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Wait Until Dark. (1978) Directed by: Thomas Behm. Pp.168

Wait Until Dark was a Summer Repertory Theatre Production performed seven times, beginning 5 June 1977. This thesis is an analysis of that production.

The first chapter includes biographical information concerning the author and a summary of the social background of the setting in New York City. Parallels are drawn between the violation of the privacy of an individual whether that individual resides in a large, metropolitan area or a smaller city.

Also included in the first chapter is a plot synopsis and character description and analysis; setting description, and justification for having chosen the script.

The second chapter is the prompt book with all character blockings.

The third chapter is a further analysis of the production and includes the author's opinion of his interpretation of the script and the various characters success in portraying their role. The audiences' reactions are also discussed in this chapter.

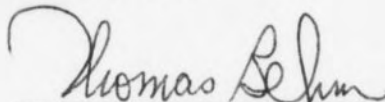
A PRODUCTION ANALYSIS OF  
FREDERICK KNOTT'S  
WAIT UNTIL DARK

by  
Paul Tauger

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
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Approved by



Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following  
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# LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. . . . .	42
Figure 2. . . . .	69
Figure 3. . . . .	89
Figure 4. . . . .	.121
Figure 5. . . . .	.135
Figure 6. . . . .	.141

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE. . . . .	ii
LIST OF FIGURES. . . . .	iii
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction . . . . .	1
Biographical Information . . . . .	1
Social Background. . . . .	2
Plot Synopsis. . . . .	4
Stylistic Considerations . . . . .	7
Character Description and Analysis . . . . .	12
Mike Talman . . . . .	13
Carlino . . . . .	13
Harry Roat. . . . .	14
Susy Hendrix. . . . .	16
Sam Hendrix . . . . .	16
Gloria. . . . .	17
Setting. . . . .	17
Justification. . . . .	18
II. PROMPT BOOK . . . . .	20
III. Introduction. . . . .	151
Interpretation. . . . .	151
Character Development and Interpretation . . . . .	157
Susy. . . . .	157
Roat. . . . .	158
Talman. . . . .	159
Carlino . . . . .	159
Sam . . . . .	160
Gloria. . . . .	161
Audience Reaction . . . . .	161
Personal Observations . . . . .	163
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	165
APPENDICES . . . . .	166

## CHAPTER I

Introduction

Wait Until Dark by Frederick Knott originally opened to mixed reviews in both London and New York. Though criticized for its "formula" construction and craftsmanlike rather than artistic approach, it was a success with the theatre-going public, running for nearly a year and earning back more than its production expenses--the hallmark of a hit.<sup>1</sup> Lacking the spectacle of elaborate and complex sets, "name" stars (Wait Until Dark featured well known and gifted performers, but none were of star stature), a tuneful score, or a controversial subject, Wait Until Dark obviously offered something that struck a resonant chord in the audiences who viewed it, and made it a valid, possibly even important, theatre experience. This chapter will attempt to define that chord, and relate it to a consistent production concept for the play.

Biographical Information

Frederick Knott was born in Hankow, China, where his father taught science at Griffith College. Knott completed his education in England, attending Cambridge

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Blum, A Pictorial History of the American Theatre 1860-1970, 3rd ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 370.

University. During World War II he served in the British Army, attaining the rank of Major by 1946, when he was discharged. Though Knott did some film writing, he did not turn to the stage until 1952, when Dial M for Murder, first presented as a television drama by the BBC, was produced on the London stage.<sup>2</sup> The play received unanimous critical acclaim both in London, and later in New York, where it enjoyed a run of 552 performances.<sup>3</sup> Wait Until Dark, Knott's second play, opened in New York 2 February 1966. The original production starred Lee Remick as Susy Hendrix and Robert Duvall as Roat, the psychopathic killer. It was directed by Arthur Penn, and featured scenery and lighting designed by George Jenkins, and costumes designed by Ruth Morley.<sup>4</sup>

#### Social Background

The key to the appeal and significance of Wait Until Dark lies in a peculiar psychological quirk unique to New Yorkers and other urban dwellers. Though this director has never seen this quirk discussed in any psychology text, it is something he has had direct experience with, having lived most of his life in New York.

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<sup>2</sup>Stanley Richards, Best Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theatre (New York: Dodd, Meade and Company, 1971), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>4</sup>Frederick Knott, Wait Until Dark (New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1967), p. 3.

New York is a rough city, full of the dangers, stresses, and tensions unique to heavily urbanized centers. These pressures become a part of day-to-day living, coloring every activity from going to work to opening a window for fresh air. Everyone, when faced with continued unmitigating pressures, searches for a sanctuary where he can relax for a time, safe in theory, if not in fact, from outside dangers. For this director, for the other New Yorkers he has known, and for Susy Hendrix, the protagonist in Wait Until Dark, this sanctuary is the apartment. Each year New Yorkers spend countless dollars on fox locks, dead bolts, door chains, and other variations of lock and key, so that they can barricade themselves in, finding security in the belief that as long as they "keep their noses clean," avoid dark streets, and barricade their fortress, they will be safe, protected, and untouched by the evil that surrounds their walls.

This quasi-religious conviction in locks, coupled with that often-proved-wrong maxim: "It always happens to the other guy, never to me" enables the New Yorker to carry on, and lead an almost normal life.

Unfortunately, every so often, the newspapers carry the story of a victim of some crime who, though undoubtedly believing in the validity of the aforementioned truisms, nevertheless winds up robbed, raped, or dead. Such episodes startle the rest of us out of our ill-founded sense of

security, momentarily terrifying us as we comprehend the real and present dangers of our environment, and then send us running to buy more and bigger locks as we again try to convince ourselves that it won't happen to us, only to "the other guy."

Wait Until Dark is just such an episode. It presents the experiences, in intimate and graphic detail, of two New Yorkers who cherish the lock-and-clean living style and find that despite the best efforts of the Yale Lock Company, and good faith, they are vulnerable--not only vulnerable, but vulnerable right in the center of their, and every New Yorker's most impregnable sanctuary--their home.

Secure in the knowledge of the guarantee of personal safety provided by the theatre's fourth wall of aesthetic distance, New Yorkers enjoyed the vicarious thrill of watching these people violated in their security. This morbid fascination, coupled with the firm belief "it can only happen to the other guy," explains the appeal Wait Until Dark had for its New York audience. The steady rise in crime that has effected all parts of this country makes Wait Until Dark a theatre experience that will reach non-New York audiences as well.

#### Plot Synopsis

Susy Hendrix is a blind woman who lives in a Greenwich Village basement apartment with her husband, Sam,



a free-lance photographer. Sam has just returned from an assignment in Montreal where he met a woman who asked him if he could bring a doll back to New York with him. She claimed the doll was a gift for her daughter who was in the hospital and she would be most grateful if he could deliver it for her. Unbeknownst to Sam, the woman is a drug smuggler and the doll is stuffed with heroin. Before Sam has a chance to deliver the doll the woman showed up and asked for it, but Sam was unable to find it (it was taken by Gloria, a little girl who lives above the Hendrix's). The woman then gets Sam out of the way by sending him on a bogus photographic assignment and returns to search the apartment herself. Her search is interrupted by Roat, a sociopathic killer, who has found out about the smuggling plot and decided to appropriate the heroin for himself. When he realizes that the woman does not know where the doll is he murders her. He then enlists the help of Talman and Carlino, two small-time con men, to help him recover the doll. Roat is convinced that Sam and Susy have the doll, and he stages an elaborate deception to con Susy into giving it to him. Talman, posing as an old friend of Sam's, calls on Susy while Sam is out on an assignment. After he gains her trust, Carlino calls, posing as a police sergeant investigating a killing in the neighborhood. Through various manipulations, they convince Susy that Sam was having an affair with the doll

woman, that the police think he murdered her, and the only piece of evidence linking him to the crime is the doll. Though Gloria eventually returns the doll to Susy, Susy resists turning it over to the con men, first because she wishes to protect Sam, and later because she has become suspicious of Carlino and Talman. Finally, Susy, with Gloria's help, discovers that Carlino and Talman are not who they say they are and she confronts Talman with her knowledge. Talman, who has gradually come to admire and respect Susy, admits his complicity in the plot and promises to leave Susy in peace provided she doesn't call the police. He also tells her not to worry about Roat. He and Carlino have recognized the inherent menace in Roat and have worked out a plan to kill him. Actually, unknown to both he and Susy, Roat has anticipated their attempt and killed Carlino. As Talman is leaving the apartment for the last time, Roat steps out from behind the front door and stabs him. Roat then tries to force Susy to give him the doll. Susy tries to fight back by breaking all the lights in the apartment, forcing Roat to function on her level, in darkness. Roat manages to overcome Susy, and succeeds in forcing her to give him the doll. He then tries to lock Susy in the bedroom and set fire to the apartment, but Susy turns on him with a knife she has concealed earlier and stabs him, though not mortally.



Susy, in shock, has dropped the knife which Roat recovers. He drags himself after Susy, who, like a trapped animal, hides behind the refrigerator. Sam returns with the police and find Roat collapsed on the refrigerator, and Susy, shaken but unharmed behind. The play ends as Susy falls into Sam's arms.

### Stylistic Considerations

This director views aesthetic distance as being composed of two semi-autonomous elements, both of which determine the degree to which an audience will be involved in a given production. The first, physical aesthetic distance, is determined by the physical mechanics of the audience/actor relationship, proscenium versus arena, audience participation as opposed to respect of the fourth wall, isolation of individual audience members from each other as opposed to maintenance of the large, amorphous audience mass. Physical aesthetic distance determines to what extent an audience's personal space, that safety zone that everyone maintains around him, will be tampered with.

The second component can be termed psychological aesthetic distance. This is determined by the stylistic conventions of the production and directs audience empathy, the extent of vicarious involvement through identification that the audience will experience, and the amount of critical response demanded of the audience.

Since the audience's appreciation of Wait Until Dark centers on their vicarious enjoyment of the threatening situation, they must be assured that there will be sufficient physical aesthetic distance to preserve the integrity of their personal space--strict respect of the unity of the fourth wall, confining the acting space to the stage, and strictly defining the space through the use of a downstage tormentor and teaser which will act as a proscenium arch.

It is this director's feeling that given an assurance of security and physical non-involvement, the audience will willingly give themselves to experiencing the psychological threat of the situations presented by the play.

Wait Until Dark succeeds in provoking an audience's response because of their apprehension that this is a very real experience, happening to very real people, and could, conceivably, happen to them. Wait Until Dark would not be as effective if it were set in an English country manor peopled by stereotypes of the kind found in Agatha Christie novels. The characters must not only be types familiar to the audience, but must be identifiable as real human beings, not caricatures. Audience empathy is alienated by a "too-surface" characterization since identification is hindered by over-simplification, or, if you will, dehumanization of human characteristics.

In short, Wait Until Dark must be treated realistically; all motivations, and events must be plausible or the vicarious experience of the audience will be delayed. Indeed, the major criticism of the play by the New York critics was its lack of plausibility.

John McClain, drama critic for the now-defunct New York Journal American, said:

Mr. Knott has an ingenious way with his plots and his people . . . [the plot of Wait Until Dark] is a neat trick any way you look at it, . . . except for a couple of minor improbabilities . . . . It is not clear to me why the dear blind wife was willing to risk her life to hang onto the dismal little doll, once she knew she was dealing with crooks, nor did I understand why she didn't call the cops when she realized they were bearing down on her.<sup>5</sup>

Less kind was Walter Kerr, then critic for the Herald Tribune:

At thrillers we are expected to suspend disbelief. But, suspending sanity is just possibly another matter. . . . The last scene . . . is typical of the play's fuzziness . . . . One thug says: "Why won't you hand it over? You don't even know why we want it." She doesn't answer. I couldn't think of any answer either . . . . This play carries excess baggage . . . through-out the evening [there is] a good deal of jawing in order to set us somewhat tenuous motives. . . .

The leader is played by Robert Duvall . . . he displays an even wider range of accents and mannerisms to much less effect: it is only stock-company bravura.

The shallowness is not Mr. Duvall's fault. We are never clear what the character's compulsion is, . . . or who, in fact, he is. Finally, [Duvall's] part reduces to . . . a stereotype of intelligent amorality.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>John McClain, "Remick Stars in a Shock," New York Journal American, 3 February 1966, p. 377.

<sup>6</sup>Walter Kerr, New York Herald Tribune, 3 February 1966, p. 376.

The Time magazine critic concurs: "Frederick Knott . . . has left this plot-boiler perforated with illogic."<sup>7</sup> He also questioned Susy's failure to call the police or, at least, flee from Roat.

Richard Gilman of Newsweek also questioned the plausibility of the plot complications.

The lady's defensive maneuvers unaccountably ignore the simple expedient of calling the police. The impatient viewer is constantly seized by the desire to yell at the poor girl: "Give the creeps that silly little doll."<sup>8</sup>

The objections of the critics can be broken down to three main points:

- (1) Character development is stereotyped and non-motivated.
- (2) It is illogical that Susy, when threatened, would not surrender the doll.
- (3) It is illogical that Susy would not call the police.

It is this director's feeling that the first objection is a flaw traceable to Arthur Penn's direction of the original production. As already shown, believable, non-caricatured performances are mandatory if the impact of the show is not to be diminished.

In casting The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Summer Repertory production, all actors will be

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<sup>7</sup>"Gordian Knott," Time, 11 February 1966, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Gilman, "Dull Doll," Newsweek, 14 February 1966, p. 88.

cast for the ability to create full, reasonable characterizations, that are close to their own physical type, temperament, and rhythm.

As for the second critical objection, this director feels that it is a simple matter of defining Susy's motivation for refusing to surrender the doll. Susy does not refuse out of obstinancy, or, as the critics seem to suggest, out of need to further complicate the plot, but because she honestly does not know to what extent her husband Sam is involved in the whole affair. Her motive is protection, not pigheadedness. In the final scene, though now convinced of Sam's innocence, she is also certain that as soon as Roat obtains the doll he will kill her. Her refusal is now motivated by the hope that by stalling Roat long enough, Gloria will arrive with Sam and the police.

The phone does present an apparent flaw. The problem occurs in Act II, Scene 1. During the scene, Talman, who Susy now realizes is deceiving her, has left for Sam's studio to search for the doll. After he leaves, Susy sends Gloria to meet Sam at the bus station. Then instead of calling the police, as the critics suggest she should do, she sits down and waits for Mike to return from Sam's studio. It is this director's feeling that by once again defining Susy's motivation for not calling, this inconsistency can be resolved. Earlier in the scene Gloria

asks Susy if Talman and Roat are police detectives. Susy replies that they might be. She is still uncertain. It is consistent with her character that she take no action until she is absolutely sure. By having the actress playing Susy take time with her reply to Gloria, to actually consider whether Talman and Roat are indeed detectives, should serve to define Susy's reasons for not calling the police when she had the opportunity.

These alterations should answer the critic's objections. In the words of John McClain, Journal American critic: "But these [objections] are small matters and the value of the play as entertainment is enormous."<sup>9</sup>

#### Character Description and Analysis

The characters in Wait Until Dark, though representing specific "types" found in an urban environment, are not shallow stereotypes, but are instead, well-developed and well-rounded. Knott has avoided the mistake of confusing recognizable social and psychological backgrounds with stock, stereo-typical behavior. Though it is easy for directors and actors to ignore the potential depth of these characters, it is this director's feeling that careful attention to character development will fully realize the complete characterizations that Knott has created.

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<sup>9</sup>McClain, "Remick Stars in a Shock," p. 371.



### Mike Talman

The character of Mike Talman may well be one of the most difficult to realize convincingly in that he comprises so many contradictions. Talman is a criminal, a small-time conman who never made it big because he lacked the ruthlessness and callousness necessary. He is the villain with a conscience, a man who worries over the moral consequences of his wrong-doing.

More than likely, Talman's failure in the straight, non-criminal world can be traced to an impatience with hypocrisy and discipline, along with a tendency towards flamboyancy that reads as a threat to those in power. Talman has achieved a bitter reconciliation to the way he earns his living, and walks a fine line between what he considers moral and immoral crime. He should project an image of sincerity, self-confidence, and a smoothness of demeanor that immediately inspires trust, respect, and liking.

### Carlino

Sargeant Carlino represents one of the more difficult acting challenges in Wait Until Dark because the role presents the greatest temptation to caricature rather than characterize. Carlino is a small-time New York conman, rough, poorly educated, and the moral antithesis of Talman. His fumbling incompetence stems from a complete

lack of self-confidence. Accordingly, he views everyone, including Suzy, as a potential threat.

Carlino is unlucky in that he is sensitive enough to be aware of his own ineptitude, but lacks enough intelligence to be anything more than a second-rate flunky to Talman. His trust in Talman is founded in his need for a strong support, instead of in any particular rapport between Talman and himself.

It is this director's feeling that by concentrating on Carlino's sensitivity and attempts at compensating for his lack of self-assurance, Carlino will develop as a real, sympathetic character, rather than the archetypal, cartoon-comic thug.

#### Harry Roat

The psychopath is thought of as a being out of touch with reality. This can be further defined by viewing the psychopath as one whose rational or logical processes are not consistent with the rest of society's and, therefore appears irrational or illogical when viewed in societal context. It is possible to play Roat as a psychopath. Many of his actions, his disguises, his abhorrence of being touched, the cunningly cruel way he relishes murder, could be characterized as psychopathic.

However, it must be remembered that the appeal of Wait Until Dark lies in its ability to expose dangers



inherent in the audience's own environment. To play Roat as a raving, ranting lunatic would, in defining a source of menace, at the same time mitigate it. If Roat is obviously insane, Carlino's and Talman's continued association with him would not appear credible.

A second condition that might account for Roat's behavior is sociopathy. The sociopathic condition consists of the complete inability to distinguish right from wrong--the sufferer lacks any sense of morality and conscience. A sociopath is capable of appearing completely normal until he encounters a situation threatening his self-interest. In such a situation he will act without regard to what society deems right, moral, and acceptable. His actions, though appearing illogical to the rest of us, are motivated by the rationale of self-centered expediency.

The sociopathic approach makes Roat a character of infinitely greater menace; not overtly insane, but capable of sudden, vicious deviations from predictable and comprehensible behavior. This egocentric concentration should make Roat a character with a great deal of personal presence and power. Though usually quiet and subdued, he should project a subtle air of threat that has a disquieting effect on anyone who comes in his presence. In addition, he possesses an above normal intelligence making him, in effect, a calculating, vicious criminal machine.

### Susy Hendrix

It would be easy to treat Wait Until Dark as a turn-of-the-century melodrama, with Susy as the poor, defenseless heroine trapped by the evil villain Roat, pinning her hopes on the arrival of the calvary, or, in this case, the police. To do so, however, would mitigate the inherent drama of conflict between two evenly matched participants. Susy Hendrix should not be played as a helpless blind lady who happens to get lucky and survives an attack by a sociopathic killer. She has already managed the adjustment to blindness without resorting to self-pity and weakness.

Though her apparent fragility is what attracted Sam originally, it was her capable inner strength that made him love her. It is this strength that must be brought out in her final encounter with Roat. The maneuvers she uses to survive Roat's menace must spring from the cunning of a calm intellect, not from the inspiration of a desperate instinct. The audience must not pity a poor, trapped animal, but rather must admire and identify with a courageous and competent heroine.

### Sam Hendrix

Sam personifies the typical New Yorker's belief that as long as his locks are secure and his attention kept out of other people's business, he will be untouched by the crime and terror of the city. His refusal to

acknowledge Susy's fears is not rooted in lack of trust in Suzy, nor in obstinate optimism, but rather in the naive faith that "it can't happen to him." He is successful and self-assured, and transmits this self-assurance to Susy. Ironically, he is the "poor, blind person," unable to perceive the threats to his and Susy's security.

#### Gloria

Gloria is the archetypal spoiled preadolescent. The product of an unhappy marriage, she demands, and will do anything to get the attention of which she feels she has been deprived. She views Susy as a rival for Sam's attention, and as a result is resentful of her. She has recently gotten glasses and these have added to her feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness.

#### Setting

As already noted, Wait Until Dark is a realistic play and therefore demands a realistic set. Whenever possible real properties will be used, i.e., the washing machine, darkroom equipment, refrigerator, and sink. The set has been kept small, to convey the intimate, cluttered feel of a snug, secure apartment.

The set also operates on two other levels that contribute to the thematic statement of the production. Physical obstacle, through the use of furniture placement and levels has been introduced wherever possible

to further emphasize the difficulties of adjustment that Susy must make. In addition, the "street side" of the set (the kitchen area with the window looking out onto the city) has been designed to suggest the threatening nature of the outside environment. The rough textures, harsh colors and hard lines of that area contrast with the warmer, softer curves and textures of the living room side.

It is also essential to achieve a complete blackout for the final scene which is played in total darkness. The only illumination for Act II, Scene 2 will be the matches, flashlights, and refrigerator light that are called for in the script.

#### Justification

In this director's opinion, Wait Until Dark is an ideal choice for the Summer Repertory stage. Its single set and small cast make it workable within the parameters mandated by Summer Repertory production.

Its content is relevant and identifiable. The play provides an entertainment-oriented summer audience with a vicarious thrill without taxing them with the demands of critical response and objectivity.

The complex and diverse characterizations, unorthodox staging, and pacing demands of this suspense thriller presents an exacting challenge to this director; it is his

opinion that this is a valuable and worthwhile directing experience.

## CHAPTER II

## PROMPT BOOK

Act I

## Scene 1

(TIME: FRIDAY EVENING) ON RISE: THE STAGE IS DARK EXCEPT FOR LIGHT COMING AROUND THE VENETIAN BLINDS (WHICH ARE CLOSED) AND LIGHT FROM UNDER THE HALL DOOR. (THE HALL LIGHTS ARE ON OUTSIDE.) THE BEDROOM DOOR IS CLOSED. THE OLD REFRIGERATOR IN THE UPPER LEFT CORNER OF THE KITCHEN HUMS LOUDLY. THERE IS COMPLETE SILENCE FOR SEVERAL SECONDS AND THEN WE HEAR THE FRONT DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE QUIETLY, OFF LEFT. THE REFRIGERATOR NOISE CUTS OUT. A FEW MOMENTS LATER THE HALL DOOR SWINGS OPEN QUIETLY AND MIKE TALMAN STANDS FRAMED IN THE DOORWAY. HE TAKES OUT A FLASHLIGHT, TURNS IT ON, AND SHINES IT AROUND THE ROOM.

## MIKE

(VERY QUIETLY.) Hello? (AFTER LISTENING A MOMENT HE COMES DOWN THE STAIRS. HE TURNS AND FLASHES THE LIGHT AROUND THE ROOM. HIS ATTENTION FALLS ON THE BEDROOM DOOR. HE TURNS THE HANDLE CAUTIOUSLY AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE BEDROOM. AT THE SAME TIME, WHILE MIKE IS IN THE BEDROOM, WE HEAR THE FRONT DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE, THIS TIME MORE NOISELY. THE BEDROOM DOOR SHUTS AS WE HEAR FOOTSTEPS APPROACH THE HALL DOOR. THE HALL DOORBELL RINGS ONCE, THERE IS A PAUSE, AND THEN RINGS AGAIN. THE HALL DOOR SWINGS OPEN AND CARLINO ENTERS. HE FUMBLES IN HIS POCKETS FOR A MOMENT AND THEN TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE LIGHTER AND FLICKS IT ON. HE THEN EXAMINES THE SPRING LOCK, PUSHING THE BOLT IN AND OUT. HE SLIPS THE CATCH TO LOCK IT AND CLOSES THE DOOR. HE COMES CAUTIOUSLY DOWN THE STAIRS AND PEERS AROUND THE ROOM IN THE DIM LIGHT OF THE LIGHTER. NOTICING THE CLOSED VENETIAN BLINDS, HE CROSSES OVER TO THE WINDOW. AT THE SAME TIME THE BEDROOM DOOR OPENS AND TALMAN SLIPS OUT. TALMAN STANDS BY THE LIGHT SWITCH WHICH IS ON THE RIGHT WALL AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS AND WATCHES CARLINO'S PROGRESS. CARLINO OPENS BLINDS AND TURNS AROUND. AS HE TURNS, TALMAN TURNS ON THE FLASHLIGHT AND CATCHES CARLINO IN THE FACE, MOMENTARILY BLINDING HIM. CARLINO FREEZES FOR A SECOND, THEN RUSHES CENTER, GRABS A KITCHEN CHAIR AND LIFTS IT OVER HIS HEAD TO THROW AT TALMAN.)



MIKE

(SHARPLY) Hold it! Hold it! (TALMAN TURNS ON LIGHT.  
MORE GENTLY) Hold it!

CARLINO

You! (PLACES CHAIR RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE IN LIVING ROOM.)

MIKE

Well! I think you put on weight! . . . They paroled me  
three months ago--been looking for you everywhere.  
(CARLINO LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.)

CARLINO

This your place?

MIKE

MY place!

CARLINO

When did you move in HERE? (CROSSES UP STAGE OF KITCHEN  
TABLE NEAR PHOTO. AS HE OBVIOUSLY BELIEVES IT, MIKE  
DECIDES TO CONTINUE ENCOURAGING HIS IMPRESSION.)

MIKE

I--er--about a month ago. (CROSSES UP LEFT OF SOFA.)

CARLINO

Photography! Who taught you all this?

MIKE

State of New York.

CARLINO

You're kidding! (MIKE SITS ON SOFA ARM.)

MIKE

Rehabilitation--it's the new thing for first offenders.

CARLINO

(PICKS UP CAMERA.)) Whad do you do? Cheesecake? . . .  
Pin-ups? . . .

MIKE

And all that.

CARLINO

And all that! I always wanted to be a photographer. How much do you make?

MIKE

I do all right.

CARLINO

(CROSSES TO KITCHEN, LEFT OF TABLE.) You always had the luck. Some jail they sent you to!

MIKE

Didn't they teach you a trade inside?

CARLINO

Oh sure . . . L and L four hours a day. (CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO WASHER. PICKS SUSY'S APRON OFF THE TOP OF A BASKET ON THE WASHING MACHINE AND HOLDS IT OUT FOR INSPECTION.)

MIKE

L and L . . . ?

CARLINO

Laundry and latrines . . . I'm the new Mr. Clean. (HE DRAPES APRON AROUND HIS STOMACH.) Hey! You're not married, are you?

MIKE

Hell no! She just comes in to . . .

CARLINO

To what?

MIKE

. . . to clean up. (CARLINO LIFTS SUSY'S NIGHTGOWN OUT OF THE BASKET.)



CARLINO

She does more than that! (THEN HE DROPS NIGHTGOWN BACK AND LOOKS STRAIGHT AT MIKE AS IF THERE IS SOME RIVALRY BETWEEN THEM.) Lisa?

MIKE

Lisa! (WITH A WRY LAUGH.) In a dump like this? (CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE, RIGHT. MOVES CHAIR, SITS.)

CARLINO

Seen her yet?

MIKE

Not a trace.

CARLINO

But you HAVE looked. (CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE, LEFT.)

MIKE

You BET I've looked! She owes me two grand.

CARLINO

Me too. Promised she'd double it for me by the time I got out. Instead she takes off. I'LL KILL HER!

MIKE

You couldn't kill anybody. Least of all Lisa . . .

CARLINO

(LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM.) So, where's the action?  
(CROSSES TO COFFEE TABLE CENTER, UPSTAGE.)

MIKE

What action?

CARLINO

(IMPATIENTLY.) Like you said in your message. "If you want a quick and easy grand. . . ." So--that's what I want.

MIKE

"If you want a quick and easy grand come to 27B Grogan Street at nine exactly--door's open. . . ."

CARLINO

Only next time phone me yourself. If you'd popped out of there a second sooner you'd have caught this in your teeth. (SHOWS HIM HIS BRASS KNUCKLES, BUT MIKE ONLY LOOKS BACK AT HIM AND WAITS FOR THE PENNY TO DROP.) You DID send that message? . . . No? . . . YOU got the SAME message?

MIKE

Just like that. Then he hung up.

CARLINO

WHO hung up?

MIKE

Search me. Thought it must be from you.

CARLINO

(POINTS ANGRILY AT SAM'S EQUIPMENT.) And all this? . . . Go on then--SAY it! This ISN'T your place. And you're FLAT broke! (CROSSES TO BEDROOM DOOR.) You--you're not EVEN A pornographer! (CARLINO CROSSES TO SAFE DOWN RIGHT AND OPENS FRONT OF FACADE.)

MIKE

I'm worse than broke. I owe eight hundred to a loan shark and I'm a month behind with the interest. (MIKE STANDS, GOES TO LEFT OF COFFEE TABLE.)

CARLINO

(WITH SOME RELISH.) Ooo!--that's bad!

MIKE

So, if you could stake me for say--two-fifty? . . . If I don't come up with some "juice" by Monday they're going to rearrange my face.

CARLINO

Two-fifty he says! And I haven't eaten since I came out. (CROSSES TO PHOTO ALCOVE, PICKS UP A CAMERA FROM SAM'S BENCH.) How much for this?

MIKE

Cameras! You can't give 'em away. . . . So who lives here?

CARLINO

Give me a few minutes--I'll find something. (CROSSES TO REFRIGERATOR, OPENS IT.) Now what have we here? Enough cold cuts for a long weekend-- (OPENS WAXED PAPER AND TAKES OUT SLICES OF HAM, CHEESE, ETC.)

MIKE

Don't! (CARLINO IS NOW LOOKING IN THE FREEZER AND DISCOVERS A TWENTY DOLLAR BILL AT THE BACK.)

CARLINO

Hey! This photographer is crafty! Keeps a twenty back of the freezer!

MIKE

So leave it there. And leave that alone . . . (CARLINO STUFFS THE BILL INTO HIS POCKET AND STARTS TO SEARCH FOR THE MUSTARD, OPENING SEVERAL CABINETS.) Then who does live here?

CARLINO

Now if I can just find where they hide the mustard . . .

MIKE

And who did send that message? (AS CARLINO FRANTICALLY SEARCHES THE KITCHEN FOR MUSTARD.)

CARLINO

Strange how you degenerate as soon as you're free. (SEARCHES CABINETS.) In the stir I can guzzle any slop they dish out. And now if I can't find the mustard I get the shakes!

MIKE

What did he sound like? (CARLINO HAS FOUND THE MUSTARD AND STARTS TO SPREAD IT ON HIS HAM AND CHEESE.)

CARLINO

I got it. I got it! (CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE, LEFT, CONTINUES WITH FOOD BUSINESS. WITHOUT A CARE:) What did WHO sound like?

MIKE

The joker who phoned.

CARLINO

Some kind of foreigner. Five to one it was a put-on. . . .

MIKE

Where were you when he phoned? (CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE, RIGHT.)

CARLINO

My usual place--and you?

MIKE

My usual place.

CARLINO

So?

MIKE

So?

CARLINO

(SUDDENLY SERIOUS.) Lisa?

MIKE

It's got to be Lisa. Who else knows where to find us? (THEY DROP THEIR VOICES INSTINCTIVELY AND ARE SUDDENLY ALERT AND TENSE. CARLINO POINTS TO THE BEDROOM.)

CARLINO

What's through there?

MIKE

Bedroom and bathroom.

CARLINO

Another entrance?

MIKE

No. Bars on all windows just like these.

CARLINO

I wonder if this place is bugged! (CALLING SHARPLY, MOVES DOWN TO EDGE OF KITCHEN.) LISA!

MIKE

Sh--Shut up!

CARLINO

(CALLING.) Come out, come out from wherever you are! (A LONG PAUSE AS THOUGH THEY REALLY EXPECTED A REPLY. CARLINO PICKS UP HIS SANDWICH AND STARTS TO TAKE AN ENORMOUS BITE WHEN THERE ARE THREE KNOCKS ON THE HALL DOOR. . . . THEY TURN TO DOOR AND THEN TO EACH OTHER.)

MIKE

Who is it? (NO REPLY. CARLINO SUDDENLY PANICS. MIKE SNAPS HIS FINGERS AND POINTS TO THE DOOR. CARLINO TIPTOES UPSTAIRS AND GETS BEHIND THE DOOR, PUTTING ON HIS KNUCKLEDUSTER. TWO MORE KNOCKS. CARLINO UNLOCKS DOOR. ROAT OPENS DOOR AND PEERS IN. HE HOLDS OVER ONE ARM A DILAPIDATED PIECE OF CARPET (ABOUT SIX FEET LONG) AND HAS AN AIRLINE BAG IN ONE HAND.)

ROAT

(TO MIKE POLITELY.) Good evening, Mr. Talman.

MIKE

You've got the wrong place . . .

ROAT

Oh, have I? . . . Then could I be interesting you in a rug for your bathroom? I'd be giving this away at six ninety-five, but for you, sir . . .

MIKE

No rugs, thank you.

ROAT

Then if I may just deliver my message . . .

MIKE

Who from?

ROAT

From the party who phoned you not half an hour ago.

MIKE

Then why the hell didn't you say so?

ROAT

Thank you, Mr. Talman.

MIKE

That's not my name. (AS ROAT ENTERS HE DELIBERATELY BANGS THE DOOR BACK AGAINST CARLINO AND THEN CLOSES IT. CARLINO GRUNTS. ROAT SPEAKS TO CARLINO WITHOUT LOOKING AT HIM, BUT AS IF HE KNEW HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME.) Oh, I beg your pardon--I had no idea you were there. (CARLINO FOLLOWS ROAT, DABBING HIS NOSE WITH HANDKERCHIEF. ROAT DROPS THE PIECE OF CARPET DOWN RIGHT OF COFFEE TABLE.) Now I'll be candid and honest with you, gentlemen. Strictly speaking, this is not my carpet. I discovered it in a pile of junk in that torn-down building at the back of here. And seeing as it's a little damp and a bit cheesy . . . a dollar seventy-five and I'll be on my way.

CARLINO

Let's have the message--then take that stinking thing out of here! (STANDING ON STAIRS, HALF WAY DOWN.)

MIKE

Where's Lisa? (CROSSES TO RIGHT, DOWN STAGE OF COFFEE TABLE.)

ROAT

I beg your pardon, Mr. Talman.

MIKE

Let's get this straight, Buster. Mr name is not Talman! And I've never heard of such a person.

ROAT

But it's a grand name, don't you think? Good old Mike Talman! . . . Don't you think it suits him fine . . . (OVER HIS SHOULDER TO CARLINO.) Sergeant Carlino?

CARLINO

Sergeant--who?

ROAT

And you will be Sergeant Carlino. (ROAT CROSSES UP RIGHT TO CENTER.)

CARLINO

(COMING DOWNSTAIRS.) Hey, come on, who the hell are you?

ROAT

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER BEHIND SOFA.) I am Harry Roat Junior and Senior--from Scarsdale. (MIKE AND CARLINO EXCHANGE MYSTIFIED GLANCES.)

CARLINO

Okay, Mister Roat Junior and Senior--the message and out!

MIKE

(CROSSING DOWNSTAGE OF THE TABLE TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) Who sent you here?



ROAT

(AS ROAT TALKS HE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE AND LETS THE ASH GROW LONG. LATER HE TAKES AN EMPTY BABY FOOD JAR FROM THE AIRLINE BAG, UNSCREWS THE CAP AND CAREFULLY USES IT AS AN ASH TRAY.) The message, Children, is that once upon a time there were two small con artists. (ROAT CROSSES TO LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE.) One of them was tall and handsome and he'd drop in on a housewife when she was alone and pretend to be an old friend of her husband's. The other would turn up a little later as a police detective. But the real brains of the outfit was a beautiful and talented girl. She could be young or old, French, Italian or Katie from Kansas . . .

MIKE

Where is Lisa?

ROAT

Both men fell for her and would make little passes when the other wasn't looking . . . (HE LAUGHS.) . . . and with a quite pathetic lack of success. Finally she got bored with them--made an anonymous phone call to the police and then disappeared, taking their loot with her. (MIKE AND CARLINO EXCHANGE GLANCES.) As they say, there's no one quite so gullible as a conman in love.

CARLINO

Who sent you here . . . (CROSSES LEFT TO BEHIND SOFA.) And who are you? (NO REPLY. AMUSED AND PLEASED BY THEIR CURIOSITY, ROAT SIMPLY LOOKS FROM ONE TO THE OTHER.)

MIKE

If Lisa told you all that, why isn't she here? (MIKE CROSSES TO DOWN STAGE CENTER, MOVING IN ON ROAT.)

CARLINO

Where is she?

MIKE

(CROSSING DOWN STAGE TO LEFT OF ROAT, STILL MOVING IN.) Are you working for Lisa . . . or is she working for you?



ROAT

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER, SLIPPING AWAY.) We are now all working for Lisa.

CARLINO

You said on the phone--a quick and easy grand.

ROAT

That is correct.

MIKE

Plus two thousand each that Lisa already owes us.

ROAT

You shall have it.

CARLINO

(CROSSING UP STAGE OF THE COUCH.) When?

ROAT

Tomorrow night, if we succeed. If we fail--nothin.

MIKE

(STILL SUSPICIOUS.) Why didn't Lisa come herself?

ROAT

Perhaps she was a little shy of meeting you again before she could give you your money.

MIKE

(NOT FULLY BUYING IT.) So when do we see her?

ROAT

Tomorrow night--with the merchandise . . . Well?

CARLINO

Look--we don't even talk till we get two-fifty each--

ROAT

(SURPRISED.) Lisa told me to give you five hundred each and the balance on delivery. Any objections? (CARLINO PUTS OUT HIS HAND FOR THE MONEY. ROAT PUTS MONEY ON TABLE. CARLINO REACHES FOR MONEY, ROAT STEPS ON MONEY. MIKE IS DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE IN THE LIVING ROOM.) But first--may we have weapons on the table?

CARLINO

(INNOCENTLY.) Search me, I'm clean.

ROAT

Your brass-knuckles?

CARLINO

What brass-knuckles?

ROAT

In your right pocket . . . I cannot negotiate in an atmosphere of mistrust . . . (CARLINO CROSSES LEFT AND DROPS HIS BRASS-KNUCKLES ONTO TABLE.) And your little razor-blade, Mr. Talman. (MIKE TAKES OUT A ONE-EDGED SAFETY RAZOR BLADE (WRAPPED IN CARDBOARD) AND PLACES IT ON TABLE, NEVER TAKING HIS EYES OFF ROAT.)

CARLINO

And how do you protect yourself? (FROM HIS POCKET ROAT TAKES A THIN IVORY STATUE OF A GIRL. IT IS ABOUT FIVE INCHES LONG AND COULD BE A SMALL FLASHLIGHT.)

ROAT

Geraldine protects me. Isn't she beautiful?

CARLINO

What does she do?

ROAT

This! (A THIN SWITCHBLADE SPRINGS OUT. CARLINO RECOILS TO CHAIR.)

MIKE

(CALMLY.) Then may we have Geraldine on the table too?

ROAT

We may not. (THE BLADE DISAPPEARS AND ROAT RETURNS KNIFE TO HIS POCKET AND ALSO THE RAZOR BLADE AND KNUCKLE DUSTER.)

CARLINO

Why the hell not?

ROAT

Because she is the referee. (ROAT THROWS CARLINO A WAD OF MONEY. CARLINO CROSSES TO PHOTO ALCOVE AND EXAMINES IT. ROAT HOLDS OUT WAD TO MIKE.)

MIKE

Not yet, Mr. Roat . . . what's the merchandise?

ROAT

(ROAT SMILES, DROPS WAD ON COFFEE TABLE.) A child's doll. (CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE, LEFT, DOWN OF MIKE, SITS.)

MIKE

A doll?

ROAT

A musical doll. Lisa last saw it a few days ago in Montreal. (A PAUSE, THEN SLOWLY.) But she now believes it is SOMEWHERE in THIS apartment.

MIKE

How did it get HERE?

ROAT

(DOWN LEFT CORNER OF KITCHEN TABLE.) While Lisa was at the airport in Montreal she got into conversation with a very nice photographer named Sam Hendrix and she asked him if he would take this doll to her little girl who was in the New York Hospital. And he was most sympathetic. But before he had time to deliver it, Lisa arrived at this apartment herself and asked for it. And then, much to her

surprise--he just couldn't find it. (MIKE PICKS UP HIS ROLL OF BILLS FROM TABLE AND POCKETS THEM.)

CARLINO

What do you mean--he couldn't find it?

ROAT

He couldn't find it. Lisa watched him search both these rooms and finally--pretending it was of no importance--she left. That was last night.

MIKE

How big is this doll? (ROAT MEASURES TWENTY INCHES. MIKE SAYS IMPATIENTLY.) Weight?

ROAT

Just under two pounds.

MIKE

(TO CARLINO.) Allow eight ounces for the music box . . . !

CARLINO

That's a lot of "HORSE!" (CROSSES TO UP STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

MIKE

(TO ROAT.) Is this the real stuff . . . PURE heroin?

ROAT

Nothing has ever been so pure. (CROSSES TO SINK.)

CARLINO

That'll be worth over a hundred grand. Do you push it yourself? (MIKE CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.)

ROAT

Now Children! . . . Let's not get too greedy--let's find the doll first, shall we?

MIKE

So Lisa sent YOU here to find it. Why does she need us?

ROAT

This morning Lisa phones this number . . . (POINTS TO PHONE.) and pretending she was an Italian actress named Liciana, she made an appointment to have some portraits taken by Mr. Hendrix at his studio tonight. Mr. and Mrs. Hendrix left this house just before seven. They walked to a movie where he left his wife and then he went on to his studio where he is still waiting . . .

CARLINO

(INTERRUPTING.) Now hold it! (TO MIKE.) Are you getting any of this?

MIKE

(IMPATIENTLY.) Sure. Just pay attention.

CARLINO

Well, I'm lost!

MIKE

So listen!

CARLINO

Look--Mr. Roat. I'm a first grade drop-out. Just give it to me like A-B-C . . . Lisa wants to get them out of here so she can come in and really go through this place. Right?

ROAT

That is correct.

CARLINO

So right now the wife is watching a movie and the photographer is at his studio waiting for some Italian broad who doesn't even exist. How long is he going to wait?

ROAT

Perhaps we had better reassure him . . . (HE CROSSES TO PHONE.) if you'll excuse me . . . (INTO PHONE.) . . . Hello? Mr. Sam Hendrix? . . . Ah, I am so glad! I am Giano of Giano's Restaurant. I have a message from Miss

Liciana. She is so very sorry to be late . . . no, wait, PLEASE. She is on her way to you now. I put her in a taxi two minutes ago . . . (IN ITALIAN, VERY FAST.) Il taxi per La Signorina Liciana subito . . . (IN ENGLISH.) Mr. Hendrix? . . . Any minute Miss Liciana will arrive. Be kind and wait for her? . . . Thank you, sir. Goodbye. (ROAT HANGS UP PHONE.) That should hold him there a bit longer.

MIKE

So Lisa has been in here already tonight?

ROAT

Yes. And she searched everywhere and still couldn't find it.

CARLINO

So she searched everywhere? How did she open this?  
(CARLINO HITS FILING CABINET AND RATTLES HANDLE.)

MIKE

And there's a closet in the bedroom that's locked too.  
I'll open that right now. (MIKE STARTS TOWARDS BEDROOM.)

ROAT

It's not in the closet. (HE FOLLOWS MIKE.)

MIKE

(STOPS DOWN RIGHT.) How do you know?

ROAT

Lisa looked. She found the key on the ledge just above it.

CARLINO

(THROWING BACK FACADE TO REVEAL SAFE.) And this? (AS MIKE GOES TO SAFE TO EXAMINE IT.)

MIKE

(TO ROAT.) Well? Does Lisa know about this safe?

ROAT

She does . . . and that's why you're here.

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CARLINO

(AFTER A VISUAL CONSULTATION WITH MIKE.) Well--this is a bit out of our line but--okay, we'll make the photographer open it when he gets back here. . . . But look--we aren't squeamish, Mr. Roat . . . are you?

ROAT

I AM. (ROAT CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.) And that is NOT why you're here. Suppose--after some persuasion--he DID unlock the safe and it WASN'T there? Then what?

CARLINO

The doll's in that safe--give you five to one.

ROAT

That's a chance Lisa won't take. (POINTING TO SAFE.) It MAY be in there. Or he may have taken it somewhere else. He may EVEN have given it to the police. We have to slide into this very gently. Believe me--Lisa didn't call you two in for nothing--

MIKE

(IMPATIENTLY.) What did she say?

ROAT

She said--"Don't let them twist any arms and you're not to steal anything . . . let the WIFE find the doll--and give it to YOU . . . (POINTS AT MIKE.) . . . of her own free will." (CARLINO APPEARS DELIGHTED AND SMACKS MIKE ON THE BACK.)

CARLINO

Well--this is like old times. So we CON 'em out of it! (TO MIKE.) You betta find out all you can about this guy. (AS IF THIS IS ALL A MATTER OF FIXED ROUTINE, MIKE CROSSES TO SINK, SEARCHES CABINETS UNDER TRASH BASKET. WHILE CARLINO JUMPS ONTO STOOL AND PEEPS THROUGH VENETIAN BLINDS, MIKE EMPTIES THE WHOLE OF THE GARBAGE PAIL ONTO FLOOR [OR BENCH] AND GOES THROUGH ITS CONTENTS [i.e., CRUMPLED ENVELOPS, SAM'S USED AIRLINE TICKET, ETC.]. ROAT CROSS TO COUNTER UP RIGHT STAGE BEHIND SOFA, STAIR CLOSET. ROAT STANDS QUIETLY AND WATCHES THEM WITH INTEREST. CARLINO, TO ROAT:) What's his name again?



MIKE

(READING OFF AIRLINE TICKET.) Hendrix--Sam Hendrix . . . flew to Montreal . . . last Monday returned New York . . . yesterday.

CARLINO

(LOOKING THROUGH BLINDS.) Hey! And look what I can see--right by the parking lot!

MIKE

What?

CARLINO

A phone booth!

MIKE

Great! And TWO blinds. Which gives us NINE signals.

CARLINO

Six.

MIKE

Nine.

CARLINO

Up--open and down. (CARLINO JUMPS OFF STOOL.) Three two's are six.

MIKE

It's three SQUARED, you turkey!

ROAT

Now you've left me behind.

CARLINO

Just a little system of ours. One of us goes zonk-zonk . . . (HE FLIPS THE BLINDS OPEN AND SHUT QUICKLY.) And then the phone rings. Just leave this to us, Mr. Roat.

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ROAT

Thank you. (ROAT CROSSES LEFT TO KITCHEN TABLE, CARLINO CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE ON LEFT. A PAUSE DURING WHICH ROAT TAKES OUT TWO SMALL NOTEBOOKS.) Oh by the way--the NUMBER of that phone booth in the parking lot is 631-5309. (MIKE AND CARLINO GLANCE AT EACH OTHER.) Here. (STILL BEWILDERED THEY TAKE THEM. ROAT THEN POINTS TO PHONE ON TABLE.) Now make a note of THIS number. (AS THEY EACH WRITE IT DOWN, ROAT POINTS TO PHOTOGRAPH [OF MARINES] ABOVE SAM'S BENCH.) And there's some information on that wall, Mike. (MIKE CROSSES UP TO PHOTO AND MAKES NOTE AND RETURNS TO STOOL.)

CARLINO

(TO ROAT.) When do we start all this? Tonight?

ROAT

Tomorrow. A proud grandfather from Asbury Park will phone Mr. Hendrix and ask him to come there and take some pictures of his family tomorrow afternoon . . . one hour by express bus--seventy-five dollars and stay to dinner. (MIKE CROSSES TO UP STAGE RIGHT EXIT INTO BEDROOM.) And that gets the husband out of the way. (ROAT NOW REALIZES MIKE HAS LEFT THE ROOM.) There's a Volkswagen bus . . . (MIKE ENTERS.) Mike? Oh, there you are. There's a Volkswagen bus out there in the car lot. (POINTING TOWARDS WINDOWS.) I'll meet you there in ten minutes. (CARLINO STARTS TO GO UPSTAIRS. ROAT PACKS THINGS INTO ZIP BAG, COLLECTS COAT, ETC., CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO SOFA.)

MIKE

You staying here--Mr. Roat?

ROAT

(CASUALLY.) Just a quick look around--in case I've forgotten anything.

MIKE

We'll stay with you then.

ROAT

Better not all leave together.

MIKE

I guess you're right. (MIKE CROSSES TO PHOTO UP STAGE OF ROAT. TO CARLINO:) Come on, then, SERGEANT CARLINO. (MIKE THEN TURNS TO ROAT.) Oh, by the way--the KEY of that bedroom closet. (A PAUSE.)

ROAT

What about it?

MIKE

It's NOT on the ledge.

ROAT

Isn't it? Then Lisa must have taken it with her. (MIKE IS NOW WATCHING ROAT VERY CAREFULLY. ROAT COUNTER DOWN RIGHT.)

MIKE

Won't they miss it? . . . When they get back tonight?

ROAT

(WITH A SHRUG.) They'll each think the other one lost it.

MIKE

Then there's just one question--before we leave here.

ROAT

Yes?

MIKE

Lisa told you an awful lot, didn't she?

ROAT

Lisa?

MIKE

Lisa. All those little details about how she worked . . .

CARLINO

And about us. (CARLINO CROSS TOWARDS ROAT.)

MIKE

You see, we know Lisa very well . . .

CARLINO

Yeah, and she would never give you anything . . .

MIKE

Unless she had to.

ROAT

So? . . . What's your question?

MIKE

We'd just like to know where you've hidden the key of that LOCKED closet in there. (ROAT WHIPS OUT HIS ZIP KNIFE AND FORCES CARLINO UPSTAIRS.)

ROAT

All right, you--through that door backwards and turn THAT way. (CARLINO BACKS UP THE STAIRS.)

MIKE

Catch! (MIKE PICKS UP THE SPIKED CAMERA TRIPOD AND TOSSES IT TO CARLINO. AT THE SAME TIME MIKE PICKS UP THE KITCHEN CHAIR AND HOLDS IT LIKE A LION TAMER. ALL THIS IN A VERY FEW SECONDS. THEN THEY ALL STAND MOTIONLESS, ROAT'S EYES MOVING FROM ONE TO THE OTHER. MIKE, QUIETLY:) Now, drop "Geraldine" on the floor--nice and easy.

ROAT

I'd rather not do that . . . [SEE FIGURE 1.]

MIKE

Drop it! (THE TWO MEN MOVE IN SUDDENLY. MIKE AND CARLINO FORCE ROAT DOWNSTAGE TO SOFA.)



Figure 1

ROAT

Children! . . . Children! . . . (THEY STOP.) Will you settle for THIS? (ROAT POCKETS KNIFE AND HOLDS UP KEY.)

MIKE

Flip it! (ROAT TOSSES KEY TO MIKE. MIKE CATCHES IT.) Why don't you sit down, Mr. Roat. (MIKE FORCES ROAT TO SIT, PUTS CHAIR DOWN, CENTER BETWEEN SOFA AND TABLE AND THEN EXITS INTO THE BEDROOM.)

ROAT

Thank you. (BUT DOESN'T MOVE.)

CARLINO

Now! (CARLINO CROSSES TO SOFA, PUTS FOOT ON ARM.)

(MIKE GOES INTO THE BEDROOM. WE HEAR HIM UNLOCK AND OPEN THE CLOSET DOOR. [PAUSE.] A BED LAMP IS SWITCHED ON FOR FIVE SECONDS AND THEN OFF. [PAUSE.] MIKE ENTERS FROM BEDROOM. HE IS OBVIOUSLY SHOCKED BY WHAT HE HAS SEEN. MIKE ENTERS AND STOPS ON LANDING.)

MIKE

(QUIETLY.) You dirty little creep! (HE TAKES OUT HIS WAD OF NOTES, DROPS THEM ON THE FLOOR AND STARTS TO GO. TO CARLINO:) Come on. (BUT CARLINO IS TOO CURIOUS AND HE HANDS THE TRIPOD TO MIKE AND GOES INTO THE BEDROOM HIMSELF.) Don't. (WHILE CARLINO IS IN THERE MIKE LOOKS AT ROAT. ROAT LOOKS STRAIGHT BACK AT HIM LIKE AN INNOCENT SCHOOLBOY WRONGLY ACCUSED OF CHEATING AT MATH. THE LAMP GOES ON AND OFF IN BEDROOM BUT QUICKER THIS TIME.) Why?

ROAT

(SADLY.) Lisa was too clever, Mike. I felt certain she KNEW where it was--and then--too late. (CARLINO ENTERS FROM BEDROOM, UPSTAGE OF MIKE. HE IS IN A PANIC. CARLINO RUNS UPSTAIRS. HE THROWS HIS MONEY ON THE FLOOR. MIKE HAS PLACED THE TRIPOD BACK WHERE HE FOUND IT. JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO EXIT, ROAT SAYS, VERY CALMLY:) You've forgotten something . . . (ONLY CARLINO TURNS.)

MIKE

Come on!

ROAT

You're already involved--aren't you? (CARLINO IS ON TOP LANDING, MIKE ON STAIRS. THEY STOP.)

CARLINO

(IN A THICK VOICE.) I can prove where I was when this happened.

ROAT

Oh? Exactly when did it happen? (PAUSE.) Just before you let me in? By the way I am not on parole and no policeman has ever heard of me.

CARLINO

But someone must have seen you with her SOMEWHERE . . .

ROAT

Never. I've followed her several times but we never actually met until she walked in there tonight.

CARLINO

All that stuff about us . . . she told you all that tonight?

ROAT

That and a good deal more.

MIKE

You just TRY and get away with this--BUT--WE--ARE--OUT!  
You're on your own now, Mr. Roat! (TO CARLINO:) Come on.  
(MIKE OPENS DOOR.)

ROAT

Sorry, Mike--(ROAT STANDS DOWN RIGHT.) but you were both so highly recommended. I need you.

CARLINO

Well, that's just too bad!--And now you've got a body in there and YOU are STUCK with it. (STARTS TO EXIT. TO MIKE:) Let's go.



## ROAT

Now just listen, Children . . . think, think, think. If you walk out on me now, I will simply walk out after you and leave Lisa in there. You've signed your names all over this apartment . . . (CARLINO COMES DOWNSTAIRS, CROSS TO PHOTO, STARTS TO GO AROUND THE ROOM, ALMOST PATHETICALLY, RUBBING HIS FINGERPRINTS OFF EVERYTHING HE CAN REMEMBER TOUCHING--HIS ONLY PROBLEM: HE CAN'T REMEMBER. MIKE CLOSSES DOOR.) And even if you could remember what you've touched it would take at least an hour to wipe off. (ROAT CROSS TO PHONE. HE TAKES OUT A PAIR OF LOOSE PLASTIC GLOVES AND PUTS THEM ON AND THEN WIPE TELEPHONE. HE IS DOWNSTAGE OF COFFEE TABLE.) Now I have touched only one thing since you came in here and before that I wore THESE. Highly recommended, by the way--and disposable--you buy them in enormous rolls from Sears. Don't forget the safe, Sergeant . . . and the icebox. (CARLINO CROSSES TO SAFE AND THEN TO REFRIGERATOR, FRANTIC ON HIS DOUBLE-TAKE FROM SAFE TO ICEBOX. ROAT WATCHES HIM A MOMENT WITH INTEREST AND AMUSEMENT.) Now just do exactly what I tell you and the police will never even come in here. (IMPATIENTLY TO CARLINO.) Will you stop acting like a housemaid and LISTEN! (MIKE COMES DOWNSTAIRS SLOWLY. CARLINO IS AT PHOTO UP STAGE.) You've got all tomorrow to do that. Now, ONE--get her out of here. Roll her up in this--(HE KICKS OLD CARPET.) and dump it where I found it, and then meet me in the Volkswagen.

## CARLINO

(PLEADING.) Look--just let us out of this? (TURNS TO MIKE FOR HELP.)

## ROAT

No. I need you.

## MIKE

(DESPERATELY.) FOR WHAT? (MIKE IS ON BOTTOM LANDING.)

## ROAT

(AS THOUGH TO CALM THEM DOWN.) Everything we just planned still holds good . . . we simply con the wife until she finds us that doll and that's it. No one gets hurt--not even a scratch. (MIKE AND CARLINO ARE NOW STANDING STILL.) There is just one minor difference, perhaps. That instead of working for Lisa--you are now working for me.

MIKE

(PICKING UP HIS MONEY.) (MIKE CROSSES TO COFFEE TABLE.)  
Then there's one other difference, Mr. Roat. You promised  
us our two thousand plus one each?

ROAT

Less this five hundred, of course.

MIKE

(POINTING TO BEDROOM.) But things have changed since then.

CARLINO

(PICKING UP HIS MONEY.) Yeah.

ROAT

All right . . . two plus two--then.

MIKE

We want two thousand plus another FIVE thousand EACH--  
tomorrow night. (STREET DOOR SLAMS, OFF UP LEFT STAGE.)

ROAT

Quiet! (THEY LISTEN. WE CAN HEAR SUSY'S BLIND STICK IN  
HALL. ROAT GESTURES MIKE AND CARLINO TO TAKE UP THEIR  
POSITION. MIKE INTO BEDROOM WITH CARPET, THEN DOWN STAGE  
OF SAFE. CARLINO CROSSES TO PHOTO ALCOVE. ROAT POINTS  
AT CARPET. MIKE SWITCHES OFF ROOM LIGHTS. ROAT CROSSES  
DOWN LEFT, PICKS UP TRASH AND PUTS IT ON TOP OF WASHER.  
THE ROOM IS LIT DIMLY BY LIGHT FROM OPEN BLINDS. ROAT,  
IN A WHISPER:) She's alone . . . stay exactly where you  
are and don't even breathe. (THEY ALL FREEZE. SOUND OF  
KEY IN DOOR AND SUSY ENTERS. SHE WEARS A RAINCOAT AND  
A PURSE BAG IS SLUNG FROM HER SHOULDER. SHE MOVES QUIETLY  
AND EASILY AS THOUGH SHE KNOWS THIS APARTMENT WELL. SHE  
HANGS STICK AND BAG ON RAILING.)

SUSY

Sammy! (AS SHE EXITS TO BEDROOM, SHE FEELS THE POSITION  
OF LIGHT SWITCH [i.e., OFF].) Sam? (SUSY CROSSES TO  
KITCHEN TABLE UPSTAGE OF SOFA THEN STOPS AND LISTENS.)  
Gloria? (SHE CROSSES TO CLOCK DOWN LEFT, FEELS IT AND  
THEN CROSSES BACK TO KITCHEN TABLE AND DIALS PHONE.)

Sam . . . well--what does she look like--THE LICIANA! . . .  
 You mean she hasn't even arrived yet? . . . DELAYED?  
 For nearly two hours? Who does she think you are? . . .  
 I'm home NOW . . . oh--the movie was great--but you  
 should have checked, honey . . . it was in Swedish!  
 Yah, das how it vas! And not even a note of background  
 music. (PAUSE, LISTENS.) Well--I TRIED to walk home but  
 I took a wrong turn somewhere so I came by taxi, how else?  
 . . . YES, A TAXI! . . . (A PAUSE.) You mean--walk to  
 your studio NOW? Oh no--I'm staying right here. When will  
 you be home? (A PAUSE, SHE LISTENS.) Eleven! . . . well,  
 in THAT case I'd better trot over right now and keep the  
 score . . . oh you needn't worry, I won't cramp your style  
 . . . ciao! (SHE HANGS UP. SUSY IS LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE,  
 SHE CROSSES RIGHT DOWNSTAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE AND CHAIR.  
 SHE GOES TO STAIRS, BUT ON HER WAY SHE KNOCKS INTO THE  
 SMALL CHAIR WHICH MIKE LEFT BELOW SAM'S BENCH. GENTLY.)  
 Ooo!--you little . . . (SHE FEELS AROUND FOR THE TABLE,  
 LIFTS CHAIR, AND THEN PLONKS IT DOWN FIERCELY IN ITS PROPER  
 PLACE.) YOU . . . are supposed to be--THERE! (SUSY DRAGS  
 CHAIR TO LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE. CROSSES TO DOOR OF BED-  
 ROOM, UP STAGE OF SOFA. SHE STARTS TOWARDS THE STAIRS  
 AND THEN STOPS SUDDENLY BETWEEN KITCHEN TABLE AND SOFA.)  
 Gloria! (A PAUSE.) O come on . . . I know you're there  
 . . . you can't fool me, you know. (A PAUSE WHILE SHE  
 LISTENS--THEN REALIZING SHE IS WRONG SHE MOVES ON. MIKE  
 SPREADS HIMSELF OUT AGAINST THE WALL AS SHE GOES UP THE  
 STAIRS. SHE PICKS UP HER STICK AND EXITS MAIN DOOR, SLAM-  
 MING THE DOOR. WE HEAR HER STICK TRAILING ALONG THE OTHER  
 SIDE OF THE BACK WALL, AND THE FRONT DOOR OPENS AND SLAMS.  
 MIKE TURNS LIGHTS ON.)

CARLINO

Phew!

ROAT

(TO MIKE.) Well?

MIKE

(WITHOUT MOVING.) Two plus five, Mr. Roat?

ROAT

(WITH A POLITE LITTLE BOW.) Two plus five, Mr. Talman.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I, SCENE 1

Scene 2

(TIME: SATURDAY AFTERNOON [ABOUT 4:15 P.M.] .)

(ON RISE: THOUGH IT IS STILL LIGHT OUTSIDE THE STAGE IS COMPLETELY BLACKED-OUT FOR SAM IS NOW USING THE ROOM AS HIS PHOTOGRAPHIC DARKROOM. FOR SEVERAL SECONDS WE ONLY HEAR SAM AND SUSY. HE IS WORKING AT HIS BENCH AND SHE IS MOVING, EASILY, BETWEEN TABLE AND SINK CLEARING THE KITCHEN TABLE. AFTER A FEW SECONDS, SUSY SPEAKS:)

SUSY

Hear about the murder?

SAM

Just two seconds . . . (A PAUSE, THEN LIGHT IN SAM'S ENLARGER GOES ON.) . . . what murder?

SUSY

They found a body this morning--somewhere near HERE.

SAM

Who told you?

SUSY

On the radio. I only heard the end of it. A woman from Scarsdale--or somewhere.

SAM

You making this up?

SUSY

Why should I? (SAM SWITCHES ON AMBER SAFE LIGHT AND LAMP ON BENCH.)

SAM

It's a ploy to make me stay home.

SUSY

It is not.

SAM

Okay windows. (AS THEY TALK SAM DEVELOPS THE ENLARGEMENT. SUSY CROSSES TO WINDOWS--OPENS BLINDS AND SHADES [IT IS DULL AND RAINY OUTSIDE], THEN CROSSES TO BEDROOM DOOR TO SWITCH ON THE ROOM LIGHTS.) You'd rather I didn't go?

SUSY

Serious.

SAM

Of course.

SUSY

(CROSSES TO BEDROOM LIGHT SWITCH UPSTAGE OF SOFA.) Well, no. I mean YES I always want you to stay home. But not because somebody's been murdered . . . because of me. Need the ceiling lights?

SAM

Yes please, it's a bit gloomy. (BY BEDROOM DOOR, SUSY SWITCHES ON CEILING LIGHTS AND ALSO SWITCHES OFF SAM'S BENCH LAMP.) That one I need.

SUSY

Sorry. (SHE SWITCHES ON HIS BENCH LAMP FROM DOOR.)

SAM

Now--quick check. Phone number for Police Emergency? (SAM CROSSES TO UP STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

SUSY

Oh--just dial zero and say you're blind. (SUSY CROSSES DOWN STAGE OF TABLE TO SAM.)

SAM

Operators get busy and don't answer.

SUSY

Oh! That urgent! So that murder DOES worry you.

SAM

This one you MUST know. Four four zero . . . one two three four. (SUSY CROSSES TO SINK DOWNSTAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE, BACK TO KITCHEN TABLE. SUSY GETS SUGAR LUMPS, TAKES OUT FOUR AND LAYS THEM IN A ROW BY PHONE.)

SUSY

Wait till I get the sugar lumps. Four four owe . . . one two three four. It's these easy ones that fool me . . . so it's FOUR--NOT four owe four NOT owe four four but FOUR FOR OWE one two three four?

SAM

Then ask for the Sixth Precinct. (SAM HAS FINISHED HIS ENLARGEMENT AND NOW STARTS TO FINISH PACKING HIS PHOTO EQUIPMENT AND PREPARING TO LEAVE.)

SUSY

Sixth Precinct. Four plus two, okay. (RAPIDLY.) Doctor's office 924-6381. Want the Chinese laundry? (SUSY SITS STOOL AT SINK.

SAM

Now--my bus leaves at five and they return from . . . where?

SUSY

Asbury Park.

SAM

At . . . ?

SUSY

Er . . . every hour on the hour.

SAM

I'll phone you as soon as I get there and again when I'm leaving. Oh--and if that doll woman (SAM CROSSES BACK TO KITCHEN TABLE, UP STAGE.) phones just say I still haven't found it.

SUSY

Okay.

SAM

And try and get her phone number.

SUSY

Maybe Gloria's seen the doll.

SAM

No she hasn't. I asked her mother. But let Gloria look around for it while she's down here. It must be SOMEWHERE.

SUSY

That child isn't (SUSY STANDS.) coming here today.

SAM

Just to do your shopping. Grocery list and five dollars by phone.

SUSY

NO GLORIA! (SUSY CROSS TO LEAN ON KITCHEN TABLE, LEFT. SUSY BANGS THE TABLE AND KNOCKS A NAPKIN HOLDER TO THE FLOOR.) Okay then where is it?

SAM

Not listening?

SUSY

Not listening!

SAM

Near the table. (SAM SITS ON KITCHEN TABLE EDGE, DOWN RIGHT. SUSY GETS DOWN AND FEELS AROUND FOR IT WITH HER HAND DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE LEFT.) What's wrong with Gloria?

SUSY

Everything. She can't even close the icebox. Am I anywhere NEAR?



SAM

Yes--but you're not searching. . . . Try twenty degrees left. If she doesn't close the icebox--just say--"close the icebox." (SUSY'S HAND SEARCHES AROUND IN A WIDER CIRCLE TILL SHE FINDS IT. SHE STANDS AND REPLACES IT ON THE TABLE.)

SUSY

And if she still doesn't?

SAM

Then just say "that's the girl--THANKS."

SUSY

What do you mean--that's the girl--THANKS? It's STILL OPEN.

SAM

A little trick I learnt in the Marines, sweetheart--always ASSUME that an order's been carried out. Then if she hasn't closed it already she'll be so EMBARRASSED . . .

SUSY

Gloria isn't a Marine--she doesn't (SUSY TURNS TO SINK, SEARCHES FOR TRASH PAIL.) embarrass that easily . . . I'd much rather have a dog.

SAM

Dogs can't shop at the supermarket.

SUSY

Dogs can't rearrange the furniture. That's Gloria's latest hobby. Whenever we're out she borrows her mother's key and sneaks in here and turns everything around. I nearly broke both my legs last night. Now WHERE has she hidden the garbage pail? I've been hunting for it all morning. (SAM CROSSES TO WASHER, DOWN LEFT, DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE. TAKES GARBAGE PAIL OFF WASHER [WHERE ROAT LEFT IT LAST NIGHT] AND HANDS IT TO SUSY.)

SAM

Here . . . now put it back where it belongs.

SUSY

Where was it?

SAM

On top of the washer. Where YOU must have put it.

SUSY

(RETURNING GARBAGE PAIL TO CLOSET UNTER SINK.) It was GLORIA!

SAM

(CROSSES TO COAT RACK, DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE, UP STAGE OF SOFA.) Oh come on now--take it easy on this kid. Her daddy's just left them again. And her mother's out looking for HIM. She's been battered back and forth like a sawed-off shuttlecock. And on top of that she's having (SAM CROSS DOWN TO CENTER TABLE, LEFT.) to wear glasses for the first time. By the way--call her Four-Eyes. (SAM LIGHTS CIGARETTE. SUSY SITS ON STOOL.)

SUSY

Four-eyes!

SAM

The glasses. That's what the kids are calling her and she can't take it so they'll go on till she can.

SUSY

So?

SAM

So if WE call her that too--she'll get used (SAM CROSS UP TO REFRIGERATOR.) to it much quicker.

SUSY

I don't know if I dare. (SAM TAKES POWER-PACK OUT OF ICEBOX.)

SAM

Now you're scared of a nine-year-old girl. (SAM CROSS BACK TO KITCHEN TABLE, UP STAGE.) The icebox needs defrosting. But MY way this time.

SUSY

YOUR WAY! And if I burn both my hands off?

SAM

Don't. UNGUENTINE'S in the emergency drawer.

SUSY

Defrost the icebox! Do I have to have a project EVERY time you're away?

SAM

And if it stops raining--try walking over to my studio and back. And no cheating. (SAM CROSS DOWN TO CENTER TABLE (LEFT.)

SUSY

Did I cheat last night?

SAM

How about that old lady who helped you across Sixth Avenue?

SUSY

You were watching! (SUSY RIGHT, DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

SAM

Only while you crossed Sixth. How about it, huh? Just once to the studio and back? All by yourself. (BUTTONS UP HIS RAINCOAT, BUCKLES BELT, ETC.)

SUSY

DO I HAVE TO BE THE WORLD'S CHAMPION BLIND WOMAN?

SAM

YES!

SUSY

How about just a little old bronze medal now and then?  
I'M AN AWFULLY GOOD LOSER!

SAM

Much sooner have a winner. (SAM LEFT OF CENTER TABLE, PUTS STUFF DOWN LEFT OF COFFEE TABLE.) I'm holding out for you, sweetheart. (SUSY CROSSES TO SAM AND FEELS AROUND FOR HIS HAND BUT HE KEEPS MOVING IT AROUND SO SHE CAN NOT FIND IT. FINALLY SHE GRABS IT AND LAUGHS.)

SUSY

Hey! You cheat! I've been there once already. (THEY HUG AND KISS.) Just don't EVER leave ME.

SAM

Fat chance! (SUSY MOVES BACK A PACE AWAY FROM SAM.)

SUSY

Is she waiting for you at the bus station? (SUSY BACKS TWO OR THREE STEPS LEFT.)

SAM

It's a HE--I'm meeting him at . . .

SUSY

No--I mean the woman who didn't turn up last night--  
LICIANA!

SAM

Oh HER. Yes. She went on ahead to get the back seat. (SUSY TAKES TWO WILD SWIPES AT HIS FACE WITH DOWN STAGE HAND BUT MISSES. SAM LAUGHS.) Nowhere near! (SAM LEANS DOWN TO PICK UP HIS BAG AND AS HE RISES SUSY SWIPES WITH UP STAGE HAND AND HITS HIM. HE LETS OUT A CRY.)

SUSY

Gosh I'm sorry, honey! I didn't know you were THERE!

SAM

I'm HERE! Now take it easy.

SUSY

But admit it that's my first lucky punch in weeks.

SAM

Yes--you were lucky and I've got a nose bleed and I'm going to miss that bus. (SAM CROSSES TO STAIRS AND UP. PUTS CIGARETTE OUT IN ASHTRAY ON TOP OF SAFE ENROUTE.)

SUSY

Oh--just tell me one thing. Where does the icebox plug in?

SAM

Huh?

SUSY

The refrigerator . . . (SUSY AT COUNTER UP STAGE BEHIND SOFA.) where does it plug into the wall?

SAM

Oh--you'll find it . . . and don't ask Gloria either.

SUSY

I don't need Gloria . . . and I certainly don't need YOU.

SAM

Hah! (SAM EXITS HALL DOOR. LEFT TO HERSELF, SUSY SEEMS A LITTLE DEPRESSED AT THE PROSPECT OF A LONELY UNEVENTFUL DAY AHEAD OF HER. [SUSY CROSSES TO BEDROOM AND ENTERS; SHE RE-ENTERS SECONDS LATER CARRYING AN ARMFUL OF LAUNDRY.] WHILE SHE IS BEDROOM THE ASHTRAY ON TOP OF SAFE [WHERE SAM LEFT HIS LIGHTED CIGARETTE] BEGINS TO SMOKE. SUSY TAKES SEVERAL PACES TOWARDS THE WASHER BEFORE SHE NOTICES THE SMELL. THEN TURNS AND SNIFFS AROUND TRYING TO LOCATE THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH THE SMOKE IS COMING.)

SUSY

(CALLING.) Sam! . . . Gloria! . . . ANYBODY! (SUSY CROSSES BACK UP TO STAIRS BUT STUMBLES AND FALLS, DROPS LAUNDRY ON STAIRS, THEN GETS HOLD OF HERSELF AND TURNS BACK, CROSSES TO PHONE [RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE] UP STAGE OF SOFA AND DIALS ZERO. SUSY, INTO PHONE:) Fire Department please--(A LONG PAUSE.) Oh hello! . . . Fire Department? . . . I hate to bother you about a little thing like this but--hello . . . I think there's something burning . . . it may only be a cigarette--but I'm blind and I can't

seem to locate it and it's getting worse! Could you send someone over, or would it be quicker if I phoned the police do you think? . . . Yes, of course, I'm sorry, it's 27B--(THE HALL DOORBELL RINGS.) Just a second--I think someone's here. (SHE LAYS PHONE ON TABLE, i.e., DOES NOT HANG UP. SUSY CROSSES RIGHT TO STAIRS AND UP TO DOOR UP STAGE OF SOFA.) Come in, come in, whoever you are! (SHE RUNS UP THE STAIRS AND OPENS THE DOOR. MIKE ENTERS. HE IS NOW DRESSED LIKE A JUNIOR EXECUTIVE. HE WEARS A RAIN-COAT WHICH HE LATER TAKES OFF.)

MIKE

Mrs. Hendrix? (SUSY OPENS DOOR GRABS MIKE.)

SUSY

Oh, good!

MIKE

My name's Tal . . .

SUSY

(QUICKLY.) Oh, that's all right, come in! (SUSY PUSHING MIKE DOWNSTAIRS, TRIPS ON LAUNDRY.) I think there's something on fire. Can you . . . ?

MIKE

Look out! (MIKE CATHES SUSY. HE HOLDS HER FOR A FEW SECONDS UNTIL SHE RECOVERS HER BALANCE.) Easy now . . . O.K.?

SUSY

Can you see it anywhere? I'm blind, you see.

MIKE

(CALMLY.) I got it. (WHEN MIKE CAUGHT SUSY ON THE STAIRS HE DROPPED A PACKAGE WHICH HE WAS CARRYING. HE NOW PICKS IT UP AND WHEN HE TAKES THE ASHTRAY OFF THE TOP OF THE SAFE HE LEAVES PACKAGE IN ITS PLACE [ON PURPOSE]. HE THEN TAKES ASHTRAY TO SINK [CROSSES LEFT TO SINK] AND PUTS OUT BURNING BUTT.) It was only a cigarette butt. There was a little paper in the ashtray. Must have caught fire. (MIKE IS DOWNSTAGE OF COFFEE TABLE AND KITCHEN TABLE.)

SUSY

Oh, THANK you. (SUSY CROSSES DOWN STAIRS.) Where WAS the ash tray?

MIKE

On the say . . . (HE STOPS JUST IN TIME. HE WAS GOING TO SAY "SAFE.") . . . by the wall mirror.

SUSY

Silly of me. I can never QUITE tell where smoke's coming (SUSY RIGHT OF COFFEE TABLE.) from. I don't know you, do I?

MIKE

No, Mrs. Hendrix. My name's Talman. (MIKE CROSS CENTER) Mike Talman. I used to know Sam.

SUSY

Oh! I'm Susy Hendrix. (SHE PUTS OUT HER HAND, MIKE CROSSES TO SUSY AND THEY SHAKE.) But I'm afraid you've just missed him--he won't be back 'til tonight.

MIKE

Oh, that's too bad. I'm flying to Phoenix in a couple of hours.

SUSY

I'm sorry.

MIKE

I should have phoned, of course. I did try last night . . . about nine o'clock but . . . (MIKE CROSSES TO STAIRS, UP STAGE OF SOFA AND PICKS UP LAUNDRY FROM STAIRS.)

SUSY

Yes, we were out. Do you often come to New York?

MIKE

(CROSSES TO SUSY AND GIVES HER LAUNDRY.) Here's your laundry.



SUSY

Oh, thank you. (SUSY CROSSES TO WASHER, DOWN STAGE.)

MIKE

No--some friends lent me their apartment for a few days--it's quite near here. I thought I saw Sam last night on Eighth Street. I was passing in a cab--so I looked him up in the phone book. (SUSY PUTS LAUNDRY IN WASHER.)

SUSY

Yes, he has a studio near there. Sit down, won't you. (WAVING TOWARD COUCH.)

MIKE

(HESITATING.) Well, just for a minute, thank you. (LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM.) I see he's still a camera bug. (MIKE SITS ON SOFA AT RIGHT, TAKES COAT OFF, DRAPES IT OVER SOFA BACK.)

SUSY

Yes, he began studying when he left the Marines . . . was that where you . . . ?

MIKE

Yes, it was. (MIKE TAKES OUT NOTEBOOK, FLIPS THROUGH PAGES LOOKING FOR INFORMATION.) The . . . seems so long ago I've almost forgotten . . . the . . . I GOT IT! . . .

SUSY

No, don't tell me the--(SUSY CROSSES TO CENTER LEFT OF SOFA.) the third training battalion--CHARLIE Company!

MIKE

(TOGETHER, FROM NOTEBOOK.) Charlie Company! That's it! (WITH A LAUGH.) Good old Charlie Company! Did you know Sam in those days?

SUSY

Oh no--we first met about a year ago--just after my accident--and got married six months later.

MIKE

You lost your sight in an accident?

SUSY

(QUITE CHEERFULLY.) Yes--an automobile accident.

MIKE

Sam and I first met five feet under water--but I guess he's told you that one.

SUSY

No

MIKE

I drove my Jeep into a canal. In fact--I guess he saved my life.

SUSY

(SITS ON SOFA NEXT TO MIKE.) Well that makes two of us!

MIKE

Oh?

SUSY

I was practicing how to cross at the lights and cars were piling up all round me by the time Sam yanked me out and he wasn't very polite about it, either!

MIKE

Oh Boy! You don't have to tell me!

SUSY

Were you scared of him?

MIKE

We all were--till we got to know him, of course. He was just a perfectionist I guess.

SUSY

And he still is! Of course HE'S the one who should be blind. He'd be terribly good at it. (MIKE BEGINS TO LAUGH AS IF HE CANNOT HELP IT.)

MIKE

Blind Sam! . . . (LAUGHS.) I know I shouldn't laugh, Mrs. Hendrix, but--

SUSY

(HIGHLY AMUSED.) Oh that's all right! Now he WOULD be the world's champion blind man . . . (THEY BOTH LAUGH TOGETHER. AS SUSY IS SPEAKING THE DOOR OPENS QUIETLY AND GLORIA LOOKS IN AND WATCHES THEM FOR A MOMENT. SUSY, CALLING:) Gloria? (TO MIKE.) Who is that?

MIKE

A little girl. (MIKE RISES, AFTER GLANCING AT GLORIA HE TURNS AWAY SO AS NOT TO BE RECOGNIZED.)

SUSY

(LOUDER.) Come in, Gloria!

MIKE

(AFTER A PAUSE.) She went out . . . does Sam . . . does Sam still get up to Canada now and then?

SUSY

Yes, he was visiting his parents there last week . . . did you ever meet them?

MIKE

Er--no, I never did. Well I'm sure sorry to have missed him, Mrs. . . . (MIKE CROSSES ONE-HALF UP STAIRS AND STOPS.)

SUSY

Drop us a card next time you're around. (SUSY CROSSES TO LANDING.)

MIKE

Thank you, Mrs. Hendrix.

SUSY

Susy.

MIKE

Susy. Well, I better go pick up my bags. (MIKE IS ON STAIRS.) Just say hello to Sam for me.

SUSY

(TRYING TO REMEMBER HIS NAME.) Uhhh?

MIKE

Mike Talman.

SUSY

Mike Talman.

MIKE

That's right. (SUSY PUTS OUT HER HAND AND THEY SHAKE AGAIN OVER THE RAILING.)

SUSY

Well goodbye . . . and thanks for putting out the . . . oh, my God! (SUSY CROSSES TO PHONE AND GRABS IT OFF TABLE. WHILE SHE IS TALKING ON PHONE MIKE OPENS DOOR. GLORIA IS STANDING OUTSIDE. HE EXITS LEFT AND GLORIA ENTERS QUIETLY AND STANDS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS WATCHING SUSY, WHO DOES NOT NOTICE HER. GLORIA IS NINE YEARS OLD AND WEARS GLASSES. SUSY, INTO PHONE:) Hello . . . oh--you're still there. I'm terribly sorry but the fire's out. As a matter of fact it wasn't in here at all. It was upstairs--just some soup that had burnt up on the stove but you could smell it for blocks! . . . Yes, you see there was a little girl up there and she was supposed to be watching it, but you know how they are sometimes--oh, no, she's fine and so it's all right now. Goodbye. (HANGS UP.) Oh--how awful! Mike? . . . Mike?

GLORIA

(ON LANDING.) WHAT soup?

SUSY

Oh--hello, Gloria.

GLORIA

(COMING DOWN STAIRS.) Who was that man who was in here?

SUSY

That was Mr. Talman . . . he's an old friend of Sam's.

GLORIA

Oh, yeah? Is the grocery list (GLORIA AT LANDING.) ready?

SUSY

Yes. It's by the phone. And five dollars . . . can you see it? (SUSY UP STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

GLORIA

(PICKING THEM UP. Yes, I have it. What else? (GLORIA CROSSES TO SUSY.)

SUSY

Nothing else . . . (CHEERFULLY.) my job for today is to defrost the icebox . . . if you'd like to help me. (WASTING NO TIME, GLORIA CROSSES TO REFRIGERATOR, UP STAGE OF SOFA, SWITCHES IT TO DEFROST AND, LEAVING THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR OPEN, STARTS TOWARDS STAIRS.) What did you do then?

GLORIA

(LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE.) Switched it to defrost, of course.

SUSY

No--that's not how WE do it.

GLORIA

It is too. I've done it for Mother--hundreds of times.

SUSY

Not with this one. If you switch THIS one to defrost the milk freezes solid and all the jars crack open. We have to do it SAM'S WAY. We just pull out the cord at the back and take EVERYTHING out and put two pans of boiling water into the freezer.

GLORIA

(OVERLAPPING.) Okay, do it Sam's way then. (GLORIA CROSSES TO STAIRS, DOWN STAGE OF SOFA.) I'll go to the A & P . . . (AS GLORIA REACHES STAIRS.)

SUSY

Did you close the door . . . of the icebox? (GLORIA GLANCES FROM THE OPEN REFRIGERATOR TO SUSY AND BACK.)

GLORIA

(ON STAIRS.) Yes.

SUSY

I didn't hear it shut.

GLORIA

Okay, then, it's open.

SUSY

(CALMLY.) Then will you shut it, please.

GLORIA

Can't you shut it yourself? It's right by you.

SUSY

That's the girl . . . thanks.

GLORIA

For what?

SUSY

(SURPRISED.) Oh! I thought you closed it!

GLORIA

Well I didn't.

SUSY

(LETTING GO.) Now look here, Four-Eyes! I thought I'd made this clear. When I open the icebox I close it (GLORIA CROSSES TO END TABLE. AT THE NAME "FOUR-EYES," GLORIA GOES INTO A CONTROLLED RAGE AND THROWS ASHTRAY.)

Did you drop that by mistake?

GLORIA

No.

SUSY

Then pick it up . . . NOW! (GLORIA GOES TO COFFEE TABLE, THROWS MAGAZINES.)

GLORIA

Don't you ever call me that again. (LOUDLY.) AND I DO NOT STEAL?

SUSY

Steal? Who said anything about stealing?

GLORIA

(LOUDLY.) YOU did! I know SAM wouldn't say a thing like that. You told Mother I'd stolen a DOLL of yours. What would I want with a silly doll?

SUSY

I never said anything of the kind. and whatever you threw down then--pick it up! (SHOUTING.) AT ONCE! (GLORIA CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE SYSTEMATICALLY THROWING KNIVES, PLATES, ETC. [WHICH WILL NOT BREAK OR DAMAGE] ONTO THE FLOOR. AS SHE DOES THIS SHE SHOUTS ANGRILY.)

GLORIA

And don't you shout at me! . . . (SUSY RECOILS FROM HER. GLORIA CROSSES TO SINK.) I--don't--like--being--shouted--at! UNDERSTAND? (SUSY PUTS HER HANDS TO HER EARS AND SHOUTS.)

SUSY

You stop that--whatever you're doing--STOP IT! You little . . . sawed-off shuttlecock! (GLORIA STOPS DROPPING THINGS AND STARES AT SUSY, A COFFEE POT STILL IN HER HANDS.)

GLORIA

WHAT did you say?



SUSY

(QUIETLY, ASHAMED OF HERSELF.) I'm sorry, Gloria, I--I shouldn't have said that. (GLORIA LAYS DOWN COFFEE POT.)

GLORIA

What does it MEAN? (GLORIA CROSSES TO SUSY, LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

SUSY

Nothing. It just popped out--see what happens when you push someone too far? . . . (GLORIA MOVES TOWARDS SUSY.)

GLORIA

I know some dirty words TOO, you know . . .

SUSY

. . . And I wouldn't have called you Four-Eyes either if . . .

GLORIA

So why DID YOU? (GLORIA CROSSES DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE TO LEFT OF SOFA.)

SUSY

Doesn't Sam call you that?

GLORIA

Sam LIKES me. He can call me what he likes.

SUSY

Oh, I see, thanks. I'll tell him.

GLORIA

WHAT will you tell him? (NO REPLY, THEN SLOWLY.) If you tell Sam ANYTHING about this--I'll TELL HIM!

SUSY

What?

GLORIA

(SLOWLY.) About that MAN--who was here just now!--I HEARD!

SUSY

What do you mean--I HEARD? (GLORIA CROSSES TO SAFE, PICKS UP BOX AND READS ADDRESS LABEL.)

GLORIA

From M. Tal-man . . . Ari-zona! . . . Well!

SUSY

What have you got there?

GLORIA

He left a package on the safe. By mistake I'm SURE.

SUSY

You better leave it there.

GLORIA

Of course . . . HE'LL be back.

SUSY

I don't like you today--I think you better go.

GLORIA

Okay. I'll go then. (GLORIA CROSSES TO REFRIGERATOR UP-STAGE OF SOFA AND SLAMS DOOR HARD.) I've CLOSED the ice-box.

SUSY

And leave the grocery list--AND the money. (GLORIA CROSSES BACK TO STAIRS, UP STAGE OF SOFA AND DROPS LIST AND MONEY ON END TABLE AND GOES UPSTAIRS. SUSY SUDDENLY REMEMBERS THE THINGS ON THE FLOOR.) Oh . . . but before you go, pick those things up . . . all of them . . . go on . . . put each one back where it came from. If you can't remember where--give it to me.

GLORIA

(STOPS ON STAIRS.) Will you tell Sam?

SUSY

I tell Sam EVERYTHING.

GLORIA

Then pick them up yourself. (ONCE AGAIN SUSY IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE, BUT INSTEAD SHE BECOMES VERY CONTROLLED.)

SUSY

(VERY QUIETLY.) O.K. . . . I will. (SUSY GETS DOWN SLOWLY ON HER KNEES AND FEELS AROUND, GATHERING ALL SHE CAN FIND INTO ONE PILE ON THE FLOOR. GLORIA STANDS AT TOP OF STAIRS AND WATCHES.) Now beat it! Go on--get out of here . . . and don't ever come down here again. (SUSY GOES ON COLLECTING ON THE FLOOR AND GLORIA WATCHES. SHE NOTICES HOW SUSY KEEPS MISSING THINGS BY INCHES. GLORIA CROSSES DOWNSTAIRS.)

GLORIA

(QUIETLY.) Please don't tell Sam. (PAUSE.) Susy . . . ? (NO REPLY.) I WANTED to help you today. [SEE FIGURE 2.] (GLORIA CROSSES TO SUSY ON FLOOR DOWN STAGE OF SOFA. SUSY GOES ON TRYING TO PICK UP. GLORIA PICKS UP SOMETHING THAT SUSY HAS MISSED TWICE AND PUTS IT INTO SUSY'S HAND.)

SUSY

(QUIETLY.) Thanks. I'll put that away. (AS THEY CONTINUE TO PICK UP AND PUT AWAY.)

GLORIA

You won't tell Sam, will you?

SUSY

Just tell me what's broken. Go on--don't be afraid.

GLORIA

Oh, nothing's broken. I only threw UNbreakables.



Figure 2

SUSY

Well! That was CRAFTY of you. Who taught you that?

GLORIA

Daddy.

SUSY

Oh! Does he throw things sometimes?

GLORIA

(CHEERFULLY.) Boy he sure did the night he left. He went around the whole apartment throwing all the unbreakables on the floor. But Mother finally got wise to this and said "Well--just look at YOU! You can't even BREAK anything!" And when we woke up the next morning he'd gone . . . (SUSY IS ABOUT TO PICK UP A SMALL SHARP KNIFE FROM THE TABLE.) LOOK OUT! . . . (GLORIA CROSSES TO SUSY AND HANDS KNIFE.) Oh--I'm sorry, Susy.

SUSY

That's okay--what is it?

GLORIA

It's just a small kitchen knife--looks sharp. (SUSY FEELS AROUND CAREFULLY AND PICKS IT UP.)

SUSY

It is! Thanks. . . (FRONT DOORBELL RINGS.) Who is it? (DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.) Come in! The door's open. (SUSY STANDS.)

GLORIA

I'll go to the A & P. (GLORIA STANDS, CROSSES TO FOOT OF STAIRS.)

SUSY

Thanks, honey. No rush. (GLORIA PICKS UP LIST AND MONEY AND RUNS UP STAIRS. DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.) COME IN!

GLORIA

I'll get it. (GLORIA ON TOP LANDING ABOUT TO OPEN DOOR.) You can call me Four Eyes ONE day if you like . . . but

not JUST yet, if you don't mind. (GLORIA OPENS DOOR, REVEALING A MAN OF ABOUT SEVENTY STANDING OUTSIDE. "ROAT" WHO IS NOW DISGUISED AS "HARRY ROAT, SR." GLORIA EXITS.)

ROAT

I would like to speak to Mr. Sam Hunt. (ROAT ENTERING.)

SUSY

I beg your pardon . . . ? Who are you, please . . . ?  
(SUSY CROSS TO UP STAGE CENTER, ROAT ON LANDING.)

ROAT

Where is she? . . . Where is Mrs. Roat? (ROAT COMES INSIDE THE DOOR AND GLORIA STANDS OUTSIDE WATCHING HIM.)

SUSY

I think you must have the wrong house . . . I'm Mrs. Hendrix . . . who are you please? . . . You see I'm . . .

ROAT

May I have a glass of water? I--I'm not feeling too well.

SUSY

(HESITATES.) Okay. Just a minute. (SUSY CROSSES TO SINK DOWNSTAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE. ROAT SEES GLORIA WATCHING AND CLOSES DOOR. HE THEN STARTS DOWN THE STAIRS.) If you'll just wait there, I'll bring it. (ROAT RUNS INTO BEDROOM AND WE HEAR HIM RUMMAGING AROUND.) What--what are you doing in there? (AFTER A FEW MOMENTS ROAT BURSTS OUT OF THE BEDROOM. HE IS HOLDING WHAT LOOKS LIKE A THIN LEATHER VOLUME. SUSY CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.)

ROAT

And you can tell SAM HUNT--if he doesn't leave her alone (ROAT RE-ENTERS FROM BEDROOM ON LANDING.)--I'll kill him! (HE STARTS CROSSING TO DOOR, MIKE ENTERS WITHOUT KNOCKING, AND COMES DOWN THE STAIRS.)

MIKE

(CHEERFULLY.) Hello . . . It's Mike Talman again. Sorry--but I think I must have left a package. . .

SUSY

Mike--stop him . . . I don't know who he is (ROAT EXITING UP STAIRS.)

Mike

You just hold it! Who are you? (ROAT ON STAIRS. ROAT PUSHES MIKE DOWN.)

ROAT

Don't touch me! Don't you dare touch me! I've found it! I've found it in the House of Sin! (ROAT EXITS, RUNNING. MIKE GETS UP FROM STAIRS.)

MIKE

Now wait a minute! Come back here! (MIKE CROSS TO HALL DOOR. OFFSTAGE WE HEAR ROAT SHOUTING, LEFT.)

ROAT

Taxi! . . . Taxi!

SUSY

Mike?

MIKE

What happened? (MIKE CLOSSES DOOR, STARTS DOWN STAIRS TO SUSY.)

SUSY

I don't know . . . he just barged in and went into the bedroom. I heard a lot of noise and then . . . (SUSY LEFT OF SOFA.)

MIKE

And then he emptied your dresser (MIKE LOOKS IN BEDROOM. THEN CROSS TO PHONE RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE.) all over the floor . . . I'll call the police.

SUSY

(THINKING HARD.) The number is . . . 440-1234. . . . Mike what will I do if he comes back? (HE CROSSES TO THE PHONE,



TAKES OUT HIS LITTLE NOTEBOOK AND IS REFERRING TO THE TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE PHONE BOOTH OUTSIDE.)

MIKE

440-1234. (AS HE DIALS 631-5309 THE NUMBER FROM HIS NOTEBOOK.) Don't worry, Susy. I'll take a later flight to Phoenix. I'll stay here 'til Sam gets back. Okay?

SUSY

(WITH GREAT RELIEF AS SHE SITS ONTO SOFA.) Oh, YES! YES, PLEASE.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I--Scene 2

Act I

Scene 3

(TIME: TWENTY MINUTES LATER. ON RISE: CARLINO ENTERS FROM BEDROOM, NOTEBOOK IN HAND. HE IS NOW DRESSED AS A CITY POLICE DETECTIVE AND WEARS RAINCOAT. HE IS FOLLOWED BY SUSY AND MIKE. MIKE IS ACTING AS THOUGH HE IS ALREADY IRRITATED BY CARLINO AND THERE IS FRICTION BETWEEN THEM THROUGHOUT THIS SCENE. CARLINO HAS A LEATHER GLOVE ON HIS LEFT HAND [WHICH HE WEARS DURING REST OF PLAY] AND A HANDKERCHIEF IN HIS RIGHT HAND. HE USES HANDKERCHIEF TO WIPE WHATEVER HE MIGHT HAVE TOUCHED THE NIGHT BEFORE. MIKE AND SUSY FOLLOW CARLINO OUT OF BEDROOM. SUSY STOPS ON LANDING.)

MIKE

(ANNOYED, ENTERING FROM BEDROOM.) But I've got to fly to Phoenix tonight.

CARLINO

Well, maybe that little girl will be able to identify him. Just write your address down here, will you. (MIKE TAKES CARLINO'S NOTEBOOK AND WRITES. CARLINO CROSS TO KITCHEN TABLE, LEFT.) How many apartments are there in this house--Mrs. Hendrix?

SUSY

Only two, this one and the one upstairs. (SUSY CROSS TO RIGHT OF SOFA. MIKE CROSS TO KITCHEN TABLE LEFT.)

CARLINO

(TO MIKE AS HE WIPES OFF SOME FINGERPRINTS. CARLINO CROSS UP TO REFRIGERATOR AND WIPE.) You say he was waving something in his hand, Mr. Talman?

MIKE

(STILL WRITING IN NOTEBOOK.) Yes, it looked like a thin leather book . . . here's my address. (MIKE GIVES NOTEBOOK BACK TO CARLINO. IN DOING THIS HE POINTS TO BOTH SIDES OF THE PAGE AND CARLINO NODS. CARLINO GOES TO WINDOW AND SIGNALS WITH THE VENETIAN BLINDS, SAYING TO SUSY:)

CARLINO

Excuse me, Mrs. Hendrix, it's a little dark in here . . . this your permanent address, Mr. Talman?

MIKE

Yes it is. (SUSY CROSS TO BEDROOM LIGHT SWITCH AND FEELS THE TOP SWITCH, FINDING IT IS IN THE "ON" POSITION SHE LOOKS PUZZLED.)

CARLINO

(GOES UPSTAIRS.) Well I won't bother you any more . . . and don't worry, Mrs. Hendrix (CARLINO CROSS TO LEFT OF COFFEE TABLE, SUSY COUNTERS DOWN RIGHT OF COFFEE TABLE, RIGHT OF SOFA.) --if your husband does find anything missing he'll let me know, I'm sure.

SUSY

Yes, he will. And thank you for coming so quickly.

CARLINO

You're entirely welcome. (THE PHONE RINGS. CARLINO CROSS UPSTAIRS, DUSTING BANNISTER. CARLINO EXITS, CLOSING DOOR BEHIND HIM. SUSY IS NEAR TO THE PHONE AND PICKS IT UP [RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE].

SUSY

Hello . . . yes . . . just a moment please. (CALLING.) Sergeant Carlino!

MIKE

I'll get him. (CALLING. Sergeant! (MIKE UP STAIRS.)  
You're wanted on phone. (CARLINO ENTERS, COMES DOWN THE  
STAIRS AND TAKES PHONE FROM SUSY.)

CARLINO

Sorry Mrs. Hendrix. (CARLINO ENTERS, CROSS DOWN TO PHONE  
RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE. MIKE FOLLOWS.) This is going  
to be one of those days. (INTO PHONE.) Carlino . . .  
yes, Lieutenant. (SURPRISED.) You mean he just walked  
in? (A PAUSE.) A DOLL? (A LONG PAUSE. SUSY, WHO HAS  
REACTED ON THE WORD "DOLL," IS LISTENING HARD. MIKE AND  
CARLINO NOTICE THIS AND GLANCE AT EACH OTHER. MIKE IS  
ON LANDING, SUSY COUNTER TO LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE.) . . .  
Have you told him yet? . . . Give me a few minutes. (A  
PAUSE.) Sure, I understand. (CARLINO HANGS UP. A  
PAUSE.)

SUSY

Did they find that old man?

CARLINO

Mrs. Hendrix, maybe I should mention one thing while I'm  
here. I didn't want to alarm you but (MIKE CROSS UP STAGE  
BEHIND SOFA.) a woman was found just outside here this  
morning . . .

SUSY

Yes, I know.

CARLINO

(SURPRISED.) You say--you KNEW her?

SUSY

Oh no. I just heard about it on the radio.

CARLINO

Oh, I see. . . (CARLINO DUSTS KITCHEN TABLE.) your HUS-  
BAND didn't know her by any chance?

SUSY

(SURPRISED.) No.

MIKE

(ANNOYED.) Of course he didn't.

CARLINO

I'm sorry, Mr. Talman but (CARLINO CROSS DOWN CENTER, LEFT OF COFFEE TABLE.) we've been told to make inquiries . . . did you hear anything peculiar last night? . . . Mrs. Hendrix?

SUSY

(TURNING.) No we didn't . . . but we were out most of the evening.

CARLINO

Oh I see--and you and Mr. Hendrix were TOGETHER all evening--I suppose?

SUSY

No. I went to a movie for about an hour while he was working at his studio.

CARLINO

Was anyone else with him?

MIKE

Hey? What is this? (MIKE CROSS DOWN CENTER BETWEEN CARLINO AND SUSY.)

SUSY

No . . . he was supposed to have photographed someone but she never . . .

MIKE

(TO CARLINO, ANGRILY.) Are you questioning (MIKE CROSS TO CARLINO.) Mrs. Hendrix for any particular reason?

CARLINO

I'm not questioning her, Mr. Talman. (CARLINO DUSTS COFFEE TABLE.)

MIKE

Then why are you taking notes?

SUSY

Mike! . . .

CARLINO

I am NOT taking notes . . . I was only checking to see . . .

MIKE

What?

CARLINO

If there was anything else I DID want to ask . . .

MIKE

Well if there is I suggest you wait till Mr. Hendrix returns home.

CARLINO

Now look--I am allowed to talk, aren't I?

MIKE

Talk, yes. But Mrs. Hendrix doesn't have to answer any questions if she doesn't want to and if they didn't teach you that at police school read the Constitution. (MIKE GRABS CARLINO'S DUST RAG AND GLARES AT HIM.)

CARLINO

Okay, then--no more questions. (CARLINO CROSS TO SAFE, DUSTS IT WITH HIS SLEEVE. MIKE CROSSES TO RIGHT OF SOFA DOWNSTAGE.)

MIKE

Have they found that old man yet?

CARLINO

(WITH MOCK RESPECT.) Mr. Talman, you're not a LAWYER by any chance?

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MIKE

No--I'm not but . . .

CARLINO

(WITH A MOCKING LAUGH. CARLINO GOES UPSTAIRS, PAUSES IN DOOR WAY.) No--I didn't THINK you were! (HE EXITS QUICKLY AND CLOSSES DOOR. WE HEAR HIM GO DOWN HALL AND STREET DOOR SLAM.)

MIKE

Well a fat lot of help he was! . . . That old man could be in New Jersey by now . . .

SUSY

(INTERRUPTING.) Mike--is this room very dirty? (SUSY CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.)

MIKE

No . . . why?

SUSY

That Sergeant kept dusting everything . . . didn't you notice?

MIKE

No--did he. (MIKE TURNS TO FACE SUSY.)

SUSY

All around the refrigerator--and in that corner . . . (POINTS TO SAFE. THE DOORBELL RINGS. SUSY STARTS TOWARDS IT TO LEFT CORNER SOFA.)

MIKE

I'll get it. He's probably thought of some (MIKE GOES UP STAIRS.) more silly questions. (MIKE GOES UPSTAIRS AND OPENS DOOR. ROAT IS STANDING OUTSIDE. HE IS NOW PLAYING THE PART OF HARRY ROAT JUNIOR. HE APPEARS OUT OF BREATH AND VERY UNCOMFORTABLE. ROAT ENTERS, STAYS IN DOORWAY.)

ROAT

Good afternoon, Mr. . . . Hunt?

MIKE

No . . . Mr. and Mrs. Hendrix live here.

ROAT

HENDRIX? I beg your pardon. (REFERS TO SLIP OF PAPER IN HIS HAND.) But this IS 27B Grogan Street?

MIKE

Yes, but . . .

ROAT

My name is Roat, Harry Roat, Junior. May I ask if an elderly gentleman dropped by today?

MIKE

Well! I don't know if he "dropped by" exactly, he . . .

ROAT

Mr. Hendrix--if I may come in for a moment . . . you see, that was my FATHER.

SUSY

Yes--come in please.

ROAT

Thank you. MIKE CLOSSES DOOR, GOES DOWN STAIRS, ROAT FOLLOWS. ON HIS WAY DOWN, MIKE TURNS TO ROAT.)

MIKE

(QUIETLY.) Mr. Roat . . . Mrs. Hendrix is blind.

ROAT

Oh . . . I understand, thank you. (AS ROAT COMES DOWN THE STAIRS, SUSY SUDDENLY RECOILS. THIS IS AN INSTINCTIVE MOVEMENT OF FEAR AND BOTH MEN NOTICE IT AND GLANCE AT EACH OTHER.)



SUSY

Mike! (SUSY COUNTERS CENTER STAGE (RECOIL?))

MIKE

(GOING TO HER.) Yes? . . . You all right? (MIKE CROSS TO SUSY, UP STAGE OF SOFA.)

SUSY

Yes, I'm sorry . . . Mr. Roat?

ROAT

I'm so very sorry this happened, Mrs. Hendrix. (ROAT CROSS TO RIGHT OF SOFA.) I do hope my father wasn't RUDE in any way?

MIKE

Well, now--he opened all the drawers in the bedroom. Was that rude, do you think?

ROAT

Oh my goodness! But let me reassure you--this is not as serious a matter as you may think, Mr. Hendrix.

MIKE

My name is TALMAN--I'm a friend of Mr. Hendrix.

ROAT

Mr. Talman--my father may appear a little--erratic at times but I assure you he would never . . .

MIKE

(OVERLAPPING.) Harm anyone?

ROAT

Certainly not.

MIKE

But he just told Mrs. Hendrix that if . . . (GLORIA ENTERS, MIKE BREAKS OFF AS GLORIA SUDDENLY ENTERS AT HALL DOOR, WITHOUT KNOCKING. SHE IS CARRYING A LARGE GROCERY BAG.)

SUSY

Gloria!

GLORIA

It's only your groceries. I'll come back later.  
(GLORIA AND ROAT ESTABLISH EYE CONTACT.)

SUSY

Leave them NOW if you like. (ROAT MOVES BACK ON LANDING.  
MIKE TURNS HIS BACK TO GLORIA SO THAT SHE CAN'T SEE HIS  
FACE. ROAT HOWEVER TURNS AROUND AND LOOKS STRAIGHT AT HER  
DELIBERATELY. SHE THEN EXITS.)

ROAT

(TO MIKE.) What did my father say? (ROAT CROSSES OFF  
LANDING.)

MIKE

That if SOMEBODY didn't leave some woman alone--he would  
KILL him!

ROAT

Did he mention the name of SAM HUNT?

SUSY

Yes! I think that's what he said . . .

ROAT

Ah! The I can explain all this quite easily. (ROAT CROSS  
DOWNSTAGE TO SUSY, RIGHT OF SOFA.) You see my father came  
here because he thinks your husband is a photographer named  
SAM HUNT.

SUSY

Well--as you see--my husband IS a photographer but we can  
clear all this up right away. Mike--there's a picture of  
Sam and me on the dresser--a WEDDING photographer. (AS  
MIKE CROSSES TO BEDROOM UP STAGE OF SOFA.)

ROAT

I'm afraid that you won't help ME very much . . . (ROAT  
COUNTERS UP STAGE. MIKE TURNS IN DOORWAY.) You see I  
have never seen this man.

MIKE

Well just who IS he, anyway?

ROAT

About three years ago my wife was on vacation in Montreal and while she was there--MY FATHER TELLS ME--she and this man became . . . acquainted.

MIKE

So your wife meets some guy three years ago--and now your father threatens to KILL him! For what?

ROAT

My father alleges that they have been seeing each other--from time to time--ever since. (A PAUSE.) And now (ROAT GOES UPSTAIRS.) if you'll excuse me, Mrs. Hendrix--I must find my father.

MIKE

(PUZZLED.) Mr. Roat, before you go--there's one thing I don't quite understand . . . how did YOU get here? (A PAUSE.) Did you follow your father here TODAY?

ROAT

Er--in a way--yes I did. (IMPATIENT TO LEAVE HE OPENS HALL DOOR.)

MIKE

But . . .

SUSY

Then! . . . (SLOWLY GROWING ANGRY.) Then you were waiting outside? All the time he was in here? (NO REPLY.) Why didn't you stop him?

ROAT

I er--I didn't follow him here EXACTLY.

MIKE

Then how EXACTLY did YOU know this address? (A LONG PAUSE.)

ROAT

I was hoping not to have to tell you this . . .

SUSY

(QUICKLY.) PLEASE tell us!

ROAT

(SLOWLY AS HE CLOSES DOOR.) I believe my father followed my WIFE to this apartment. (A PAUSE. SUSY DOES NOT BELIEVE--MORE ANGRY THAN HURT. MIKE STILL ON LANDING AT BEDROOM DOOR.)

SUSY

When? (AS HE TALKS HE COMES DOWN THE STAIRS AND, STEP BY STEP, NEARER AND NEARER TO SUSY.)

ROAT

Last Sunday my father had (ROAT DOWNSTAIRS, TOWARD SUSY, UP STAGE OF SOFA.) invited us to dinner at his club. My wife arrived late and said she couldn't stay because she had to call on a FRIEND who was flying to Montreal the next day and she had to give him something. Then my father became very testy and wanted to know his NAME and what it WAS she had to give him and she finally became annoyed and said "Well, if you MUST know--it's that DOLL of mine--that YOU broke!" (SLIGHT PAUSE.) Then she got up and walked out . . .

SUSY

A doll--did you say? (ROAT CATCHES MIKE'S EYE BUT SPEAKS ON AS IF IT WAS OF NO IMPORTANCE.)

ROAT

Yes, it was a musical doll. (A PAUSE.)

SUSY

Was it . . . ?

ROAT

Yes?

SUSY

You say Mrs. Roat was going to give a doll to--a FRIEND--

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who was going to Canada?

ROAT

Yes.

SUSY

Last . . . Monday?

ROAT

(QUIETLY, HE IS NOW CLOSE TO SUSY.) That's right.

SUSY

WHY did she have to do that?

ROAT

Because this doll wasn't just a toy. It had been specially (ROAT CROSS UP STAGE OF SUSY, UP STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE TO WINDOW.) made for her in Montreal. It played a little tune that was a favorite of hers. (SLOWLY AND POINTEDLY WHISTLES TUNE AT SUSY.) So her friend said he would take it back to the makers and have it fixed. And then bring it back to her. . . . The moment my wife walked out on us that night my father said to me "It's that doll Sam HUNT gave her." Then he followed her. The next morning I found this note under my door--(ROAT FLICKS BLINDS OPEN AND SHUT. SUSY REACTS TO THIS SLIGHTLY. THEN, WHILE PRETENDING TO READ FROM A SLIP OF PAPER HE RUSTLES IT SO SHE CAN HEAR.) It just says --(READING.) "Dear Harry--Sam Hunt lives at 27B Grogan Street in Greenwich Village--Dad." (A PAUSE. SUSY SITS. THE TWO MEN KEEP GLANCING FROM WINDOW TO THE PHONE AS IF THEY EXPECT IT TO RING ANY MOMENT.) Then, this morning, when I told him that Liciana hadn't come home last night--

SUSY

Who? . . . WHO--who didn't come home last night?

ROAT

Liciana--my wife. But she frequently comes to Manhattan and then decides to stay with friends. She usually phones (ROAT CROSS TO UP CENTER STAGE, UP STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.) to say where she is but so far we haven't . . . heard anything. (THE PHONE RINGS, MIKE STARTS TO CROSS TO PHONE, BUT ROAT HOLDS UP HIS HAND AND THEN POINTS TO SUSY [i.e., "LET HER TAKE IT"]). BUT SUSY IS IN A DAZE AND DOESN'T SEEM TO HEAR THE PHONE. MIKE LOOKS BACK AT ROAT AND SHRUGS. ROAT NODS.)

MIKE

Shall I get it, Susy? (SHE DOES NOT REPLY SO HE PICKS IT UP. MIKE IS AT PHONE RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE, ROAT COUNTERS RIGHT. MIKE, INTO PHONE:) Hello . . . one moment. Susy--it's Sergeant Carlino--he wants to speak to you . . . Susy?

SUSY

(STILL DAZED.) Hmmm? . . . What does he want?

ROAT

I must go now, Mrs. Hendrix. (ROAT CROSS UP STAGE OF SOFA TO STAIRS.)

MIKE

(INTO PHONE.) Hello . . . can I take a message? . . . No, I'll take it. Hang on a moment--his SON is here now . . . Mr. Roat! Don't go--he wants to speak to you.

ROAT

(ROAT CROSS TO TOP LANDING IN DOORWAY.) Who?

MIKE

The police . . .

ROAT

(ALARMED.) No! . . . (IN A WHISPER.) Say I've gone.  
(GOES TO DOOR.)

MIKE

But it's about your WIFE . . . (SUSY REACTS.)

ROAT

What? (HE CLOSSES DOOR, CROSS BACK TO PHONE RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

MIKE

And your father is at the police station. (ROAT TAKES PHONE FROM MIKE. MIKE COUNTERS TO UP CENTER STAGE.)

ROAT

Hello . . . speaking . . . that's right . . . no, she didn't

but . . . (A LONG PAUSE.) Is she hurt? . . . (ANGRILY.)  
No, tell me now! (ROAT LISTENS FOR SEVERAL SECONDS. THEN  
HE SEEMS TO GO INTO KIND OF TRANCE. SUSY STANDS. SHE  
SENSES THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG AND TRYs TO LISTEN TO OTHER  
END OF PHONE. FINALLY ROAT DROPS THE PHONE ON THE TABLE  
[WITHOUT HANGING UP] AND CROSSES UP STAIRS AND RUNS OUT OF  
THE APARTMENT.)

MIKE

(SHOUTING AFTER HIM.) Mr. Roat . . . Mr. Roat! (MIKE  
GOES UP STAIRS. ROAT EXITS, LEAVING HALL DOOR OPEN, MIKE  
GOES UP STAIRS TO CLOSE THE HALL DOOR.)

SUSY

Mike! Don't go!

MIKE

Of course not. He left the door open. (AS HE CLOSES DOOR  
AND COMES DOWNSTAIRS HE SAYS LIGHTLY: Well--(MIKE CROSS  
TO UP STAGE OF SOFA RIGHT.) that's some family, the Roats!  
The old man just walked into Carlino's office . . . and it  
seems that MRS. Roat has been in some kind of accident . . .

SUSY

(QUIETLY.) She's dead.

MIKE

What?

SUSY

(SLOWLY.) She was murdered just outside here last night.

MIKE

(AMAZED.) You KNEW that? . . . All the time he was here?

SUSY

I only realized when he spoke on the (SUSY CROSS DOWN  
CENTER RIGHT OF SOFA, UP STAGE OF COFFEE TABLE.) phone just  
now. The Sergeant must have told him. It was on the radio.  
I think they even mentioned her name only I wasn't listen-  
ing properly. Mike--could you phone the bus station at  
Asbury Park . . . and ask them to get Sam to phone me immed-  
iately.



MIKE

Sure I will . . . but look-- (MIKE CROSS TO PHONE AND HANGS IT UP.) you're not worrying about anything that old man is going to say? He's obviously nuts!

SUSY

But there's something you don't know, Mike . . . Sam DID bring a child's doll back from Canada . . . (A PAUSE. SHE IS TRYING TO REMEMBER. MIKE WAITS FOR HER TO CONTINUE.)

MIKE

But it can't be the same one.

SUSY

EXACTLY like the one he described just now. I was trying to help him unpack and I must have knocked it off the bed because it played a few notes. So I picked it up and said, "Ah, surprise!" or something like that. I thought it was a present for me. But Sam--he said--no, it was for a little girl who was in a hospital . . . some WOMAN he'd met at the airport in Montreal had asked him to bring it here for her . . . someone he said he'd never met before . . . (HER VOICE TRAILS AWAY AS SHE REALIZES THAT SAM MUST HAVE BEEN LYING.)

MIKE

(COAXING HER GENTLY.) And so--Sam took it to the hospital . . . ?

SUSY

No--this woman . . . IT MUST HAVE BEEN MRS. ROAT! She came here late that night to pick it up but--but Sam couldn't find it . . . IT MUST STILL BE HERE SOMEWHERE. (BECOMING HYSTERICAL.) And that Italian woman who didn't turn up last night . . . Liciana. That was Mrs. Roat too! (SUSY CROSS TO BEDROOM, ENTERS, FEELS ON DRESSER, KNOCKING OVER SOME BOTTLES.)

MIKE

Now just take it easy, Susy. Suppose Sam DID know her, that's not so serious . . .

SUSY

(RENTERS, DOWN RIGHT STAGE TO SAFE.) Mike--can you see a photograph of Sam and me--it should be on the dresser? It's a wedding photograph in a leather frame-- (MIKE CROSS TO BEDROOM.)

MIKE

Not on the dresser . . . (SUDDENLY.) Oh, that's what the (MIKE REENTERS, STANDS ON LANDING.) old man was carrying when he left the house . . .

SUSY

(SLOWLY, OVERLAPPING.) He's taken a photograph of SAM to the police . . .

MIKE

(GOING TO PHONE.) Then let's (MIKE CROSS TO PHONE.) phone Carlino and tell him.

SUSY

NO! We musn't say anything to the police. The Sergeant (SUSY CROSS LEFT TO SOFA.) mentioned a doll when he was on the phone, don't you remember? And all those questions about where Sam was last night--and about the murdered woman --the police (MIKE CROSS TO WINDOW.) must think he . . . they must think he killed her! (MIKE FLICKS BLINDS LOUDLY AS THOUGH LOOKING OUT OF WINDOW.)

MIKE

Susy!

SUSY

What is it?

MIKE

(QUIETLY.) There's a police car just down the street . . . [SEE FIGURE 3.] (A LONG PAUSE--HE TURNS AND WATCHES HER.) They're watching this house.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I--SCENE 3

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Figure 3

Act II

## Scene 1

(TIME: ABOUT AN HOUR LATER. ALTERATIONS TO SET: THERE IS VISUAL EVIDENCE THAT SUSY AND MIKE HAVE MADE A THOROUGH SEARCH OF THE APARTMENT DURING THE LAST HOUR. BOXES LIE OUTSIDE THE CLOSET UNDER THE STAIRS AND THE CLOSETS UNDER THE SINK, ETC., HAVE BEEN EMPTIED OUT INTO THE ROOM. [BUT THE FACADE IS STILL HIDING THE SAFE AND SAM'S STEEL FILE IS STILL LOCKED.] ON RISE: MIKE IS ALONE ON STAGE. HIS JACKET IS OFF, ETC., AND HE APPEARS TIRED AND FRUSTRATED. HE LOOKS AT HIS WATCH AND THEN, WITH A GLANCE AT THE BEDROOM, HE GOES TO WINDOW AND MAKES A SIGNAL WITH ONE OF THE BLINDS--LEAVING IT CLOSED. THEN HE GOES STRAIGHT TO THE TELEPHONE AND WAITS. THERE IS THE NOISE OF A TABLE LAMP FALLING OVER IN THE BEDROOM AND AN ANGRY CRY, OFF, FROM SUSY. MIKE LOOKS AT PHONE AND THEN GESTURES IMPATIENTLY TOWARDS VENETIAN BLINDS. MIKE GOES TO WINDOW, CROSSES BACK TO KITCHEN TABLE, LEFT.)

MIKE

Come on! (THE PHONE RINGS. MIKE GRABS IT. INTO PHONE:) Hello . . . yes . . . yes it is . . . (CALLING TO SUSY IN BEDROOM.) Asbury Park--bus station.

SUSY

(CALLING.) Let me speak to him.

MIKE

(INTO PHONE:) He caught the five o'clock bus from Manhattan . . . are you SURE? . . . (TO SUSY:) He wasn't on it . . .

SUSY

(SUSY ENTERS HURRIEDLY FROM BEDROOM) But he MUST have been . . .

MIKE

Maybe he missed it.

SUSY

If he had he'd have phoned. Let me speak to them! (SUSY RUNS FORWARD VIOLENTLY TOWARDS THE PHONE AND HITS COFFEE TABLE RIGHT, KNOCKING IT OVER AND FALLING HARD ONTO THE FLOOR.)

MIKE

(HE HANGS UP PHONE AND CROSS TO UP STAGE OF SUSY.) You okay, Susy? (HE TRIES TO HELP HER UP.)

SUSY

No! (HE LEAVES HER ALONE.) That does it! . . . That's the third time in half an hour and I just broke a lamp in the bedroom. (MIKE TRIES AGAIN TO HELP HER UP.)

MIKE

Let me help you up then . . .

SUSY

No, leave me alone! It's no good, Mike. I CAN'T.

MIKE

If you could at least remember where Sam keeps the key of that filing cabinet.

SUSY

We'll just have to wait for Sam to get back--I just can't understand why he hasn't phoned by now.

MIKE

We can't wait for Sam. We've got to find that doll and destroy it and anything else that might connect Sam and Mrs. Roat. And BEFORE that Sergeant comes back. If we don't . . .

SUSY

(SUDDENLY.) Back of the freezer!

MIKE

What do you mean--back of the freezer?

SUSY

(GETTING UP FROM FLOOR, MIKE AND SUSY STAND.) The key of the filing cabinet! I knew it was a funny place. (MIKE RUSHES TO REFRIGERATOR AND FINDS THE SMALL KEY FROZEN TO THE BACK OF THE FREEZER.) Is it there?

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MIKE

Yes--it's frozen in. (HE HACKS AT IT WITH HIS RAZOR BLADE.)

SUSY

There should be a twenty-dollar bill there too . . . do you see it?

MIKE

(WITH A GLANCE ROUND AT HER.) Yes--I see it.

SUSY

We put that there when we moved in here . . . in case we ever starved to death. (MIKE CROSS TO FILING CABINET AND UNLOCKS IT AND RAPIDLY SEARCHES FIRST TWO DRAWERS.) Is the doll there?

MIKE

No--but this is. (MIKE CROSS DOWN STAGE TO SUSY WITH A CARDBOARD BOX OF KEYS FROM BOTTOM DRAWER, OPENS IT AND HANDS IT TO SUSY.)

SUSY

(QUICKLY.) NOW we're off! These are all the keys we have. There's one for everything that's locked. There should be a small key on a large paper clip--with a tag. (MIKE FINDS IT.)

MIKE

"Small suitcase"?

SUSY

That's it. That's where Sam keeps important papers and stuff. (SUSY CROSSES RIGHT INTO BEDROOM. AS SHE EXITS:) Thanks, Mike--(SUSY ON LANDING.) I'm feeling better now. (AS SOON AS SHE HAS GONE MIKE PICKS OUT TWO OR THREE OF THE LARGER KEYS, THROWING GLANCES AT THE SAFE. THEN HE CROSSES RIGHT TO SAFE AND, QUIETLY OPENING THE FACADE, TRIES EACH OF THE KEYS IN ITS LOCK. HE FREEZES AS SUSY RE-ENTERS TO RIGHT OF SOFA FROM BEDROOM. SHE IS CARRYING THE SUITCASE AND THE KEY.) Mike? (MIKE CROSSES LEFT AWAY FROM SAFE.)

MIKE

Here, Susy.

SUSY

(GIVING HIM KEY AND SUITCASE.) Would you open this?  
(MIKE CROSS TO SUSY, TAKES SUITCASE TO COFFEE TABLE, SITS  
ON SOFA. MIKE UNLOCKS AND OPENS CASE AND PRETENDS TO  
SEARCH.) Well--is the doll in there? (NO REPLY. SUSY  
THEN FEELS AROUND IN CASE AND FINDS A BUNDLE OF LETTERS  
WITH A RUBBER BAND AROUND THEM. SHE TAKES LETTERS, CROSS  
LEFT TO CENTER STAGE.)

MIKE

No doll. (SUSY HANDS HIM THE LETTERS.)

SUSY

Here, maybe you'd better look these over, (SUSY CROSS  
BACK TO MIKE AT LEFT.) just in case. (MIKE GLANCES AT THE  
BACK OF EACH ENVELOPE, CHECKING THE RETURN ADDRESS. SUSY  
WAITS ANXIOUSLY.) Can you see all right?

MIKE

(PUZZLED.) See what?

SUSY

To read the letters.

MIKE

Oh, sure. The light IS on. (HE RESUMES CHECKING LETTERS.)

SUSY

If any of them are from her--don't read them to me just--  
just burn them in the sink. (HE LOOKS ROUND AT THE SINK  
AND THEN AT SUSY AS SHE WAITS. [HE IS TEMPTED--THIS WOULD  
REALLY CLINCH IT.] MIKE STANDS. SUSY, TRYING NOT TO  
APPEAR FRIGHTENED:) Well? (MIKE PUTS LETTERS IN HER HAND.)

MIKE

They're all from you, Susy . . . you type pretty well.



SUSY

Oh! Well that's a relief! I didn't know Sam was a hoarder! I nearly didn't show them to you. And you haven't found anything yet? . . . Of HERS?

MIKE

Not yet. And we've looked in just about every place it could be (MIKE CROSSES TO SAFE.) . . . everywhere except this safe . . . I only just noticed it was here. (BUT SUSY HAS HER ATTENTION ELSEWHERE AND HAS MOVED BACK TO THE LIGHT SWITCH.)

SUSY

This IS the light that hangs down from the ceiling? (SHE SWITCHES IT OFF AND THEN ON, FROM DOOR.)

MIKE

Yes, it is.

SUSY

On now?

MIKE

On . . . why?

SUSY

It's nothing . . . only I noticed that Carlino had to open the blinds to read something. And yet this switch was ON. (SUSY CROSS OFF LANDING TO RIGHT OF SOFA, UP STAGE.) I felt it.

MIKE

Well, they're on now anyway. Do you think Sam could have put that doll in THIS safe? . . . (HE IS WATCHING HER CAREFULLY, BUT SHE HARDLY SEEMS TO BE LISTENING.) Susy?

SUSY

Hmmm? In the safe? (CASUALLY.) No, it couldn't be in THERE. (SLOWLY.) . . . And Mr. Roat did the same thing.

MIKE

(IMPATIENTLY.) Did WHAT?

SUSY

He opened the blinds too--didn't he?

MIKE

Did he?

SUSY

Well, I presume he didn't CLOSE them! . . . Mike, did you notice how I kind of JUMPED when Roat Junior came down the stairs?

MIKE

Yes--why?

SUSY

For a moment I thought it was the old man.

MIKE

You mean--that they were together?

SUSY

Yes. Of course I realized right away I was wrong but he had exactly the same walk as his father . . . and the same shoes.

MIKE

You mean they SOUNDED the same . . .

SUSY

But EXACTLY the same. New shoes and one of them squeaked a bit. YOU probably didn't notice . . .

MIKE

No I didn't.

SUSY

You're wearing boots . . . (MIKE LOOKS DOWN AT HIS SHOES.) Sam wears them most of the time . . . Is that police car still outside? (MIKE HESITATES, THEN CROSS TO WINDOW, UP STAGE OF SOFA, GETS STOOL, CROSS UP STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

MIKE

(LOOKING AT SUSY.) Yes it is . . . and they're looking this way.

SUSY

Can you see their faces? (SUSY CROSS TO UPPER LEFT CORNER OF SOFA.)

MIKE

(STILL LOOKING AT SUSY.) Not too well.

SUSY

Try! . . . This is VERY important!

MIKE

Why?

SUSY

This may surprise you, Mike. But is one of those men--MR. ROAT? (HE STARES AT HER A LONG TIME.)

MIKE

Mr. ROAT?!

SUSY

Well? Is it?

MIKE

The old man--or the son?

SUSY

Roat JUNIOR.

MIKE

No . . . now WHAT would HE be doing in a police car?

SUSY

There's a radio in that car, isn't there?

MIKE

I don't know. Suppose there is? (AS SUSY QUICKLY FIRES HER QUESTIONS, MIKE IS LOOKING AT HER CURIOUSLY AND BECOMES INCREASINGLY CAUTIOUS AS HE WONDERS HOW NEAR TO THE TRUTH SHE IS GUESSING. SUSY CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.)

SUSY

I'm just wondering if . . . DO YOU THINK MR. ROAT COULD POSSIBLE BE A POLICEMAN TOO? (A PAUSE. MIKE BREATHES MORE FREELY, DELIGHTED THAT SHE IS SO WIDE OF THE MARK.)

MIKE

(ALMOST AMUSED.) What--WHAT makes you think THAT? (MIKE JUMPS OFF STOOL.)

SUSY

First of all Carlino fiddles with those blinds and almost immediately the police phone and ask to speak to him . . . then Roat fiddles with them . . . and then Carlino phones HIM . . .

MIKE

He didn't. (MIKE PUTS STOOL BACK.) He phoned YOU.

SUSY

(WONDERING TO HERSELF.) Or did he?

MIKE

Oh, I see. You mean sending each other messages--via these blinds? And the police radio? (SUSY DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

SUSY

SOMETHING like that. You must admit--if they did suspect Sam--it would be a pretty neat trick . . . when Roat first mentioned that doll--I nearly told him all about it.

MIKE

I doubt if the police work like THAT.

SUSY

You see, I KNOW Mr. Roat's story and Sam's just don't match . . . but I'd forgotten something. (A PAUSE.)

MIKE

What?

SUSY

That I KNOW Sam. And I don't know Mr. Roat at all!  
(MIKE CROSS DOWNSTAGE TO SUSY, TAKES HER ARMS.) Do I?

MIKE

Look, Susy, if Sam can explain all this--fine. Then there's nothing to worry about. But if he CAN'T-- I want to help him . . . Susy--why don't you want to (MIKE CROSS TO SAFE.) tell me about this SAFE? (AS SHE TALKS, SHE RETURNS LETTERS TO SUITCASE AND SITS ON THE COUCH. SUSY CLOSES SUITCASE.)

SUSY

(LIGHTLY.) Oh it can't be in there because . . . well-- it just isn't OURS. You see the woman who had this apartment before us . . . she tried to sell it to us for two hundred dollars. Then one hundred--then fifty . . . and when we finally made it clear that we just didn't want it-- she LOCKED it . . . and then she walked out and Sam saw her deliberately drop the key down the drain outside.  
(A PAUSE. MIKE WATCHES HER VERY SUSPICIOUSLY.)

MIKE

Susy, are you making this up?

SUSY

Of course not! . . . Why should I.

MIKE

(WITH A LAUGH.) Not that I blame you. (MIKE CROSS TO SOFA, UP RIGHT STAGE, PUT JACKET ON.) I don't think I would open up my safe in front of a complete stranger-- even if I could watch him.

SUSY

Now have I been treating you like a complete stranger?

MIKE

No but . . .

SUSY

I just wish that doll WAS in the safe! Then NOBODY could find it--could they?

MIKE

(AFTER A PAUSE.) I wouldn't count on that. If the police get a warrant to search this place, and they may, they could have it opened up . . . have you thought of that?

SUSY

Open this safe? Without a key?

MIKE

They could drill it open.

SUSY

(DELIGHTED.) Well--let's hope they try! That would take HOURS, wouldn't? AND BY THAT TIME SAM WILL BE HOME!  
(MIKE REALIZES HE IS GETTING NOWHERE AND DECIDES TO TRY SOMETHING ELSE.)

MIKE

I guess you're right . . . but you'd (MIKE CROSS TO HAT RACK AND HIS OVERCOAT.) better make SURE if it's in there.

SUSY

You really believe . . . !

MIKE

Not now--but when I've gone. (HE PICKS UP RAINCOAT AND CROSS TO STAIRS.)

SUSY

You're going? . . . Where? (SUSY STANDS AND UP STAGE OF SOFA LEFT CORNER.)

MIKE

To the apartment--where I've been staying.

SUSY

Why?

MIKE

Just to pick up my things. I'll bring them over here.

SUSY

But do you have to go NOW?

MIKE

Someone else is moving in (MIKE ON LANDING.) there tonight and I have to return the key. I won't be long. (HE MOVES TO EXIT. AS HE REACHES THE DOOR SHE SAYS:)

SUSY

Then you better give me your phone number.

MIKE

(TURNING.) WHAT phone number?

SUSY

Where you're going now.

MIKE

But it's just round the corner . . . (SUSY CROSSES TO SINK, STARTS TO FIND JAR OF SUGAR LUMPS.)

SUSY

But if you're delayed . . . and in case I DO find the doll.

MIKE

I--I'll phone you when I get there. (HE TURNS TO GO.)

SUSY

Then, just give me the NAME of your friends--or the ADDRESS . . . so I can call Information. (MIKE ON TOP LANDING. MIKE IS NOW IN A CORNER. THEN HE TAKES OUT HIS NOTEBOOK.)



MIKE

I--er--I just MAY have it written down SOMEWHERE . . .  
(CHECKING NUMBER FROM HIS NOTEBOOK.) Yes, here it is . . .  
but can you REMEMBER it?

SUSY

Sure I can--just a second. (SUSY CROSSES TO PHONE ON  
KITCHEN TABLE LEFT AND TAKES OUT HANDFUL OF SUGAR LUMPS.)  
. . . Ready.

MIKE

(SLOWLY.) O - B - 1

SUSY

(QUICKLY.) That 631--same as this one. Go on.

MIKE

5 . . . 3 . . . 0 . . . 9.

SUSY

. . . oh, that's a stinker! . . . Five-THIRTY-nine . . .  
there's always one magic number . . . I'll be thirty in two  
years--that's ALMOST three, isn't it? Three threes are nine.  
And twice three is six except it's FIVE and not six. So it's  
THREE. (SHE PLACES THREE SUGAR LUMPS BY PHONE.) O.K.--631--  
FIVE--thirty, I mean three zero . . . nine . . . 5309?

MIKE

(AMAZED.) That's right! How long can you remember that?

SUSY

About two and a half minutes. SO HURRY! (MIKE OPENS HALL  
DOOR.) Oh!--And lock the street door in case Carlino comes  
back and this one too--I'll let you in. (MIKE SLIPS CATCH  
ON THE DOOR TO LOCK IT.)

MIKE

O.K.--locked. (STARTS TO EXIT.)

SUSY

And Mike . . .

MIKE

(TURNS BACK.) Yes? (SUSY CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.)

SUSY

I just don't know WHAT I'd have done if you hadn't come by today. (MIKE LOOKS DOWN AT SUSY A MOMENT. HE HAS NEVER FELT SUCH A HEEL IN HIS LIFE. HE TRIES TO SAY SOMETHING, THEN GIVES UP AND EXITS, CLOSING DOOR. WE HEAR HIM WALK TO STREET DOOR AND SLAMS IT SHUT AS HE LEAVES HOUSE. SUSY CROSSES TO BEDROOM, TAKES SUITCASE, DOWNSTAGE OF COFFEE TABLE, GOES INTO BEDROOM. THE STAGE IS EMPTY FOR SEVERAL SECONDS, THEN WE HEAR SOMEONE TRY THE HANDLE OF HALL DOOR. LONG PAUSE. THEN A KEY IS FITTED INTO THE LOCK AND GLORIA CREEPS IN. SHE IS CARRYING THE SAME LARGE GROCERY BAG THAT SHE HAD BEFORE. SEEING NO ONE IN THE ROOM SHE TIPTOES DOWN THE STAIRS TO END TABLE. SHE GLANCES THROUGH OPEN BEDROOM DOOR THEN OPENS THE GROCERY BAG AND TAKES OUT THE DOLL. AS THOUGH SHE HAS ALREADY THOUGHT THIS OUT, SHE PUTS THE DOLL CAREFULLY ON THE FLOOR UNDER THE END TABLE BY COUCH. THEN CREEPS BACK UP THE STAIRS. WHEN HALFWAY UP, SUSY RE-ENTERS FROM BEDROOM, CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE, UP STAGE OF SOFA. GLORIA FREEZES STILL BUT SHE IS TOO LATE AND SUSY HEARS HER.) Who is that . . . Mike? (SUSY LEFT OF SOFA, UP STAGE.)

GLORIA

(TURNING ON STAIRS.) Oh, hello, Susy!

SUSY

(STARTLED.) Oh! Don't DO that to me! How did you get in here?

GLORIA

I borrowed the key you lent Mother. Because when I got upstairs I found I'd left a stick of butter in the bottom of the bag. . . (SUSY PUTS OUT HER HAND.)

SUSY

Thank you, honey.

GLORIA

It's already in the icebox. (GLORIA COMES DOWN STAIRS, STOPS ON BOTTOM LANDING.) I closed the door. You can pay me tomorrow, if you like. It came to four seventy-two, but you owe me thirty-five cents from last time so if I give you thirteen . . . (SUSY PUTS HER HANDS UP TO HER EARS.)

SUSY

Don't! No more numbers, please, I'm not a computer. Just call it quits--O.K.?

GLORIA

O.K.--Thanks. Bye-bye, then. (GLORIA BEGINS TO EXIT, STOPS ON TOP OF STAIRS.) It's none of my business but that man who was in here with Sam's friend . . .

SUSY

That was a Mr. Roat . . . yes? . . . What about him?  
(SUSY TO KITCHEN TABLE, RIGHT.)

GLORIA

Is he a detective?

SUSY

(VERY INTERESTED.) Why? . . . What makes you THINK he is?

GLORIA

Because of the lady who was murdered last night--that's all. (SUSY GOES TO SINK.)

SUSY

Look, honey, if you stand on this . . . can you see through the window? (GLORIA CLIMBS UP ON STOOL, DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE, UP STAGE OF SOFA.)

GLORIA

I think so.

SUSY

There's a police car outside . . . (NO REPLY.) You see it?

GLORIA

No.

SUSY

Look carefully--are you sure?

GLORIA

(LOOKING THROUGH BLINDS.) No police car.

SUSY

It must have gone. There was one there a few minutes ago . . . can you see a policeman? . . . ANYWHERE?

GLORIA

No.

SUSY

Or ANYONE who might be watching this house?

GLORIA

Don't think so. Not many people around. It's still raining. (PAUSE.) Can I get down now?

SUSY

Yes, of course . . . (GLORIA STARTS TO CLIMB DOWN.) Oh, wait a minute. When we first moved in here--Sam used to make his phone calls from a phone booth somewhere out there. I think it was near some traffic lights. Can you see a phone booth from this window? (GLORIA HAS ALREADY CLIMBED UP AND LOOKS THROUGH WINDOW.)

GLORIA

Yes, there's one by the parking lot at the end of the street.

SUSY

Is there--a car parked anywhere NEAR the phone booth?

GLORIA

One of those Volkswagen buses . . . it's right beside it.

SUSY

Anyone in it?

GLORIA

I can't see. It has curtains all around. (SUSY CROSS TO KITCHEN TABLE LEFT. GLORIA GLANCES AT SUSY.) Is something the matter, Susy? You look awfully worried.

SUSY

It's nothing, honey--I'll be all right when Sam gets home.

GLORIA

Would you like me to stay with you until he . . . (SHE IS LOOKING THROUGH THE WINDOW AGAIN ANDS SAYS CASUALLY:) . . . there's a man getting out now.

SUSY

The Volkswagen?

GLORIA

Yes . . . he's talking to someone inside. I can't SEE who it is . . . now he's coming this way . . .

SUSY

(QUICKLY.) Is it Mr. Roat? . . . That man who you thought was a detective?

GLORIA

No. It isn't. Sam hasn't done anything, has he? (GLORIA JUMPS OFF STOOL.)

SUSY

No, of course not . . . Honey, you remember that doll your mother asked you about?

GLORIA

What about it? (GLORIA CROSS TO COFFEE TABLE.)

SUSY

It belonged to the woman who was killed last night. And if the police found it here they might think that Sam had something to do with it. That's why it's so important . . .

GLORIA

Look out!

SUSY

What is it?

GLORIA

(ON FLOOR. IN WHISPER.) There's a man looking through the window. (SUSY GOES OVER TO SINK AND PRETENDS TO BE CLEANING UP.)

SUSY

Can he see you?

GLORIA

No . . . but he's still looking . . . it's the man from the Volkswagen. (VERY CAUTIOUSLY GLORIA FEELS FOR THE DOLL AND THEN DRAGS IT CAREFULLY BEHIND THE COUCH. AS SHE DOES THIS, IT PLAYS TWO OR THREE NOTES OF ITS TUNE. SUSY HEARS THIS AND TURNS SHARPLY.)

SUSY

(HORRIFIED.) Don't let him see the doll!

GLORIA

Now he's gone. (A PAUSE, THEN STREET DOORBELL RINGS.)

SUSY

That's the street door! And it's locked . . . run up and see if you can lock the back door. (GLORIA GRABS THE DOLL AND RUNS UP STAIRS, LOCKS DOOR, THEN HALTS.)

GLORIA

We can't. I think Daddy took the key with him. (STREET DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.)

SUSY

We've got to hide that doll quickly! ANYWHERE!

GLORIA

(RUNNING UP.) I'll take it upstairs.

SUSY

No! In here! (GLORIA RUNS DOWN STAIRS AND STUFFS DOLL BACK IN GROCERY BAG, TWISTS THE TOP SHUT AND HIDES IT IN THE GARBAGE PAIL UNDERNEATH THE OTHER GARBAGE BAG.) Where on earth did you find it?

GLORIA

(INNOCENTLY.) It was just lying under the table by the sofa. I guess it must have fallen off . . .

SUSY

(SHARPLY.) We've been searching this room for over an hour. You've got to tell me.

GLORIA

(AFTER A PAUSE.) I took it. (STREET DOORBELL RINGS.)

SUSY

Why?

GLORIA

When I first saw it in here, I thought it was a present for me, but Sam said it was for ANOTHER little girl. So . . . I stole it. It's under the garbage. You can't possibly see it.

SUSY

(KNEELS DOWN SO SHE IS FACE TO FACE WITH GLORIA.) How would you like to do something that's difficult--and terribly dangerous?

GLORIA

Yes! . . . WHAT?

SUSY

Can you see that phone booth--from UPSTAIRS?

GLORIA

From Mother's bedroom--I think.

SUSY

(POINTING TO PHONE. SUSY STANDS.) Write down our phone number quickly. (AS GLORIA GOES TO PHONE AND COPIES THE NUMBER DOWN:) Now listen very carefully--this is difficult . . . go upstairs and watch that phone booth and don't take your eyes off it. Not for a second. (SLOWLY.) Now if ANYONE from the Volkswagen goes in and makes a phone call--phone me the moment he comes out . . . do you understand?



GLORIA

(AS IF IT WAS NOTHING.) Sure--I understand.

SUSY

ONLY the Volkswagen people--and ONLY after they come OUT of the phone booth.

GLORIA

(CROSS TO STAIRS.) No problem. (SUSY TO CENTER STAGE.)

SUSY

No, wait, I've got a better idea. When you phone me I WON'T ANSWER. Just let it ring TWICE. And then hang up.

GLORIA

I know. Like a signal. There's a friend of Daddy's who does that. Only SHE does it SEVEN TIMES. (GLORIA STARTS UPSTAIRS AGAIN, THEN TURNS AND SAYS:) Susy, if you need me for anything just bang on that water pipe. You can hear it all over the house.

SUSY

Where is it?

GLORIA

By the refrigerator. (GLORIA CROSS TO SUSY, TAKES SUSY TO WATER PIPES. DURING GLORIA'S LAST SPEECH WE CAN HEAR CARLINO ENTER BY THE BACK DOOR AND THEN THE HALL DOORBELL RINGS. SUSY PUTS OUT HER HANDS AND HOLDS GLORIA BY THE SHOULDERS TO KEEP HER FROM MOVING.)

SUSY

(CALLING.) Who is it?

CARLINO

(OFF.) It's Sergeant Carlino.

SUSY

(CALLING.) Just a second, Sergeant. I'm on the phone. I won't be a moment. (GLORIA PULLS SUSY'S HEAD DOWN, WHISPERS SOMETHING IN HER EAR. SUSY NODS AND GLORIA QUIETLY TIPTOES INTO THE CLOSET UNDER THE STAIRS AND CLOSES THE DOOR. TO COVER GLORIA'S MOVEMENTS SUSY

CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE, RIGHT AND PRETENDS TO BE SPEAKING ON THE PHONE.) That's a wonderful idea--and a box of Kleenex and a large bottle of aspirin . . . that's all, honey--I'll have to go now. There's someone at the door . . . bye. (SUSY CROSS RIGHT UPSTAIRS AND OPENS DOOR. CARLINO ENTERS. SUSY LEADS CARLINO DOWN STAIRS. AS SHE LEADS HIM INTO THE BEDROOM, SUSY SAYS:) I'm sorry I kept you waiting. And I'm so glad you came because some kids were playing out at the back and I think they've broken a window in the bathroom. Would you mind taking a look?

CARLINO

I've got more important things to do, Mrs. Hendrix.

SUSY

It would only take you a moment . . . (CARLINO INTO BEDROOM. ONCE HE IS IN THERE SUSY CROSSES TO CLOSET UNDER STAIRS.)

CARLINO

(OFF.) There's nothing wrong with the bathroom window.

(SUSY CROSS RIGHT TO STAIR LANDING WITH GLORIA. STOP.)

SUSY

(OFF.) How about THIS window then?

CARLINO

(GLORIA UP STAIRS, EXITS.) (OFF:) It's okay.

SUSY

(AS SHE ENTERS.) Oh--I'm sure I heard some glass breaking SOMEWHERE. Well, thanks for looking anyway. (SUSY CROSS TO RIGHT CORNER SOFA, UP STAGE.) Was there something you wanted to ask me?

CARLINO

(ENTERING.) I understand that a Mr. Roat called on you just now.

SUSY

Yes he did.

CARLINO

I thought you should know that the woman who was murdered outside here last night was his wife.

SUSY

Oh.

CARLINO

(ACCUSINGLY.) You don't seem very surprised to hear that.

SUSY

Well, from the way her husband behaved on the phone I guessed something had happened. (CARLINO CROSS UP STAGE OF SOFA TO UP CENTER STAGE.)

CARLINO

You seem to have been searching for something since I was here last, Mrs. Hendrix.

SUSY

Yes--I was trying to find some bags for the vacuum cleaner.

CARLINO

Oh--some bags for the vacuum cleaner--well maybe I can find them for you. (CARLINO CROSS TO KITCHEN CABINETS.)

SUSY

No, please don't bother. (AS CARLINO TALKS HE SEARCHES INSIDE THE WASHING MACHINE, RUMMAGING AMONGST THE CLOTHES AND TOWELS.)

CARLINO

No bother at all . . . you know the other day my wife lost her only can opener . . . and you'll never guess where I found it . . .

SUSY

(IMMEDIATELY.) In the washing machine?

CARLINO

(TURNING, SURPRISED.) That's right! Just thought you might

have done the same thing.

SUSY

Thank you. But I'd rather you didn't look for them now.

CARLINO

Are you sure you weren't looking for something ELSE, Mrs. Hendrix? (NO REPLY.) Are you sure you weren't looking . . . for a doll?

SUSY

A doll? I don't know what you mean?

CARLINO

A doll that your husband brought back from Canada (CARLINO CROSS TO LEFT OF COFFEE TABLE.) . . . and which Mrs. Roat came here to collect the other night.

SUSY

My husband never knew Mrs. Roat.

CARLINO

We know he did. Mr. Roat now recognizes your husband from a photograph that his father has.

SUSY

You mean which he STOLE from our bedroom?

CARLINO

And the old man remembers seeing your husband and Mrs. Roat together several times. (NO REPLY. HE CROSSES SLOWLY TO SAFE, WATCHING SUSY CLOSELY.) Now where else might that doll be . . . in this safe perhaps? (A PAUSE.)

SUSY

Why would my husband have to put a doll in there?

CARLINO

And if he did YOU couldn't open it anyway, could you?

SUSY

(AFTER A PAUSE.) YES. As it so happens, I could.

CARLINO

(SURPRISED.) You could?

SUSY

Yes. (A PAUSE.)

CARLINO

Then will you open it?

SUSY

For you?

CARLINO

Yes.

SUSY

Now?

CARLINO

Yes.

SUSY

CERTAINLY NOT! You'll need a warrant for that and you know it.

CARLINO

Oh we'll have a warrant in no time. (CROSS TO SUSY, DOWN-STAGE OF SOFA.)

SUSY

Then you'll have to BLAST it open! You'll get no help from me!

CARLINO

It won't take us twenty minutes to drill that open and BEFORE your husband gets back. (HE STARTS TO GO UP THE STAIRS, THEN TURNS.) And in the meantime you are not to leave this house. (JUST AS HE REACHES DOOR.)

SUSY

Oh, Sergeant--is Mr. Roat still at the Sixth Precinct? (SUSY CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT TO KITCHEN TABLE. A PAUSE.)

CARLINO

(SURPRISED.) He's probably left there by now. Why?

SUSY

I just wanted to tell him something--that is very important . . . could you give me his phone number PLEASE?

CARLINO

His phone number?

SUSY

Yes. Now you're not going to tell me he didn't give it to YOU.

CARLINO

Well of course he did--but I don't have it on me. Maybe you can get it from Information. He lives in Scarsdale.

SUSY

I've already tried and it's not listed. Oh--I know how I (SUSY CROSS LEFT TO KITCHEN TABLE, DIALS PHONE.) can get it.

CARLINO

What are you doing?

SUSY

(AS SHE DIALS.) 440-1234. They'll put me through to the Sixth Precinct and THEY can tell me Mr. Roat's phone number. (CARLINO CROSS TO SUSY, GRABS PHONE FROM HER HAND.)

CARLINO

Look--that's only for police emergencies--I can dial my office direct. It's just possible he may still be there.

SUSY

Thank you. (CARLINO DIALS CAREFULLY FROM HIS NOTEBOOK.)

CARLINO

(INTO PHONE.) Carlino . . . is Mr. Roat still there?  
. . . No, the son . . . Mrs. Hendrix wants to speak to him.  
(HE PUTS THE PHONE INTO HER HAND.)

SUSY

Thank you. (INTO PHONE.) Mr. Roat? . . . My husband's friend, Mr. Talman, has just phoned a lawyer and he has advised us that if your father makes any more accusations against my husband he will take immediate action . . . do you understand what I'm saying? . . . Thank you, Mr. Roat.  
(SUSY HANGS UP. CARLINO WHO HAS BEEN WATCHING HER PHONE WITH OBVIOUS AMUSEMENT NOW STARTS UP THE STAIRS.)

CARLINO

(AS HE GOES.) That lawyer friend isn't going to stop me, Mrs. Hendrix. And I'll be right back with (CARLINO ON TOP LANDING, STARTS BACK. PHONE STARTS TO RING AND HE RURNS AND STARTS DOWN THE STAIRS AS THOUGH EXPECTING THAT IT MAY BE FOR HIM. SUSY LETS IT RING EXACTLY TWICE AND THEN PICKS IT UP.) That might be for me.

SUSY

(INTO PHONE.) Hello . . . (A LONG PAUSE AS SHE LISTENS.) There's no answer . . . they must have hung up. (SHE HANGS UP. CARLINO GOES AGAIN TO HALL DOOR AND OPENS IT.)

CARLINO

I'll be right back, Mrs. Hendrix--WITH a search warrant.  
(CARLINO EXITS.)

SUSY

I'll be here. (CARLINO CLOSES THE DOOR BUT SLIPS THE CATCH SO THAT IT IS NOT LOCKED. WE CAN HEAR HIM WALK ALONG THE HALLWAY, LEFT TO THE STREET DOOR. WE HEAR IT OPEN AND SLAM. SUSY IMMEDIATELY GOES AND FEELS FOR THE SUGAR LUMPS WHICH GAVE HER MIKE'S PHONE NUMBER. AS SHE DIALS SHE



MUTTERS RAPIDLY TO HERSELF.) Three . . . so it's nine two four . . . not six but five . . . thirty . . . and . . . nine. (AFTER A PAUSE, INTO PHONE.) Mike? . . . I'VE GOT IT! . . . THE DOLL! . . . I'll tell you when you get here . . . come right away . . . and Mike . . . I was right about Mr. Roat--he IS a detective! He and Carlino have been-- (SHE BREAKS OFF SUDDENLY AS SHE HEARS THE CLICK OF THE HALL DOOR AS IT OPENS ABOUT SIX INCHES. THEN SHE SAYS INTO PHONE QUIETLY:) Hurry. (WE SEE CARLINO STICK HIS HEAD IN, TRYING TO SEE WHAT SUSY IS DOING. SHE HANGS UP AND CALLS TO THE HALL DOOR.) Sergeant Carlino? . . . Did you forget something? (THE DOOR CLOSSES QUIETLY. SUSY GOES QUICKLY UPSTAIRS, CALLING AS SHE GOES.) Sergeant Carlino! (SHE OPENS HALL DOOR AND TAKING HER BLIND STICK OFF THE RAILING, GOES INTO THE HALLWAY.) Sergeant Carlino! (THEN SHE DISAPPEARS TO CHECK THE FRONT DOOR. WHILE SUSY IS STILL OFF STAGE, THE PHONE STARTS TO RING AGAIN. SUSY APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY AT THE END OF THE FIRST RING AND COMES DOWNSTAIRS QUICKLY TO ANSWER IT. AFTER ITS SECOND RING, IT STOPS. SUSY'S REACTION TO THIS IS DELAYED, I.E., SHE GOES ON A FEW PACES TO THE PHONE AND THEN STOPS SUDDENLY BEHIND THE SOFA. SHE STANDS THERE ABSOLUTELY STILL FOR SEVERAL SECONDS WHILE THE HORROR OF THE SITUATION SLOWLY DAWNS ON HER. IN FRUSTRATION, SHE POUNDS ON THE SOFA. SHE IS ALMOST HYSTERICAL.) Mike! (AFTER A MOMENT SHE PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER AND HURRIES UP THE STAIRS AND SLAMS THE HALL DOOR AND MAKES SURE IT IS LOCKED. SHE RUNS DOWN THE STAIRS AND CROSSES TO THE GARBAGE PAIL AND TAKES OUT THE DOLL, QUICKLY STUFFING THE GROCERY BAG AND PAIL BACK UNDER THE SINK. THEN HOLDING THE DOLL SHE CROSSES TOWARDS THE BEDROOM BUT WHEN SHE IS HALFWAY ACROSS THE ROOM, WE HEAR SOMEONE RUNNING OUTSIDE, RIGHT, AND ENTERING THE BACK DOOR AND THEN TRYING TO OPEN THE HALL DOOR. THEN HE KNOCKS ON DOOR. SUSY, CALLING:) Who is it?

MIKE

Mike.

SUSY

(CALLING.) Just a second, Mike. (FOR A MOMENT SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. THEN SHE TAKES THE DOLL TO THE WASHING MACHINE, OPENS IT AND WRAPPING THE DOLL IN A TOWEL, BURIES IT UNDER THE WASHING.)

MIKE

Susy!

SUSY

I'm coming. (THEN SHE CLOSES THE WASHER DOOR AS QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE AND GOES UP STAIRS AND OPENS HALL DOOR. MIKE STANDS OUTSIDE.) Come in quickly, Mike . . .close the door. (SHE TURNS AND GOES DOWN THE STAIRS. MIKE CLOSES THE DOOR. SUSY CROSSES TO CENTER. MIKE PRETENDS TO LOCK DOOR.)

MIKE

Well? (SUSY TURNS AND FACES HIM BUT DOES NOT REPLY. A LONG PAUSE.) You've got it? (A PAUSE. MIKE CROSSES ONE-HALF WAY DOWN STEPS. THE DOOR QUIETLY SWINGS OPEN, CARLINO AND ROAT ENTER, AND STAND MOTIONLESS ON THE LANDING.)

SUSY

(QUIETLY.) Yes.

MIKE

Well? . . . Where is it?

(AFTER A LONG PAUSE, SUSY CALLS SHARPLY AS THOUGH SPEAKING TO SOMEONE IN THE HALL DOORWAY.)

SUSY

Gloria?

MIKE

What's the matter?

SUSY

I thought for a moment . . . there was someone else there.

MIKE

(VERY CALMLY.) No--it was just the door--didn't quite close. (MIKE GOES UP TO TOP OF STAIRS. ROAT HOLDS OUT HIS HAND FOR MIKE TO STOP STILL. THEN ROAT CLOSES THE DOOR HIMSELF.) That's better.

SUSY

Is it still raining?

MIKE

Yes . . . (IMPATIENTLY.) Susy--where is the doll?

SUSY

You'll see--I won't be a second. (CARLINO STARTS TO DUST TOP BANNISTER, ROAT STOPS HIM WITH A LOOK OF ANGER AND DISGUST. SUSY EXITS INTO BEDROOM AFTER SEVERAL SECONDS SUSY ENTERS FROM BEDROOM WEARING A RAINCOAT AND CARRYING A ZIP PURSE SLUNG FROM ONE SHOULDER. SHE GOES STRAIGHT TO THE SOFA AND STARTS FEELING AROUND FOR SOMETHING.)

MIKE

(VERY SURPRISED.) Where are YOU going?

SUSY

Where's the box of keys?

MIKE

In front of the settee--is it in the safe? (SUSY FINDS KEY BOX AND HOLDS THEM OUT TO MIKE.)

SUSY

Can you find three keys on a ring--one large and two small?

MIKE

Is it . . . in the safe?

SUSY

No . . . but I DID look there.

MIKE

You did! . . . When?

SUSY

As soon as you had gone.

MIKE

(CROSS TO SUSY, TAKES BOX OF KEYS.) Then all that nonsense about the old woman?

SUSY

Oh--I was just making that up. (LAUGHS.) I thought you realized. I mean--as you said yourself--I don't know you THAT well! You're not hurt, are you?

MIKE

Are those the ones you want? (HE HANDS SUSY THREE KEYS ON A RING AND SHE FEELS THEM CAREFULLY.)

SUSY

Yes! Good! (SHE PUTS THEM INTO HER COAT POCKET AND CROSSES TO SINK.)

MIKE

(EXASPERATED.) Susy! You said YOU HAD FOUND THE DOLL!

SUSY

I know where it is.

MIKE

Where?

SUSY

It's locked up . . . in Sam's desk. (THE THREE MEN LOOK AT EACH OTHER.)

MIKE

What desk?

SUSY

In his studio. (SHE TURNS AND CROSSES TO KITCHEN DRAWER AND FEELS AROUND THE DRAINING BOARD FOR KITCHEN KNIFE. MIKE TURNS TO ROAT. ROAT'S EYES NEVER LEAVE SUSY. HE MAKES A HAND-WINDING SIGN TO MIKE ["KEEP QUIZZING HER"].)

MIKE

How do you know it's there? (SUSY TURNS FROM THE SINK. MIKE CROSS TO RIGHT CENTER STAGE. SUSY FACES MIKE.)

SUSY

You remember that little girl who came in when Mr. Roat was here?

MIKE

Yes.

SUSY

She told me. She phoned me from the drug store.

MIKE

(BEWILDERED.) When?

SUSY

Just after you left. She wanted to know if I needed anything and I thought I might as well ask her if SHE had seen the doll anywhere--and by golly she had!

MIKE

When?

SUSY

Yesterday morning. I had sent her to Sam's studio because I needed some money. She often does my shopping for me. And when she walked into his little office at the back--there was the doll on his desk! Of course she thought it was a present for her--just as I had--but Sam said no--it was for ANOTHER little girl. And then he locked it in his desk. (MIKE TO ROAT--A QUICK GLANCE.)

MIKE

(SUSPICIOUSLY.) Strange place to put a doll.

SUSY

(WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST HESITATION.) That's exactly what she said! "That's a funny place to put a doll! What do you want to lock it up for?"

MIKE

And what did Sam say to that?

SUSY

He said something . . . rather odd!

MIKE

What?

SUSY

He said . . . (SLOWLY.) "Ah! but this is a doll that even grownups would like to have."

MIKE

(AFTER A PAUSE AND ANOTHER GLANCE AT ROAT.) Susy, are you making this up?

SUSY

Go and ask her if you like. She's probably still there. (SUSY CROSS TO CENTER STAGE.) It's the drug store at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Fourth Street. (SUSY HAS FOUND KITCHEN KNIFE. AS SHE CROSSES TO STAIRS SHE PUTS KNIFE IN HER PURSE.)

MIKE

Where are you going with that knife?

SUSY

There's a john at the back of Sam's studio. I'm going to slice that doll up into tiny pieces and flush it away! (MIKE TURNS TO ROAT IN HORROR AND CARLINO LOOKS AS THOUGH HE IS ABOUT TO THROW UP. SUSY CROSSES PAST MIKE AND STARTS UP STAIRS. WHEN SHE IS ALMOST ON TOP OF ROAT AND CARLINO MIKE SAYS SHARPLY:)

MIKE

Now just hold it, Susy . . . YOU can't go. [SEE FIGURE 4]

SUSY

(STOPPING ON STAIRS.) Of course I can! I've been going there by myself for weeks.

MIKE

I'll get it much quicker.



Figure 4



SUSY

But the studio's locked. If anyone sees you go in . . .

MIKE

I'll be careful. Which is the key?

(SUSY HOLDS OUT KEY. MIKE TAKES HER HAND AND LEADS HER DOWN THE STAIRS.)

SUSY

The large one lets you in. One of the small ones opens the desk. You unlock the middle top drawer--and then they all spring open. (MIKE STARTS UPSTAIRS.) But Mike . . . !

MIKE

Yes?

SUSY

You'll come back.

MIKE

Of course. Soon as I've got it.

SUSY

And bring it with you. We'll DISPOSE of it HERE.

MIKE

I will. Where's his studio.

SUSY

78 West Eighth Street. (MIKE REPEATS THE ADDRESS LOUD AND CLEAR, GESTURING TO CARLINO WHO COPIES IT DOWN.)

MIKE

I'll find it. (SHE TAKES OFF COAT AND LAYS ON BACK OF SOFA.)

SUSY

But please be careful . . . Carlino came back while you were gone.

MIKE

(WITH FAKED SURPRISE.) He DID? . . . But you didn't let him in?

SUSY

I had to. (SHE LAUGHS.) You should have seen us! Carlino was at the door. The SAFE WAS WIDE OPEN. The phone started ringing (SUSY CROSS TO LEFT OF SOFA.) and then the doorbell and I could hardly tell which was which!

(ROAT AND TALMAN GLARE AT CARLINO.)

MIKE

What did he want?

SUSY

Oh he just asked a lot of silly questions. And I could hear him searching for that doll all over the room--he even--(SHE LAUGHS.) --he even looked in the WASHING MACHINE! Can you imagine! But it's all right! He now THINKS it's in the SAFE! And he's going to get a warrant and have it drilled open. And by the time they've done THAT--there just won't be no doll--will there?

MIKE

There sure won't.

SUSY

Go on, Mike, and hurry!

MIKE

I will.

SUSY

And lock this door--and the street door as you go out.

MIKE

Okay.

SUSY

Good luck! (THE THREE MEN EXIT--MIKE LAST--AND CLOSE THE DOOR--SUSY LISTENS TO MAKE SURE THEY HAVE GONE. SHE THEN

CROSSES TO SINK, FINDS A HEAVY UTENSIL, FEELS UNTIL SHE FINDS THE WATER PIPE [WHICH IS BEHIND THE REFRIGERATOR] AND BANGS ON IT THREE TIMES. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS THERE ARE TWO MUFFLED KNOCKS ON THE PIPE FROM GLORIA. SUSY THEN STANDS ON STOOL, AND TIES A KNOT IN THE CORD SO THAT IT IS TOO HIGH TO REACH AND TUCKS IT BEHIND THE CURTAIN. AS SHE FINISHES DOING THIS THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.) Who is it?

GLORIA

It's me, Gloria! (SUSY CROSSES AND LETS HER IN HALL DOOR.)

SUSY

Lock the door, honey.

GLORIA

(LOCKING IT.) Did you get my two signals?

SUSY

(ON LANDING.) Yes! You were WONDERFUL! Now quickly, WHO was it who went into that phone booth?

GLORIA

The last one was Sam's friend.

SUSY

Mr. Talman?

GLORIA

Yes.

SUSY

And before him?

GLORIA

The man with glasses.

SUSY

Who?

GLORIA

That man I thought was a detective.

SUSY

That's Mr. Roat.

GLORIA

And they just left the house with that police sergeant who was in here. They all went back to the Volkswagen. (A PAUSE.) Susy--are Mr. Talman and Mr. Roat police detectives, too?

SUSY

(SUSY CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO SOFA, GETS PURSE. GLORIA FOLLOWS, STOPPING AT END TABLE, RIGHT OF SUSY.) They MAY be. Anyway I'm not taking any chances till Sam gets back. Do you know the Port Authority Bus Terminal?

GLORIA

The what?

SUSY

It's the--just ask for the biggest bus station in New York --I think it's near Forty-second Street.

GLORIA

Near Forty-second Street.

SUSY

Go out the back way and take the first taxi you can find. (HANDING GLORIA HER PURSE, SUSY TAKES OUT THE KNIFE FIRST.) Here--take all the money in this--ALL of it. (AS GLORIA TAKES OUT SEVERAL DOLLAR BILLS AND PUTS THE PURSE BACK IN SUSY'S HANDS.)

GLORIA

What do I do when I get to the bus place?

SUSY

Ask where the buses come in from Asbury Park--ASBURY PARK. Say that.

GLORIA

Asbury Park.

SUSY

Meet EVERY bus that comes in from there. Just stay there all night if you have to. Sam will be on ONE of them. Can you do that?

GLORIA

Of course I can. What shall I tell him?

SUSY

EVERYTHING. And he will know what to do.

GLORIA

About the doll . . . ?

SUSY

About the doll and the three men and the Volkswagen. Everything you can think of. (GLORIA STARTS UP THE STAIRS THEN TURNS.) Wait a minute. Before you go--can you find me some ammonia and some vegetable oil?

GLORIA

Where are they?

SUSY

(SHE POINTS TO THE KITCHEN SHELVES.) Under the sink . . . (GLORIA CROSS TO SINK.) and in that cabinet. (SUSY CROSS TO TABLE, PUTS THE KNIFE DOWN AND FEELS FOR THE VASE OF FLOWERS AS GLORIA SEARCHES FOR THE BOTTLES. SUSY CARRIES VASE OF FLOWERS TO THE SINK AND HOLDS THE FLOWERS, SO THEY DO NOT DROP OUT.) Ammonia.

GLORIA

(TAKES BOTTLE FROM CUPBOARD UNDER SINK.) Got it. (GLORIA CROSS TO TABLE.)

SUSY

Pour some into this vase . . . quite a lot . . . watch out for your eyes. (GLORIA POURS IN SOME AMMONIA. THEY BOTH WINCE AT THE SMELL.)

GLORIA

Ugh! What's this for?

SUSY

For just in case. . . . Go on . . . a little more. Okay. Now a little oil on top of that . . . to stop it smelling. (GLORIA POURS IN SOME OIL THAT SHE GOT FROM THE WALL CUPBOARD OVER THE STOVE.) Now put those bottles away where you found them. (GLORIA CROSS BACK TO CABINETS. AS SHE DOES WHAT SHE IS TOLD:) Now--where's the fuse box? Can you see it?

GLORIA

The what.

SUSY

(SEARCHING.) There's a fuse box in the wall somewhere . . . (SUSY CROSS TO WALL UNDER WINDOWS, WORKS HER WAY UP STAGE.) near Sam's darkroom I think. (SHE PUTS OUT HER HAND.) Take me to it. (GLORIA TAKES SUSY'S HAND AND LEADS HER TO THE FUSE BOX.) Now go round the whole apartment turning ON all the lights. Start in the bathroom. (GLORIA TURNS JUST BEFORE ENTERING BEDROOM)

GLORIA

On--or off?

SUSY

(IMPATIENTLY.) On! . . . On!

GLORIA

(A LITTLE HURT.) Okay. Okay.

SUSY

I'm not mad at you, honey--just in an awful hurry. Those men are coming back here!

GLORIA

That's okay, Susy--I'm not mad either. (GLORIA EXITS INTO BEDROOM)

SUSY

Is it dark outside yet?

GLORIA

(OFF.) No--not quite.

SUSY

I wish it would hurry up. Close the drapes in the bedroom.

GLORIA

(CALLING OFF.) I will. They just switched on the street lamps.

SUSY

Good. (WE HEAR GLORIA CLOSING THE DRAPES IN BEDROOM AND THEN SEVERAL LIGHTS GO ON IN THERE--ONE AFTER THE OTHER. MEANWHILE SUSY HAS OPENED THE FUSE BOX AND IS FEELING FOR THE FUSES. THEN GLORIA ENTERS FROM BEDROOM.)

GLORIA

All on.

SUSY

In here too? (GLORIA SWITCHES ON WALL SWITCHES.)

GLORIA

Yes.

SUSY

Good. Now--as I take out each fuse--tell me which light has gone OFF. Ready?

GLORIA

Yes. (AS SUSY UNSCREWS EACH FUSE GLORIA CALLS OUT. GLORIA LOOKS INTO BEDROOM) Bedroom . . . bathroom . . . all out in there . . . ceiling . . . that one . . .

SUSY

WHICH one?



GLORIA

Sorry--on Sam's bench--it's just by you. (SUSY SCREWS THAT FUSE BACK IN AGAIN.)

SUSY

Now THAT one I want to keep . . . is it on again?

GLORIA

Yes. (SUSY UNSCREWS THE LAST FUSE.) Wall lights . . . that's all.

SUSY

Now--don't be frightened, honey--I'm going to turn THIS one off for a second.

GLORIA

I won't be frightened. (SUSY TURNS OFF BENCH LAMP AT THE LAMP ITSELF.)

SUSY

Now--can you see anything AT ALL?

GLORIA

No! Except the clock.

SUSY

Oh, Sam's timer. I'll turn it around. There. Now?

GLORIA

No!

SUSY

Absolutely dark?

GLORIA

YES! (SUSY MOVES AWAY FROM THE BENCH AND WAVES HER HAND.)

SUSY

Can you see me moving? Look very carefully.

SUSY

Then there MUST be a light from SOMEWHERE--where's it coming from?

GLORIA

From under the door at the top of the stairs.

SUSY

Hell! Okay--wait. (SUSY SWITCHES ON THE BENCH LAMP.) There's a broom in the stair closet. (AS GLORIA CROSSES TO STAIR CLOSET.) Go into the hall, sweetheart, and smash every bulb in sight. Just go on until you can't see anything.

GLORIA

WILL DO! (GLORIA RUNS UP THE STAIRS AND UNLOCKS DOOR AND EXITS. THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR WE CAN THEN SEE THE LIGHT SWINGING AS SHE STRIKES--ONCE, TWICE AND THREE TIMES AT THE HALL LIGHT. THEN THERE IS A BANG AND THE LIGHT GOES OUT. ANOTHER BANG AND THE HALL IS DARK. GLORIA ENTERS.) All out!

SUSY

Close the door. (GLORIA CLOSSES IT.) See anything now? (SUSY SWITCHES OFF LIGHT.)

GLORIA

Nothing at all.

SUSY

All dark?

GLORIA

Yes! (SUSY SWITCHES ON BENCH LAMP. GLORIA COMES DOWN-STAIRS AND RETURNS BROOM TO CLOSET. SUSY CROSS DOWN CENTER STAGE.)

SUSY

Good! Off you go then--know what to do?

GLORIA

(RUNNING UPSTAIRS TO DOOR.) Asbury Park. Tell Sam everything.

SUSY

. . . Lock that door and check that the street door is locked. Then go out the back way and run until you find a taxi.

GLORIA

Bye, Susy. (SHE OPENS HALL DOOR.)

SUSY

And, Honey . . . I just don't know ANYONE who could do all this as well as you.

GLORIA

Oh boy I wish something like this would happen EVERY day. (GLORIA EXITS, LOCKING HALL DOOR. SUSY STANDS STILL FOR A MOMENT AND LISTENS. WE HEAR THE BACK DOOR OPEN AND SLAM AND GLORIA RUNNING OUT INTO THE ALLEY. SUSY REMAINS STILL FOR A MOMENT. SHE GOES TO THE TABLE, FINDS THE KNIFE, KNOCKS IT ON THE FLOOR, GOES DOWN ON KNEES AND FINDS IT. SHE MOVES AROUND FOR A MOMENT AS THOUGH WONDERING WHERE TO PUT IT. THEN SHE GOES TO THE WASHING MACHINE, OPENS IT AND HIDES THE KNIFE UNDERNEATH THE WASHING. SHE CLOSSES THE WASHER DOOR, CROSSES TO KITCHEN TABLE AND SITS. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD IN THE HALL. THE HALL DOOR KNOB IS RATTLED, BUT THE DOOR IS LOCKED. THERE IS A QUIET KNOCK BUT SUSY DOESN'T MOVE.)

MIKE

(OFF.) Susy. (SHE DOES NOT REPLY. HE CALLS LOUDER AND MORE URGENTLY.) Susy . . . there's something I must tell you. It's important. (SHE DOES NOT MOVE. THEN WE HEAR SOMETHING BEING FITTED IN BETWEEN THE DOOR AND THE LOCK AND AFTER SOME PATIENT RATTLING THE DOOR OPENS AND MIKE ENTERS. HE RETURNS A PIECE OF CELLULOID TO HIS POCKET. HE THEN CLOSSES THE DOOR.)

SUSY

(CALMLY.) Hello Mike . . . I was expecting you . . . did you get into the studio all right?

MIKE

As it happens--I did . . . no thanks to you. I don't know whether you've ever been there OR NOT--but there is NO DESK. (MIKE THROWS THE BUNCH OF THREE KEYS ONTO THE FLOOR FROM LANDING.)

SUSY

And no doll? (MIKE STARES AT SUSY FOR SEVERAL SECONDS.)

MIKE

How long have you known?

SUSY

About what?

MIKE

Me.

SUSY

(AS THOUGH TO A FRIEND.) Now that's much better, Mike. Isn't it? Now we can talk like sensible people. (MIKE CROSS DOWN STAIRS TO COFFEE TABLE.)

MIKE

(QUIETLY.) Where is it? (A PAUSE.)

SUSY

(SUSY STANDS.) You'll have to BUY it.

MIKE

(AFTER A PAUSE.) Go on then--how much?

SUSY

Not money. I'll trade you--truth for truth. Let's start with Sam and Mrs. Roat--TRUE or FALSE?

MIKE

Do you know where it is? (NO REPLY.) I can't trade if you (MIKE AT BOTTOM OF STAIRS.) don't know.

SUSY

I know.

MIKE

Here?

SUSY

How about Sam?

MIKE

If I tell you--can I have it right now?

SUSY

In a few minutes--you COULD--yes.

MIKE

Then it IS here.

SUSY

Well?

MIKE

Sam didn't kill that woman. He first met her at the airport JUST LIKE HE TOLD YOU.

SUSY

So you aren't a policeman . . . nor is Sgt. Carlino.

MIKE

No.

SUSY

Have you ever met Sam?

MIKE

No. Is it in the safe?

SUSY

Who was she?

MIKE

I can't tell you that.

SUSY

Did you kill her?

MIKE

No.

SUSY

Did MR. ROAT?

MIKE

(AFTER A PAUSE.) You don't have to know that either . . . in the safe?

SUSY

Yes . . . it's in the safe.

MIKE

The key?

SUSY

It's already unlocked.

MIKE

Thank you, Susy. (MIKE CROSS TO PHONE AND DIALS A NUMBER. AS HE WAITS EXCITEDLY AND THEN SPEAKS, SUSY REMAINS PERFECTLY STILL AND TRIES TO HEAR THE OTHER END. MIKE, INTO PHONE.) IT'S HERE . . . YES . . . YES! NOW! May be your only chance. (MIKE HANGS UP AND CROSSES TO SAFE. SUSY WAITS UNTIL HE REACHES IT AND TRIES THE HANDLE OF THE SAFE. [IT IS LOCKED.] THEN SHE MAKES A DIVE FOR THE PHONE AND DIALS O.)

SUSY

(VERY QUICKLY INTO PHONE.) This is 27B Grogan Street . . . (MIKE CROSSES TO PHONE. BEFORE SHE HAS SAID THE WORD "GROGAN" MIKE HAS WRENCHED THE CORD OUT OF THE FLOOR SOCKET.)

MIKE

That was just stupid--wasn't it. [SEE FIGURE 5.] (SUSY DOESN'T ANSWER. MIKE ANGRILY:) The key PLEASE! You said I could have it.

SUSY

(RISES AND BACKS TO SOFA AWAY FROM HIM.) I've hidden it.



Figure 5



Very carefully. It's SOMEWHERE in this apartment.

MIKE

(FOLLOWING HER.) I'm not going to search for it. You're going to give it to me now.

SUSY

Then you'll have to MAKE me give it to you. (A PAUSE. MIKE'S VOICE IS COLD AS HE DOES ALL HE CAN TO SCARE HER.)

MIKE

Don't think I couldn't. (MIKE CROSS TO LEFT OF COFFEE TABLE.)

SUSY

Then you'll have to hurt me VERY much . . . and I'm not so sure you can do that.

MIKE

Then you don't know me very well.

SUSY

I think I do.

MIKE

You don't know me at all--do you?

SUSY

You can know some people very well--in a short time . . . you might be able to hurt me a little. But that won't be enough . . . (THERE IS A SUDDEN AND VIOLENT REVving-UP OF A CAR FROM THE ALLEY OUTSIDE. THEN WE HEAR A MAN SHOUT AND THE SOUND OF A TRASH CAN BEING KNOCKED VIOLENTLY AGAINST THE ALLEY WALL. THEN THE CAR REVS OFF. MIKE TURNS HIS FULL ATTENTION TO THIS AND FOR A FEW MOMENTS IGNORES SUSY. A SHORT PAUSE AS MIKE'S ATTENTION SWITCHES FROM WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED OUTSIDE TO SUSY.)

MIKE

(GENTLY, AS THOUGH GIVING IN.) Perhaps you're right . . . maybe I just couldn't hurt you enough. But suppose there was a man who COULD . . . (HE WATCHES HER REACTION. FOR

THE FIRST TIME SHE BEGINS TO LOOK FRIGHTENED.) . . . and suppose he was waiting right outside here . . . where he has been waiting all day . . . just for this. All I have to do is walk out of here and he'll come in.

SUSY

(IN A LEVEL TONE.) Anything he does you'll be doing yourself. You'll never forget that.

MIKE

I won't be here. (A PAUSE.) Have it your way then.  
(MIKE CROSSES UP STAGE OF SOFA TO STAIRS.)

SUSY

(SHOUTING ANGRILY.) Go on then GET OUT! You're worse than he is! (MIKE OPENS HALL DOOR AND THEN TURNS.)

MIKE

(DESPERATELY.) But WHY? . . . How's Sam going to feel (MIKE ON STAIRS.) when he comes back here and finds you . . . ? (MIKE RUNS UP REST OF STAIRS, THROWS OPEN DOOR. HE LOOKS DOWN AT SUSY FOR A LONG MOMENT, THEN SLOWLY CLOSES THE DOOR.)

MIKE

(QUIETLY.) Okay, Susy--you win. (SUSY DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THIS AND SHOUTS VIOLENTLY AGAIN.)

SUSY

Get out!--If you come near me . . . !

MIKE

It's all over, Susy. You can keep your damned doll. I guess (MIKE CROSSES DOWN STAIRS.) you've earned it anyway . . . and you needn't be afraid of Mr. Roat any longer. Mr. Roat is dead.

SUSY

(AFTER A PAUSE.) Are you still lying? (SUSY BACKS AWAY DOWN LEFT STAGE.)

MIKE

No more lies. I can't tell you much--who I am or who

Carlino is . . . and we never knew who Mr. Roat was anyway. We only met him last night--but no more lying.

SUSY

You've killed him?

MIKE

(CROSS TO END TABLE.) When Roat was in here doing his old man act--Carlino and I flipped and he won. I can't tell you why we had to kill Roat but we did. Then the three of us agreed that--when I'd gotten the doll--Carlino would bring his car round to the back alley and pick up Roat and me. So as Mr. Roat walked round into the alley just now . . . a '58 Pontiac through the back of the head.

SUSY

You better go, Mike.

MIKE

How much are you going to tell about us?

SUSY

Will you leave Sam and me alone--always?

MIKE

That's a promise--we'll never meet again.

SUSY

Then I won't give you away.

MIKE

What about Sam?

SUSY

He'll do as I ask him. You see, I AM grateful. It's rather like thanking someone for not pushing you under a bus--but you could have hurt me and you didn't.

MIKE

Goodbye, Susy. (HE TURNS TO GO. CROSSES TO FOOT OF STAIRS.)

SUSY

What will you do now?

MIKE

Run. I owe money to a Shylock and his boys are looking for me. (MIKE GOES UP STAIRS ONE-HALF WAY.) That's why I had to do this. I'll just run and run--won't be the first time.

SUSY

There's a--it's not much but there's still that twenty-dollar bill at the back of the freezer--if that would help. (SUSY CROSS TO COFFEE TABLE.)

MIKE

We already took it--but thanks just the same. (SUSY CROSSES TO LEFT OF STAIR BANNISTER. SUSY PUTS OUT HER HAND.)

SUSY

Goodbye then. (AS MIKE TAKES HER HAND SHE PUTS HER OTHER HAND UP AS THOUGH TO FEEL HIS FACE, BUT HE TAKES IT GENTLY WITH HIS OTHER HAND AND PULLS IT DOWN.)

MIKE

(QUIETLY.) Uh--uh . . . no see--no tell. (HE TURNS AND AS HE GOES QUIETLY UP THE STAIRS.)

SUSY

Good luck. (HE OPENS THE DOOR. AS HE TURNS IN THE DOORWAY TO TAKE ONE LAST LOOK AT SUSY, HE SUDDENLY STIFFENS AND GASPS.)

SUSY

Mike? (MIKE FALLS DOWN STAIRS, KNOCKING INTO SUSY. SUSY DRAWS BACK, SCREAMING AND TERRIFIED, AND FALLS OVER END TABLE. AFTER A BEAT, ROAT APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY, HOLDING A BLOODIED KNIFE.)

ROAT

Well, Susy--now all the children have gone to bed--we can talk.

(ROAT LOCKS THE DOOR AND PUTS THE CHAIN ON THE DOOR. SUSY LIES OVER THE END TABLE SOBBING.)

ROAT

I'm going to lock us in, Susy. Of course I knew they'd (ROAT CROSS DOWNSTAIRS.) try and kill me the moment we had the doll. But when Carlino walked up to his car just now he (SUSY WORKS HER WAY BACK ALONG SOFA, SO IT IS BETWEEN HER AND ROAT.) saw it start up--all by itself--and drive straight at him. I couldn't resist switching on the light just to catch his expression . . . (ROAT DRAGS MIKE'S BODY INTO THE BEDROOM, COMES OUT AGAIN, STOPPING ON LANDING.) I don't think I've ever seen anyone look quite so surprised! So it's in the safe, is it? (NO REPLY FROM SUSY.) Take your time. At best Sam will just be arriving at St. Vincent's Hospital. You see, when his bus arrived at Asbury Park he was given a phone message which said you had had a slight accident and by (SUSY CROSSES TO LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE.) the time they've kept him waiting around there I'll have finished. So will you give it to me now--please.

SUSY

I won't give it to you.

ROAT

I WON'T give it to you. I WON'T give it to you . . . you remind (ROAT CROSSES DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE, CROSSES UPSTAGE, CIRCLING AROUND SUSY.) me of someone else who talked like that . . . only she said "I don't know where it is . . . I don't know--I don't know . . . " over and over again. (THEN FROM HIS ZIP BAG HE TAKES OUT A VERY LIGHTWEIGHT CHIFFON SCARF AND TURNS AND WATCHES HER.) I've heard people say that before--only she was more stubborn . . . I don't know--I don't know. (HE FLINGS THE SCARF INTO THE AIR SO IT ALMOST FLOATS OVER HER HEAD. SHE RECOILS VIOLENTLY AND AS THE SCARF TANGLES IN HER FINGERS SHE BACKS AWAY FROM IT AS THOUGH SOMEONE HAD HANDED HER A SNAKE. FINALLY IT FALLS TO THE FLOOR. HE WATCHES ALL THIS AS THOUGH IT WAS SOME KIND OF EXPERIMENT. QUIETLY.) Do you frighten easily? . . . [SEE FIGURE 6.] It's just in front of you on the floor. Would you pick it up, please . . . there's no need to be ashamed . . . everybody's frightened of SOMETHING. (INSTEAD, SUSY BACKS AWAY. THEN, AS HE TALKS, SHE SLOWLY MANEUVERS HER WAY ROUND, UNTIL SHE IS CLOSE TO THE FLOWER VASE. AS THOUGH HIS EXPERIMENT HAS SO FAR SUCCEEDED, HE PICKS UP THE SCARF HIMSELF. DURING



Figure 6



THE ABOVE DIALOGUE HE HAS TAKEN FROM HIS ZIP BAG A METAL CAN OF GASOLINE AND NOW GOES TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS AND SPRINKLES IT ALL OVER THE STAIR CARPET AND AROUND THE BEDROOM DOOR AND INTO THE BEDROOM. WHEN HE COMES OUT OF BEDROOM HE PUTS THE CAN ON TOP OF THE SAFE. DURING THE ABOVE SUSY FEELS AROUND THE TABLE UNTIL SHE FINDS THE MATCHES AND PUTS THEM INTO HER POCKET. ROAT, DURING THE ABOVE ACTION:) I have gasoline here. This place will go up like a matchbox . . . it's simply a question of whether you want to be outside in the street--or locked in there with Mike . . . won't you give it to me now?

SUSY

No.

ROAT

(CROSS DOWN OF COUCH TO RIGHT OF KITCHEN TABLE.) I won't give it to you--I don't know--I don't know . . . and then finally--as it ALWAYS happens--something seemed to snap . . . and she told me everything she knew. As it happened she DIDN'T know where it was but she told me EVERYTHING she COULD . . . at last she WANTED to help me . . . and like her YOU won't stop at that . . . when she'd answered all my questions--she went on--other things--little things that just MIGHT be useful to me . . . and then other things--things I didn't even WANT to know . . . little intimate things about herself and Mike and Carlino and I kept telling her--THAT'S ENOUGH--I don't want to know any more--but she went on and on and on . . . and then she was dead. (WHILE HE HAS BEEN TALKING HE HAS BEEN MOVING CLOSER AND CLOSER TO HER.) I'm not going to ask you for it again, Susy . . . so when you WANT to give it to me--you have to tell me. (NO REPLY. SHE IS STILL FEELING THE FLOWERS. HE MOVES EVEN CLOSER AND SAYS VERY GENTLY:) Then will you go in there? . . . Shall I help you? (AS HE TOUCHES HER LIGHTLY ON THE ARM, SHE THROWS THE VASE AND ITS CONTENTS INTO HIS FACE. HIS HANDS FLY TO HIS EYES. SUSY MAKES A VIOLENT DASH FOR THE BENCH LAMP, KNOCKING OVER A CHAIR AND STUMBLING. THIS GIVES ROAT A CHANCE TO RECOVER. HE SEES WHAT SHE IS AIMING FOR AND GOES ROUND THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE AND REACHES THE LAMP BEFORE HER. BUT SUSY HAS HEARD HIM MOVE AND CHANGES DIRECTION AND HURLING HERSELF ACROSS THE ROOM SHE REACHES THE LIGHT SWITCH BY THE BEDROOM DOOR. ROAT MAKES A FRANTIC DASH TO GET TO HER BEFORE SHE CAN SWITCH IT OFF BUT HE IS TOO LATE, AND SUSY SWITCHES THE BENCH LAMP OFF [FROM THE BEDROOM LIGHT SWITCH]. THE STAGE IS NOW COMPLETELY DARK. WE NOW CANNOT HEAR SUSY MOVING. BUT WE HEAR ROAT AS HE GROPE FOR THE BEDROOM LIGHT SWITCH. BY THE TIME HE SWITCHES ON THE BENCH LAMP [FROM THE LIGHT SWITCH]--SUSY HAS NOW MOVED ACROSS TO THE BENCH



LAMP IS FEELING FOR IT. THEN JUST AS SHE TOUCHES THE BENCH LAMP ROAT FLICKS OUT HIS KNIFE AND TAKES AIM.) Don't touch it! (AS SUSY LIFTS THE LAMP TO SMASH IT, ROAT THROWS HIS KNIFE AND WE SEE IT STICK AND QUIVER IN THE BACK WALL JUST ABOVE SUSY'S HEAD AND A SPLIT SECOND LATER SHE SMASHES THE LAMP AGAINST THE WALL. COMPLETE DARKNESS AGAIN. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A KEY AS SUSY TAKES IT OUT OF BEDROOM DOOR. ROAT'S FIRST MOVE IS TO THE BACK WALL TO RETRIEVE HIS KNIFE. WE HEAR HIM CLUMSILY SEARCHING THE WALL. THEN WE HEAR SUSY SPEAK, SHE HAS NOW MOVED TO THE SAFE, DOWN RIGHT STAGE.)

SUSY

(QUIETLY.) I have your knife, Mr. Roat. (NEITHER SPEAKS NOW FOR SEVERAL SECONDS. ROAT IS STANDING PERFECTLY STILL AND HIS BREATHING GRADUALLY QUIETENS UNTIL WE CANNOT HEAR HIM AT ALL. THEN HE STRIKES A MATCH. HE IS STILL OVER BY SAM'S BENCH. SUSY IS BY THE SAFE AND SHE HAS HIS KNIFE IN HER HAND.)

ROAT

(VERY CALMLY.) I can see you now, Susy . . . I have a whole box of matches . . . you're over by the safe. (WITH HER OTHER HAND SHE FEELS ON THE SAFE UNTIL SHE FINDS THE BOTTLE OF GASOLINE. SHE THEN TURNS AND GOES STRAIGHT FOR HIM. AS HE SEES WHAT SHE IS ABOUT TO DO HE SHOUTS:) No! (HE BLOWS OUT THE MATCH.) I've blown it out. It's OUT! (JUST BEFORE HIS MATCH WENT OUT WE SEE SUSY, AIMING AT HIS VOICE, START TO SOUSE HIM THOROUGHLY WITH THE GASOLINE. ONCE MORE IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR HIM CHOKE AND SPLUTTER.)

SUSY

Just try lighting a match NOW!

ROAT

I won't!

SUSY

(SHE STRIKES A MATCH AND HOLDS IT OUT TOWARDS HIM.) Throw your matches onto the floor . . . now! Or I'll set you on fire. (HE THROWS HIS BOX OF MATCHES ON FLOOR AND SHE BLOWS OUT HER MATCH.)

ROAT

They're on the floor.

SUSY

Now stand perfectly still where you are . . . and listen.  
(SILENCE FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN WE HEAR ROAT START TO  
TIPTOE TOWARDS THE STAIRS. SUSY, SHARPLY:) Don't move!  
. . . However quietly (SUSY CROSS TO STAIRS.) you move I  
can hear you. (HE STOPS.) Now listen . . . go slowly to  
the bedroom door and walk so I can hear you . . . go on.  
(WE HEAR ROAT START TOWARDS BEDROOM BUT HE KNOCKS INTO THE  
SOFA.)

ROAT

(FRIGHTENED.) I--I can't. I don't know where I am.

SUSY

Just find one of the walls and work your way around . . .  
(ROAT CROSS TO BEDROOM DOOR, UP STAGE OF SOFA.) it's not  
very difficult. (WE HEAR HIM CROSS TO THE BEDROOM DOOR.  
HE KNOCKS TO SHOW HE IS THERE.)

ROAT

I'm by the door. (SUSY CROSS TO TOP LANDING.)

SUSY

Now go inside . . . close the door and knock from the OTHER  
side. (WE HEAR HIM FEELING FOR THE KEY IN THE LOCK.) I  
have the key here.

ROAT

What are you going to do?

SUSY

Just go in there--close the door and knock. I'm going to  
lock you in . . . go on.

ROAT

(FROM BEDROOM DOOR.) No. Let me stay in here. I won't  
move. I'll go and sit at the table . . . (AS HE SPEAKS WE  
CAN NOW HEAR HIM GOING VERY QUIETLY UP THE STAIRS. THEY  
CREAK AS HE MOUNTS EACH STEP.) . . . I'll keep knocking on  
the table so you'll know I'm there. . . . (HE SUDDENLY MAKES  
A DIVE FOR THE HALL DOOR BUT BEFORE HE GETS NEAR ENOUGH SUSY

STRIKES A MATCH. SHE IS ALREADY UP THERE AHEAD OF HIM. SHE HOLDS IT OUT IN FRONT OF HER AT ARM'S LENGTH. HE STOPS DEAD ON THE STAIRS, SCREAMS SHARPLY.) No! Put it out! The gasoline! (HOLDING THE LIGHTED MATCH IN ONE HAND AND HIS KNIFE IN THE OTHER SUSY COMES DOWN THE STAIRS AFTER HIM AS HE BACKS AWAY. AS HER MATCH GOES OUT WE HEAR HIM FALL DOWN THE LAST FEW STAIRS. THEN IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR HIM SCRAMBLE FOR THE TABLE AND HE STARTS TO BEAT ON IT LOUDLY. ROAT, IN A PANIC.) I'm at the table and I'll keep tapping on it so you'll know exactly where I am. . . . (HE STARTS TAPPING LOUDLY ON THE TABLE WITH HIS KNUCKLES--A CONTINUOUS TAPPING [BUT NOT IN RHYTHM], BUT AFTER SEVERAL SECONDS HE STOPS TAPPING.)

SUSY

Keep tapping. (HE CONTINUES TAPPING. NEITHER SPEAKS FOR SEVERAL SECONDS.)

ROAT

(MORE QUIETLY.) I have to hand it to you . . . I don't know anyone who could have done this . . . you thought of EVERYTHING.

SUSY

(GENTLY.) Just keep tapping. (ROAT CONTINUES TAPPING--AS BEFORE--WITH INTERMITTENT KNOCKS ON THE TABLE. ROAT QUIETLY GETS BLIND STICK OFF BANNISTER, WORKS HIS WAY TO REFRIGERATOR. BUT DURING HIS NEXT SPEECH THE KNOCKS CHANGE GRADUALLY INTO A MORE PRECISE RHYTHM UNTIL HE IS FINALLY BEATING A HARD SHARP SLOW RHYTHM WHICH IS ALSO PUNCTUATING WHAT HE IS SAYING. AT THE SAME TIME SOMETHING SINISTER CREEPS BACK INTO HIS VOICE AS IF HE HAS HAD AN IDEA AND IS DARING HER TO GUESS WHAT IT IS.)

ROAT

(CONTINUING.) . . . It's funny--when most people plan something (TAP, TAP, TAP.) . . . however clever they are (TAP, TAP.) . . . there's always some little thing (TAP.) . . . they overlook . . . (HE STOPS TAPPING.) but you, Susy . . .

SUSY

(SHARPLY.) Keep tapping! (HE DOES NOT TAP ANY LONGER. SHE SHOUTS:) KEEP TAPPING! (ROAT'S VOICE IS MOVING AWAY FROM THE TABLE AS HE SAYS:)

ROAT

. . . YOU didn't forget ANYTHING . . . did you! (HE OPENS THE REFRIGERATOR, THROWING A WIDE BEAM OF LIGHT STRAIGHT ACROSS AT SUSY WHO STANDS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. [THE REFRIGERATOR IMMEDIATELY STARTS ITS LOUD HUM, WHICH GOES ON AND ON.] SUSY GOES STRAIGHT FOR THE REFRIGERATOR AS FAST AS SHE CAN WITH HIS KNIFE HELD IN FRONT OF HER. BUT BEFORE SHE REACHES IT HE SNATCHES UP A TOWEL AND LOOPS IT UP OVER THE HINGE OF THE DOOR SO THAT WHEN SHE SLAMS IT SHUT IT ONLY SWINGS WIDE OPEN AGAIN. SHE DOES THIS FRANTICALLY SEVERAL TIMES. HE STANDS BACK AND WATCHES HER. ROAT, VERY QUIETLY.) Won't it shut? (SHE TRIES TO LEAN AGAINST IT BUT IT WON'T QUITE SHUT AND THERE IS ALWAYS AT LEAST A THIN STREAK OF LIGHT. IN TRYING DESPERATELY TO CLOSE IT SHE DROPS THE KNIFE ON THE FLOOR. THEY BOTH DROP TO THEIR KNEES AND SEARCH FOR THE KNIFE. ROAT FINDS IT AND STANDS.) So you see--it's all finished! . . . You can relax now, Susy. It's all over. I have the knife. (A PAUSE.) Now get up and go over to where you were standing before . . . go on.

SUSY

(TERRIFIED.) I'll give it to you . . . I'LL GIVE YOU THE DOLL . . . (SUSY CROSS RIGHT, DOWN STAGE OF KITCHEN TABLE.)

ROAT

No, no! Do as I say . . . (HE THEN GOES TO THE SINK AND, AS HE TALKS, WASHES THE GASOLINE FROM HIS CLOTHES.) Back a bit . . . a little more . . . (SUSY BACKS TO COFFEE TABLE.) that's right . . . hands by your sides. (A PAUSE.) Now--what was it you wanted to say?

SUSY

I'll give you the doll--if you'll just promise to go--and leave us alone.

ROAT

(AFTER A PAUSE.) You have to say . . . PLEASE may I give you the doll?

SUSY

Please may I give you the doll. (A LONG PAUSE, WHILE HE PUTS ON HIS GLOVES ETC.)

## ROAT

(QUIETLY.) You may. (HE WATCHES HER AS SHE FEELS HER WAY TO THE WASHING MACHINE AND OPENS IT. AS SHE SEARCHES INSIDE HER BODY MASKS WHAT SHE IS DOING. SHE SEARCHES FOR SEVERAL SECONDS AND THEN BRINGS OUT THE DOLL. [ROAT COUNTERS TO LEFT OF KITCHEN TABLE.] [SHE SLIDES THE SMALL KITCHEN KNIFE UP THE SLEEVE OF HER SWEATER.] ROAT IS SURPRISED TO SEE WHERE SHE HAD HIDDEN THE DOLL.) You are clever, aren't you? . . . a little arrogant at times--but clever . . . now go and put it on the table. (SHE TAKES IT TO THE TABLE.) Now back to your place. (SHE MOVES DOWN RIGHT TO COFFEE TABLE. MEANWHILE ROAT SLITS OPEN THE BACK OF THE DOLL AND THEN TEARS IT OPEN PULLING OUT SEVERAL SMALL BAGS OF WHITE POWDER. HE FETCHES HIS ZIP BAG AND STUFFS IN THE LITTLE BAGS. AS HE DOES THIS THE MUSICAL DOLL STARTS TO PLAY. HE COLLECTS ALL HIS THINGS TOGETHER AND PUTS THEM WITH HIS ZIP BAG AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. THEN HE PUTS ON HIS RAINCOAT. HE IS NOW READY TO GO. FINALLY HE LOOKS AROUND UNTIL HE SEES HIS BOX OF MATCHES ON THE FLOOR. HE PICKS THEM UP AND RATTLES THEN FOR SUSY'S BENEFIT AND TOSSES THEM ONTO THE TOP STAIR. WHEN HE HAS COMPLETED THE ABOVE ROAT CROSS DOWN TO LEFT OF COUCH. HE SAYS MILDLY:) Now may I have the key . . . to the bedroom? (SHE TAKES THE KEY FROM HER POCKET AND GIVES IT TO HIM.) And now--if you'll go into the bedroom please.

## SUSY

(PLEADING.) You have what you want now--will you PLEASE go. I'll never give you away . . . if you'll just go.

## ROAT

(MILDLY.) I'd like to do that, Susy . . . but I have a rule that has to be obeyed--you know the one I mean? (HE IS NOW MOVING CLOSER TO HER.) . . . That clever, arrogant girls have to be punished. . . .

## SUSY

No!

## ROAT

I'm only doing what you were going to do to me. I'm going to lock you in there . . . go on. (HE PUTS HIS HAND LIGHTLY ON HER ELBOW BUT SHE SHAKES HIM OFF AND TURNING STARTS TO GO TO THE BEDROOM. HE FOLLOWS JUST BEHIND HER.) That's right. But you mustn't shout. If I hear you call for help, I'll set fire to the stairs. Then no one will



be able to help you until the firemen arrive and by that time . . . (AS SHE REACHES THE DOORWAY HE SUDDENLY TRIES TO PUSH HER INSIDE BUT SHE TURNS AND CATCHES HIS COAT. AT FIRST HE DOES NOT SEE THE KNIFE IN HER OTHER HAND AS SHE STABS AT HIM ONCE, TWICE, THREE TIMES [ALWAYS JUST MISSING]). THEN HE SEES IT AND TRIES TO BACK AWAY BUT SHE STILL HOLDS ONTO HIS COAT AND WON'T LET GO. IN THE STRUGGLE THEY HAVE NOW TURNED AROUND SO THAT AS HE TRIES TO GET AWAY FROM HER HE BACKS INTO THE BEDROOM AND SHE PUTS HER HEAD DOWN AND GOES IN AFTER HIM STABBING VIOLENTLY AND WILDLY. THERE IS A SCREAM, A THUD AND THEN SEVERAL MOMENTS OF SILENCE. A FIGURE APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY AND CROSSES SLOWLY INTO THE LIVING ROOM. IT IS SUSY. SHE DROPS THE KNIFE, REALIZING ITS ALL OVER. SHE BEGINS TO WHIMPER QUIETLY. WHEN ALL IS CALM ROAT SUDDENLY LUNGES VIOLENTLY INTO THE ROOM AND FALLS SEVERAL FEET INTO THE ROOM, GRABBING SUSY BY THE LEG. SUSY SCREAMS AND FALLS, DRAGGING HERSELF AND ROAT TO CENTER STAGE. ROAT SEES KNIFE ON FLOOR AND GRABS IT. SUSY CRAWLS TOWARDS REFRIGERATOR. SHE TRIES TO CLOSE IT BUT THE TOWEL STILL KEEPS IT SPRINGING OPEN AGAIN. THEN ROAT STABS HIS KNIFE INTO THE FLOOR AHEAD OF HIM AND PULLS HIMSELF ALONG THE FLOOR TOWARDS SUSY. HE DOES THIS AGAIN AND AGAIN, SLIDING ALONG THE FLOOR LIKE A REPTILE, ROAT PULLS HIMSELF UP AND KNOCKS OVER THE KITCHEN TABLE. SUSY SCREAMS AGAIN. THEN SHE MAKES A WILD EFFORT TO FIND THE ELECTRIC CORD ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE REFRIGERATOR. SHE BEGINS TO SHOUT FOR HELP.)

SUSY

Help me! Help me! (AS HE SLIDES NEARER, ROAT SAYS:)

ROAT

I'll help you, Susy. (SHE GOES TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE REFRIGERATOR, I.E., BEHIND ITS OPEN SWINGING DOOR. SHE SEARCHES FOR THE CORD ON THAT SIDE. AT LAST SHE FINDS IT AND TUGS AT IT BUT NOTHING HAPPENS. ROAT REACHES THE REFRIGERATOR AND HAULS HIMSELF UP, USING THE INSIDE TRAYS LIKE A LADDER. THEN HE STEADIES HIMSELF AGAINST THE SWINGING DOOR AND RAISING HIS KNIFE HURLS HIMSELF AND THE DOOR AT SUSY. JUST AS HE DOES, SUSY SCREAMS AND GIVES A FINAL TUG AND THE LIGHT GOES OUT AND THE REFRIGERATOR STOPS HUMMING. COMPLETE DARKNESS AGAIN AND SILENCE IN THE ROOM. THEN IMMEDIATELY WE HEAR FOOTSTEPS AND SHOUTING. THERE IS BANGING ON THE HALL DOOR AND THEN IT BREAKS OPEN WITH A SPLINTERING CRASH. PATROLMAN ONE ENTERS FOLLOWED BY PATROLMAN TWO. THEY FLASH THEIR LIGHTS AROUND THE ROOM UNTIL ONE HALTS ON ROAT'S BODY. SAM RUNS IN CALLING:)

SAM

Susy!

PATROLMAN TWO

(ON LANDING.) You better stay out of here, Mr. Hendrix!  
(SAM RUSHES PAST HIM AND DOWN THE STAIRS TO RIGHT OF END  
TABLE.)

SAM

(CALLING OFF.) Susy!

PATROLMAN TWO

(DOWN THE STAIRS AFTER HIM.) Mr. Hendrix! (MEANWHILE  
PATROLMAN ONE HAS COME DOWN THE STAIRS WITH HIS FLASH-  
LIGHT ON, AND HAS GONE OVER TO ROAT. ROAT IS IN A GRO-  
TESQUE POSITION, APPARENTLY DEAD, ONE SLEEVE IS CAUGHT  
IN THE REFRIGERATOR SHELF SO HE IS HALF HANGING BY ONE  
ARM AND HIS WEIGHT IS SO PLACED AS TO HOLD THE REFRIGERA-  
TOR DOOR WIDE OPEN, COMPLETELY MASKING SUSY.) That's  
one of 'em. I'm going in there. (INDICATES BEDROOM.)

PATROLMAN ONE

(PULLS ROAT OFF REFRIGERATOR.) He's still bleeding--  
may stand a chance. (PATROLMAN TWO ENTERS THE BEDROOM.  
WE HEAR HIM KICK OPEN THE BATHROOM DOOR AND OPEN A  
CLOSET. PATROLMAN TWO ENTERS FROM BEDROOM.)

PATROLMAN TWO

There's a D.O.A. in there--looks like a knifing.  
First aid bag and ambulance.  
(SUSY STRIKES A MATCH, AND COMES OUT FROM BEHIND REFRIG-  
ERATOR. SUDDENLY NOTICING HER, PATROLMAN TWO WHIPS OUT HIS  
GUN AND GOES DOWN ON ONE KNEE. SHOUTS:) Watch it!  
(PATROLMAN ONE TURNS SHARPLY DRAWING HIS GUN, SO THEY ARE  
NOW BOTH AIMING THEIR GUNS AND FLASHLIGHTS STRAIGHT AT  
SUSY. SHE STANDS THERE QUITE STILL, ARM OUTSTRETCHED,  
HOLDING THE LIGHTED MATCH AS IF IT WAS HER LAST AND ONLY  
MEANS OF PROTECTION. GLORIA APPEARS IN THE HALL DOOR AND  
LOOKS DOWN. FOR A MOMENT THE TWO PATROLMEN SIMPLY STARE  
AT SUSY, COMPLETELY BEWILDERED AS TO WHO SHE IS AND WHAT  
SHE IS DOING. THEN SEEING SHE IS UNARMED THEY PUT AWAY  
THEIR GUNS BUT KEEP THEIR FLASHLIGHTS ON HER.)



## PATROLMAN ONE

(GENTLY.) Put that match out! (GLORIA RUNS DOWN THE STAIRS AND PUSHES HER WAY BETWEEN THE TWO MEN. TAKES SUSY'S HAND AND GENTLY BLOWS OUT THE MATCH.)

## GLORIA

Susy--are you all right? . . . It's ME--we're back.  
(PATROLMAN ONE GOES TO SUSY TO HELP HER OUT OF THE ROOM.)

## PATROLMAN ONE

(GENTLY.) Okay, lady--let's get out of here, shall we?

## SAM

Leave her alone! BOTH of you. She can manage by herself.  
(GLORIA TAKES SUSY BY THE HAND AND LEADS HER DOWN CENTER STAGE. GLORIA THEN LEAVES HER TO HERSELF AND THEN BACKS AWAY FROM SUSY. DURING THIS THE TWO PATROLMEN KEEP THEIR FLASHLIGHTS ON SUSY AND GLORIA SO AS TO LIGHT THEIR WAY.)

## SAM

(QUIETLY.) I'm holding out for you, sweetheart. (THEN HE HOLDS OUT HIS HAND AND LETS HER GROPE AROUND UNTIL SHE FINDS IT. AS SHE TOUCHES IT EVERYONE IS VERY STILL.) Susy.

## CURTAIN

End of Play

## CHAPTER III

Introduction

The University of North Carolina Summer Repertory Theatre production of Wait Until Dark opened on 5 June 1977 for a run of seven performances. This chapter will constitute a critical evaluation of the production, exploring such areas as achievement of interpretation, success of character development and audience response.

Interpretation

This director feels that the key to a successful interpretation of Wait Until Dark lies in properly defining the nature of the confrontation between Roat and Susy, i.e., it must be a contest between evenly matched participants. Though Roat's capabilities are apparent from the outset, it was necessary to determine several central scenes in which Susy's strength and competence could be demonstrated.

The first such scene was in Act I when Susy discovered the fire started in the ashtray by Sam's cigarette. Knott's original stage directions called for Susy to completely lose control and fly up the stairs in a panic. This director felt that it was essential for Susy to act calmly and rationally in this situation, thereby

establishing her ability to deal with a potentially threatening situation.

In the Summer Repertory production, Susy had a moment of fear when she first recognized the smoke, but immediately forced her fear under control and quickly and calmly went to the phone to call for help. When Mike showed up at the front door she did not fly to him in an irrational panic, but instead, she went quickly and deliberately, knowing that the situation required immediate attention and a cool head.

The second crucial scene was Susy's realization that Mike was involved in the plot with Carlino and Roat. Once again, Knott calls upon his heroine to react with horror and panic. This director felt that such an interpretation would destroy the credibility of Susy's later actions taken against Roat. In the Summer Repertory production this moment was expanded and Susy's subtext carefully delineated to take her through the following emotional responses-- first fear and momentary panic, then: self-pity (briefly), anger, both at Mike and at herself for being taken in, then grim, resolute determination to survive the situation. The rest of her actions showed hurried but rational forethought, not indiscriminate panic.

The last key scene was, of course, Susy's final confrontation with Roat. The scene was staged to allow a constant switching of dominance over the situation, first

Roat with the knife, then Susy using darkness, then Roat with his matches, and Susy again using the gasoline. Susy did not flail around looking for weapons to use against Roat, but instead, carefully maneuvered for the best position. Consequently, Roat exhibited real fear when Susy was in control of the situation. This director feels that this interpretation contributed to the tension of the final scene, analogous to watching a well-played chess match.

The second major element of this director's interpretation of Wait Until Dark involved demonstrating the relative vulnerability of everyone to invasions of their peace and security. This was shown primarily through Susy's misplaced trust in Talman and her consistent belief that if they were the police they were justified in their actions. In the Summer Repertory production, this vulnerability encompassed even Talman and Carlino. In the opening scene, their too-immediate acceptance of their subservient relationship to Roat, which resulted in their eventual destruction, showed that even those living outside the law are equally liable to becoming victim, instead of victimizer.

One major problem inherent in the script rapidly became apparent when rehearsals reached the run-through phase. Knott had several scene divisions that did not correspond to the passage of time and seemed to exist solely to allow the audience (or perhaps the actors) a

breather from the action. Rather than heightening the tension of the play, they destroy the momentum of the suspense as it builds.

This director felt that the nearly-cinematic flow of Wait Until Dark could best be preserved by eliminating all of the scene breaks in Act II. In Knott's original script Act II, Scene 2 picked up with Talman's return from Sam's studio where Susy had sent him to search for the doll. In the UNC-G Summer Repertory production, Susy, after hiding the doll in the washing machine, crosses to the kitchen table and sits, awaiting Mike's return. For the next several moments, everything was absolutely still on stage. Then, Talman's footsteps were heard approaching the hall door. He tried the door knob, and, finding it locked, called Susy's name.

This director felt that forcing the audience to share Susy's wait for Talman's return would increase their tension and also their vicarious experience of Susy's fear. The director found his theory born out, for in the performances he witnessed, no one in the audience shifted, murmured amongst themselves, or coughed--the traditional indicators of a disaffected audience.

The Act I scene divisions covered the passage of time, so there was no way to dispense with them. However, this director felt that a musical segue would be less distracting than a simple dropped curtain. A music student

at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro was commissioned to compose a score for the scene changes, and also for house and curtain music. The music, performed by a small wind ensemble, used the melody played by the music box in the doll as a theme and successfully captured the mood established by the play.

The director made two other major changes in Knott's script. The first was in the final confrontation scene between Roat and Susy. After Susy had attacked Roat with the knife and they both disappeared into the bedroom, Knott's stage directions for the ensuing action was as follows:

They remain in [the bedroom] for at least ten seconds. Then [Susy] almost falls in through the door, stumbling and dropping the knife. She feels around for it frantically but cannot find it on the floor. She then gives up searching and rushes in the wrong direction, smashing violently into the safe and almost knocking herself out. She recovers and starts trying to find her bearings. She stumbles up the stairs and tries to open the door but the chain prevents her. She then turns and stumbles down the stairs to look for the knife. As she reaches the bottom of the stairs, Roat suddenly lunges violently into the room and falls several feet into the room [sic] grabbing at Susy.<sup>1</sup>

This director felt that all of Susy's frantic actions after she returns from the bedroom totally abrogated the impact of Roat's re-entrance. The UNC-G production was staged as follows: After Susy and Roat tumbled into the bedroom, there was silence for several seconds. Then

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Knott, Wait Until Dark (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1967), p. 75.



a figure came out into the light. The audience saw that it was Susy, and that she apparently was all right. Susy crossed slowly to the end table and stood very still, sobbing softly. Realizing that her ordeal was over, she let the knife slip out of her hands and fall to the floor. After several moments, when the audience had let out a collective sigh of relief, Roat flew through the bedroom door with a scream, grabbing Susy at the ankle. It is this director's feeling that the quiet, finally peaceful mood established by Susy on her re-entrance allowed Roat's leap on to her to be even more of a violent shock.

The other major change involved the final scene of the play. Knott originally called for Gloria to prevent the policeman from helping Susy cross through the debris of the room to Sam, insisting that Susy manage by herself. This director felt that, in light of Gloria's earlier actions, this would read as further cruelty on her part.

In the UNC-G production, it was Sam who insisted that Susy manage without help. To ensure that the audience understood that his actions were motivated by love and not callous disregard, Sam said "I'm holding out for you, sweetheart," a line from one of the games he played with Susy in Act I.

This director feels that, on the whole, he was able to realize his intended interpretation, and that it proved valid and workable.



### Character Development and Interpretation

In guiding character development for The University of North Carolina Summer Repertory production of Wait Until Dark this director relied almost completely on pre-rehearsal discussions of character motivations and careful and complete development of the characters inner monologues. Improvisational exercises and other theatre games proved unnecessary.

#### Susy

This director was most impressed by the facility with which the actress who performed the role of Susy Hendrix was able to assimilate the complex motivational units mandated by her part. She took great pains to find justifications for all of her character's actions and as a result her performance was outstanding.

This actress is a person of great inner strength (one of the reasons she was cast in the part) and this strength was reflected in her determination to master the demands of playing a blind woman. All of the furniture and properties were used beginning with the first rehearsal to allow her to become completely familiar with their feel and location. Later in the rehearsal period scenes involving complex blocking were performed in darkness, furthering her ability to cope with performance without depending on her sight.

Also of value was a field trip to the Governor Morehead School for the Blind, where she and this director were instructed in such activities as use of a cane, navigating unfamiliar rooms, and finding dropped objects.

In this director's opinion, the actress portraying Susy exhibited the elusive combination of sensitivity and fragility, strength of will, and determination that he sought for the role.

#### Roat

Harry Roat was played by an actor who usually played comic character roles. He was cast chiefly on the strength of his performance as Murph, the young tough, in Israel Horowitz's The Indian Wants The Bronx, which this director had an opportunity to witness. The inherent menace was easily brought out in the course of rehearsal. In fact, Roat started out as too frightening and had to be toned down. This actor could incorporate the imagery suggested by this director with a minimum of difficulty. He did have a problem with the scenes requiring Roat to impersonate another character, such as Roat, Senior and Junior, and the Italian waiter on the telephone to Sam. His awkwardness with these characterizations resulted in a near-comic effect, though this proved not to be undesirable as it mitigated his menace in the early scenes.

## Talman

The character of Talman presented something of a problem to this director and was not as fully realized as he had hoped. The demands of double and triple casting required the hiring of an actor, who though talented, would lean towards a presentational rather than representational style. During the early rehearsal period this actor's particular personal acting style continually came across as menace, making him, in fact, a more threatening character than Roat. A great deal of the rehearsal process was spent trying to get him to lighten his characterization so as to make Talman a more sensitive and likeable person. These efforts did succeed to a certain extent--Talman's menace was considerably alleviated. Unfortunately, however, he did not progress enough to show the compassion for Susy that dominates his actions in the last scenes of Act II.

## Carlino

The role of Carlino proved to be an example of the dangers of type casting. His characterization was excellent; Carlino, for all his gruff bravado, was definitely an empathetic character who brought humor and lightness to the early Talman--Carlino--Susy scenes. This actor's problems were of a more mechanical nature. He had a great deal of difficulty with pacing and cue pick-up. Though this problem was not as evident in his scenes with Susy

and Roat, it became painfully apparent in his opening scene of the first act with Talman because the actor playing Talman had a tendency to time lines for their individual dramatic effect, thereby sacrificing the pacing of the scene. This scene did pick up a little as rehearsals progressed, but this director feels that even at its best, the scene dragged unnecessarily.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of working with the actor playing Carlino was his inability to assimilate motivation through the mechanisms of suggested imagery and sub-text that worked so well with the rest of the cast. This director finally had to resort to giving line readings and specific actions, a technique he is usually loathe to use because of the one-sided nature it gives the creative process.

In the future, this director will give greater weight to an actor's ability to "take direction" at auditions, rather than determining suitability mostly by the actor's physical conformance to a character's type.

#### Sam

Sam Hendrix was played by an actor this director had had the opportunity to work with in previous productions. This individual sometimes has trouble projecting warmth and tenderness, even to the extreme of appearing callous. However, in Wait Until Dark, he was able to interpret this quality as determination that Susy would

stand on her own feet without resorting to self-pity. This director feels that this approach was successful and is quite satisfied with the character the actor created.

### Gloria

Originally this director intended to fill the role of Gloria with a young-looking high school student, feeling that the tight rehearsal period and demanding production situation of Summer Repertory Theatre would best be served with an older, more experienced girl. However, at the auditions, this director was most impressed by the ten-year-old actress he selected. She showed an excellent understanding of the material, sufficient vocal variety, and most importantly, an ability to interact with the actress playing Susy.

During rehearsal she had some difficulty with mechanical things: timing blocking precisely with her lines, cue pick-up, and throwing of the utensils in her tantrum scene. These problems were solved through constant repetition and drilling, and she executed her part with an élan that, in this director's opinion, is usually confined to the "professional" children who perform on Broadway.

### Audience Reaction

This director is well pleased with the reception accorded Wait Until Dark. At the performances he witnessed,

the audiences seemed completely involved with the production; they murmured apprehensively at moments of plot revelation, e.g., Gloria's return of the doll, Susy's realization that Mike was involved in the plot, and Roat's reappearance after stabbing Mike; they gasped (and sometimes screamed) when Roat jumped out of the bedroom; the applause at curtain call was warm and enthusiastic, and several times the performers were rewarded with a standing ovation.

This director also noticed a direct relationship between the size of an audience at a given performance and the degree to which their responses were vocalized, i.e., smaller audiences were quieter and less prone to screaming or gasping out loud. It is this director's feeling that this response was not due to alienation of audience empathies, but rather to individual audience members' unwillingness to being conspicuous with their reactions in a small group.

The Greensboro newspapers' theatre critics confirmed this director's perception of audience response. Abe D. Jones, arts editor for the Greensboro Record, wrote in a review of Wait Until Dark:

Talk about thrillers!

If the Summer Repertory Theatre at UNC-G offered to give free tickets to the next show to everyone who doesn't bite a fingernail or jump during "Wait Until Dark" the troupe wouldn't lose a thing . . . . The only



criticism of "Wait Until Dark" as an opener for the summer season is--How will the Summer Rep group top it?<sup>2</sup>

Joe Knox, theatre critic for the Greensboro Record, wrote:

[Wait Until Dark] was an unqualified success, a chilling story of mystery, intrigue and violence with a steady build-up of suspense that reaches a fine level of scream-shattering terror by the final curtain.

It was a masterpiece of theatre. Director Paul Tauger has the rare touch of an Alfred Hitchcock.<sup>3</sup>

#### Personal Observations

This director's opinion is that the efforts of the fine production staff for Wait Until Dark were a major factor contributing to the success of the production. The set designer, lighting designer, and costume designer were constant reservoirs of ideas and support. The Summer Repertory producing situation mandates very stringent restrictions on production, particularly in the areas of budget, feasibility of set changeover from night to night, and adaptability of lighting for three different productions. In spite of the elaborate nature of the realistic interior set, the many fully-functional set pieces and props, and the difficult lighting (especially for the

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<sup>2</sup>Abe D. Jones, Jr., "'Wait Until Dark' Has High Suspense," Greensboro Record, 9 June 1977, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Joe Knox, "Fine Acting Makes Blind Fear Visible in 'Wait Until Dark,'" Greensboro Daily News, 8 June 1977, p. 17.



final scenes), this director has virtually no criticisms of the designs, either in concept or execution. In addition, he found the designer-director collaboration for Wait Until Dark to be one of the most pleasant, positive, problem-free ones in his experience.

This director feels that Wait Until Dark was a successful production in that he was able to fully realize his interpretation, successfully effect actor-director relationships, and achieve a production that audiences found to be relevant and entertaining.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDICES

# The Greensboro Record

Greensboro, N.C., Thursday, June 9, 1977

## 'Wait Until Dark' has high suspense

BY ABE D. JONES JR.  
Record Arts Editor

Talk about thrillers!

If the Summer Repertory Theatre at UNC-G offered to give free tickets to the next show to everyone who doesn't bite a fingernail or jump during "Wait Until Dark," the troupe wouldn't lose a thing.

They'd probably come out ahead if offered passes to anyone who doesn't jump more than three times.

It's that kind of play which opened last night. The action builds as three con men close in on a blind woman, left alone in her apartment in New York. She's the unwitting custodian of a doll loaded with heroin and the three want it — at any cost.

As the blind housewife, Barbara Blackledge gives an outstanding performance, right in every detail. And as Harry Roat, the psychopath who enjoys his work of terror and crime, Ed Simpson is the kind of man you'd like to bash across the nose.

"Wait Until Dark" is the first in the UNC-G Summer Repertory Theatre offerings. It plays again tonight, then is repeated on June 14, 18, 21, 24 and 27. In between, there will be "Gypsy" opening Friday night, and "The Pirates of Penzance," opening Monday night. All shows



are at 8:15 in the handsome Taylor Theatre on UNC-G's campus.

Barbara Blackledge's performance in the opener was a perfect reading of the part, one made more difficult by the need for a sighted person to learn to move and think like a blind person. She avoided objects at the right times, tripped when they'd been moved, kept her head up and turned toward speakers or the sound of action at just the right moment.

As Gloria, the little girl who was supposed to help out and finally did, Janene Swift was appropriately horrible — when she was supposed to be — and mischievously helpful later.

Tom McClary was slick and ingratiating as the charmer among the con men, while Joel Feldman — who looks something like Peter Falk — was just right as a self-confessed first-grade dropout who masquerades as a policeman. All in all, the con men, led by the villainous Ed Simpson as Roat, was the kind of group to give one nightmares.

Paul Tauger's direction kept things moving at a suspenseful pace, while Robert Ballard's scenery lived up to UNC-G's reputation for outstanding stage decor. You could move in and live in his apartment set with only a little furniture shifting here and there to suit your own taste.

There is even original music, appropriately sinister, by Mahlon Peterson, and Roger Foster's lighting stresses the dark — and the light — in just the right fashion.

When the lights are out, and the blind and the sighted get on more even terms, those nail-bitings and seat-jumpings really start in the audience.

The only possible criticism of "Wait Until Dark" as an opener for the summer season is — How will the Summer rep group top it?

# GREENSBORO DAILY NEWS

Since July 18, 1969

GREENSBORO, N.C. WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1977

## *Fine Acting Makes Blind Fear Visible In 'Wait Until Dark'*

BY JOE KNOX  
Daily News Staff Writer

"Wait Until Dark" by Frederick Knott opened Wednesday night in the theater of Taylor Building as the first of the three offerings this month by UNC-G Summer Repertory Theatre, 1977.

It was an unqualified success, a chilling story of mystery, intrigue and violence with a steady build-up of suspense that reaches a fine level of scream-shattering terror by the final curtain.

It was a masterpiece of theater. Director Paul Tauger has the rare touch of an Alfred Hitchcock.

From the first scene, in which you are introduced to Susy Hendrix, attractive, capable, newly married, blind, the action is fast-moving and totally absorbing.

By chance, while she is alone, the blind woman is caught up in the scheme of three criminals, one of them a ruthless killer, to recover a doll they believe her to have hidden in her Greenwich Village basement apartment. The doll, stuffed with narcotics, had been innocently brought into the country from Canada by her husband.

The plot the three men concoct to get Susy to give them the doll, how this extremely sensitive blind woman gradually senses increasing danger, and how she

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### A Review

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meets it with clever devices is the meat of the story, and it is very meaty.

Barbara Blackledge did a marvelous job as Susy. She was quite as convincing as if she had really been blind. In the final scene when danger is acute, her performance was brilliant.

The sheer terror she and her antagonist exuded over the footlights was really something to remember.

Tom McClary, whom we have admired in other UNC-G Theatre shows, was cast as Mike, an ex-convict with polished manners who tries to con Susy into giving up the doll. He seemed a bit unsure of himself in the first few moments, but then carried off the role with flair and confidence, a fine job.

Other leading male roles were played expertly by Joel Feldman and Ed Simpson.

Janene Swift was cast as Gloria, the little girl upstairs who is in and out of the apartment as the plot thickens. She was a delight and performed like a pro.

Leif C. Crowe was Sam, Susy's husband, and Douglas W. Cook and David Fitzsimmons appeared briefly as policemen.

The set, designed by Robert Ballard, was a fine reproduction of an efficiency apartment in Greenwich Village, and all-important lighting, by Roger Foster, was excellent.

"Wait Until Dark" will be presented again tonight, with the absolutely noiseless curtain going up at 8:15 p.m.