecting her.)

Stand back from her, I say!

TONYA

Oh, this is a farce!

GEORGE III

I certainly hope so!

JEFF (O.S.)

Hey Tonya, did you see my socks?

TONYA

They're in there! Keep looking!

(To the others.)

All of you - out! Right now!

LIZZIE

You can't get rid of me so easily. You need me.

FREDERICK

(To Lizzie)

That was beautifully said. It was like poetry.

LIZZIE

Do you like poetry?

FREDERICK

I live for it. That and dignity. Always dignity!

LIZZIE

Me too.

TONYA

(To all of them)

Please, I'm begging you! He can't find you here. What would he think?

LIZZIE

Such a fussy little worry-wart, isn't she? Gentlemen - in here.

(She opens the US door.)

TONYA

Not in there. Outside! Gone!

GEORGE III

All three of us? This could be lots of fun.

(He grabs Frederick and dives into the closet, Lizzie follows closing the door. Tonya remains by the door as ...)

Jeff emerges, dressed, from the SL door.)

JEFF

I still can't find my socks.

TONYA

Under the bed.

JEFF

Well why didn't you say so the first time?

(He crawls under the bed, so we only see his legs sticking out.)

(The US door flies open, banging Tonya in the knee. George III comes practically sailing out the door.)

TONYA

OW!

(She limps around holding her knee.)

JEFF

(From under the bed.)

What's the matter?

GEORGE III

I don't think they want me very much.

JEFF

Tonya? Is that you?

TONYA

Ouch! Oh God!

JEFF

What's the matter?

TONYA

Nothing, I'm fine.

(To George)

Would you please get out?

GEORGE III

(With a jaundiced eye at the closet door)

Don't worry, I shall. I can take a hint as well as the next man.

(George exits in a huff out the SR door.)

JEFF

Is somebody there?

TONYA

No!

JEFF

Hey! I found a sock!

(The closet door flies open again, again  
banging into Tonya's knee. Frederick comes  
flying out, pants around his knees.)

TONYA

OWW!

JEFF

Now what?

TONYA

Nothing! Oh Jesus!

(That knee really hurts now.)

FREDERICK

She tried to chop it off!

TONYA

Good!

JEFF

Who's that?

TONYA

(Deepening her voice and doing her best to  
imitate Frederick)

It's me! She tried to chop it off.

FREDERICK

You *are* mad, it's true! You're both of you mad!

(He exits out the SR door.)

JEFF

Tonya, what are you saying!

TONYA

(Deep voice again)

You're mad! Find your other sock!

(Again the door flies open and again it bangs into Tonya's knee.)

TONYA

OWWWWWWWWW!

(This time Lizzie comes out, a bit rumped but with great dignity.)

LIZZIE

Well, I showed them, didn't I.

TONYA

(Fallen to the floor in agony.)

Ouch! Oh God!

LIZZIE

What's the matter with you?

TONYA

It hurts!

LIZZIE

God, but you're weak. I can't do anything with the likes of you.

JEFF

Tonya, there's somebody there, I know there is. I can hear her.

TONYA

Just find your damn sock!

LIZZIE

I wash my hands of this whole mess.

TONYA

Good!

LIZZIE

You're on your own.

TONYA

Good!

(She exits SR door. Jeff comes out from under the bed.)

JEFF

What's the matter with you?

TONYA

I hit my knee! What does it look like?

JEFF

When you hit your knee, you start talking to yourself?

(She is trying to get back on her feet.)

TONYA

What if I do? What do you care?

JEFF

I care a lot as a matter of fact!

TONYA

THEN WHY DON'T YOU HELP ME!

JEFF

WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME WHAT TO DO?!

(Pause. Tonya has an idea, an epiphany, a heavenly shaft of light might find her right now, and somewhere a choir of angels is singing.)

She totters over to where she left the baton earlier and picks it up, still reeling from the pain, and slightly out of breath. Her entire tone has softened with the peace she has finally found.)

TONYA

Here.

JEFF

What's that?

TONYA

I thought of something.

JEFF

What kind of something?

TONYA

Something you could do for me. It just ... hit me. So to speak. When I was on the floor, with my knee.

JEFF

What is it?

TONYA

Remember what you said to me. If I could just say what it was I wanted you to do, you'd do it for me.

JEFF

I remember.

TONYA

I want to be like one of the great people, Jeff. That's not so much, is it? To have people think you're the greatest? To have people cheering for you? Because they love you? Because they think you're wonderful? Isn't that the American way? Isn't that what it's all about?

JEFF

I guess so. Sure.

(She holds out the baton to him.)

What's that for?

TONYA

It's for you. I want you to do ...

(a pointedly knowing look)

... *something* with it.

JEFF

No ... ! Tonya, I can't ...

TONYA

You said you would – if I could say it – well, I'm saying it ... Take it.

(She passes it to him, and having done so, he now fades into darkness. As at the beginning of the play, the lights narrow to a narrow spot on Tonya and we hear the

thunder of applause and cheers rising.

She comes downstage to acknowledge her fans.  
She is radiant, and seems to be absorbing  
their cheers through her skin.)

TONYA

Thank you! Thank you so much. I love you all. I love  
you all so much!

(Lights out. End of play.)