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NOTORIOUS HARIK WILL KILL THE POPE

3 act play by Ronald Tavel

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Characters:

A PILGRIM, TURHAN BEY

THE GYPSY

JOHN P

JOHN OC

VINNIE CANTROCELLI

DOCTOR CHICAGO

CHUCK SCAREBOROUGH

THE HULK

SAM THE BELLHOP

CUE QUEEN

FILM DIRECTOR

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

STEPHEN CRANE

PROTEST MARCHERS

MUSICIANS

LANA TURNER

EBRIETY MURPHY

NANNY

ACQUANETTA

OLD HISPANIC WOMAN

PRE-SET:

The set for Act I should serve all 4 scenes in the Act, and require the fewest prop changes possible. Scene 1 represents a fortune-teller's storefront on the Lower East Side and six actors are pre-set in it. A small area at stage right and against the wing is the Outer Office at Ebriety Acres (Sc. 3). It has a large desk and a chair pulled up to it. On the desk are a number of items that would be found there in the morning: an L.A. Times, a thermos of steaming coffee, a cup. At stage left and against the wing is a men's room, or large bathroom *with windows* (Sc. 2, 3). It has a door; large mirrors optional. At stage center and against the drop is a framed and elevated area defined in Sc. 3 as a "life-sized TV set." In it a devan, cushions, and various pieces that suggest a very expensive hotel room or apartment on the Riviera. Downstage of the TV screen and slightly to the right or left of it (off-center at any rate) is a chaise longue which faces the screen. Beside it a small table with a can of Crisco on it. The center pieces represent a room at *2 blocks* Ebriety Acres. There is a door to this room, either to the left or right of the TV screen. Somewhere in the center area is a high stool.

PRE-SET ACTORS:

The actors who are pre-set give the impression of being wooden or plaster figures and, if possible, have arms and bodies that emerge out of the wood, wax, or plaster from which they are molded. That is, they give the impression of not being fully formed out of the substance from which they are carved, chipped or molded.

DOCTOR CHICAGO in a white frock and very thick horn-rimmed glasses is seated at the desk in the Outer Office, reading the paper. JOHN P, a heavy-set elderly man, and JOHN OC, a tall, slender elderly man, both in undershirts and suspenders, are frozen in the act of shaving themselves in the men's room. They stand back-to-back, apparently at opposing mirrors. LANA TURNER, in evening wear and *a sweater* jewelry, is semi-recumbent on the devan. A teenager in ordinary clothes, VINNIE CANTROCELLI, is stretched out on the chaise longue facing her. His hand is frozen in the act of dipping its middle finger in the Crisco can. A GYPSY, dressed as one might be who owned a storefront on the LES, is seated in profile on the stool.

SCENE 1.

(A PILGRIM; GYPSY EAST of A.

Pre-Set: DOCTOR CHICAGO; JOHN P; JOHN OC; LANA TURNER;
VINNIE CANTROCELLI)

(The lights go to dark on the Pre-Set and when they come back, a tall, slender PILGRIM is standing far downstage, perfectly still, facing the Pre-Set, his face invisible to the audience. He wears a long, flowing cape and a wide brimmed hat pulled low on his brow. The lights are dim, throwing ominous shadows here and there, and partially obscuring the faces of the figures. After some moments, the PILGRIM walks slowly up, and then amongst the various frozen figures, examining them, but always from a careful distance. At one point, as he passes the GYPSY on the stool, the GYPSY's long fingers come alive and tap him on the back of the shoulder. The PILGRIM, whose face remains in shadows through most of the scene, turns quickly about, quite startled that anything in the store should be alive. His hand raised in fear, he exclaims:-)

PILGRIM: Why! I --

GYPSY: (Placing a finger in front of his lips) No. First, five bucks...
(the PILGRIM recovers, takes out the money, and puts it in the extended palm)
Thank you. I'm called the Gypsy East of A. Strange? Well, everything is strange until it's explained to you. I live in, and operate out of, this small storefront here in Alphabet City, it's between A and B, no? so there's how come they call me the Gypsy East of A.
(indicating the other ACTORS)
And these? well... Some gypsies tell fortunes in their storefronts, I offer complete personas. And they have to do with that.

PILGRIM: Have you one yourself? A persona, I mean. The whole alphabet lies east of A.

GYPSY: True. You're fast. Therefore, listen carefully: My tribe is Turkish and traces itself back to Constantinople in the 15th Century, and when I

was a kid I traveled with them all over the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean. Then when I was 13 I started smoking a pipe, and my family objected so violently to that that I ran away, all the way to Tibet, and never came back. And since then I've seen most of Asia, Africa, and America including a lot of L.A. Now, the identity I'm going to offer you will get involved with a bunch of people you know, or ought to know, like Lana Turner here, and John J. O'Conner, but it includes a Turk who started smoking a pipe when he was 13 and ran away to Tibet and injured his heart high up there in the Himalayas; and he saw most of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America including a lot of L.A. and injured his heart there, also. His name is Turhan Selahettin Schultavy Bey and if you don't remember Turhan Bey your mother does, cause when he looked into a lens and made love to his leading ladies, her pulse stopped. Turhan Bey was Hollywood's only Turkish matinee idol of millions, they called him the New Valentino, and in those days he dated Lana Turner. -You see, real stars are better than old gods, cause they're highly accessible models whose flickering celluloid whisks up our tabulae rasae as easily as airplane engines do unwary airport flocks. And the gods are altogether too remote, no, for pilgrims who need some mirror in which to admire themselves and at the same time have dictated how to act, how to speak, and make love and politics? -Those days being the 40s and back then in L.A.'s where I got, and you will get, mixed up with those two -- I was shooting serials then on the old RKO soundstage with Acquanetta and the jungle crowd, nice people, and my screen name then was Gypsy Jack -- But, whoa! I'm getting way ahead of myself... Because the destiny for you, young Pilgrim, the one you're paying for, actually begins in the future - in August of the year 2000 to be factual, that's a little more than 14 years from now, though before you turn around that fateful summer of presidential primaries'll be on us. Now, naturally, some things will be different then, oh, they'll have life-sized TVs and flat, transparent pills which look like harmless contact lenses but can turn water into a kind of hallucinatory hundred and twenty proof watka - "turn-back-the-old-wheels-of-time watka" they'll call it - but mostly people and politics will be the

same then as they are today. And we'll still be finding our roles in received images, in Lana Turners and Turhan Beys if you will, as Lana Turner found hers in Madame X, collector of men and killer of her men, and Turhan Bey settled for his in Ackbah Harik, art collector and lady killer, and notorious killer of the -- But there I go racing ahead of you again and making everything strange because I'm not explaining it one heartbreak at a time. So then, to begin again, in the future now, the persona that you'll want starts to take shape because two elderly gentlemen, they're both 85, will be getting dressed in a locker room with opposing mirrors, or men's toilet, actually, it is, if truth be known... or needed....

SCENE 2.

(The GYPSY; A PILGRIM; JOHN P; JOHN OC.

Pre-Set: DOCTOR CHICAGO; LANA TURNER; VINNIE CANTROCELLI)

(The GYPSY touches JOHN P and JOHN OC with his long and elegantly magical fingers, and the two elderly gentlemen begin to stir, come alive, and speak. As they speak, the GYPSY and the PILGRIM move to one side, where they stand together and carefully watch this scene taking place in the men's room. JOHN P and JOHN OC are shaving in their undershirts, suspenders, and trousers, standing back to back as if at opposing mirrors. JOHN P has a slight Slavic accent; he is heavy-set. JOHN OC is tall, slender, and at times a shade high-strung.)

JOHN P: Have you enough room there, John?

JOHN OC: It's tight, all right. So gross of them not to provide us with a larger john, John. Did much better for myself on Fifth Avenue.

JOHN P: Well, such austerity is new to us. But, hopefully, not for long, eh?

JOHN OC: Yes, the post is dressed down to appear, rather shrewdly I suppose, less attractive than the one you're giving up. John, now that we're alone --

JOHN P: I wager you thought this day would never come. Long way to L.A. from the boot, isn't it, John?

JOHN OC: John, I should like to ask you --

JOHN P: You've a tad extra shaving cream, please?

JOHN OC: (Holding the can at arm's length, reading the macho designer-label) Just Denim. "For the man who doesn't have to try too hard."

JOHN P: (Plucking it from JOHN OC's grasp) Perfect -- cause I certainly didn't have to try too hard.

JOHN OC: (Resuming his shaving) No, John, I didn't think this day would ever come. Sixteen years at our age is an awesome time. Awesome time for any

program to hatch, its dimensions notwithstanding.

- JOHN P: Ah-ha! - so you were dubious back in '84! And I was correct back then inferring a failure of foresight on your part. -What do you doughboys call it: "Weak knees"?
- JOHN OC: Let's say the project appeared problematic to me.
- JOHN P: Because you believed with my having come, given my Slavic background, so upstart far to that point, that I was finding the sky my limit!
- JOHN OC: Your limit? I believed the sky then, as I do now, your jurisdiction. But my question is --
- JOHN P: I need a pair of those tiny nail-trimmer jobs. Grey coming in around these sideburns.
- JOHN OC: (Giving a pair to JOHN P) Here, use them myself.
- JOHN P: On what - your pompadour? Bit too grand to keep after with a pair of nail-clippers, isn't it?
- JOHN OC: Look, John, this pompadour gets uppity because I don't always have the leizure to look after its elevations what with trying to see yours through.
- JOHN P: My project is embrasive. But nothing to go Elvis over: I have every confidence it will succeed. It has so far.
- JOHN OC: But just-just. There were days, primary days, when your unbudgeable abortion and rearmament platforms gained us votes by barely a hair.
- JOHN P: Thank you for the clippers. Speaking of hair, I still think Punk's a little extreme --
- JOHN OC: Now, John, I've other things to --
- JOHN P: Got a comb on you?
- JOHN OC: Isn't a convincing double more to the point?
- JOHN P: A double? What for? John, what is there to possibly get upset over? This should be the proudest day of our lives - so far.
- JOHN OC: What's to get upset over?! How about the latest

pacifist Conference of Catlick Bishops? -Or a Turk of some sort!! Have you forgotten the Turks - the Young Turks?!

JOHN P: Now, now, those times are passed. Have some faith in mankind, will you? -May I have my bullet-proof vest over there? Listen, John, the United Estates are light-years ahead in the arms race, every abortion clinic in the land's been razed to the ground, Central America's a bombed-out peaceful desert, and -- oh, that look on your nose - a - face is going to ruin my victory!
(breaking into wild laughter)

JOHN OC: I -- are you guffawing so raucously at my nose?!

JOHN P: Why, John, how misinterpretive! -At my vest! Look, it's almost too small for me now, see, you are tickling my tummy attempting to fasten it. That means I gained weight during this primary. And that's cause I was as assured of my victory as of my two feet -- which I have planted firmly on Satan's head --
(laughing wildly again at his own statement)
-so as to hold him down, being my meaning...

JOHN OC: I wish you'd quit that laughing.

JOHN P: (Switching to a breathy coo) Coooo. Coooooooooooo.
-There, is that better?!
(crossing to JOHN OC who sits on the window ledge in a huff; trying to placate him)
John, I needed a real sharp Republican when I anointed you Archbitchop of New York, one with his nose pressed against the window of the White House, and yours was so engaged, I spotted that at once - oh yes, you would be my proper liaison par excellence in that job - and you have been, you've been very good at that indeed.

JOHN OC: Big deal! the Archbitchop of New York. And since then Cardinal. And since then I've made so many enemies, or near-enemies, over the Cuomos, homos, Ferraros et al.

JOHN P: What a negative megaphysics! Why, you've bravely weathered every blizzard, brought each bark back through narrows conjested with piratical fleets of fakers, fetus-snuffers, fairies, fascists, Fidelistas, and fools.

- JOHN OC: This is not the time for alliteration. I don't think this bullet-proof vest is enough.
- JOHN P: So, that Hulk humungous of Republican bodyguards.
- JOHN OC: They can be bought! They're only Hulks.
- JOHN P: And God -- has He no part in this?
- JOHN OC: Oh, please, John, not now. Who knows what His part is -- or parts are, for that matter. These days, how many Cardinals even think He's a She?
- JOHN P: Now is not the time for Doctrine, either. My alb.
- JOHN OC: Here you go, pressed just this morning.
- JOHN P: My, my, I'd not remembered how fine your gown was.
- JOHN OC: But with the pompadour 'n all, you need something.
- JOHN P: John, you weren't this jittery when I made you Cardinal. So why should turning me into the Republican Party nominee, a mere layman --
- JOHN OC: No, but I was jittery. Had I bent forward a jot farther to kiss your ring that blessed day, my Red Hat would have dropped right in your lap!
(JOHN P bursts into joyous laughter again)
Now what?
- JOHN P: (Laughing) Red Hat... red... red - the Reds...
- JOHN OC: (Dead-pan) Our Lord is softening you upstairs.
- JOHN P: But it just occurred to me - about Americans - the Reds and you Americans - how, Heavens! for almost the entire 20th Century you pegged the Reds as the ideational threat to your immoral way of life! That it was they who were going to invade and alter this Reformation nation!
- JOHN OC: Them and the fascists. But it was us, huh -- that's what tickles you? Well, you've no call to see it in the light of such one-upmanship. I mean, we are doing this to benefit America.
- JOHN P: Spare me your gloss on history, John. Naturally it's not one-upmanship. But to the average Yank Protestant it may so seem. After all, up to now

they were all by and large contentedly en route to Hell.

JOHN OC: And was it really almost fortuitous, some simple statistic that showed you the way to block that passage?

JOHN P: It was, truly. That's not idle hearsay.
(reaching for his beanie)
Twenty years ago your immigration department claimed that the U.S. would be more than 50% hispanic by the turn of the century. Instantly I saw a Holy Clipper which could save every Yank soul from sea to shiny sea sail across my vision.

JOHN OC: (Seeing it, enthralled) How vision-ary! -And you had nothing to do but wait...

JOHN P: Well, no, your well-proven political skills were required for that new naturalization law...

JOHN OC: But basically it was just a matter of time...

JOHN P: letting a decade or two pass...

JOHN OC: doing a little laid-back electioneering, just a little from time to time...

JOHN P: in a gentle and very dignified manner, of course...

JOHN OC: and letting me nominate you...

JOHN P: for presidential candidate, and then waiting till the turn of the century...

JOHN OC: and you were a shoe-in. I mean, I always knew we Americans voted in group-blocks on the basis of religion, but I'd never have guessed so absolutely.

JOHN P: Matter of faith, John, matter of faith in God.

JOHN OC: Yes, Papa. Your cloak?

JOHN P: (As JOHN OC helps him into it) And don't forget The Bible. I thought it would be a nice touch, accepting the nomination with my personal Bible in hand.

(suddenly, very soft and gentle:)
John, what is your question?

JOHN OC: Oh, my question... I almost forgot. -Um - a - acknowledging as Your Grace does my invaluable service, could you see me, your White House guarantor, as your Papal replacement? I mean, now that the Seat's so soon to be vacant?

JOHN P: (Gently) That should go without asking, John. Why else did I elevate you to Cardinal but to prepare the way?... However, what would you think of my choosing you as running-mate - to run on my ticket as vice-president, instead?

JOHN OC: Much. I'd think much of that... But let me think much on that.

JOHN P: Feel better?

JOHN OC: Much.

JOHN P: (Quietly) Then finish dressing. You look... murderous.
(going to the door while JOHN OC dresses):
Well, now! I can hear the Republicans shouting outside.

JOHN OC: In Spanish?

JOHN P: Mostly.
(opening the door and, quite unsuspecting, getting hit with a mass of rising balloons)
Oh, my! So adult.

JOHN OC: I'm ready. How do I look?

JOHN P: Like Elvis. John, what's the date?

JOHN OC: August 5, 2000.

JOHN P: Then we're eight months into a new millennium. And perfectly apropos, no? Because with you beside me in Washington, t'will verily be The Millennium of Our Lord come at last. -John, take my hand, will you?
(JOHN OC crosses to him, takes his hand)
And let us go out together.

(They exit waving, a slow, dignified gesture - and at a deliberate pace to cries of "Viva! Viva El Presidente! Presidente Juan Paolo!")

SCENE 3.

(A PILGRIM, and as TURHAN BEY; The GYPSY; LANA TURNER; VINNIE CANTROCELLI; EBRIETY MURPHY; NANNY; DOCTOR CHICAGO; CHUCK SCAREBOROUGH; JOHN P; JOHN OC; OLD HISPANIC LADY; ACQUANETTA)

(The lights re-focus on the GYPSY, puffing on his pipe, and the PILGRIM, deep in thought, who are contemplating the scene that they have just witnessed.)

PILGRIM: Well, well, well -- lot can go down in a men's room, can't it?

GYPSY: 'Nough to clog all its pipes, if the attendant's not quick with the Drano.

PILGRIM: And where do I come in?

GYPSY: Right here - in another part of L.A., Pasadena to be exact - at an institution called Ebriety Acres, a de-tox and rehab farm for well-healed alxies, named for its founder, Ebriety Murphy, illusionist --

PILGRIM: Then you feel reincarnation is an illusion, or an illusionist's stock in trade.

GYPSY: Not precisely, Pilgrim, not exactly. What do you feel?

PILGRIM: Don't know that I care, one way or the other.

GYPSY: All right. For now. Anyhow, let's get on: At Ebriety Acres, and situated not very far from where I first saw him in my mind -- behind the dark barn of Eternity, dicking off -- we'll discover Little Vinnie Cantrocelli, an irresolute teenager, and the decadent, alcoholic heir to the fabulous Cantrocelli Confection fortune - for his family will have amassed an obscene fortune by being the manufacturers of the celebrated Cantrocelli Cannoli - the cannoli with an aphrodisiac effect, quote, unquote. And on August 5, 2000, their teenage scion will be taping a rerun of "A Night in Nice" off his life-

sized TV. "A Night in Nice" starred Lana Turner as Joy and Turhan Bey as Ackbah Harik. -Will you go in?

PILGRIM: May I have the pipe?

GYPSY: Of course, a necessity.

(The PILGRIM removes his hat and cloak, gives them to the GYPSY, and takes the pipe. His long, dark hair is slicked back and he is wearing a brown blazer and tan, pleated 40s slacks. Then, as TURHAN BEY, the PILGRIM steps up into the TV screen. LANA TURNER and VINNIE instantly come alive.)

LANA: (Irked) Out collecting Picassoes - or women?

TURHAN: It was only a Degas, and a couple of Monets.

LANA: Ellen Degas, and Cecily and Rita Monet?

TURHAN: Must I forever endure your ill-founded jealousies?

VINNIE: Oh, boy, Turhan Bey!

LANA: Then why so late?

TURHAN: Oh, Joy, you know I have business --

LANA: I know nothing of the sort! - except that even on the Riviera you keep me at bay.

VINNIE: Or under Bey.

LANA: But you know how much I crave your flesh, Ackbah! Because I am American: I consume, therefore I am.

TURHAN: But there was a murder in the --

VINNIE: Oh, boy, a murder!

LANA: Oh, I don't care about murders!

VINNIE: I do.

LANA: I only know that I've spent a thousand nights all by myself. -Harik, why are you so cold?

TURHAN: I'm not cold.

VINNIE: Neither am I, she must be nuts.

LANA: Ackbah Harik! how can you say that you are not cold? Evening after sunset evening, in the still and stifling Riviera air of Nice, I have made humiliating overtures, only to be repulsed for what reason search me.

TURHAN: But you are a married woman and your husband is the foremost torpedo in the Kosher Nostra.

LANA: My husband is the oldest torpedo in the Kosher Nostra. Oh, Harik, am I then so hideous to you?

TURHAN: (Taking LANA in his arms) Your eyes are like water-lilies in the cool pools of the Costa del Sol. Your skin is as warm and languid as the winds of the Sirocco. When I hold you in my arms I feel the fever of my Turkish race swelling in my veins and I ken for certes I was born to breathe my violent last in the consummation of the era...

VINNIE: Harik's hot tonight!

LANA: Then keep me in your arms, smother me in your huge, heaving chest, Harik!

VINNIE: Why don't I meet women like that?

TURHAN: (Turning off) But the murder in the Pope's summer palace, it looks like the work of your better half.

LANA: (Slamming TURHAN on the head with two globular bottles) That for my better half, you frozen fish!

TURHAN: (Collapsing) Oooooooooo.....

LANA: Harik, are ya hurt? - oh, speak to me, speak to me!

(The telephone rings. VINNIE drops his Crisco can, lowers the volume with his remote, and goes to answer it.)

VINNIE: Someone wants to speak to me. Guy can't get off on a steamy sequence 'fore some jerk starts -- (picking up)
Yeah?

(Lights come up in the Outer Office right, from where tough, matronly EBRIETY MURPHY is calling. Standing next to her is NANNY, middle-aged and timid looking in futuristic L.A. wear. Her hat, in particular, is astounding.)

EBRIETY: Vincent Cantrocelli?

VINNIE: No, the Count of Mounting Crisco, actually.

EBRIETY: Don't get smart. Yer Nanny's out here. Wanna see her?

VINNIE: (Happy) Oh, great, Nanny! She bring anything?

EBRIETY: Looks like a box a Cantrocelli Cannolies - "The cannoli with the aphrodisiac ef--"

VINNIE: Yeah, yeah, save it for the libidinally handicapped. O.K., show her in.
(hanging up)
Cantrocelli Cannolies, jist what I need couped up here. I told Nanny a hundred times they only aggravate incarceration.

(NANNY, flushed and excited, comes through the door to the Rehab room, followed by EBRIETY carrying a folding screen.)

NANNY: (Rushing to VINNIE) Oh, my baby! my poor baby! you look wan and wasted, how are you?!

VINNIE: Wan and wasted.

NANNY: My gracious God, my good God, you don't eat!

EBRIETY: (Setting up the folding screen) Drop it, Madam. Over here! You know the rules: no grifter's allowed a interview the inmates 'n skip the frisk.

NANNY: Oh, my God, they call them inmates! But you can see what I have, just a box of cannolies, premium Cantrocelli, the cannoli with the aphro--

EBRIETY: Save it, sister, I can't see what's under yer fashion. Who knows but you ain't got a half dozen bottles a booze stacked up yer bra.

NANNY: Oh, none, none at all, these're me.

VINNIE: (Taking the box) She'll get rough, Nanny, twice-born Ebriety Murphy gets off on that, I wouldn't provoke her.

EBRIETY: He's right. You bitches come in here got the cherce a shedding yer duds toute suite, or me shredding yer duds even touter suite, sweetheart!

NANNY: (Being yanked behind the screen) Animal!

(The second she's behind the screen, NANNY's clothes come flying over it, some of them slung on the screen's top, others flung straight out and landing in VINNIE's face as he clicks up the TV volume. As in old films, we see NANNY's head and shoulders above the dressing screen as she talks. On the TV, LANA is administering to the prone TURHAN: her doorbell rings twice, she goes to the door, opens it and admits ACQUANETTA, Hollywood's dark-skinned Jungle Woman. ACQUANETTA wears a suit; her black hair hangs to her waist.)

VINNIE: Will you two pipe down, I'm tryin-a watch a pic.

LANA: Poor Harik! -Heavens, someone's at the door!...

ACQUA: Oh, Miss Joy, me hate to disturb you --

LANA: Then why are ya?

ACQUA: Cause you only person in Nice can help. Somebody bad using me for experiments - in reincarnation.

LANA: Oh, you poor -- well -- whoever you actually are before the experiments.

ACQUA: They capture me in Rwanda, bring me here to civilization on the Riviera and start experiment.

LANA: Come in and sit down.

NANNY: (Noticing the TV) Say, that's Acquanetta, the old-time ape girl... whatcha watchin', Vinnie?

EBRIETY: O.K., Nanny, yer clean - 'cept for this curious bank note. You kin get dressed. 'N while ya are--

VINNIE: "A Night in Nice."

EBRIETY: (Grabbing the box from VINNIE) I'll jist examine the box ya brung a quote cannolies unquote. Might have dessert of a altogether other sort in it...

NANNY: (Ragged) You mad minx of multiple misgivings! -"A Night in Nice"? - that's with Lana Turner, no? 'N Turhan Bey's in that, ain't he?

VINNIE: Check.

EBRIETY: (Hiding the note) I'll jist check this thoroughly,

see if there's a false bottom or somethin'.

VINNIE: Lana's bottom ain't false, tell ya that much. Course, that top could be...

ACQUA: Oh, who this man here? I not see him 'fore.

LANA: (Faking nonchalant) Oh, no one.

ACQUA: (Her toe nudging TURHAN) He just rug on floor, maybe big bear really, soon change back?

LANA: Um, yeah - that's it - sure.

NANNY: (Slowly) You know, I remember that pic...

ACQUA: Or maybe change to something else, yes? - way different? Have some soul nobody know what?

NANNY: (All in one breath) That's a old pic, "A Night in --," it's real famous, only we usedta call it "The Slut in a Rut" counta Lana Turner can't get Turhan Bey cause she's awready married to a mad mobster and Turhan Bey's on a Papal murder case which I think Lana's husband turned Acquanetta into a ape to do so's he's after Turhan Bey who suspects him and vice versa a course while Lana's after Turhan cause before she really fell for him in a big way she went a bet with the Kosher Nostra in Monte Carlo says she could seduce Bey before the end of her posh two-week stay on the Costa 'n she don't have the half million or somethin' to square if she loses 'n a course can't ask her husband for it so's the mob's makin' cement shoes for her cause that murder that young Turhan's on's actually a warning I remember now of what's in store for her she don't come across or he don't come period so's "The Slut's in a Rut's" puttin' it mildly.

EBRIETY: (Totally involved) Oh, yeah, so what happens? -Turn that sound down, shrimp!

NANNY: (As VINNIE obeys, again in one breath) Well, she gets depressed like Lana does in all her flickers 'n when the walls start closin' in on her, her swank neat world collapsin' which's what she's famous for, Lana makes whatcha'd call a lifer's choice 'n runs away to Africa with Acquanetta her girl friend, goes right down from the Riviera to

Rwanda, loses her mind, becomes a pocketbook-swinging in the jungle there 'n finally at the end the pig-knees eat her.

EBRIETY: (Thoughtful) Life's tough.

VINNIE: (Angry) You bitches are ruinin' the flic for me!

EBRIETY: (To NANNY) You finished here, so I can take the screen now? You got 7½ minutes, (to VINNIE) and you got --

VINNIE: 7½ inches.

EBRIETY: Gasbag! Gumbo gums!

VINNIE: The better to nibble on yer pair, you --

EBRIETY: (Snatching his Crisco can) You -- and what you prefer to call your "dip," you drip in a dip, you'll pay for this 'n a hundred other foulmouth infractions of decorum. I'm a lady!

VINNIE: Well, lady, long as it ain't more'n the keep per week ya soak me for I kin make it. 'N you, too.

EBRIETY: (Folding the dressing screen) Yeah?

VINNIE: 'N you, too.

EBRIETY: I heard you!

VINNIE: Ya did, huh? So then what time ya get outta here?

EBRIETY: I get out at 5:00:- but when you get out I wouldn't put no more scratch on than you're willin' to part withal, sonny!

VINNIE: Now, now, my little portion of refried beans...

EBRIETY: Beans, huh? Then I'll bend over, Cantrocelli, 'n blow ya right back to the 40s where yer head's still at. -'N I'm hip to you, too, Ms Bank Note!

(EBRIETY exits in a huff. NANNY, re-dressed, looks a mess.)

NANNY: What dumb, dopey double talk. She gone?

VINNIE: Wait a minute.
(hanging a huge blow-up of Turhan Bey on the door)

Someone carved peek holes in the door.

NANNY: Coulda jista bin some celibate cellmate, long ago.

VINNIE: Coulda. But right now it serves the espionage purposes of that amazing Amazon all too well. Ya know, if Ebriety weren't a schizoid whose several selves form such a mutual admiration society, I could go for her in a big --

NANNY: Don't dream, Vinnie. I told you before, you are a dreamer eighty-sixed from life.

VINNIE: Thought I was jist a awkward irresolute teenager.

NANNY: Don't understate. Your dreams have turned you out of the tavern of life and turned your tender-hearted Nanny into a turn of the century bootleg.

VINNIE: So don't stall then, where is it? I'm thirsty.

NANNY: (Extracting her contact lenses) You'll never guess. These contact lenses that I picked up fer a C down at Gypsy East of A's ain't no mere see-thru mirrors, kiddo.

VINNIE: What in the far-fetched world --

NANNY: Quick, gimme that pitcher of water over there.

VINNIE: (Rushing to NANNY with the water) And then?

NANNY: (Dropping the lenses into the pitcher) Hold yer horses... Wait five seconds, then taste this!

VINNIE: (Tasting) Watka -- a hundred 'n twenty proof!

(VINNIE gulps down an entire glassful. Lights blitz wildly and a tremendous boom rattles the stage, throwing VINNIE for a loop. A drop eliminates the TV film: in its place we see CHUCK SCAREBOROUGH, TV Anchorman. Seated behind him are JOHN P, JOHN OC, and A HULK BODYGUARD wearing a suit.)

NANNY: Is your Nanny good to you or is she good to you?!

VINNIE: You even look good to me!

NANNY: Well, the French say, "Avec du vin, pas si laid."

VINNIE: The vin takes the lead outta the flicker, too!

NANNY: My poor rich baby, so wealthy 'n all he's got to

INSERT for Page 3-9

NANNY: (Hitting the remote) Looks like Chuck Scarebora with a news up-date. -Let's listena the peroxide.

GYPSY: (Seated beside VINNIE, apparently invisible to everyone except VINNIE) Yes, listen to him, boy, for I have invented you to help put an unmanageable, exotic projection of myself into working order. A young pilgrim, Vinnie, with half his mind his own, - and murder very far from it. So hook in here, boy: and be radical.

show fer it's an old TV. That's why I figure the least I can do is allow him some liquor.

- VINNIE: (Crooked) Allow him to liquor where? Nanny, you leaped out 'n inta yer duds like lightin', you a quick-change artist, ain'tcha? Never knew that. There's fungus among-us. But I will remember you in my will, Nanny, which at this stink-rate won't take long to effectuate and's most probably the real reason why you figger the way you do 'bout liquor...
- NANNY: (Disturbed) Say, that don't look like the pic.
- VINNIE: And I thought it was jist the watka...
- NANNY: (Hitting the remote) Looks like Chuck Scarebora with a news up-date. -Let's listena the peroxide.
- CHUCK: Chuck Scareborough here at the Hollywood Bowl, interrupting your local programming for live-ly coverage of the Republican National Convention. Seated behind me, His Holiness, who has just won the nomination for presidential candidate by a narrow 51% of the delegates --
- HULK: (Meaning, "Cut it short") Ah-hem!
- CHUCK: (Slightly frightened) Damas y Hombres, mira la por donde vene La Papa Juan Paolo to make his acceptance speech, reports have it will be short.
- JOHN P: (Coming forward with the fiercely watchful HULK a step ahead of him; balloons rise about him, getting in his way) I offer you, considering that I was formerly the ultimate authority on Western religion, a quick and automatic identity -- after all, most men are too lazy-minded and slow of step to plod through the quicksand of postmodern contradictions to find an authentic one. And I promise you a refreshing and healthy disrespect for facts, a strong rearmament program to replace my predecessor's weak anti-poverty one, and an end to sex...
(taking a drink of water)
of the extra-marital kind, a suppression of condoms, queers, cancer clinics, abortion distortion and masturbation. In place of the pointless above, I will institutionalize ignorance, atomic testing, environmental

pollution and over-population -- all of which shall hurry the Armageddon and universal death, the better for us all to get to Heaven more quickly. I promise you Heaven. Amen and I thank y---

HISPANIC: Miraculo! Miraculo!!!

(An OLD HISPANIC WOMAN attempts to fall upon JOHN P in a religious ecstasy. The HULK beats her mercilessly. Chaos.)

NANNY: Turn that sound off, I've heard enough! He don't make an ounce of liberal sense!

VINNIE: (Cutting the sound) What American would vote for him if he did? Ya see, since they chopped down the Amazon, there's no oxygen left for our brains. Consequently, Americans can't cogitate no more.

NANNY: Ech! Run that backwards so that it didn't ever really happen, will ya, precious?

(VINNIE hits the remote and we see all the previous TV action silently play backwards in hilarious, quick-motion. VINNIE, quite drunk, ignores it, having other worries:)

VINNIE: Listen, Nanny, who's keeping me locked up here?

NANNY: Whadda ya mean, locked up?

VINNIE: You don't know? - I've been tryin' to bust out for months, I'm a regular Prisoner of Zenda here at Ebriety Acres! But I signed myself in a year ago - my chemical dependency bein' what it was - so shouldn't I be able to check out whenever I consider myself cured?
(hiccuping)
And, clearly, I am now cured.

NANNY: Maybe rummies lose all their uncivil rights once they're checked inside a de-tox center?

VINNIE: Nah, not one with these fancy fees. But every time I hit the front desk where that Doctor Chicago sits like a tabula rasa in Eternity, he waves the red flag. Claims there's someone with power of attorney over me till I'm of age says I stay put. In this mansion of immutability!

NANNY: But you've got no known living relatives.

VINNIE: That's what I mean, Nanny!

NANNY: And he won't tell you who it is?

VINNIE: Bribes are futile.

NANNY: But I knew absolutment rien of this: quel scandale!

VINNIE: It's like livin' in a Lana movie for crissake.

NANNY: (Gathering her effects) Your Nanny'll get right on it. I'll shelve all else and uncover this renegade relative immediately! Baby'll be sprung before ya kin say Jack Daniels. Now drink up, and don't worry, cause I have a hunch.

VINNIE: Hey, thanks for the contact lenses.

NANNY: No problem - and asta luwaygo mi carido nino - might as well get used to the lingo, no?
(exiting, forgetting her hat)

VINNIE: Adios! -'N I could do a lot more imbibin' at home than here. -So let's see if Lana bedded Bey yet.

(VINNIE starts a second full flask and resets the TV to the film: we see LANA reviving TURHAN with passionate kisses.)

TURHAN: (Coming to) Oooooo -- where am I?

ACQUA: Wait - this man not bear rug - he bad - me know him - he Ackbah Harik, evil Arab slave trader, sell me to scientist who make experiment.

TURHAN: (Affable) Oh, it is late.

LANA: Harik, did you ruin this sultry beauty, first?

ACQUA: Him give me beads - my father, native chief, throw me out. Then I finished in jungle forever!
(fleeing in tears, exiting through a window)

LANA: So this is the Amazing Harik, legendary art-collector and case-cracker:- a spoiler of children, a seller of slaves!

TURHAN: I'm double-parked.

LANA: Wait, aren't you going to spend the night?

TURHAN: (Exiting) Sure. At my apartment.

VINNIE: (Drinking) Some hero.

LANA: Fooey! He's a blend of Turkish flair and hot air. But I have a ploy. It is a dangerous gamble, perhaps suicidal: but men have made me desperate.

(LANA picks up a phone on her set and dials. She waits... The phone in VINNIE's room rings. He picks up.)

VINNIE: Go.

LANA: Canny Cannoli?

VINNIE: Oh, joy, Lana Turner!!

LANA: I'd like a large delivery of Canny Canno--

VINNIE: That's Cantrocelli Cannoli.

LANA: The erotic dessert?

VINNIE: The cannoli with the aphrodisiac effect.

LANA: That's the one. You deliver?

VINNIE: Within a broad's radius. Where are ya?

LANA: 1946 Wilshire Boulevard.

VINNIE: I'll send a boy right over.

LANA: How'll I know him? I don't answer to strangers.

VINNIE: He always rings twice.

LANA: Don't get smart!

VINNIE: His name's Vi-- a - Victor - very good looking.

LANA: Oh, yeah? Well, then, all right... And - um - tell him to ring twice.

VINNIE: You got it.
(pressing the receiver and the remote with his other hand: a drop falls and the TV goes dark)
And now to ring twice for Ebriety. Good thing I caught your pic, Lana, showed me the way out...

EBRIETY: (Picking up in the Office) You ring, midget?

INSERT for Page 3-13

(The PILGRIM laughs supersedingly. They watch the action.)

GYPSY: -You see, real stars are better than old gods, cause they're highly accessible models whose flickering celluloid whisks up our tabulae rasae as easily as airplane engines do unwary airport flocks. And the gods are altogether too remote, no, for pilgrims who need some mirror in which to admire themselves and at the same time have dictated how to act, how to speak, and make love and politics?

VINNIE: Get in here, pill, I just took sleeping pills.

EBRIETY: How many?

VINNIE: 69.

(EBRIETY slams the receiver down and tears out. VINNIE grabs his two empty flasks and hides behind the door.)

VINNIE: Who says dead soldiers won't do in a pinch?

(EBRIETY runs in and VINNIE brains her with two deft blows. She passes out. Soused and clumsy, VINNIE strips off her uniform and dons it himself. Then he drags her over to his chaise and throws a blanket on her. He finds the hat and foxes that NANNY left and tries those on as well. During this, The PILGRIM, still outfitted as Harik, appears where The GYPSY is standing, intrigued, and watching the action.)

PILGRIM: I assume, East of A, that my identity-getting is in some opposition to the quick and automatic package that the Pope's offering to Americans?

GYPSY: Well, yes - I suppose so - the persona I'm offering you is by no means automatic, anyhow.

PILGRIM: Gypsy, there's something so innocent about that!

GYPSY: (Surprised) You saying I got my Harik all wrong?

(The PILGRIM laughs supersedingly. They watch the action.)

VINNIE: Always thought you dressed too plain, Eb. And these foxes'll make it look like I'm steppin' out. Which I am - of this high class gin mill! (placing the remote in EBRIETY's hand) Here, amuse yaself if ya rally, great Turner-Bey pic in progress. Doctor Chicago - here I come!

(VINNIE, having stuffed the two empty flasks into the huge bosom of the uniform, takes the white box of cannolies in hand and staggers out the door of his room into the Outer Office where DOCTOR CHICAGO, still pre-set, is sitting behind the desk reading the L.A. Times through very thick-lensed, horn-rimmed glasses. His intention to slip past the desk as unnoticed as possible is hampered by CHICAGO's good-morning mood, the latter being in a frame to exchange a few words over his steaming styrofoam; he is laughing.)

VINNIE: (With a slight, alcoholic hand-wave) How ya doin', Sam?

CHICAGO: (Removing his glasses and placing them on the desktop) Ho-ho, this is rich, Ebriety!

VINNIE: (Without stopping, scooping the glasses up and sipping from CHICAGO's cup; flat:) Oh, yeah?

CHICAGO: Yeah, you'll love it! -Not the coffee! -- look-it here:

VINNIE: (Crushing the glasses underfoot and continuing to walk without a break) What?

CHICAGO: Hoppa's preview of Gypsy Jack's latest programmer, "The Search for the Cure to Life and Other Lesser Ailments." Says G.J. oughta search for a cure to himself before he --

VINNIE: Can't stop, Doc, got a out-patient outside --

CHICAGO: How's Vinnie?

VINNIE: (Staggering) Fell asleep watchin' TV, that sick, unrepentant rummy, don't disturb him.

CHICAGO: (Blindly fingering the desktop in search of his glasses) Whatcha got there, Ebriety?

VINNIE: His cannolies, took 'em, he's too zonked to notice.

CHICAGO: Ha-ha, that's rich.

VINNIE: Yeah. So's he. Took him for a C note as well.

CHICAGO: Oh, yeah? That expensive foxes you're wearin'?

VINNIE: No, actually. Coupla dead cats his Nanny brung around. Took 'em to town.

CHICAGO: That so? How come you're walkin' so funny?

VINNIE: Took it up the ass last night, joker was hung like a horse.

(VINNIE exits with the bewildered CHICAGO staring after him.)

SCENE 4.

(The GYPSY; VINNIE CANTROCELLI; PROTEST MARCHERS; The HULK;
GOONS; LANA TURNER; TURHAN BEY; ACQUANETTA

(A Street on Wilshire Boulevard. The lights alter allowing EBRIETY, DOCTOR CHICAGO and The PILGRIM to leave the stage unseen. The GYPSY crosses into the center area, picking up the few scattered props left from the previous scene that will not be needed in this one and pulling a slide across the TV, effectively shuttering it. He speaks as he does:)

GYPSY: So Ebriety Murphy, illusionist, a.k.a. Vinnie Cantrocelli, with the box of libidinous goodies in tow, will make good her/his escape - at least, that is, as far as a deserted street on Wilshire Boulevard. But then, just when the way to Miss L.'s will appear clear and the path there too easy to be believed, a --

(VINNIE zigzags in with determined bent - then sees The GYPSY, takes an adjustment, and manfully cuts him off:-)

VINNIE: Hey! hey! Jack, I'll handle this, there's no call to carry narrative coals to Newcastle, man!

GYPSY: (Deferring, bowing out, and exiting) Ooooo. My imagination is taking over for me, so to speak...

VINNIE: Well, then - I've safely put the distance between Ebriety's tank and Lana's mans. Note her elegant lawn furniture. So now to drop this drag - and --

(PROTEST MARCHERS enter singing. They carry banners and signs reading, "Down with the Diocese Internationale!," "Stop the Pop," "Nope to the Pope!," "Stay Religious Sway of U.S.A.," etc. They sweep VINNIE up and along with them.)

MARCHERS: (Singing) Sever the chain
Collapsing your brain!
Snap the ropes
Enslaving you, dopes!
You ain't no pink
If ya break the link
Between Church 'n State!
Now, he may rate
In his Papal place -

'Scuse me, Yer Grace -
 But that ain't here -
 Disappear! beware!
 Go back to Rome
 Your historical home
 'N leave us alone!
 Leave us Yanks alone!
 Hands off America!

(The HULK enters, humungous and awesome in shredded battle fatigues, armed with a whip and pipes. The MARCHERS turn as a man and thrust their placards into VINNIE's hands.)

MARCHERS: It ain't us! -It's her! It's her, she tricked us! The Medusa, the deceiver, it ain't us!!

VINNIE: (Buried in a banner reading, "Stay Fundie Sway of the U.S.A.") What resolve!

(The HULK stops in his tracks to shift his red-eyed focus from the MARCHERS to VINNIE - whom the MARCHERS, backing off in an ever widening circle, desert centerstage.):

VINNIE: (Hiccuping) Now, son, I've a battery of lawyers...
 (to the audience, helpless, despairing)
 Tell ya this much, ain't gonna be no way to
 treat a middle-aged matron....

(An accomplished Kung-Fu menace, The HULK whips and pommels his drunk victim. His full flasks spouting like whales, VINNIE sinks in a battered heap. Then, as the lights shift mood to the sound of airy music, The HULK steps back and joins the MARCHERS in a fantasy-dance suggesting that grand Hollywood chestnut, the dream sequence:)

MARCHERS: (Singing and dancing, stripping off VINNIE's drag)
 Dream, dream, dream!.....

This squirt in a skirt
 Ain't what he seems:
 While deliv'ring dessert
 To the girl of his dreams,
 He'll detour 'n end
 By delivering us!
 Our predicament mend
 Will Vinnie of means,
 The Papal plot rend,
 The bad to hell send
 And deliver, oh! all of us!

This pint with the pints, this squirt in a skirt

Ain't Ebriety Murphy - hell! this ain't her! -
 It is Vinnie - now, "Vincent, The Vanquisher!"
 Since adults can't the Catlick greed stem,
 What we need's a wee lad to lead them!

Now we know, Little Vinnie, you're starting
 from zero:-

So go amongst the Gods and get you a hero -
 Go to the Gods and get a great Hero!
 Get up! get going! There's nothing to fear - oh!
 For it's certain a boy shall lead them
 When the grown can't the Catlick creed stem!

(The HULK and the MARCHERS, revealing TURHAN BEY for a very brief moment, in 19th Century Albanian finery, cover him up again, whirl about, and leave the stage with him.)

VINNIE: (Sitting up) Gee, the hazards of bein' a delivery boy in a city no better than Belfast! Guess us rich kids are norm'ly sheltered from the Sid-Viciousitudes souls sentenced to work are sometimes subject to... And what a strange dream I just had! -But if it was only a dream, how come I ain't in Ebriety's best no more?... Nah - her fashion musta fell victim to that Hulk -- yeah, sure, it was just the Christian dream of a playboy's guilty conscience, to speak with a certain Freudian glib. -Good, me box o' love-provokin' cannolies - hulked over a bit but still holdin' their cream... And so, Lana, my blousey beauty, I'm pernted in yer direction, if you'll excuse my cherce of words...

(VINNIE crosses to the door - the same as to his room in Sc. 3 - and rings. The chimes play a ridiculous quick riff. Nothing happens. VINNIE smirks knowingly at the audience, and then, with an elaborate gesture, rings again.)

LANA: (OS) It's open!

VINNIE: (Gingerly opening the door with his back to the audience and peering within) Yoo-hoo, it's Vi -- Victor. Victor, the delivery boy!

(A long, uneventful moment. Then a tube of lipstick rolls slowly down the raked floor within and comes to rest at VINNIE's foot. He pauses, then bends uncertainly over to pick it up. LANA emanates in the doorway wearing her famous white turban, halter, shorts, and open-toed pumps. VINNIE is face to face with her painted toenails. Slowly,

he unbends, viewing up her ankles to her shapely thighs, shorts, naked midriff, bust, and blue eyes. Shaking, he offers the tube to her. She takes it slowly from him, slowly screws out the suggestive cherrylush paste and lifts it to the level of her insolent face. Then, as she applies the cosmetic to her pouting lips, she slowly circles VINNIE. As she completes the circle and stands upstage of VINNIE within the door, his pants drop to the floor. LANA glances down, her penciled-in eyebrows raised in amazement:)

LANA: Why, Victor!... how mature!

VINNIE: (Pulling up, embarrassed) Oh - a - musta lost a lotta weight, runnin' deliveries'll do that to ya.

LANA: (Stepping outside) Didja bring the cannolies?

VINNIE: Sure did. Shall I - a - put them in the kitchen?

LANA: Never mind! I'll take them out here on the lawn. (assuming an incredibly provocative recumbancy on the chaise, and fingering the lipstick)

VINNIE: (Giving her the box) Yes, m'am. Um - a - we also feature Amorous Antipaste.

LANA: (Contemptuous) Do you?

VINNIE: 'N Erogenous Area Cookies.

LANA: (Sharp) Cannolies'll be enough!

VINNIE: Yes, m'am.

LANA: (Examining the box) Kinda collapsed, ain't this? Cantrocelli always so slapdash with what they send out to represent them?

VINNIE: I'm sent out to represent them, nothin' collapsed about me.

LANA: (Pause; removing sunglasses and eyeing him up and down; with a sneer:) Eatcha heart out.

VINNIE: Oh, a, talkin' about eatin', you gonna eat them little, uh, pokin'-provokin' cannolies now?

LANA: (Sharp) They ain't for me!

VINNIE: Shit!

LANA: (Aggressive) Whad joo say?!

VINNIE: I said, shitta been more quiet around here when a star like you tries to relax. Shame to have all that noise jist outside yer mans.

LANA: What noise?

VINNIE: Dint you jist hear that whole racket them protest marchers made?

LANA: What protest marchers?

VINNIE: Them people protestin' the Pope's nomination.

LANA: What Pope?

VINNIE: (Aside) Gee. How refreshin'. A political naïve.

LANA: You babblin' to yaself or somethin'? Look, Victor, no need to plant here on my lawn till ya grow whiskers. Your tip'll be on my tab.

VINNIE: Yes, m'am, but I was just, um, thinkin', if your friend or, um, the person you're givin' them cannolies to is fussy I could fix them up with some new wrappin' or ribbons or whatnots if we could jist, um, go into your den or bedroo--

LANA: You should live so long! Look, jerk, the "person" I'm givin' them to I'm meetin' at a hotel tonight so I kin jist have them laid out on the table there, I don't need no fancy what-cha-ma-callems, 'n besides, Turhan ain't fussy --

VINNIE: (Stunned) Turhan?!

LANA: (Sneering) Yeah, you domestic nowhere nerd - Turhan Turkish Taffy Bey!

(A "BOING" goes off, as if in VINNIE's head. The MARCHERS file in discreetly, taking positions at left of the lawn. LANA applies a few more extraneous layers of cherrylush.)

MARCHERS: (Singing) So go amongst the Gods and get you
a hero -
Go to the Gods and get a great Hero!

VINNIE: (Flat) Oh, Turhan Bey. Where you meetin' him?

LANA: Wouldn't you like to know.

VINNIE: Matter of fact, I would.

LANA: And I would like to be Queen of England. Now, put a pipe up yer ass and blow, kid!

MARCHERS: (A feed to VINNIE) Oh, for a tryst, The Ritz is so declass  !

VINNIE: Oh, for a tryst, The Ritz is so declass  !

LANA: It ain't The Ritz, it's The Catatonia.

VINNIE: Thanks!

LANA: (Furious) Why! you little so-n-so!

VINNIE: Sorry, gotta float, bike's hitched to a hydrant!

LANA: I hope a Doberman pinscher pisses it!

VINNIE: (Running off) Long as he doesn't pinch it! And the best of the rest of the day to you, too!

LANA: (Quite irritated, taking the box and going up to her door) Well, they're not about to let a nobody like him, blotto to boot, in The Catatonia, anyhow. 'Sides, that soused cipher still don't know what floor we're trystin' on -- do he?

(She twists on the "tryst" and goes through the door. The MARCHERS part to reveal, elevated atop several low steps, TURHAN BEY in romantic near-east finery: brocaded vest, bejeweled brooch, multi-colored turban, sheathed scepter, etc. Curled at his feet is ACQUANETTA, costumed as an Arabian slave girl held to him with gold chains. She and The MARCHERS provide a choral back-up to TURHAN's song:)

TURHAN: (Singing) Since you, Gypsy, say the way
To be saved and save each day,
Is to try personas on
And mid-Eastern costumes don -
Turhan Bey - yes! what the hell!
Turbans suit me just as well -
So I'll reincarnate when
I've grown bored with whom I've been.
And since thinking cannot date
Roles that slip from fate to fate,
Even robber - killer - slaver -
Always altering behavior,
I'll be trying, switching parts:-

Ace of Evil, King of Hearts,
Deuce endemoned, Jack of crimes
Saddened by the worst of times -
And Joker with an Empty Grin -
Sober after quarts of gin!

(When the song ends, the singers turn and look at the open door. There is a moment of silence, and then the tube of lipstick rolls slowly down the raked stage within and settles at the doorstep. The door quietly closes.

End Act I.

ACT II

SCENE 5.

(TURHAN BEY; SAM The BELLHOP; NANNY; LANA TURNER; VINNIE;
JOHN P; JOHN OC; The HULK; ACQUANETTA; SIMONE SIMON;
EBRIETY MURPHY; HOTEL GUESTS

(The Hotel Catalonia. Three parallel rooms on the 10th floor, each with a bed, small table, lamp, phone, door, and very wide, large window with a wide ledge. Through all the windows the sparkling sight of nighttime L.A. The Left Room has a bathroom with window at wing left. At wing right the hotel's lobby is represented by the bellhop desk (the same piece as in Act I.) On it a phone and enormous registration book. Lights up on the lobby area where SAM The BELLHOP, a pale, wiry near-neurotic in uniform and full brimmed cap, is chatting with TURHAN BEY. TURHAN, whose lengthy black hair is greased back, wears a leather and earth-colored single-breasted over an earth-colored jerkin, pleated cream slacks, two-toned shoes. He is holding a professional camera, a white box identical to the cannoli one, and a meerschaum pipe. TURHAN appears to be at his most debonair and continental, but is actually trying to extricate himself from SAM on whom the continentalism is ineluctably rubbing off. TURHAN is laughing easily:)

TURHAN: Well, women are just my hobby, Sam, not my vocation. I'm a photographer by training and then, if you like, but a far second at that, an actor. -In "B" films.

SAM: Aren't you a shade modest, Mr. Bey? Playing opposite Katherine Hepburn, Virginia Mayo, Maria Montez, and Merle Oberon isn't exactly getting wired in "B's". Them ladies land blockbusters or spit in the mogul's eye.

TURHAN: Well then, let's say that it's "them ladies," as you put it, and not me, who make my highly-produced horse operas blockbusters.

SAM: Now, now, Mr. Bey, none of your continental self-effacement here. My seven sisters wouldn't fancy themselves the flop of the social season should

they find your housecoat in their closet for a weekend - a long, very rainy weekend. Smirksmirk.

TURHAN: (Taking a photo of SAM's astounding smirk) But, Sam, actors aren't what their movies make them out to be: I'm actually here just to go over lines with La--

SAM: And that hand-kissing routine, I'd slip ya half my hop's weekly take, tips 'n all, if you'd teach me just that.

TURHAN: (Placing his box on the desk) Nothing to it, really. Ordinary politeness, I should think.

SAM: With extra-ordinary results, I should think. So much so, Mr. Bey, that I could swear beautiful women were your hidden means of income. Why, you practically live here at The Hotel Catalonia - "The assignation spot for them what's hot" - and with a different star for every crescent of the moon! Must be the Mohammedan in you. But, calm yourself, my tempestuous Turkoman, note of your vigor does not pass beyond this desk, specially with the juicy jack your Eastern generosity finds sometimes fit to supplement the salaries here...

TURHAN: (Sensing more serious blackmail) Here's a five...

SAM: (Offering a key, grinning) And here's the key to the elevator. Plated gold for our gold clients.

TURHAN: (Masking his realizations) Think I can go up now?

SAM: (Insidiously, slowly, opening the box so that its contents face TURHAN) Sorry, but the sweetie, who arrived with her dresser, and both obviously incognito, said you mustn't till she called down, perhaps needing to spiffy up - or straighten out.

TURHAN: (Grabbing the box away from him) But we're only here to study our script for "A Night in Nice."

SAM: Oh, yeah? Speaking of spiffy, that outfit's swell on you. And pleated pants conceal the swell. Smirk-smirk.

TURHAN: And uniforms suit you. Specially that cap.

SAM: Really? Wanna try it on? Try it on - gaw head,

I ain't afraid grease. ...Or anything else...
 (giving TURHAN his cap, revealing a sinister skull
 with only three long hairs on it, and reaching
 for the box again, like Death Incarnate)
 And I'll just look after this box for y--

(The desk phone rings. A baby spot in the Left Room hits NANNY at the phone, wearing a hooded cloak. Her come-on is new, but not her speed. SAM picks up, charming again:)

SAM: Oops, a guest, 'scuse me, Mr. Bey. -Hotel Catalonia, assignation spot for whomsoever's hot to trot, Bellhop Desk.

NANNY: (Sharp) Send up the yella Lazy Susan.

SAM: And what if I'm too lazy, Susan?

NANNY: I'll be jist as lazy with yer tip, asshole!

SAM: Well, I never!

NANNY: Betchoo never got yer yap ripped either, but I'll take care a that too on my way out 'n send ya the bill fer the blackjack I'll bust in two doin' it!

SAM: Yes, m'am, the yellow Lazy Susan to Room --?

NANNY: 10-02, and if it takes ya more than two secs to get here I won't be too lazy to crack yer cranium with it either, yer bald 'cept fer three last lonely hairs on it cranium case it's so thick ya think I don't know exactly who, 'n what, ya are cause I do - git me?!

SAM: Gotcha! And, a, please, pocket the blackjack.
 (hanging up and rushing off)
 Gotta fly, Mr. Bey, be back in a jiff. You will mind the desk for me, won't you?! -Seems there's some kind of emergency - for me.

NANNY: (Sugary, calling into the dark) That sweet old man'll be right up with the Lazy Susan, honey, ya kin spread them wop cannolies out on it real nice.

LANA: (OS, sweetly) Oh, all right, Elizabeth.

NANNY: You pretty fixed up, then, now, won't be needing me for a while?

LANA: (OS) Not for a while. But I can't dismiss you yet. We're sure to have supper and I'll want you to serve it, Elizabeth, can't risk the quite sinister help here coming in and catching us --

NANNY: I'll keep them at bay, honey, don't worry. Jist wanna step out fer a box a tampons, ten minutes.

LANA: (OS, sweetly) I understand. That'll be fine.

(The spot in the Left Room dies: the focus returns to TURHAN nervously whistling "This Squirt in a Skirt." He trembles.)

TURHAN: Where did I hear that tune? - somewhere odd... couldn't shake it all day... like the incidental over in "The Amazing Mr. X"... eerie, God knows. (whistling; hearing VINNIE whistle it OS) There it is, again... Am I halucinating? Feel like I've been losing my mind since mid-morning... -People are coming! Wouldn't do now at all for me to be caught here with my pants down. Or with them up, either, for that matter....

(TURHAN darts behind the desk, pulling the hop's cap down and the registry upright so as to conceal his face. A few well-dressed HOUSE GUESTS enter chatting with VINNIE at their heels. He sports a battered fedora and a bundled up Oriental rug. Just as he successfully slips past the desk, a BOING! goes off: both he and TURHAN react strongly. VINNIE peers over the registry, while the noisy GUESTS exit.)

VINNIE: (Incredulous) Nah....

(VINNIE resumes his route, whistling. TURHAN is alerted.)

TURHAN: So! - that was you! -You're The Whistler, eh? - you insidious creep! All right, that's quite far enough - out you go!

VINNIE: Hold on, my good hop, I've a soft spot here less yer blind, a Turkish prayer rug of the finest --

TURHAN: And what's in it -- Cleopatra?

VINNIE: (Spotting the box) You wish! What's in here?

TURHAN: That's my business! -Who's that for?

VINNIE: Sindbad the Sailor. Who's this for?

TURHAN: I can't see that that's any concern of yours!

VINNIE: Oh, yeah? Well, if you must know, hot shot, I'm the house dick.

TURHAN: (Low) Coulda sworn I was.

VINNIE: What?

TURHAN: If you're the in-house gum, then what's your handle?

VINNIE: A - Victor.

TURHAN: Victor what?

VINNIE: Victor Hugo.

TURHAN: Victor Hugo what?

VINNIE: Whadda ya mean Victor Hugo what?

TURHAN: Nobody's named just Victor Hugo.

VINNIE: Victor Hugo Moore.

TURHAN: More than what?

VINNIE: More than Alcatraz.

TURHAN: What?

VINNIE: Victor Hugo Alcatraz.

TURHAN: Oh! Victor Hugo Alcatraz, the Central American dictator.

VINNIE: No! The other Victor Hugo Alcatraz.

TURHAN: What other Victor Hugo Alcatraz?

VINNIE: Victor Hugo Alcatraz, the other big Central American dictator.

TURHAN: Oh.

VINNIE: Look here, hop, I already laid it out for you - I'm the buttons - who else'd walk in unmasked? - this jernt's notorious.

TURHAN: (Low) So's mine.

VINNIE: What?

TURHAN: Well, Mr. Victor Hugo Alcatraz, if you are the dick around here, you'll have an elevator key.

VINNIE: (Thrusting his hand in his pocket) And I do!
(the phone rings; aside:)
Course, I don't. I only got a half-pint a Moonlite Express, the deadly skid row meade...

TURHAN: (Picking up) Hotel Catalonia, "assignation sp--"

(While TURHAN speaks, turning his back in delight, VINNIE opens the box and with lightning speed switches his half-pint for a half-pint the box contains. A spot hits LANA TURNER on the phone in the Left Room. She is dazzling in diamonds and a green evening gown. She arranges cannolies on a yellow Lazy Susan as she coos into the phone:)

LANA: "-- spot for whomsoever's hot to trot?" If Mr. Bey's in the lobby hot to trot, send him up now.

TURHAN: How's a girl, little Lana, how is she?

VINNIE: Lana? -Lana Turner!

LANA: She's resting quietly, Dr. Bey. But it may be time to take her temperature, I think...

TURHAN: Got your lines down, dear, in the cloak and dagger scene?

VINNIE: (Under his breath) And Turk Turhan Bey. My God!

LANA: They'll be down, soon as you're up...

TURHAN: (Hanging up, discarding the cap) And up I go!

(TURHAN exits. VINNIE whips out a telescope, pointing it after him and peering through it. SAM reappears, crazed.)

SAM: She is devastating! Anything but the human wreckage I expected! What could they be shooting 'sides scenes? Hey, kid, what're you doin' here?

VINNIE: Lookin' at the stars, my good geek. An' there they go up, the little red stars, 4, 5, 6...

SAM: I said, Whadda ya think yer doin' here, kiddo?!

(NANNY appears with her hood up, nearly covering her face. In a hurry, and preoccupied, she passes for a moment right

in front of the telescope's lens and hits hard at SAM:)

NANNY: I'm wise to you, extortionist, an' you better put a blanket on yer two-penny, tired shananagans, cause the stretch I'm fed up with allotin' you's about ready to snap, see? -And see that no more flushers, broke like you, lean on them two doves up there fer the rest of the night - 'cept me, I'll be comin' 'n goin'.
(to VINNIE)
Step aside, shrimp.

(NANNY exits while VINNIE continues to stare through his scope at the elevators as if NANNY had not passed by.)

VINNIE: Yes, sir, there it is, stopped at 10. Tenth floor, then, it is.

SAM: (Yelling) I said --

VINNIE: I heard what you said, bonehead, an' I ain't just rubberin' around here - I'm a crack reporter trackin' a big cat, catch it? - some babe' freaked 'n floated a story says a black panther escaped from the zoo tonight 'n was last seen in the vacinity of this hotel...
(taking out the half-pint, ruminating)
And where've I smelled that hefty dame before?... that perfume, Jungle Gardenia... very familiar...

(VINNIE swigs from the half-pint, spins wildly about, and falls flat on his face, out like a light. SAM is amazed.)

SAM: (Staring down at him) Imagine that.

(The light in the lobby is killed. A low table lamp comes on in the Right Room. The HULK, sleepy-eyed, fully clothed, sits on the bed. JOHN P prepares to retire. JOHN OC sits at the small table, sipping wine. He appears introspective and has a tendency to avert his gaze from JOHN P.)

JOHN P: You seem preoccupied, John.

JOHN OC: Oh - a - do I? I - um - was meditating, Papa.

JOHN P: Good: meditation is a sleeping pill of sorts, but divisive thought is a speedball so to speak, and not to be indulged in prior to retiring.

HULK: I'm outta speedballs, Papa Dos, think it's jake if I flake out?

JOHN P: Of course, Humungous: you've had a long day.

(The HULK keels over on the bed and is instantly out.)

JOHN OC: John, Humungous told me there were scattered demonstrations on Wilshire Boulevard this morning protesting your nomination. Some of them turned violent. You're not concerned?

JOHN P: There are always demonstrations protesting this and advancing that around here. This is America. But it is America of the 21st Century and not the America of rock 'n roll, westerns, their frontier spirit, or their Age of Reason revolution. Now is the Age of No-Reason, if you will, the age of the ascent of soul over mind and intuition over brains. In short, it is the age of us.

JOHN OC: But we have an Age of Reason constitution here that keeps the drift of things somehow in line w--

JOHN P: Nonsense. Your constitution is neither reason-favoring nor retrogressive: it's merely pliable, and it bends with the wind, or hot air, that the majority of the moment is blowing...
(going to the window, his hands clasped behind him)
So think who that majority is now, who the new immigrants are, those who overwhelmed this country in the last hundred twenty years. They are not philosophers fleeing oppressive systems that picket their innovative urge. They are serfs satisfied by an increment, a fistful of goods to sit on, to stare at, or wear. And all have an underling's outlook, devoted to and crumbling before authority, anti-frontiers, anti-freedom, and imbred anti-rebellion. So this majority has not, and will not demonstrate against me, today, tomorrow, or in November. It shall vote for me.

JOHN OC: Yanks can be the trickiest people when the lateness of the hour inclines you to generalize.

JOHN P: And Catlicks? -John, what was he before he changed into a Hulk?

JOHN OC: A fop at the court of Louis Quatorze.

JOHN P: Oh. Makes me uncomfortable. For some reason, I have the excathedra feeling that I'm a lot safer when he's not around.

JOHN OC: (Sighing) What do you see out the window?

JOHN P: Stars. Configurations of stars.

JOHN OC: In the sky, or on the ground?

JOHN P: (Turning around and facing JOHN OC) Both, I suppose, that's the advantage of Los Angeles, no?

(The second JOHN P turns around, we see VINNIE, fearfully gazing down, inching along the window ledge from right to left - unaware that ACQUANETTA, as a panther, is stalking him, quite close behind on the treacherous ledge. JOHN OC sees them, shudders, takes another long sip of wine.)

JOHN OC: I wonder if that's really an advantage.

JOHN P: What?

JOHN OC: Seeing configurations in the sky.

JOHN P: What does that mean? Did you order another glass of wine at dinner, while I was in the john, John?

JOHN OC: Good: I didn't remember if we'd had wine or not.

JOHN P: If you don't remember, that's doubtless because you're having more than I know behind my back now.

JOHN OC: It's more than you know behind your back now that worries me.

JOHN P: So you're sufficiently lit for double-talk! My, my, the strain of high politics on some Cardinals.

JOHN OC: And we are high, no? This is the 10th floor?

JOHN P: Of course, it's the 10th floor, and, yes, you are high. John, you'll come right over here to the window and get yourself a breath of fresh air!

JOHN OC: I'd rather not, at the moment, John.

JOHN P: I don't care what you'd rather: come over here this instant, I'll open it for you. For shame!

(As JOHN P turns, ACQUANETTA is frightened off, and VINNIE, exactly midway in the window, freezes with his arms pointed straight out like a cross. JOHN P rattles the window.)

JOHN P: Heavens, it's a bit stuck. Wonder when was the

last time someone opened this?

JOHN OC: Probably to jump out.

JOHN P: What folderol you give vent to, John! Now, there! Look at the incredible configurations in the sky!

JOHN OC: I am.

JOHN P: And breathe deep. Extra-ordinary view, isn't it?

(They are standing on either side of VINNIE, with JOHN OC barely daring a glance at him out of the corner of his eye.)

JOHN OC: Agreed.

JOHN P: (Like an exercise coach) Ahhh! God's fresh air. In-out, in-out! Wonderful stone work here, no?

JOHN OC: My thoughts exactly.

JOHN P: Strange it escaped my eye before. Like the angels atop the Sullivan Building in New York. In fact, quite as good as the art on the Chartes Cathedral.

JOHN OC: Realistic as all hell. -I mean, quite as good.

JOHN P: Yes. And in the posture of Our Lord about to meet His Maker.

VINNIE: Hope I'm not.

JOHN P: What?

JOHN OC: I didn't say anything.

JOHN P: Thought you did.

JOHN OC: Hoped you did.

(Two muttering FIGURES are unlocking the Middle Room door.)

JOHN P: You hear that?

JOHN OC: That I did. And it necessitates heeding.

(JOHN OC runs to the Right and Middle Room partition, lifts a picture on it, and peers through two peekholes under it.)

JOHN P: Heeding? I'd say more likely lack of breeding.

JOHN OC: Ssssssssh! Spies, plotters, could be anyone,
I've got to, John!

(JOHN P places a hand on VINNIE's groin to support himself.)

VINNIE: Ooooooooooooo.

JOHN P: If you drank less, you'd groan less.

JOHN OC: Ssssssssssssh!

(SIMONE SIMON, wearing a hooded cloak, enters the Middle Room and turns on a dim light. She is feline-featured, almost wraith-like, and speaks in a thick French provincial accent with a peculiarly subdued child-like affectation: the ideally unaware sex-kitten. She is followed in by a second WOMAN in a hooded cloak whose identity is unclear.)

SIMONE: But Sandra, how can you forget that I pay the jeweler for these two gold keys myself right there at the store when I ordered them?

NANNY: You did no such thing, Simone.

SIMONE: Sandra Martin! are you losing your memory?

NANNY: Be a fine thing for a private secretary to start losin' her memory. You'd never know which night you had a date and with which white knight.

SIMONE: Oh, don't chatter so crazy, French girls never forget a date, and it is with one guy only, that is the way we are.

NANNY: Tell it to the marines. All eight of them.

SIMONE: Sandra, I am not going to dispute morals with you. Try to remember about these keys.

NANNY: I don't haveta try: you were too in cat-character and temperamental shooting the zoo scene in "Cat People" to pay for them yourself. So you gave me \$662.50 so I could.

SIMONE: You are losing your Hollywood mind!

NANNY: Not me, Simone, and you asked me to stay with the jeweler when he engraved yer beau's initials on 'em to make sure they were the right initials. I remember that exactly because I remember I had

trouble rememberin' S.C. were the ones ya wanted.

SIMONE: And why not? Big Stevie is my only beau!

NANNY: (Severe) Are you callin' me two-tongued?

SIMONE: And the fluce I give you to pay the house bills while I am in Paree cutting "La Bête Humaine"? The telegraph company is bringing suit --

NANNY: (More severe) Are you callin' me gooey-palmed?

SIMONE: (In despair, flinging herself on the bed) But there is \$11,000 missing from my bank account!

NANNY: (Severer yet; under the bulb, revealing her face) Simone Simon, are you callin' me an embezzler?!

SIMONE: What does it matter what you call the help? You are some kind of adventuress, that is for certain, pin what face upon it that you will! And I must avoid a scandal now, my image here is tarnishing!

JOHN OC: (Taken with the scene) Ah, lovely! Lovely!

VINNIE: Lovely-lovely? -Must be Lana...

JOHN P: What?

VINNIE: Must be Lana who's in that room.

JOHN P: Ought you be Tom-ing on a lady's boudoir, John?

JOHN OC: Ladies don't rent one-night rooms with someone...

VINNIE: That someone'd be Turhan!

JOHN P: Sssssh: it's one thing to Tom and another to judge -- loud enough to be detected.

JOHN OC: Wasn't aware I said anything.

JOHN P: (Sardonic) Have another drink.

NANNY: (Uncloaked, scribbling at the table) Cut the waterfall, Simone, I don't need no scandal now, either. And what with yer insults to interviewers 'n snot on the set, you got one paw outside RKO's gate as it is. So where'll I be if they deport you? I wasn't born a photogenic sex-kitten like

some strumpets I know. Why, that's like comin' inta diamond mines!

SIMONE: Fiend! Unsympathetic Nazi! What are you doing now?

NANNY: Aiding yer aging memory -- by making a list of all your lovers, Mademoiselle. Wanna see it?

SIMONE: Blackmailer!!

NANNY: (Showing SIMONE the list) Business is business. 'N if it takes ya as long to read this as it does yer scripts in English, we'll be here fer the week.

SIMONE: (Reading the list, pop-eyed) But we came here --

NANNY: We came here to discuss hush money, honey - so yer damn mother wouldn't have to know it - listenin' 'n buttin' in to everything like she always does!

SIMONE: I am lost, ruined! soaked by a sow!

NANNY: Not so loud, huh? Hedda Hopper's helpers live in the woodwork here, cat-house like this. 'Sides, I wanna get some z's.

SIMONE: Cat-house?? Folie fantastique! Grrrr... Grrr...

(NANNY and SIMONE go behind a dressing screen: without so much as the loss of a second their clothes come flying over it. Simultaneously, JOHN P retreats behind a screen in his room and his clothes ditto. JOHN OC is still peeking.)

JOHN OC: Charming. Excessively.

JOHN P: Big day tomorrow at the fund-raiser, John. I for one am turning in now. -Oops, there's a draft on my fanny, could you get the window for me, John?

JOHN OC: Surely: and I'll be bedding down shortly as well.

(JOHN OC closes the window, allowing VINNIE to resume his precipitous way along the ledge. Pretending to prepare for bed, JOHN OC slyly follows VINNIE's progress: then soon as VINNIE has cleared the Right Room window, JOHN OC hastens back to the peekholes. JOHN P gets into bed and pulls up the covers in exact coordination with NANNY's doing of the same. But JOHN P has a "big" problem with the snoring HULK, a man who does battle even in his sleep. The shadowy form of ACQUANETTA as a panther haunts each window briefly...

SIMONE adjusts her see-through negligee and wraps gifts.)

SIMONE: Now here are the gold keys to my apartment and the pair of brocated Shantung silk pajamas I have specially designed for Stephen, but, dammit - would you believe this... the gold golf-ball watch is missing... could she, no! have swiped it... what audace, I wonder... oh, if is true Simone is veritably victimized by this - this "secretary" - this Vichy woman: I am in her power! (seeing VINNIE on her window ledge, hissing) Sacré - siiissss - a Devil Dog of the dark on my window ledge! Looks like a deadly pincher!

VINNIE: (Yanking up the window) Pincher where?

SIMONE: (Scratching wildly) Siisssssssssssss.....

VINNIE: Steady, Lana, no fakin' fang 'n claw with me!

SIMONE: Lana? I am no Lana.

VINNIE: Well, I am a pincher - and that's straight goods: the house dick, to be exact, 'n I kin pinch ya fer fornication in a place of public assemblage!

SIMONE: Fornication? What are you talking about?

VINNIE: (Pointing to NANNY) That protractive Turkoman rechargin' in the sack right here!

SIMONE: That is no protractive Turkoman - that is my Nazi secretary: Herren Sandra Martin.

VINNIE: Don't try to pull the wool sweater over on me, Junior Miss - ain't got the boobs to justify it!

SIMONE: (Lifting NANNY's blanket) But she just pull the blanket over her puss, that's all - look.

VINNIE: (Smelling NANNY) Oh, God! - a gallon of Jungle Gardenia!.... where have I whiffed that before?...

SIMONE: So you're mistook, house prick, I call the manager!

VINNIE: Don't move, Lana, I said I'm the buttons here - and I will cherchez la femme!

SIMONE: (Clicking a lamp on, revealing herself in the see-thru) But you cherchez la femme Lana - not me!!

VINNIE: I've died and gone to French heaven!

(overwhelmed by her loveliness, slipping off the ledge into a box of kitty litter under it)
--where the floor is made of sawdust!

SIMONE: So you come in, eh? - now I scream: EEEEEKK--

VINNIE: Button yer lip, you French impersonation of a Persian pedigree - no pets allowed in the cushy Catalonia, 'n that's what I'm pinchin' ya for.

SIMONE: But I have no pets, you misguided gumshoe.

VINNIE: Oh, no? Then what's this kitty litter doin' here - simulatin' the floors a the beer halls yer usedta?

SIMONE: Why, no, it is camouflagin' the Jungle Gardenia.

VINNIE: Says you. -But neat! I like a dame with brains.

SIMONE: (Coming on) You ain't so hard-on my eyes either.

VINNIE: Don't kid yaself, looker - no vapid vamp's, gonna getcha off my hook.

(aside:)

I am impervious to pulchritude.

(quickly, to SIMONE:)

-Where's the cat?

SIMONE: Cat? What is cat?

(SAM knocks. VINNIE pulls a gun out of his Oriental rug.)

VINNIE: All right, open it slow and no false moves or I'll bop you and yer late-night visitor.

(SIMONE opens the door a bit and SAM jimmys it open wider.)

SAM: (Evilly) The cat food you ordered, Mademoiselle.

VINNIE: Ah-ha!

SIMONE: But I didn't! -Mon Dieu! Betrayed!

SAM: Oh, it's you, runt - I thought I told ya to dust!

VINNIE: Now wait a minute, you Death-Mask --

SAM: Gotcha on a rape rap! - I'm dialin' the heat!

SIMONE: But I thought he was the heat around here.

- SAM: Don't go simple on me, sister - he's some Dead End brat, star-gazin' for the night. I stopped him downstairs earlier, he fainted, then I figured he lammed - but somehow the snot sneaked up the 'scape to rape ya, damned if I know how, I'll handle this, sorry for the jimmy-job 'cept I'll get pinked if I step off for his bustin' 'n enterin' act tonight. But you don't sweat it, pussy, I'll heave the horny underage in the L.A. ice box this time --
- VINNIE: (Drawing) Tough stud, huh? I'm packin' a Lugar --
- SAM: (Using his jimmy, slamming the gun to the floor with an easy, simple gesture) You're packin' a pea-shooter, pipsqueak - and yer big night's over as of right now!
- SIMONE: (Before SAM can pick up the gun) One moment, hop, I can solve this mystery. I was cradle-snatching today and this garçon is my snatch for the night. I slipped him my extra gold key -see, I have two: which explains how he got up here.
- SAM: You were cradle-snatch---! Well, I'll be....
- SIMONE: (Giving SAM a five) You'll be leaving this suite très silencieusement and telling no one of the jailbait's presence. We French girls get blamed for everything. -Your pourboire, monsieur, \$5.
- SAM: Oh, a, mercy... But jist remember here: a steamy adolescent's got no protraction at all to speak of:- no more, anyhow, than your ninth life, Irena, that you've just about used up.
- SIMONE: (Slamming the door on SAM) Irena! He is such a downer, that coot. When I look into that beady eye, I see my ugly, untimely end in it.
- VINNIE: (Relieved) Wow! you saved my life... What for?
- SIMONE: (Swishing back into the room) Because I believe you may want to save my ninth one. It is the fair exchange or good neighbor policy or something...
- VINNIE: Shoot.
- SIMONE: (Munching the cat food) To start, you saw no accoutrements appertaining to cats this evening.
- VINNIE: Easy: what else?

SIMONE: This catatonic catnapping here, having catburgled half my cache, is en train de blackcatmailing me.

VINNIE: (Picking up his gun) So you'll be wanting....

SIMONE: I leave the vexatious part to you. Do it off-camera. -And who knows what reward beyond these (feeling the pajamas with blatant insinuation) Shantung pajamas can await you, petit, if the job is as clean as a kitten done licking herself...?

VINNIE: (Thoroughly interested, but suddenly despairing, flinging himself on the bed) I know I can squash this aroma ridden rip-off artist, Mademoiselle...?

SIMONE: -Simone Simon. Purrrrrrrrrrrrr...

VINNIE: But I don't know if I'm worthy of my own mission and the hapless millions so dependent upon it! In fact, the path is penned with peccadilloes beyond my sickest drunkmares. The truth, Simone Simon, is that after embarrassing two ladies to death, drinking something that nearly caused my death, and nearly falling to my death from this high-rise, I've not yet even found my sea-legs!

SIMONE: (Sitting with him, both on NANNY) Poor Bateau ivre, Simone will help you: what is your mission?

VINNIE: To pop the Pope.

SIMONE: (Mildly jarred) Wait, let me pop my ears first.

VINNIE: Well, you know the Pope is running for Republican president with the polls - and Poles - predicting a landslide: so the sole way to save the U.S.A. from this Pole who'd chisel her of her democracy --

SIMONE: Is l'assassinat.

VINNIE: Exactly. An' if ya wanna whiff a pope ya gotta get yaself a Turk, no?

SIMONE: Bien sûr.

VINNIE: Well, I can't even get to a Turk. -But you bein' such a star, you must know all the other big stars.

SIMONE: So?

VINNIE: So kin ya get me a intro to Turhan Bey, I mean, he's the only Turk who comes readily to mind.

- SIMONE: I see. Well, Turhan Bey, that will not be easy. Oh, introducing you both, pas de problème. But, well, Turhan Bey, he is an exotic star who may eventually prove a bit too rich for Yank Plain Jane's impoverished palate, not what Variety calls a big deal box appeal, for who knows how long he will last once the former male leads return from service: consequently he is quite consumed promoting his career at this point and I do not know if he would take the time off to off the Pope. And then he has other interests that consume his time, like his photography and - well - Turhan has coronary thrombosis developed in the Himalayas and - well - other interests as well I don't think you would understand.... rather consuming. In fact, completely consuming.
- VINNIE: But would you use your, um, charms for persuasion?
- SIMONE: Of course, garçon: Simone is a democrat. Oh, what is your name, garçon?
- VINNIE: Vinnie Cantrocelli, a.k.a. Victor, a.k.a. Victor Hugo, a.k.a. Moore and Alcatraz, a.k.a. Ebriety M--
- SIMONE: Enough! -a boy in the assassination business must have a lot of a.k.a.'s. Simone could use a couple herself these days. -Irena not among them.
- VINNIE: But I know at least he's checked in here now.
- SIMONE: Really? Turhan Bey is here tonight?
- VINNIE: Yeah. With Lana Turner. On this very floor.
- SIMONE: Ah, so that's the Lana run-around - Thank God, I'd thought - well - and of course this floor, the 10th is for fornicate - perhaps they are adjoining, all the screwing rooms are adjoining here in case of dissatisfaction is convenient for exchange. -I will look!
- (SIMONE runs to her partition with the Right Room, lifts a picture there, and peers through: naturally, nothing is visible since JOHN OC is still peeking on the other side.)
- SIMONE: No, nothing, it is dark in there. Must have knocked off their nuckie and turned in.
- VINNIE: Wait: that's the room west of this, no? Then that's not them. I passed that one on my way

to yours. Jist two old farts in there.

JOHN OC: What sauce!

SIMONE: Then let's check the other look-out, a, look-in:
(running to her partition with the Left Room
and lifting the picture there: peering through)
Ah, Vinnie! success!

VINNIE: You see them?

SIMONE: In the flesh. So to speak: they're still dressed.

(Soft lights bathe the Left Room. TURHAN is taking photos at the window, LANA studies her script; we hear a throaty roar.)

VINNIE: Oh, inta makin' it with their leathers on, eh?

SIMONE: No - they are not even near each other. He is photographing something out the window.

VINNIE: Well, at least we won't be coitus interrupting.

SIMONE: Doesn't matter, Vinnie, I am telling you he will prove recalcitrant in any-- he's done. Here look.

VINNIE: (Peering through) Hmmm..... Left his camera right on the ledge. Ya know, in a bit they'll strip down 'n if I slip along their ledge like I did yours, I kin snatch that camera 'n snap snatch 'n snatched. Tur'll be more amenable to proposition once we've snaps of his proposition.

SIMONE: But that is blackmail, too...

VINNIE: (Hiccuping) Morals keep bad in high politics... And this is politics as high as I, and this hotel, get. So I said "Hi!", now I say "Bye!"

SIMONE: (Concerned) Too bad you are not French, you'd get the logic of ebriety better. -Ecoute, I will shadow you in case you stumble. Narrow ledges give Simone no trouble.

VINNIE: (Suddenly, showing how tipsy he really is) But?

SIMONE: No, really. Pas de problème.

(Shouldering the rug, VINNIE crawls out on the ledge and starts toward the Left Room window, nearly slipping off a

number of times. SIMONE follows closely, having no trouble whatsoever. When they pass the wall separating the windows and emerge on the Left Room window ledge, ACQUANETTA, not SIMONE, is behind him. VINNIE notices no difference.)

LANA: Finished the photography session?

TURHAN: I saw something that interests me.

LANA: Human or animal?

TURHAN: Funny you should ask: I am not certain. But whatever it was, it's in the can.

LANA: Wish you were.

TURHAN: (Getting his white box) What?

LANA: Most men'd see something that interests them right on this bed. And I don't mean our script.

TURHAN: Excuse me, I have to use the can.

LANA: Again? What for?

TURHAN: (By the bathroom) I ask you not to ask me that.

LANA: Well, whatever it is, it's in the can.

VINNIE: Stop breathin' down my neck like that, will ya? I'll grab the camera soon as they connect - but she's still puttin' on her face now, 'n he's in the loo prob'ly puttin' on a bag - or testin' it.

ACQUA: (Tearing at VINNIE's head) Grrrrroooowwwllll!!

VINNIE: (Smacking ACQUANETTA) Quit shovin' me, huh? I said I'll get it in a second:- they'll see me now! Fuck! don't you ever file your nails?

(TURHAN, in the bathroom, straps his belt around his arm, and shoots up. NANNY gets out of bed in her negligee and slips out the door. She hastens over to the Right Room and gently rings its bell. The HULK beats JOHN OC to the door.)

HULK: (Opening the door) Sellin' somethin'?

NANNY: (Shocked and terrified) EEEEEEEKKKKKK!!!

JOHN OC: (Calm) Thank you, I'll take care of this, Hugh. (looking about in the hall; EBRIETY slips down

the corridor; waiting until she is gone)
Come in, but be quiet, his Holiness is asleep.

NANNY: Your Eminence, you won't believe this --

JOHN OC: (Extending his hand) My ring.

NANNY: Oops, forgot.
(kissing his ring)
He's more indirect than you calculated. He's no intention of doing it himself. The brat's a traditionalist, wants a Turk to go the gory part.

JOHN OC: But you should have known that much about him.

NANNY: You can't predict with an educated alkie.

JOHN OC: But I thought Italians --

NANNY: Not this one: he's anything but rash. He even reads. And turns out to be sufficiently Orthodox to complicate by conceding to convention. Anyhow, he wants that Turkish actor, whatshisname --

JOHN OC: Turhan Selahettin Schultavy Bey.

NANNY: Yeah, that's the one - to do the actual blastin'. And he's gettin' Simone Simon, the big French star 'n tart, to soften him up.

JOHN OC: Think it'll work?

NANNY: Who knows? But she's Latin, passionate, and a democrat. And he's blotto, and ingenious when.

JOHN OC: And the Turk?

NANNY: A Turk's a Turk.

JOHN OC: What does that mean?

NANNY: I'm not sure. I love tautologies, Your Eminence.

JOHN OC: (Thinking) So..... it's to be a Geehad - undertaken in tandem.....

NANNY: In tan dumb with a Turk!

JOHN OC: (Arching an eyebrow at her thickness) Indeed.

NANNY: I got the message ya pasted under the Lazy Susan.

JOHN OC: And?

NANNY: And it's no go, Lana ain't interested. She said to tell ya she's not Marilyn Monroe.

JOHN OC: What is she then, the Virgin Mary? -Well, return to your mistresses, throw no monkey wrenches into machinations, and, as before, jot down all new developments and paste them under the Lazy Susan. Remember, the yellow one.

NANNY: (Starting to leave) Roger,

JOHN OC: By the way, you wouldn't be monkeying around on the side with any of them in a way that might foul our nest now, would you?

NANNY: (Nervous, swinging the golf-ball watch) Who, me?

JOHN OC: Good. Just remember Hugh, here.

HULK: Unless yer inta some cut-rate dental work,, dear.

(NANNY leaves for the direction of the Middle Room but runs into EBRIETY and DOCTOR CHICAGO, arm in arm, in the hall.)

EBRIETY: Well, if it ain't Kid Cannoli's sweet old Nanny!

NANNY: I - a - why, hello, Doctor Chicago, bring yer playmate to The Catalonia often?

CHICAGO: (Tipsy) Not too. Usually take her right on the desktop. But she wanted somethin' softer tonight. Figgered I'd accommodate.

EBRIETY: (Furious) Shut up, you!

NANNY: Why should he, Ebriety, men like to retail hot tail. Good night, now. Night, Doctor!

(NANNY reenters the Middle Room, gets a white box identical to the other two, and her cloak. EBRIETY and CHICAGO exit. TURHAN emerges from the bathroom in a pasley housecoat, an altered man: very horny. SIMONE has replaced ACQUANETTA.)

TURHAN: Pussy juice! don't think I ever felt this way before after shoo-- um: shall we peel 'n feel real?

LANA: (Not absorbing his change) Care for a cannoli?

TURHAN: Later for that -- I ever tell ya yer built?

(NANNY opens the door to the Left Room, wearing her cloak and holding the box. LANA blocks her from entering.)

LANA: Don't bother to ring, Elizabeth.

VINNIE: (Opening the window just enough to hear) Eliz--?

NANNY: Oh, please, you got ring, ringing twice, on the brain. Oh, hi, Turhan, just dropping my tamps off. -So take them for me, will ya, Lan?
(LANA does, putting them by the Susan on the bed)
Cause you'll want me out of your way now, no?

SIMONE: Who's that, I can't see?

VINNIE: Neither can I. Ssssssh.

LANA: Yes! Couldja take in a pic, be back about 12:00?

NANNY: What's real near that you'd recommend?

TURHAN: "The Curse of The Cat People" is right outside.

NANNY: (Flat) I am certain. See yis later.

(NANNY returns to the Middle Room and a position at the peekholes. TURHAN whips down the top of LANA's green gown. SIMONE circles restlessly in heat. VINNIE is battered by her bottom, but cannot turn around. He yanks the window completely open, grabs the camera, and quickly focuses it.)

LANA: (Ever the tease: Come-here, Get-away) No cannoli?

TURHAN: (Reaching blindly behind him while facing and holding her, and mistakenly getting a tampon)
Yes! Eat up the treat and then eat up the treat.
(biting deeply into the tampon)
Kind of hard, no?

LANA: Everything worthwhile is. -So don't touch, Turk!
(then, grabbing his head)
Touch down! Touch down!

TURHAN: (Diving) With a mouth already full?

SIMONE: Quick, he's touched down!

VINNIE: And what a neat landing it is. Course, the runway's pretty wide.

(VINNIE stands up on the ledge snapping the sex, which sends SIMONE screeching into alley-howls. The camera flash is

multi-magnified, becoming a lightning storm. TURHAN jumps out of his skin and LANA is sent crashing up the wall.)

TURHAN: What in the --

VINNIE: We are serving notice:- the seventies are over!!

TURHAN: Who are --

VINNIE: An' yer cans are in the can!

TURHAN: (Leaping at the camera) Gimme that, you little --

VINNIE: (Whipping out his gun) I've a German Lugar here says Turkey don't stay neutral a minute longer!

TURHAN: (Dodging the gun and slamming his head into the sill) Ow! And just what does that mean, midget?

VINNIE: That you play balls with me or I pass yer pussies, pussy, 'n in-pussy-puss onto the papers!

TURHAN: (About to strike him) Why, you filthy night-bat!

LANA: (Dangling from the wall) Wait - whadda ya want him to do?

VINNIE: Ice the Pope.

TURHAN: (Incredulous) What did you say?

VINNIE: (Jumping into the room; SIMONE cat-leaps in right behind him) Yer Mohammedan, ain'tcha, buster?

TURHAN: But -- but --!!

VINNIE: (Grandly unrolling the rug and pushing TURHAN down on it) So there's yer prayer rug, scum of Islam, down on it 'n face Mecca with yer but-but in the air, praisin' Allah fer this golden swing He's good enough to give ya at gettin' to Paradise by savin' yer Arab soul 'n the soul of every other offshoot of Mohammed in cuttin' down yer age-old arch enemy!

TURHAN: Are you mad? I can't --

VINNIE: Can't? Can't? -Did not the hordes of Islam wash through the western strongholds of Christendom in the Middle Ages, yea! way passed the northern borders of Burgundy, cleansing all the Christmen

called their own 'twixt the beer-bottle infested Atlantic and condom-contaminated Dardenelles?
-Can't, man, can't??

TURHAN: But --

LANA: How inspiring!

VINNIE: Did not they bring poetry, calligraphy, cous-cous, long division, belly dancing, magazine reading, and fanmail writing to the Catlicks who like culturally depraved cavemen lived?

TURHAN: They did!

VINNIE: (Lifting the picture on the right wall as he talks, seeing only dark, but inhaling deeply) And do not which very coin-counters, no less cavemen now than then, threaten today to re-cover the earth with their vile spawn of vulgarity, philistinism, know-nothingism, bigotry, backwardness, banality, beastliness, and bombs - bombs to bombard the Moslem world back to the Christian Middle Ages!

TURHAN: Do they?

VINNIE: Don't they, Mohammedan?

LANA: How thrilling! He's inta somethin', definitely inta somethin', Tur.

TURHAN: But what can I do?

VINNIE: Take Koran in that hand and scimitar in t'other and carve out the heart as your forebears would of this pontiff pontificating in the name of the new Bleak Ages - for for him 'tis the U.S.A. today, tomorrow the world - world of Mohammed!

SIMONE: Move in now, boy, for the birdie, make the kill!

TURHAN: Why me?

VINNIE: Why you? Are not you Ackbah Harik, Notorious Harik, Harik the Terrible? His haunt the moonlit Mediterranean, his mission danger, his vocation intrigue, his hobby -- beautiful women?

TURHAN: Well, I can--

VINNIE: You can do everything! And you should - and to

you the glory, for you the epics writ of the
crime of the century, you, your panache, only you!

TURHAN: No, young man, I can't.

LANA: Whadda you mean, you wimp, you can't!?

TURHAN: I can't hold a gun steady, don't you understand,
much less a scimitar - I mainline: I'm - a junkie!

ALL: A DOPE FIEND! A HORSE SNORT! A JUNKLINER!!

TURHAN: Ah, me.

VINNIE: There goes America! She who shot up for the
stars, now shoots up but her veins!

SIMONE: (Eating a cannoli; flat:) This is a scandal.

LANA: Lemme have one a those, we gotta think this over.

SIMONE: (To TURHAN) Want one?

TURHAN: I can't eat after I ate.

LANA: I don't believe this, the publicity coup of the
week, 'n he's an IV leaguer. -Seven husbands,
seventeen lovers, and a junkie Turk let me down.

SIMONE: So truly appelled the girl with a soap opera life.

LANA: And the cat woman of RKO is better?

TURHAN: (Going to VINNIE) Ladies, ladies, not now, the
boy is disconsolate.

VINNIE: Don't come near me, you fraud! -You were the
greatest. You were Detective Harik, you were The
Whispering Shadow, the avenger of democracy, you
were my hero, the foreign matinee idol of millions,
the defender of freedom, The Amazing Mr. X, you
were the legendary, front-line Leader of the
whole Third World....

TURHAN: Were, boy?... am! All these attributes that
matinees affixed to me - a denizen of the Cote
d'azur's most romantic undergrounds, a spy and
double-agent, an espion of the Buddha and
Cassanova in the boudoirs of countesses and
queens, a pirate of fortuity in Sindbaddian seas,

rouser of chained Egyptian slaves, a stone-faced Pharoah of riparian kingdoms now sanded beneath Abyssinia and Sudan - all these were the pulpboard play of lobbycards and as temporary as the unhappy afternoons they offered you respite from... Gone are these Oriental epithets, gone with the war from radio, celluloid, and my life.... -But when I take that belt and needle to my arm, boy, I eagle above what years and dwindling fame, what drop in fortune and the ever impatient, novelty-searching and fickle public can strip me of... the elicsor in my veins like rapids over a cascade thunders and I become that Ali Baba in Infinity, that forever feverished Abelard, that AESop of my own unending, fabled blood, and Seed of the Dragon of an Initial Always no fad staled or currency drained can take from me, self-sufficing dreamer that I am of the dreams that they over and again summoned me to sell.... Were, boy?.... Am.

(ACQUANETTA, sarong and leopard-clad, crawls on the window.)

LANA: (Thinking it over) Ya know, Gypsy Jack - you know Gypsy Jack - has spells to cure almost anything.

SIMONE: Really? Gypsy Jack, the actor in serials?

LANA: Yeah, he's cuttin' one now, "Gypsy Jack's Search for the Cure to Life and Other Lesser Ailments" - 'n all them cures are done with old gypsy spells.

SIMONE: Well, I am due at RKO tomorrow, I shall use my every charm and quickly persuade him to spill!

TURHAN: (Dubious) But you think - heroin addiction?

LANA: No problem for Gypsy J., believe me, I know him.

SIMONE: Figured as much.

LANA: Now wait a --

ACQUA: (Leaping in) All you wait! Gypsy Jack, he lover me. Him under Leopard Woman spell. He not talk nothing for you, French one - all you here die!! (enraged with jealousy, leaping out the window)

LANA: That was Acquanetta, no, the Venezualan Volcano?

SIMONE: Then I shall speak to her, instead.

TURHAN: She didn't seem very reasonable.

SIMONE: Do not worry - she may be a leopard woman, but she has ailurophobia: the dreaded, irrational fear of cats! Meeeoowwww.....

ALL: (Crossing themselves) OH!

TURHAN: (Hopeless) So what?

SIMONE: So I can scare her into extracting Gypsy's spell - and she tells, or dies herself. She'll tell.

TURHAN: And would you really do that for me?

SIMONE: If you will stiff the pontiff for us.

TURHAN: Agreed! What man would not outfeat a mere fanatic if he could restore his own will-power doing so?

VINNIE: Then we four are single-minded through serving our individual interests. And our destinies henceforth are inextricably entwined. Let us inextricably entwine our arms and swear to this mission's inextricability:
(they form a circle and crisscross their arms)
For Truth -- and for Turkey!

ALL: FOR TRUTH -- AND FOR TURKEY!

SIMONE: Come, Vinnie, you still have much undoing to do concerning my secretary, Sandra.

NANNY: (At the peekholes) The scarlet harlot!

VINNIE: (SIMONE dragging him from the room by the collar like a kitten) Night, Lana, night, Turhan...

TURHAN: Good night, boy.

LANA: See yis tomorra - at the Republican Fund Raiser!

(SIMONE and VINNIE go out the door and exit down the hall.)

LANA: You really going to go through with this?

TURHAN: Of course not. Look, he left my camera here. While I was at the window, I shot some creature teetering on the ledge. It was half leopard -- and half woman! So I can shake Acquanetta down myself, should I so desire. And of course, his negative negative of us is still in here. So I am not compromised in the least. -Imagine that

small size imagining he's up to croaking the Pope when he's not even up to a filthy blackmail job.

LANA: Then you won't take his --

TURHAN: Oh, no, I'll take his cure - and then, well, maybe turn him in. The boy's obviously a menace.

LANA: (Horrorified) Men are such beasts!

TURHAN: Grrrrr. And all you ladies literally are not? Come, let us gorge on his fabulous cannolies - seems it's they that overcome the impotence of junk. And get it on, huh? I've got an early call.

LANA: (Reluctantly dissuaded from her scruples) Seems somehow immoral to use both the boy and his Spanish fly pastries now for such poisonal gain 'n pleasure. My conscience pinches me....

(As TURHAN pinches LANA, the lights fade on them. A spot hits NANNY thoughtfully replacing the picture on the wall.)

NANNY: Oh, yeah? what's it got - Turkish fingers? The crust of that peroxide to talk about conscience! A triple-agent's job is never wholesome, but I find these studio stars a breed apart. And they are the dramatis personae in our American mythology! No wonder the country's in the two-faced racket it is. Well! the skinny Cardinal will certainly be interested in the information I'm developpin' here on the 10th. Hope it's not too late to wake him. Or you.

(As NANNY prepares to leave the Middle Room, VINNIE reenters in a huff, and makes his way quickly along the hall.)

VINNIE: Think a drunk can't smell? Well, Jungle Gardenia, sober or lit, is not only loud: it's unmistakable - and so I'm definitely on the scent of a scent!

(VINNIE is about to open the Middle Room door, when NANNY does. He stands back, against the wall. NANNY steps out.)

NANNY: (Shrieking) EEEEEKKKKK -- the rummy!

VINNIE: (Drawing his gun) NANNY!! My beloved Nanny! Well, rummy but no dummy, eh, nefarious Nanny?!

(The HULK and JOHN OC emanate from the dark behind VINNIE.)

JOHN OC: Take him, Hugh.

HULK: His grave's awaready measured, Yer Eminence.

(The HULK whips the gun from VINNIE's grasp and puts him in a hammer-lock. Sinisterly, JOHN OC moves in on VINNIE.)

JOHN OC: -Alcoholic apostate... And iniquitous Terrorist!

End Act II.

ACT III

SCENE 6.

(The GYPSY; The PILGRIM and as TURHAN BEY; SIMONE SIMON; ACQUANETTA; FILM DIRECTOR; CUE QUEEN; NANNY; The HULK

(RKO Lots 4 and 5, and a No-Man's-Land down of them. The GYPSY and The PILGRIM appear in the No-Man's-Land area.)

GYPSY: Tell you this much, Pilgrim, I don't like it. Rather than sell you a five-buck fortune, for the same fin I offer you the crime to save the century, one that could buffer the collapsing together of church and state, and consequential collapse of both, shock sleeping America out of its conservative, mindless complacency, and paint a permanent face on you where none at all now exists, and first chance you get you turncoat on the deal.

PILGRIM: Now wait a minute, you Gypsy, or whatever you really are. It's one thing to reincarnate in the image of a long-gone glamor boy, and quite another to get him to squibb the Holy See: and doubly so when the mark's en route to our highest office.

GYPSY: Citizen, if you're not up to the most difficult portrait in identity I see for you, knowing you, you're not up to any at all. And will drop back into the river of ciphers en piddling route to sea.

PILGRIM: What I object to is the lazy idea that violence guarantees one a face. Only people who accomplish something get that - and I'm not sure political slaughter does. So I'd fade into history, following it, faster than Turhan Bey has - while the rest of the country continued to piddle as if I'd done nothing - cause I wouldn't have.

GYPSY: What is fading into history, and how would a star like Turhan Bey do that? Permanently positioned in the symbolism of our national hagiolatry, he's defined freedom's unalterable seduction.

PILGRIM: Not for me. Screen stars fade like planetary ones. So I thought I'd merely "wade" into history first: see if the temperature were right.

GYPSY: That experimental "wade," Pilgrim, is not even the privilege of kings. So let me summon Simone Simon, la belle dame engagée, and Acquanetta, la belle sauvage enragée, to help you back in.

(The GYPSY pulls a small overhead chain, as for an unseen bulb, and ACQUANETTA, in sarong and bangles, appears center in a spot. SIMONE, wearing a 40s hat and full coat that virtually hide her, stands in the dark outside the spot.)

SIMONE: Yoo-hoo, Jungle Woman!

ACQUA: What you come here do, French one, see Gypsy Jack?

SIMONE: No, chérie, you.

ACQUA: (Furious) I kill --

SIMONE: You kill a lot of time threatening, and I am not in a mood for tinseltown Zambezi now.

ACQUA: What you want, Person of Paris?

SIMONE: First, to know what you did to Little Vinnie.

ACQUA: (Surprised, then adjusting: inventing for effect) Little Vin---...? -Many ask Acquanetta this. She have not answer.....

SIMONE: Grrr. She will, sooner than her juju brain thinks.

ACQUA: (Ominous) Second?

SIMONE: Second, you will use your voodoo power over Gitain Jacques to extract from him the curative spell for junk - you know, evil white liquid-powder... looks like Bonami?

ACQUA: You look like Bonami junk. You not crowd wild Acquanetta - drift, bitch!

SIMONE: Get cracking, Bengazi Temptress, or Simone will lose control, when Simone loses control --

ACQUA: Her bowels explode like zeppelin?

(Enraged, SIMONE tears off her hat and coat: beneath them she is a black cat. She leaps on ACQUANETTA and the GYPSY

pulls the chain: the spot goes out. While horrendous screeching and howling is heard, the GYPSY slips away. The PILGRIM, annoyed, pulls the chain back on. SIMONE is left standing, a bit frazzled, holding a life-sized cardboard cut-out draped in a sarong, bangles, and long black wig.)

SIMONE: Turhan! Oh! Where is Vinnie, I've not seen him since yester-- Turhan, your get-up is so strange.

TURHAN: Yours is not? What's - I mean, who's that?

SIMONE: That is alluring movie spitfire Burnu Acquanetta - or what's become of her. She is scared into a stiff. Oh, but Vinnie - have you seen him?

TURHAN: Not the ghost of him, Simone.

SIMONE: (Frightened) Ghost?! Mon Dieu!

TURHAN: No, no, just a Brit expression. I've no reason to suspect anything untoward concerning him - yet.

SIMONE: But I am lost without Vin - and Gypsy Jack will be shooting a scene with Acquanetta on Lot 4 in five, discover her missing, become alarmed, sound an alarm perhaps, then retrieve this, and thus prove our undoing!

TURHAN: Can you cover, go on for her? -You'll meet Gypsy Jack, anyhow.

SIMONE: And try to extract the spell directly myself?

TURHAN: I'd be in your debt, Simone, we're desperate.

(A hip, young FILM DIRECTOR pokes his head on stage.)

DIRECTOR: Gypsy Jack and Burnu Acquanetta, Lot 4 in four!

TURHAN: Quick, get a get-up, I'll stall the take.

(TURHAN shoves SIMONE through an exit. The GYPSY, as Jack, calls out from behind a screen that slides across Lot 4.)

GYPSY: (OS) Acquanetta, damn you! where are you? They gave us four.

TURHAN: Be with you in a sec, Jack, she's slipping the sash on her costume.

GYPSY: (OS) What sash? - the idiot, sarongs have no sash!

TURHAN: So? - they're giving your serial a sci-fi slant. Pushing it ahead 13, 14 years into the future.

(The GYPSY slides open the screen. A small jungle set is visible within, a rock, some plants. He is in tropic gear.)

GYPSY: My flicks are straight jungle junk. No futurism.

TURHAN: Why not? They'll acquire dimension. It'll give them a touch of hindsight, never hurts, Jack.

GYPSY: And just who the hell are you, smarty-pants?

(SIMONE appears on Lot 4 in a sarong, bangles, and wild black wig that totally covers her face, reaches to her but.)

SIMONE: (Deepening her voice) I here. No sash.

GYPSY: (Not looking at her, applying his make-up) Know your lines? No blank takes. We're on in three.

SIMONE: Lines??? Me play this scene catatonic, no? Like all scenes I in. What I famous for.

GYPSY: Jerk, this one got lines, didn't ya see the script?

SIMONE: Sure me see script. But Venezualan Volcano no can read English.

GYPSY: Now you decide to announce that? -Cue Queen'll have to feed ya the dialogue, dummy. -CUE QUEEN!!

SIMONE: Wait, Jack, you listen. 'Fore he get here, Jungle Dish have something she must ask.

GYPSY: What? -Quick, will ya?

SIMONE: Acquanetta need spell cure addiction to junk --

GYPSY: You hooked?

SIMONE: Acquanetta not hooked, silly bwana, native girl never hooked, get high off good banana juice.

GYPSY: So whadda ya need the cure for?

SIMONE: Friend. Friend Acquanetta, she dope fiend bad.

GYPSY: (Grabbing her) Look, bangles-on-the-brain, I told ya before, ya wanna know a spell, ya gotta

put out!

SIMONE: Put out? But me tight-thighs, daughter of senator from Samoa, brung up right, no put out for smelly beach-bum white-trash shark fisher!

GYPSY: White-trash smelly shark fisher, eh?

SIMONE: (Cat-sniffing him) With scale on his hands - ech!

GYPSY: Didn't know it smelled. Well, no nookie for shark man, no spell, get it? Now get set on this set!

SIMONE: (Angry) No spell? Acquanetta not get spell?

GYPSY: Whadda ya deaf, as well as illiterate? I said --

SIMONE: Who care what smelly shark man say - give junk spell real quick or Burnu get carried away --

GYPSY: I'll jab ya one, they'll carry ya away all right.

SIMONE: (Turning feline, cat claws emerging from beneath her wig) Grooowwwllll!!!! Rrrraaaaaaaaaa!!!!

GYPSY: Grew yer nails? I like a broad with spit in her! (tearing her sarong, seeing the black cat under it) --You are not Acquanetta!

SIMONE: (As herself) I am the heroine of this movie!

GYPSY: There has been too much talk of heroine here!

SIMONE: And too little of the spell to end it, locked in your fishy heart! I sniffed it out: I tear it out!

(SIMONE jumps the GYPSY, clawing and screeching. Plants fly hither and yon. The FILM DIRECTOR, en route to Lot 5, stops in dismay and closes the slide on Lot 4. Then sees TURHAN.)

DIRECTOR: Damn, them budget serial bums, hittin' the hooch again, make enough racket to kill my nouvelle vague production takes every time. -Turhan Bey! whadda you doin' out here? You're in my shoot, man, Lot 5.

TURHAN: Oh, I -- which shoot is that? I'm bouncing these days, cutting three, four pics at once. You know how it is.

DIRECTOR: Yeah, yer hot right now. I should have such luck.

It's the Aladdin's Illusive Lamp aerial crane 'n sloop track dungeon job, get in: I'll call costume.

(The DIRECTOR opens the slide on Lot 5 a foot or so, ushers himself and TURHAN in, then closes it. SIMONE immediately emerges from Lot 4, covered with blood, baring bloody fangs.)

SIMONE: The shark man is stunned for the next two weeks! And the secret cure for horse and the secret to the cure for life and other lesser ailments sealed in his deceptive heart until then, alas! But Simone has preserved her virtue and the virtue of Burnu Jungle Babe for a long time - and for a long time now is Simone doomed to crouch the canopy of our city parks, a killer cat - for when she gets emotional, restive, or near a handsome man, Simone alters, her human form quivering down to the feline. Then cat-black, she is trapped in uncontrollable violence while simply wanting and trying to do only good. So now I must prowl the L.A. night, a bloodthirsty democrat, shrieking, "Sic semper Republican rape-artists!" For jungle justice is cruel, but swift!

(The CUE QUEEN, a thin blond man with script in hand, enters.)

QUEEN: Somebody call for the Cue Queen? -Love your costume, you in one a them film noir films? - specialize in bloody, realistic stuff, very bloody costume yer in, very realistic...

SIMONE: Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

QUEEN: Yeah, it is chilly out here. You wouldn't be Burnu Acquanetta by any chance?

SIMONE: Burnu is catatonic now.

QUEEN: Uh-huh. Somebody call for the Cue Queen?

SIMONE: (Fast, covering, indicating Lot 5) Um, in there.

QUEEN: Thanks - a - whatever ya name is. 'N jist hang in there, honey, I'm sure ya'll make it big whatever yer game is -- oops, no pun inten-- I gotta make it now misself --
(opening the slide on Lot 5 and entering)
Oh, I think the big cat's in this here scene, behind the bars, safely, uh, jist growling, dungeons had them....

(SIMONE goes in, rather deflated, like a pet being sent to

its corner: her corner being behind bars in an Arabian Nights torture chamber. TURHAN, stripped to the waist, wearing turquoise pantaloons, is hanging on a stretching rack with weights attached to his ankles. Blood drips from his wrists, brow, and ankles. NANNY stands near the rack in a Bagdad queen's costume, a face veil under her eyes. The HULK, dressed and oiled as a Torturer, is grinding the rack, behind which the CUE QUEEN quietly slips. The FILM DIRECTOR stands to one side, enthralled with his work.)

DIRECTOR: Go, kids - live with it!

HULK: Ali Haroun ben Rachid Mohammed Abdel Farouz Hamid Halleem's memory would seem to be failing him, Your Majesty. The identity of the rebel who bribed him to attempt the life of the Caliph appears to have slipped his recollection.

NANNY: So slip him another turn, O oily pectoraled One.

TURHAN: Do thy worst, but the name of the rebel never out my mouth shall ye wrest, O Woman of the Tartars!

HULK: Woman of the Tartars! you carrion for the birds, she is queen here.

QUEEN: (Puzzled, aside) Thought I was?

HULK: Nay, she is queen in Basrah, and her patience is infinite. Fools look favorably upon a man ten foot tall, yet you'll be twelve or fifteen ere my force is e'en applied!

NANNY: Unless you should enjoy sudden total recall, and in which case, I swear, sudden total freedom also.

TURHAN: Nay, never, ply thy trade, gloomy Giant!

HULK: I shall, thou rebellious refuse of Arabia!

TURHAN: And not for all the gold in Tartary, nor all the fame and fortune --

DIRECTOR: (Prodding SIMONE) Turn 'im! turn 'im! Growl, cat!

HULK: (Grinding) He is young and tough, Joe - my queen.

NANNY: Then make it a triple turn!

TURHAN: (As himself, dismayed) A triple? - Oh, Lord!

QUEEN: (Whispering behind the rack) No, no:- "Quadruple!

Quintuple! and I'll not repent my confidence!"

TURHAN: (As the HULK grinds the rack) Eeeeeek - it hurts!

QUEEN: No:- "My faith like a mountain holds, I feel naught and naught shall my tongue move!"

NANNY: More, stretch him more, O Hooded One! Blood becomes the wrists and ankles of this rubbish!

TURHAN: (As SIMONE whines) NO, NO! I can't stand it!

DIRECTOR: (Gleeful) Great improv! Wow! Go with it!

QUEEN: (Flipping the script, whispering) Are you crazy? Some practical joker slip you the wrong sides?

HULK: Shall I give him the yank that snaps the conspirator's pelvis apart, my Queen?

TURHAN: No, prithee, no more: I'll bare his name lest you bare my bones within me for mine own eyes, to see!

QUEEN: (Frantic) I heard a leads takin' liberties with lines, but this beats-- And that cat's so loud!

NANNY: So, slave. His name?

TURHAN: Veenchenté... Veenchenté the Vanquisher.

NANNY: The short heir apparent to the Bedouins? But we have that dwarf already in custody... No matter, we'll dispatch him forthright.

TURHAN: Nay, spare his little life, O Powerful One...

NANNY: Silence. Tell me, garbage, did we not pay you earlier to slay Veenchenté, himself?

TURHAN: Aye, but the dwarf paid me more to spare him and take the Caliph's life instead.

NANNY: And so you thought to fatten your purse more substantially thereby?

TURHAN: I meant no harm to any man of truth, my mistress.

NANNY: (Moving slowly away from the rack) I know, fear not.... For I shall reward you for that.

(The HULK lets the rack go slack, and TURHAN relaxes, his

eyes close, his face shows great relief. Then NANNY turns slowly, draws a dagger from under her veils, approaches the rack, and stabs TURHAN in the chest. His eyes open in horror as the lights dim. Then cold full lights come up.)

DIRECTOR: Cut! That's a take! -Fab improv, kids! Love it! And that's all, folks, thirty for today, thank you; see ya at the Nice Film Festival next!

NANNY: (To The HULK) You payin' for lunch, pecs?

HULK: After last night, babe, lunch's cheap.

(NANNY, The HULK, and The DIRECTOR leave. The CUE QUEEN unshackles TURHAN and brings him carefully off the rack.)

QUEEN: What was wrong with you today? Nouvelle Joe's up fer all that invention, but the scribblers ain't, they'll strike fer sure this time. Ali is not supposed to give in to the torture.

TURHAN: Perhaps... But the Pilgrim in me did.

QUEEN: The Pilg--? You hittin' the needle again, Turhan?

TURHAN: (Rubbing his ankles) Yeah: that's it. Yes! sorry.

QUEEN: Well, ya see, it gets ya nowhere - in life, or in that script. Cause if ya don't stay a hero and help the rebel dwarf, but betray him instead, she kills ya anyhow. So I say you might as well be a hero. -Oh, don't forget not to let the cat out tonight.

(Indicating SIMONE, the CUE QUEEN exits. TURHAN waits till he is gone and then cuts SIMONE out from behind the bars.)

TURHAN: You O.K.?

SIMONE: O.K.? tu fou, toi? Minus my human form, how can I attend the Republican Fund Raiser this evening?

TURHAN: What do you mean - isn't this a costume?

SIMONE: Oh - a - oui. Certainment... C'est ça.

TURHAN: But minus the cure for junk, how can I attend?

SIMONE: Oh, no, you must attend no matter, and fight your craving. Your honor is at stake and, as a war refugee, the honor of Turkey for which, par force,

you stand. You pledged. And I will figure something.

TURHAN: Then you really believe The Church caused the war?

SIMONE: Oh, her investments militaire make that positive!

TURHAN: (Staring down) The walls close in....

SIMONE: Do you recognize this perfume? It lingers yet.

TURHAN: The woman playing the queen?

SIMONE: Well, I hope it was not the torturer.

TURHAN: (Sniffing the air) No, but it could've been the Cue Queen. Yeah, I recognize it.

SIMONE: Then be extra careful. And let us go separately, lest à deux, we wake sleeping dogs. Good luck.

(TURHAN and SIMONE exit in opposite directions.)

SCENE 7.

(NIGHTCLUB PATRONS and ENTERTAINERS; MASTER OF CEREMONIES;
 LANA TURNER; TURHAN BEY; ACQUANETTA; JOHN OC; The HULK;
 NANNY; VINNIE; EBRIETY MURPHY; STEPHEN CRANE; SIMONE
 SIMON; The GYPSY; JOHN P; MUSICIANS

(The Nice Nice Rooftop Nightclub in Hollywood. Most of the stage represents the club's dancefloor. Up right is a wide and elaborate entrance to the club. Off-center up left are a few steps beneath a narrow curtain from behind which the entertainers emerge. At wing left is the club's men's room with a large window and a long curtain over it. Singers and dancers as CLUB PATRONS, wearing costume eye-masks, enter carrying tables and chairs, tablecloths, candles, and potted palms which they set up down of the dancefloor while they sing and dance to a rousing, spirited 40s tune.)

PATRONS: (Singing, dancing, setting up the tables and palms)

Welcome to the Nice Nice Night Club
 French-style c ave and deco-trite hub --
 The Riviera done in plywood --
 A Cote d'azur in Holly-ly-wood!

Welcome to the Nice Nice Night Club
 Rooftop Right-wing Church-State Light Grub
 Masked Ball Campaign-Funding Raiser --
 Dance and drink: it shouldn't faze ya!

Don't misplace your Nice Nice door-stub --
 You'll lose big you do that, poor bub:-
 Cause we got a five-buck door-prize
 At the Nice Nice Rooftop High-rise!!

(A thin, disconcertingly unusual MASTER OF CEREMONIES leaps onto the dancefloor with mike in hand, exclaiming weirdly:)

M.C.: Ladies and Gentlemen, lovely Lana Turner!

(LANA TURNER flips the narrow curtain aside and emerges in blinding diamonds and shockingly scant attire. She sings immediately, belting out a brazen, torrid number. The PATRONS wolf-whistle and applaud wildly while falling over each other in their haste to grab seats at the various tables. As LANA starts her second stanza, TURHAN BEY and ACQUANETTA enter the club arm in arm. TURHAN is wearing

his Ackbah Harik outfit and ACQUANETTA is darkly alluring in smart but severely-shouldered 40s evening wear. They seat themselves at the rightmost table, TURHAN pulling the chair out for ACQUANETTA in his most continental manner.)

LANA: (Singing) I abolished August, folks! -
Bet you heard a lot of jokes:
That, however, isn't one:
I've got August on the run!

In that month your fingers swell,
Rings won't fit, ya look like hell:-
You kin strip, your blouses rip,
But your sweat's still gonna drip!

(LANA aims the "drip!" directly at TURHAN, then dances away, circling among the tables. The music decreases in volume - rather humorously - to allow us to hear the conversation. TURHAN is uncharacteristically awkward, even nervous. He puts his box on the table. ACQUANETTA is haughty, distant.)

TURHAN: You look most alluring tonight, Burnu. Are those formidable pads noo? -The shoulder ones, I mean.
(ACQUANETTA stares icily at him; pause)
Naturally. ...Or unnaturally....
(another long embarrassing pause)
Glad you're holding up your end -- of the conversation, that is.

ACQUA: (Arch, with a Spanish accent) Dee studio require me to step out wees other star, jung man, but I prefer old man, understand? well-healed. Joo are just heel, not well-healed.

TURHAN: Imagine I should consider myself spanked. By you. And that would require very little imagination.

ACQUA: (Absolutely indignant) Am I hearing correctly?

TURHAN: -Pleasurable imagination, I mean... I... um....

LANA: (Singing) So I took the months in hand
And had steamy August banned.
Fans may think that's quite a feat
But I hadda - I hate heat!

I got rid of August - hell!
Heat makes movie stars rebel:
Even leads can lose their grip
When the summer's such a gyp!

(Delivering the "gyp!" to TURHAN, LANA accepts her applause, then seats herself at his table in a jealous huff. Without a break, the MUSICIANS strike up a jazzy rhumba. The CLUB PATRONS leap at once onto the dancefloor, grinding hips.)

LANA: So you exotic types hit it off? - maybe even knock some off?

ACQUA: Somebody knock someone off?

LANA: Guess apples stick together? birds of a feather --

TURHAN: Please, Lana, exotic Acquanetta and I are contractually obligated to be seen dating in pub--

LANA: Exotic Acquanetta, eh? Lemme tell you something, Mr. Near-East Nowhere, Acquanetta here's about as exotic as my elbow! She's Mildred Davenport of Norristown, P.A. - and can pee in your "a" for all I care!

ACQUA: I luf your ring, Lana, eet ees the size of a pea, no? and can fit up a dog's "a" weezout even waking heem.

LANA: How dare you downplay this ring, you fake spik accent! Stephen, my latest ex, gave me this - to commemorate our dear daughter Cheryl's birth!

ACQUA: She must haf been very leetle.

LANA: Little? This here's a three-carat ice cube, you hick town one-woman hot Red Light District!

TURHAN: (To LANA) Shall we dance?

LANA: (Still furious) Sure I'm peppery enough for you?

(As LANA and TURHAN get up to dance, NANNY, wearing an eye-mask and enough cherrylush lipstick to cut with a plaster-knife, her head buried in a collar of ermines, enters the club. Directly behind her is JOHN OC, masked and wearing a cape, the masked HULK, and between them, what appears to be JOHN P, also masked. The last is actually VINNIE, gagged beneath his mask and bound beneath his cloak, disguised as the Pope with high platforms, a binnie, and pillows to give him the correct rotundity. NANNY lifts her eye-mask briefly to dress down the M.C. who stops the party at the door. A palm frond swishes at her face, compromising her dignity.)

NANNY: We don't need no tickets -- we're the main event here, you geek!

M.C.: A geek was once some woman's normal baby boy. And a thousand apologies, madam, but masks, like the Grim Reaper, are democrat in equalizing all of us.

NANNY: Whadjoo say about democrats?

JOHN OC: (To The HULK, indicating the leftmost table) Hugh, engineer him over to that table there...

NANNY: (To VINNIE) And remember, you, try to open yer trap jist once, an' we'll blow the roof of yer head off higher'n the twenty-floor roof of this Nice Nice trap!

HULK: 'N scrape the scraps of it up to stuff down the throats of yer picky pals in the Jackass Party afterwards.

VINNIE: (Gagged) Hmmm huuumm.

(Surrounding him with guns stuck in his ribs, NANNY, JOHN OC, and The HULK maneuver VINNIE through the dancing couples. But various DANCERS whisk one or another of the quartet off into the rhumba, continually impeding their progress toward the empty table à la Marx Brothers. VINNIE struggles to disclose his predicament to the cut-in partners, but his captors always get to him with their concealed guns before he can. During this, ACQUANETTA spots JOHN OC, gets up, strides boldly over to him and cuts-in. They dance.)

ACQUA: (Immediately) You look expensif, haf you much money?

JOHN OC: (Charmed) Enough to live on, enough to leave on.

LANA: (To TURHAN) You look like Ackbah Harik tonight, figure to promote our flick that way?

TURHAN: Why no, with the Nice Nice's Riviera motif, I figured this suit would most suit the decor.

LANA: That your only reason?

TURHAN: Why, I - what other reason would I have?

(The M.C. stops the band and hops up the few short steps.)

M.C.: A surprise announcement, patrons of The Triple-N! At this pernt, assume yer seats, for The Nice Nice Night Club, located here on the rooftop of the posh twenty-storey Hollywood Presidential

Cloudclimber, is presenting Un régal sans égal - and the very generous Cantrocelli confection-manufacturing family has just declared that they are contributing to this Republican Party Masked Ball Fund Raiser by catering our Campaign Funder free of charge - with their fantastic and super-celebrated Cantrocelli Cannolies!! Yummy-yum!

(The PATRONS scramble for their chairs, allowing The HULK, JOHN OC, and NANNY to finally get VINNIE to the leftmost table. ACQUANETTA, TURHAN and LANA return to the rightmost table. EBRIETY MURPHY enters dressed like a cigarette girl, and begins to distribute cannolies from a huge, strapped tray slung from her shoulders. VINNIE is visibly jolted.)

EBRIETY: Cannolies, legendary Cantrocelli Cannolies! A cannoli, sir? Fabulous cannoli, madam? (etc.)

LANA: How come it's a masked ball if it's a fund raiser?

TURHAN: A lot of democrats don't want people to know they're republicans.

LANA: Huh? -I don't understand --

TURHAN: You make the love, we'll make the politics.

LANA: You will? -you, displaying such a defective love of democracy as to be a disgrace to U.S. politics?

TURHAN: And you would do better? you, displaying such an absolute absence of self-knowledge as to border on being unconscious!

JOHN OC: (Seeing VINNIE begin to hyperventilate) Hugh, he is having a time breathing: better remove the gag.

NANNY: Say... don't that confectioness look familiar?

JOHN OC: Few stockinged females enter my field of vision.

NANNY: Naturally. -Hey, you, Cantrocel Confectionary, over here:- we'll take some a them cannolies!

EBRIETY: (Sauntering over) Why, hello. You're Vinnie's little-known nanny, no? Love the circle ya run in.

NANNY: (Startled at being recognized) Well, no, I...

EBRIETY: Skip it, sister, in or out of ermine I kin spot a fox. And a long lost relative, lost for so long, is nothin' if not a fox!

- NANNY: And you're Ebriety Murphy, reincarnationist, and proprietess of Ebriety Acres, the dryin' out dump. Who was drainin' off the Cantrocelli kid's entire income - till I stepped in.
- EBRIETY: 'N started helpin' yaself, right, sweetheart? Mind if I sit down? I will, anyhow. -Hi, guys.
- JOHN OC: And just what are you doing here, now?
- EBRIETY: Lookin' fer Vinnie Cantrocelli, escapee. Given his passion fer politics, I figgered this here bash was the hole to crash 'n do some ferretin'.
- NANNY: Passion fer politics, my hole! That rich snot's passion is ostrich politics, folla me? Comes down to the real thing 'n his head's stuck in a hole.
- VINNIE: (Ungagged, imitating JOHN P) Unfortunate. Stick your head in a hole, your hole's Grade-A U.S.A. cannon fodder.
- EBRIETY: (Surprised, turning slowly to him) Hi, Pope-y.
- JOHN OC: (Fast, to cover) What's this free cannoli drop?
- EBRIETY: Way to drop in free. That perpetually hard pint sized prick skipped my inn so my inn's less in. So, to ill enunciate, I garnished his cannolies.
- NANNY: You wouldn't be anglin' to resume wormin' the worm outta his inheritance again now, would you?
- EBRIETY: Love to, you papal-shoulder rubbing papist, but haven't you, as executor to his estate, made that a preposterously passé pipe dream on my part?
- VINNIE: Laudable.
- JOHN OC: (To NANNY) What a Jezebel you are! Didn't I warn you that Hugh here --
- EBRIETY: Cool it, O'Conner. Lessen, Jezebel, you'd help me to nab him, re-lab him, 'n go halves with me on his estate 'fore I sell ya to the state. (lifting a glass, toasting triumphantly) Here's moths in yer ermines, Nanny! 'N flies in yer fly, Pope-y: though ya look like ya already got 'em. -Don't say much - fer a Pope, that is - do he?
- JOHN OC: (Fuming) He's meditating.

- EBRIETY: I'll bet. 'Sgot a lot to think over. Now.
- JOHN OC: So you --
- EBRIETY: Yeah, I do. Know exactly who he is. I smell 'im.
- VINNIE: I find odoriferous references to the chemically dependent utterly tasteless.
- NANNY: (To VINNIE) Shut up!
(drawing her gun on EBRIETY)
Then ya'll sit jist where ya are: cause I got a bead on you, babe, 'n wouldn't think twice about patchin' that run on yer stockin' with lead thread, get it?
- EBRIETY: (Starting to rise) Say, look here --
- ACQUA: Say, look there at old geezer, I think he loaded!
(ACQUANETTA leaves TURHAN's table and struts brazenly across to the leftmost one where, at first, she stands unnoticed.)
- HULK: (To EBRIETY) Ya lift yer end up again 'n yer apt to end up a Requiem Lass.
- EBRIETY: Well, now, if it's the Cantrocelli cash you're --
- JOHN OC: Never mind that now! we're playing for bigger cannolies than that - the White House, in fact - and remember, we're desperate caricatures, it's the California gaseroonie for us if something goes wrong so we've little to lose leveling you in the bargain -- oh... what? --
- ACQUA: Hello! My name is Burnu.
- JOHN OC: Another time, another place would have been humpy-dory. But it was just Humpty Dumpty of you to (drawing his gun on ACQUANETTA)
overhear: so siddown before you have a great fall!
- ACQUA: (Sitting innocently) Oh, thees ees just like one of my melodramas! I luf to play movie games.
- EBRIETY: But Nanny --
- NANNY: But nothin', jist keep yer flap strapped 'n do as we tell ya. See that slant-eyed stud over there in the double breasted blazer next to the double breasted blazer?

EBRIETY: Why, yes, that's Turhan Bey, no? filmland fancy man?

NANNY: Don't turn around, moron, jist keep lookin' at me. Next to him on the table is a conventional white confectionary box identical to this one here. In a minute, he 'n Lana are gonna be distracted by Lana's ex, sperled-brat Stephen Crane, who I tipped off they'd both be here with Lana showin' off Stephen's precious three-carat anniversary ring while leanin' on Turhan's long, lean limb. At that point, we want you to take this box, and make like Nature's makin' ya make, viz., that yer en route to the powder room, see?

EBRIETY: I'm followin'...

NANNY: Good. Then when ya slip past their table, snatch, snatch that white box that's on it, and slip this one here into its place. Got it?

EBRIETY: And then?

NANNY: And then slip out up to the men's room, there's a big back window there, ya listenin'? open it up, climb out onto the roof 'n from there take a powder - an' then make yaself scarce in L.A. - real scarce, understand?

HULK: Or yer seaweed-soaked pale puss'll wash up on Malibu Beach tomorra mornin'.

EBRIETY: Guess I don't got much of a choice, do I?

NANNY: Neither do we. Cause if I exchange the boxes, Lana's bound to recognize me, I'm her maid.

JOHN OC: Which is bound to backfire on us. But for you, backfiring's a bonus, no?: cause if those fools fire in your back, Miss Murphy, you can quickly reincarnate, chances heavily favoring some improvement. Ha-ha-ha!

ACQUA: Oh, thees ees such fun! In my moofies, I always reincarnate.

JOHN OC: (Ominous) Good: because all that practice will come in handy for you shortly.

NANNY: (Giving EBRIETY the white box) Here's the box!

M.C.: Ladies and Republicans, allow me, right now, to

remind you to guard your ticket stubs like they were buried treasure, cause at ball's end we've a smashing door-prize for the patron whose ticket has the lucky number on it! Remember our motto:- "All else may be lies - but not the door-prize!" And now, gobble them cannolies down, or yer liable to gag on 'em durin' the piece of resistance coming up:- That French Resistance-fighter herself, straight from the barricades of embattled Paris, a too cuddly kitten in her ninth reincarnated life: Simone Simon! - to meow-wow! for your delectation the suggestive ballad, "I'm the Girl with the Bold Golden Keys!" - Bring her on -- !

(STEPHEN CRANE, a tall blond drunk, stumbles into the club.)

STEPHEN: Bring him on! - where is he! the Turd, a, Turk --

LANA: (Standing) Stephen! - what are you doing here --

STEPHEN: So there you are! Alimony Alice --

LANA: You nuts? I'm the one pays the alimony --

STEPHEN: (Grabbing LANA's hand) That's what I mean! -- let's see your -- there they are -- my stones! the ones I gave you to celebrate Cheryl's -- wearin' them out on a date with another dick -- 'n a swarthy Arab thigh-prier no less -- I'll pry these off!
(trying, with drunken force, to yank her ring off)

LANA: (Struggling with him) But I had them reset -- nothing off-color about wearing your stones if I had them reset, first! Oh, Stephen! -- you're plastered --

TURHAN: (Standing calmly, going to STEPHEN) Excuse me, would you care to step out into the rooftop garden, and continue this in the shrubbery?

STEPHEN: Why, you crummy cream puff, we'll continue it right here in yer rubbery routh - a, mouth - which'll be rubbery in one minute!

TURHAN: (Taking a boxing stance) Up with your dukes.

ACQUA: Oh, what eef he pukes, zat blond, looks like he will --

HULK: And end da fight early - too bad.

STEPHEN: (Fumbling about) Lez go, womanizer! lez go...

(TURHAN and STEPHEN box, TURHAN assuming the stiff European form, STEPHEN lurching drunkenly and dirty, swinging wildly and below the belt. The PATRONS encircle them, shouting their approval, munching the cannolies, and making passes at each other. LANA is pressured to the breaking point.)

LANA: Oh, Stephen! - Turhan, stop! Somebody break them up! Oh, God! help me! help me! God!

M.C.: (Calling behind the curtain) Quick, kitten, get on! Distract these low-life boxing fans -- it's so unbecoming the club!

(SIMONE emerges from behind the curtain, wearing a makeshift throw-over in an attempt to conceal her cat-form. She sings, trying to caterwaul above the boisterous PATRONS. During her song, EBRIETY gets up, crosses to TURHAN's table, and exchanges the boxes. Then she exits with TURHAN's box.)

SIMONE: (Singing) I'm the Girl with the Golden Keys!
I give them out freely, then freeze:
Could you ask for anything more?
Je suis la belle fille aux clefs d'or!

They're the keys to my boudoir - my
bed! -

That's so easy to open I dread,
If your aim isn't marriage - just ruse -
Such a privilege comme ça you'll abuse!

Oh! I know that I'm foolish, not wise,
And men fill a virgin with lies:
But a long time has passed since I
felt a man's touch,
So distributing keys doesn't seem
like too much ---

(TURHAN, bloodied about the mouth, is winning the bout; but LANA, utterly distraught, and trying to pry the boxers apart because no one else will, finally pulls off her ring and throws it at STEPHEN's head. It bounces into the crowd.)

LANA: No one will stop you? Nothing will stop you?! -
except this?! Then take it back, you cheap
Indian-giving goon!

STEPHEN: (Diving after it) Cheryl's ring! - a ling ding!

VINNIE: Gee, Simone looks awful. Sings awful, too, pure
caterwauling!

(STEPHEN crawls about the dancefloor looking for the ring, to the delight of the amorous PATRONS. He ends at SIMONE's feet, recognizes her, and yanks slobbering on her throwover.)

STEPHEN: Simone, dearest, what're you doin' up here? You a Republican?

LANA: Simone dearest?? -Then that cat and Stephen are lov--?

SIMONE: (Torn between anger and fear) Stevie! Big stupid Stevie! My love! What a disgrace you make me!!

(STEPHEN's pull yanks off SIMONE's throwover, revealing her cat-form: she yowls as in rutting time: the CROWD joins in.)

STEPHEN: Huh? Pussy is pussy - but this is goin' too far!

VINNIE: I'll say! I hearda women changin' their minds - but their behinds?

NANNY: We toldja to clamp yer tramp amp - 'n we mean it!

SIMONE: (Desperately, to cover) Oh, this my cat-costume! just costume! - it time for my cat song -- band!

NANNY: (Staring hard at SIMONE) I always hated her... Puttin' on an act, 'n she proves out as chameleon as the next: annexed when vexed paws, claws 'n a tail...

VINNIE: So, Nanny, from which side of my family were you lost?

HULK: We'll show ya da family tree - 'n plant ya by it.

SIMONE: (Singing) Attack Cat spat
At this, then that.
But just say, "Scat!
Attack Black Cat!"
And, tit for tat,
She'll leave you flat!

(kicking STEPHEN: he passes out; the PATRONS then retake their seats, eating and listening to her)

Aristocrat,
Attack brat cat;
An acrobat,
Attack-rat cat;
No diplomat,
Attack chat-cat:
A democrat
Is big Black Cat!

(the M.C. and back-up SINGERS joining her)
 Her habitat
 Is where fat rat
 Had picked a mat
 And there just sat:
 Then pitapat
 Across that mat,
 Attack Black Cat:
 The end fat rat!

(The PATRONS applaud SIMONE's number while she leaps to the floor and paws over her crooked lover. One COUPLE dances quietly, the OTHERS mutter lecherously among themselves. LANA dabs TURHAN's bloody face. He picks up the white box.)

STEPHEN: Simone, my sweet, the ring....

SIMONE: Oh, poor Stevie, I will look for her ring for you.
 (love-lost, crawling around in frantic search)

LANA: Turhan, what can we do? There's the mark, not fourteen feet from us, so near and yet so far...

TURHAN: Will you excuse me? Can-time again, I'm afraid.

LANA: (Very straight) Turhan, if you take that, and go to the can now, don't ever come back.

TURHAN: (Upset; pause) Lana, I --

LANA: No, Turhan, this time I mean it.

TURHAN: (Very long pause; finally, lifting her hand and kissing it) Good night, Lana. I have been with many women. But you were the very most beautiful.

(TURHAN exits. VINNIE watches him go with great anxiety.)

VINNIE: I don't get it. Doesn't Mr. Bey conceal his works in the confection box that Ebriety took?

NANNY: So?

VINNIE: So what's in the box you replaced it with?

JOHN OC: Wouldn't you like to know.

ACQUA: I would!

NANNY: Why not tell the kid, John J.? Cinch the information won't get farther than this table.

JOHN OC: That is correct, cause neither will he. I figure you for about five minutes left of life, Master Teenage Terrorist, and then right here at this reserved ringside's where you buy it. That box Mr. Bey just picked up's got a set of works in it identical to his own - except for the fact that it's laced with an almost lethal blast of angel-dust, not heroin, get me? So the Turk'll be back twisted completely out of his ball park in four, five minutes and thinking you're the Pope, spatter your brains all over this clean nightclub wall.

NANNY: See, it's fun tellin' him, ain't it, John? Ya get off watchin' the whacker-off squirm this way, no?

JOHN OC: Most enjoyable.

VINNIE: You milk easy, John J., but I still don't get --

JOHN OC: What don't you get, egghead? My life-long dream was to be pope. And I'm eighty-five now, so it's right now. Or never!

VINNIE: Oh, I dunno, ya could live to be a hundred twenty-eight, twenty-nine. What's yer hurry, Cardinal?

JOHN OC: Look at him plead for a few more days, a few more minutes. No, no, my boy:- I pegged the Pope for a sure loser in this election, after all, he's not an actor, how could he win? And where would that leave me? - a mere Archbishop for what'd be left of my life! So I engaged Embezzling-Betty, your sweet old nanny here, to set you up with a special watka - containing a certain something special in it sold only by the Gypsy East of A - set you up for the coup of the century:- Sapping - oh, yes! - the Holy See. But then shrewd little wise-ass you had to go and uncover the scheme, sniffing out the sure-fire deal via sniffing Nan here's loud perfume, as 'twere - no?

VINNIE: Well, I dunno, I coulda been wrong. Hard liquor makes it hard fer the ol' schnazole to smell ri--

JOHN OC: But you weren't wrong, you rummy! -And therein rests your undoing! For once the Turk blasts you to kingdom-come, the press and public'll realize he mistook you for the Pope, and the Pope'll be a shoe-in for president on a sympathy vote, see? -And with the Vatican vacated, I'll be a shoe-in for pope! Get it all now?

VINNIE: Why do I all of a sudden not feel too good?... Maybe you kind folks tied these ropes too tight, they seem to be givin' me a tummy ache.

NANNY: Or ya could even be vice president instead - that is, if ya wanted to, John O'C.

VINNIE: Well, something to do with vice, at any rate.

JOHN OC: Nice, very nice: wise-cracking right up to your end, when you should be using these final moments profitably, making your peace with The Lord.

VINNIE: (Indicating ACQUANETTA) Prefer to be making this piece, if I'm so close to my end.

JOHN OC: Enough! -Hugh, put the gag back on.

ACQUA: (To VINNIE) Do not move so close to my end!

VINNIE: Love to get the chance to talk more to ya about jist that very thing sometime, hon -- ummmm -- (the HULK gags him)

NANNY: (Anxious) J.J., people are lookin' this way - at what Hugh's doin'!

JOHN OC: Then get up:- do something - sing, distract them.

(As NANNY gets up to head for the singers' steps, the lights soften dramatically on the nightclub, and come up in the Men's Room where EBRIETY is struggling to open the window.)

EBRIETY: Dammit, God musta goofed, it's stuck! Would take a Republican elephant to open this - it won't budge one bit.
(hearing steps at the door)
What's that? Someone's comin' in. Just my luck!

(EBRIETY slips behind the long window curtain. Since it does not reach to the floor, her feet remain visible beneath it. TURHAN enters the Men's Room, trembling. He rips the cords off the white box, removes the needle and vial, and rapidly shoots up. He screams in shock and pain. The sound startles EBRIETY who cries out herself and drops his actual works-container which she is still carrying. It falls with a thud, visible under the curtain. TURHAN turns slowly and sees it. Grasping his inner elbow with insufferable agony, he approaches the curtain cautiously, and tears it aside.)

TURHAN: You! The reincarnation woman. What are you doing in the men's --

(looking down at EBRIETY's feet)

And what is that?

(bending over painfully, picking up the box, and managing to open it; EBRIETY shakes with fear)
My works!

EBRIETY: No, no, I knew nothing - they forced me --

TURHAN: (Evenly) I want you to be very quiet. Strap this belt to my right arm. You work in a detox clinic, no? I'm not asking anything unusual of you.

(terrified, EBRIETY obeys; then, showing her his own charged needle:)

Now, use this needle. Here: in the white vein.

EBRIETY: A -- all right: if you promise --

TURHAN: (Grim) I said be quiet.

(Torturously, EBRIETY injects him, then lets the needle drop to the floor while she searches his face for his response. TURHAN addresses her calmly while rolling down his sleeve.)

TURHAN: Who forced you?

EBRIETY: Embezzlement-Betty... she's a nanny, 'n a maid... 'n a private secretary, 'n a actress 'n a singer, I guess... 'n who knows what all else, holds down a lotta gigs....

TURHAN: Yes. I know her -- sitting at the Pope's table?

EBRIETY: A - yeah - that one.

TURHAN: (Going to the window and examining it) Were having trouble with this window, were you?... You've got to undo the latch, that's all. That is, if you want to open it and go out.
(unhooking the latch and opening the window)
You did want to open this window and go out, didn't you?

EBRIETY: No, no, please! I'm innocent -- all my lives!

TURHAN: I'm afraid so are all of everybody's many lives. That's what makes them so tough, really.

(TURHAN seizes EBRIETY, cupping his hand over her mouth. Then he pulls her to the window, lifts her up and throws her

through it. She screams in her plunge just as the music revs up and NANNY begins her song with a scream nearly as loud. As NANNY sings, we see TURHAN take out the Lugar and fill its chamber with bullets. The lights fade the Men's Room down and out as they come up more brightly on NANNY. She launches into a tongue-twister; the M.C. backs her up.)

NANNY: (Singing) Nice Nice, Nice nice,
Nice Nice, nice nice,
Nice nice, nice Nice,
Nice nice, Nice Nice
Take my advice:
First ask what price!

Finding life too proper, prim,
Boring, solemn, even grim?
And each love the leaving type? -
Laugh at them, and smoke a pipe!

(swinging the gold golf ball watch suspended from
a chain around her neck)

Nice Nice, Nice nice,
Nice Nice, nice nice,
Nice nice, nice Nice,
Nice nice, Nice Nice,
Throw dice, think twice,
Quick cats eat mice!

(the PATRONS joining her in absolute orgiastic
frenzy - except for SIMONE who stares hard)

Had it thinking, searching for
Something finer, something more?
Shove these sex cannolies down:-
Brother! you'll be gonna town!

SIMONE: (Astounded) My gold golf ball watch! - Stevie's
present - then you are Sandra Martin: and you did
steal it, you Axis battle-ax!

NANNY: No, no, yer mistook, I ain't Sandra Martin! I'm --

(SIMONE springs at NANNY who flees back to the leftmost
table. SIMONE stalks her there and, as she begins to claw
NANNY, falls against VINNIE, sniffs him and recognizes him.)

SIMONE: (Meowing in dismay) Vin---!

(TURHAN re-enters the nightclub with steady frozen eyes and
grim determination, the Lugar drawn, and heads straight for
the leftmost table. LANA begins to scream uncontrollably,
and ACQUANETTA stands in fear, about to run. JOHN OC
signals to The HULK:)

JOHN OC: Hugh, stop the chippy!

(Quickly beyond all control, The HULK delivers a smashing blow to ACQUANETTA. Badly hurt, she collapses. The PATRONS graduate from orgy into chaos. SIMONE blocks TURHAN's way.)

SIMONE: No! Turhan! this is not the Po---

(TURHAN shoots SIMONE. She screams and dies. The HULK and JOHN OC grab VINNIE, holding him between them, his muffled sounds inaudible in the confusion. TURHAN fires at VINNIE, then turns and runs up to the club entrance where the M.C. holds forth a skeletal hand, stopping him and plucking the ticket stub from the pocket over TURHAN's heart:)

M.C: Excuse me, sir, you leaving? -Your ticket stub, please: And it's "5!" - the lucky number, folks! Which earns you our surprise door-prize!

(The M.C. turns automatically to the wide club entrance where JOHN P, in all his finery, enters arm in arm with The GYPSY. The M.C. hands TURHAN's ticket-stub to The GYPSY.)

GYPSY: Thank you, Master... of Ceremonies.... And your door-prize, Pilgrim:- the return of your five dollars.

(handing TURHAN the five dollars and pulling the Lugar from TURHAN's hand - which TURHAN failed to realize had somehow, in those brief seconds, become The GYPSY's pipe)

And my pipe, thank you.

(The PILGRIM turns back into the nightclub, going toward VINNIE. The CROWD clears a path for him.)

PILGRIM: (With ineffable anguish) Vinnie! Oh, VINNIE!!

(VINNIE stands, the mask falls from his face, he staggers a few steps, then collapses and dies. The lights and cast fade out from around The PILGRIM who remains in a dimming spot - with his empty hand and a dead boy.

End Act III.