

SUCCESS AND SUCCESSION

a play by Ronald Tavel

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Characters:

GLENN GLASER, a case worker in his mid-forties, of medium height and fifty pounds overweight.

JENNY, an office temporary in her mid to late thirties, rather short and extremely heavy.

RICHARD GLASER, a composer in his mid-forties, tall and slender; Glenn's older brother by a year or two, but looking considerably younger.

LUK, a Taiwanese immigrant girl, nineteen or twenty, thin, sexy, and very beautiful. (Pronounced "Luck")

MR. WHITE, a black plumber in his mid-fifties, taller than average, well-built, and quite matter-of-fact.

BARTON, a flamboyant percussionist and composer, thirty, fairly tall and about twenty pounds overweight.

JOLENE, a European architect and composer, fifty-two, short, trim, and elegant, a woman of great self-possession and strength.

Place:

The main floor of a New York brownstone.

Time:

November and December, the mid-1980s.

Scenes:

Act I.

- Scene 1. The middle of a night early in November.
2. Six o'clock that morning.
3. Late that afternoon.

Act II.

- Scene 1. Early on a Monday evening, two and a half weeks later.
2. Very late that night.
3. Early the next morning.

Act III.

- Scene 1. An afternoon two weeks later.
2. An evening two weeks following that.

Set:

The main floor of a New York brownstone. Upstage right a bay window looking out on a garden. Above the window art nouveau stained-glass panels. Beneath the window a large, comfortable couch, somewhat sunken in the center. To its left, an end-table heaped with rice paper rubbings, artists' materials, a wind-up toy ostrich, a box of fancy chocolates, and an antique lamp. Near the couch a battered TV, facing up, set on a low stand. A telephone on the TV stand or end-table. Wing right is covered with a floor-to-ceiling bookcase holding, amidst its hundreds of books, a stereo set, speakers, a bust or two, and various small artifacts. Two or three parlor chairs arranged in front of the bookcase. Wing left, on or near the apron, a windowed door to the street, with several feet of the outside stoop visible and going into the wing. At left, up from the door, an ornate cabinet cluttered with papers, clothes, and materials: among them an emerald, semi-smiling Buddha. A recessed area from up center to wing left, about 10 feet in depth to the backdrop, forming a kind of wide corridor which serves as the kitchenette. In the tiled kitchenette a handsome refrigerator, sink, counter with cups and an electric coffee-maker on it, etc. At center, on the right wall of the corridor, a staircase leading to (unseen bedrooms, bathrooms, etc., on) the second floor. At the end of the corridor an imposing door to the basement. Downstage, to left of center, a small table with chairs. One or two large rice paper rubbings, with Oriental motifs, framed on the walls. Plants, standing lamps, further odd antiques, and old newspapers and clothes scattered here and there.

ACT I

SCENE 1.

(The middle of a night, early in November. Dark stage. After a few moments of pregnant silence, a crumbling roar that builds to a tremendous climax, a man's terrifying screams, and then, with great volume, an awesome crashing sound. Confused cries join the screaming coming from the upper floors. Finally, a light-switch is clicked and a dim glow is thrown onto the set from the top of the staircase. Offstage voices all at once:)

GLENN: (Offstage) My God, Richard, what happened?!

JENNY: (OS) What is it? - what's the matter?!

GLENN: (OS) What happened??

RICHARD: (OS) The ceiling caved in!

GLENN: (OS) Are you hurt?

RICHARD: (OS) I can't tell - I don't think so.

JENNY: (OS) What is it? - shit! What time is it?

GLENN: (OS) The ceiling caved in.

JENNY: (OS) I told you to have it fixed! Look at that, will you?

(GLENN and JENNY appear at the top of the staircase, supporting RICHARD between them. All three are in half-pajamas, or underwear, trying to pull on bathrobes. GLENN and JENNY help RICHARD down the stairs.)

RICHARD: Oh, my God, Jesus, what a scare!

JENNY: What the heck did you do?

RICHARD: Nothing. I'd just fallen asleep up there, then

I heard this tremendous roar, and the whole howling ceiling came down on me.

JENNY: Must've been the rain yesterday.

GLENN: (To JENNY) Put a goddamn light on, will you?

JENNY: Which one?

GLENN: Which one! Any one, asshole!

JENNY: I can't see a thing!

GLENN: God, she still doesn't know where the shitty light-switches are!

(JENNY clicks on the end-table lamp. RICHARD is bleeding from his forehead and right hand; he tests the blood with a finger)  
Are you hurt?

RICHARD: No, not badly. Jist a coupla cuts 'n scratches. Luckily, I was sleeping with my hand covering my face: like this. And it came down flat - right on my head and back - in one whole chunk.

JENNY: It ain't in one whole chunk now. -It's in a lotta pieces. Probably broke up into pieces when it smashed on your head.

GLENN: (Impatient) Go see how bad it is, will you, what are you standing here for?

JENNY: (Hopping upstairs) I told you we should've fixed that ceiling before.

GLENN: She told me! Oh, wow! I have to be up so early in the morning. I got two child-abuses left over from yesterday 'n a half-dozen welfare bunnies comin' in for review at 7:50.

RICHARD: And I'm dead, too:- I just now fell out.

GLENN: (Dabbing RICHARD's blood) Then go back to sleep.

RICHARD: (Lighting a cigarette) I can't sleep up there! What if what's still standing, gives way?

GLENN: It won't, don't be stupid.

RICHARD: How do you know it won't?

GLENN: So sleep on the couch by the window.

RICHARD: That broken-down couch? Can you sleep on it?

GLENN: Of course, you can. I did, a lot of times.  
It's very comfortable.

RICHARD: (Testing the couch with his fist) Oh, man.  
(lying on it, and falling in)  
Like a sinking ship.

GLENN: (Annoyed/insulted) Never mind.

JENNY: (Appearing on the stairs) It's a slab about  
one-third the ceiling. It must be in a thousand  
pieces, all over the floor. What a mess.

GLENN: And the rest of the ceiling?

JENNY: There's some long cracks in the rest, but I  
think that's holding.

GLENN: Did you bring a blanket?

JENNY: You didn't tell me to bring a blanket.

GLENN: And how the hell is Richard supposed to sleep  
down here without a blanket?

JENNY: So, you don't tell me. How should I know he's  
sleeping down here?  
(going back up in a huff)

GLENN: (In the kitchenette, apparently checking a  
clock there) Oh, God! it's 4 o'clock. I  
gotta get up in two hours.

RICHARD: (On the couch, looking up, fearfully) Will I  
be safe down here?

GLENN: Yes, you'll be safe! The whole house isn't  
caving in.  
(heading for the stairs)

RICHARD: Oh, no? What about those cracks in the hallway?

JENNY: (Re-appearing on the stairs with a blanket and  
tossing it to RICHARD) Here, this is a nice  
one, your mother made it. I'll sweep up the  
rubble in your room tomorrow. I gotta go back  
to bed, too.

GLENN: (Blocked by JENNY on the stairs) Get out of my  
way, will you?

(disappearing up the steps)

JENNY: (To RICHARD) Is that O.K.? You never saw that one before, did you?

RICHARD: Yeah, it's fine. Thank you, Jen.

JENNY: So I'll see you in the morning.

RICHARD: In the morning? But I just fell asleep a half hour ago. Look, I'm still trembling.

JENNY: Try not to. Sweet dreams, your majesty.

RICHARD: Sweet dreams? -That awful crumbling sound must've touched off a dream:- I saw this four hundred pound monster coming at me and I couldn't get away, I started shrieking. Shit! I can't fall back asleep now.

JENNY: Well I can.  
(disappearing upstairs)

RICHARD: So what do I do instead --  
(looking up)  
stare at the ceiling all night? -If I do, be the first time it ever had a purpose.  
(lying back and shaking his head in dismay)  
What next?

(He puts out his cigarette and, bending over, yanks apart two extension cords, switching off the light.)

(LIGHTS.)

## SCENE 2.

(Six o'clock that morning. Pale dawn from the windows falling on RICHARD, who tosses and turns in his semi-doze on the couch. An alarm clock which rattles off upstairs is immediately silenced and followed by cigarette-coughing (GLENN's) of a rather violent nature. RICHARD pulls a huge cushion over his head. A second, louder alarm goes off, followed this time by JENNY's cigarette-coughing which curiously resembles GLENN's - in pitch, stages of increasing aggravation, etc. Some banging around and slamming of doors, climaxed by loud retching sounds.)

RICHARD throws off the cushion and grabs for his watch, staring at it as if timing something. Then we hear JENNY's retching: RICHARD seems satisfied.)

GLENN: (OS, calling) Jenny, did you see my white shirt?

JENNY: (OS, calling) The shirts are still at the laundry.

GLENN: (OS) Dammit! I told you to take them out yesterday.

JENNY: (OS) I was busy.

GLENN: (OS) Busy, bullshit! You forgot them again.

JENNY: (OS) I told you I had a doctor's appointment.

(Slamming and dropping sounds. More coughing and gagging.)

GLENN: (OS) Oh, God!

JENNY: (OS) Now what's the matter?

GLENN: (OS, groaning) Did you see my checkbook?

JENNY: (OS) How should I see your checkbook?

GLENN: (OS) Ahh, shit, I had it right here yesterday.

JENNY: (OS) Shit, there's no hot water.

(More opening and slamming of drawers, etc., from the second floor. JENNY, half-dressed, comes running down the stairs and rushes back to the sink, there managing to fill an electric coffee-maker with water and grinds while simultaneously filling a small pot-pipe. Dexterously, she plugs the machine into the wall while igniting her pipe. The further cacophony of objects being tossed about above.)

RICHARD: (Bleary) What the hell is going on up there?

JENNY: Oh, good morning, King Richard. How are you? I forgot you were sleeping down here.

RICHARD: What's all that racket in the bedroom?

JENNY: Oh, he can't find his checkbook again.

RICHARD: What does he need his checkbook for?



JENNY: The plumber. Wanna toke?

RICHARD: I'm still sleeping.

JENNY: Gotta finish dressing.  
(rushing up the stairs and running into GLENN coming down)

GLENN: Get out of my way, will you?  
(she does, and he descends, heading straight for the bookcase)  
Damn! where did I put it?  
(flipping quickly through some books, dropping one after another on the floor)  
It was right here yesterday.

RICHARD: Try to remember.

GLENN: Oh, shut up!

RICHARD: (Somewhat intimidated) Well, I mean if you stop and thi--

GLENN: -You O.K.?

RICHARD: Yeah, I'm fine.

GLENN: Go back to sleep. Look, the plumber's coming, tell him I'll pay tonight.

RICHARD: What time?

GLENN: (In the kitchenette) I don't know. Is this coffee finished?

RICHARD: I mean what time is he coming?

GLENN: (Impatient; pouring a cup) I just said I don't know: They always come in the morning.

RICHARD: Great.

GLENN: Too strong! She fucking every day makes it too strong. -I don't have no time to drink this.  
(slamming the cup down, scrambling to the down-stage table, and sifting through a heap of newspapers on it. Calling up:-)  
Jenny! where's the car key?

JENNY: (OS, calling) Wait a second, will you, Glenn, I'll be down in a minute.

GLENN: I want it now, I wanna see if the car's working!  
Why don't you leave it where it's supposed to be?

JENNY: (OS) I did.

GLENN: So where the hell is it? Oh, I can't stand this.

JENNY: (OS) Isn't it in the cabinet?

GLENN: (By the cabinet) No, it is not in the cabinet!

JENNY: (OS) Well, I'll be down in a sec 'n look for it.

GLENN: (As in pain) We're so goddamn late...

RICHARD: Can I help?

JENNY: (Tearing downstairs) Go out to the car, will you, I'll find it quicker without you here.

GLENN: (Red-faced) And what're you gonna do?

JENNY: (In the kitchenette) I didn't have my coffee yet.

GLENN: God, she didn't have her coffee yet! Do you know what time it is?

JENNY: Glenn!! -Calm down, will you? Wanna toke?

GLENN: (Rushing back and grabbing the pipe) Gimme.

RICHARD: What should I tell him?

GLENN: (Puffing) Who?

RICHARD: The plumber.

GLENN: That he looks wonderful. What do you mean what should you tell him?

JENNY: (Coming forward, with GLENN trailing her, with cups of coffee for herself and RICHARD; loud:)  
Look, will you go out to the car?!

GLENN: (Shouting) I don't have the key, dummy!

JENNY: Here it is.

GLENN: (His voice dropping several decimals) Where?

JENNY: Right under the Buddha - in the cabinet: where

I said I put it.  
(producing the key from under the large Buddha)

GLENN: (Deflated) Oh..... So what the hell is that Buddha doing on top of everything?

RICHARD: (Apologetic) I put it there. I wanted him to sit on the score and see if he could hatch it.

GLENN: Do you have to keep your score right where we leave the key 'n the license 'n mechanic's bills?

RICHARD: I'm sorry. I didn't know if I'd remember otherwise - I don't remember anything when I get up. I have to take it to the xerox place before they close today.

GLENN: Yeah? Well first, you have to get up before they close.

RICHARD: You know I don't usually sleep at night, Glenn. And with the ceiling fall--

JENNY: (Having gulpped down her coffee) You ready?

GLENN: Yeah. See you later.

(GLENN and JENNY exit arguing through the door to the stoop, and argue well on into the wings.)

GLENN: So give it to me now before you lose it again.

JENNY: I wanna drive today!

GLENN: (OS) Not with me in the car, you don't! (etc.)

JENNY: (OS) So here -- damn you! -- take it. You're too much. (etc.)

GLENN: (OS) Oh, shut up.

(RICHARD sighs and piles first one, and then a second, cushion over his head. He squirms on the couch trying to get comfortable, but since it sinks in the center, his body is in a kind of arc, belly downmost. LUK, dressed to the nines in evening clothes and jewelry, appears on the stoop, fumbles in her purse for several moments, and then rings the bell - a startlingly loud, grating buzzer. RICHARD groans and pulls the cushions tighter around his ears, trying to ignore it. LUK rings again, twice or thrice, jamming the pin hard, and this time it sticks, clanging the buzzer non-stop. RICHARD gives up, throws

the cushions wildly away, and sits erect, cross-eyed.)

RICHARD: No rest for the dreary.

(He stumbles across the room, tying the sash of his over-large bathrobe, draws the curtain on the glass door, peers through it, sees LUK, and unlocks the door. She stands in the doorway for a moment, perplexed. LUK has a nervous stutter, and speaks English poorly.)

LUK: Ah, Richard! I sorry, sorry I wake you. I think they still home. I not know you hear bell.

RICHARD: I'd have to be the first deaf composer since Beethoven not to hear this bell. -You don't have a key?

LUK: I have! I forget. I sorry.

RICHARD: Well, come in, Luk, they just left. You missed them by a minute. -You didn't see them on the street?

LUK: No, I come different street. I sorry, I think I have key here in pocketbook.

RICHARD: (As LUK finally enters, startled at her get-up) Working a lamppost, I mean, night shift?

LUK: No, I not work last night. I go out.

RICHARD: Oh.  
(stepping outside and picking at the pin with his fingernail. The buzzing stops.)

LUK: Get back late. It morning already. Well, good night. Sorry I make wake up for me.

RICHARD: That's O.K. I wasn't sleeping real deep anyhow.

LUK: (Spotting the blanket) Oooo, you sleep on couch?

RICHARD: The ceiling in my room fell down. So I thought I'd try this - ceiling, that is.

LUK: Ceiling fall down? Oh, my God!

RICHARD: No, don't worry, I wasn't hurt.

LUK: Must fix it. Have to call somebody.

RICHARD: Later.

LUK: Must fix goddamn bell, too. Tell Glenn.

RICHARD: (Flatly) Yeah. I'll tell him.  
Tomorrow.

LUK: Well, good night.

RICHARD: Good night, Luk.

(LUK exits up the stairs. RICHARD sniffs the air.)

RICHARD: (Sarcastic) Great perfume. "My Sin in Ho Chi  
Min," I think it's called.

(RICHARD makes a crash-dive for the couch. But soon as  
he re-adjusts to it, we hear ear-splitting, dreadful  
disco music from the second floor. He groans, listens in  
pain for a moment, then calls up:)

RICHARD: Luk, could you turn that down a little?

LUK: (OS) Oh, 'scuse me. I turn off. Not know you  
hear.

RICHARD: (To himself) Course not, I'm deaf.

(The music stops. RICHARD pulls up the blanket, but  
blinks his eyes alternately as the sun brightens through  
the window and his sleep prospects dim. Suddenly, one of  
the stained-glass plates slips its panel above the window  
and falls out, smashing to pieces on the couch and nearest  
parlor chair. Disturbed by the glass-fall, a wind-up toy  
ostrich on the end-table begins to circle about.)

RICHARD: Holy Baloney!

(RICHARD stares non-plused at the destruction, examines  
himself, hopes he is not hurt, and decides to reach for a  
cigarette amidst the smithereens. MR. WHITE, dressed in  
overalls and carrying a tool chest, appears on the stoop.  
He looks up, as if checking the house-number with a card  
he holds in his hand, then rings the bell. It immediately  
sticks, clanging mercilessly.)

RICHARD: It's Grand Central Station, crossroads of one  
hundred something-or-other lives daily!

(RICHARD jumps up, runs to the door, unlocks it, steps  
outside and once again plucks the pin with his fingernail.)

RICHARD: (Sailing) Where would I be if I bit my nails?

WHITE: (Humorless) Mr. Glaser?

RICHARD: Yes.

WHITE: You the landlord?

RICHARD: Uh-uh, my brother is.

WHITE: He here?

RICHARD: He's already gone to work.

WHITE: Oh.  
(looking at his watch)  
I'm Mr. White.

RICHARD: Of course.

WHITE: The plumber. Yer brother called about a leak?

RICHARD: Yeah - you can see it there by the curb.  
(pointing out and down, to the street, wing left)  
See, where the water's coming up through the  
pavement?

WHITE: (Looking) How long that been?

RICHARD: Don't know. Coupla days, I guess.

WHITE: Uh-huh. Well, I gotta check in the basement.  
That there's prob'ly the pipe comin' from the  
main waterline under the street. It goes into  
yer cellar.

RICHARD: Well, come in: I'll show you where it is.

WHITE: (Not stopping to wipe his muddy boots on the  
doormat) Thanks.

RICHARD: (Noticing) This way.  
(preceeding MR. WHITE through the living room  
and kitchenette back to the basement door)

WHITE: How's yer water pressure been? In the shower  
an' all?

RICHARD: Pretty low.  
(opening the door)  
The basement's right down there.

WHITE: O.K., take me a minute.

RICHARD: (As MR. WHITE descends) You need me?

WHITE: It's jist a standard trapdoor. I'll find it.

(Grabbing a mop and broom, RICHARD works his way along the kitchenette wiping up MR. WHITE's foottracks. Awesome hammer and pulley sounds blast up through the floor. RICHARD shudders. Lighting his cigarette, he switches on the TV and starts gathering the broken glass. A shrill TV WEATHERWOMAN is heard. LUK, in a see-thru negligee, appears atop the stairs as RICHARD begins scoring, all these sounds apparently, on a music sheet.)

LUK: Oh, Rich, 'scuse me, I get a phone calls?

RICHARD: Um, not when I was here. Lemme see if someone left you a note or something.  
(looking through paper scraps in the cabinet)  
No, I don't see any.

LUK: From Chinee Restaurant Associate'?

RICHARD: Nope: you expecting them to call?

LUK: 'Bout a job. The big guy he hire for everyone.

RICHARD: Nothing, sorry. But if you're expecting to hear about a job, maybe you should hang around the phone more, no?

LUK: (Annoyed) I hang around! They not call.

RICHARD: You gotta push.  
(seeing LUK bend to adjust a garter)  
Jobs are harder to get than a virgin these days.

LUK: (Absolutely no pick-up on his insinuation) I know this. Thank you.  
(exiting upstairs. RICHARD returns to scoring)

TV: "...now the local forecast: Well, it's going to be another hot and sticky day in New York."

RICHARD: Naturally.

TV: "Temperatures are expected to climb into the low 90s by late afternoon and don't look for much relief through the remainder of the week..."

RICHARD: (Playing the volume up and down) Wonder why they even bother to call it autumn? It jist goes from air-conditioning to steam-heat around

here, without so much as a quarter-tone between  
 .... New York is nature at its most chickenshit.  
 Leaves ya always uncomfortable, while withholding  
 the action that would make that worthwhile:- like  
 hurricanes, earthquakes, avalanches! And yet it  
 suits this town to a "T": Discomfort 'n Dullness,  
 thy name is New York.... O.K., lady, yer tones -  
 monitored jist a bit - will counterpoint this  
 trash ya relay with harmonic punctuation....  
 (clinking the glass splinters as he gathers them)  
 Hmmm. And maybe for the 2nd movement....

(MR. WHITE re-enters from the basement, and shuts the door  
 behind him. His face, hands, and overalls are soiled.)

WHITE: (Not seeing RICHARD, calling) Yoo-hoo?

RICHARD: (Turning off the TV) Yes?

WHITE: It's the pipe to the mainline, all right. It's  
 busted. Want us to start now?

RICHARD: I guess you have to. We got a summons from the  
 Department of Water Supply. They gave us three  
 days to fix it. After that we're fined, daily.

WHITE: Yer brother know how much this is gonna cost?

RICHARD: I suppose: cause he said he'll pay you this  
 afternoon. But it has to be done, no?

WHITE: Yup.

RICHARD: So, O.K. - I'll be up here if you need me.

WHITE: Jist don't use the water. We gonna turn it off  
 fer a few hours.

RICHARD: All right, gimme time to fill some pails.

WHITE: Go ahead. You got a few minutes.

(MR. WHITE exits through the street door. RICHARD crosses  
 to the sink and fills large pails while reciting a weather  
 forecast with exaggerated volume modulation. Joining him,  
 is the unbearable drilling through the pavement outside.)

RICHARD: "And now the New York weathercast:  
 Forget Novembers of the past --  
 Cause we've a heat wave that should push  
 Every gal to sun her tush..."  
 --But I don't know if I like the machine drill



as ensemble back-up.

(He brings the pails to the table downstage. The basement door is flung open and BARTON appears, disarrayed and in high dudgeon, immediately establishing his presence.)

BARTON: Well, that's the last straw! First I have to get up and show White where the trapdoor to the pipe is, then I have to let his assistant in through the basement, then he says he can take care of everything so I finally go back to bed and lock my bedroom door, and this fucking drilling starts! Do you hear that outside?

RICHARD: No, I'm deaf.

BARTON: I told your damn brother to tell White to come next Monday when I'm off and don't mind not sleeping. But would he? - no! He lets him come today when I got a show to jam all night. I don't get home till one in the morning and then I got to first start composing the musical, I don't get to bed till five in the morning and - what time is it now? - 7 fucking o'clock - less than two hours sleep and I'll be up the livelong day with them plumbers and then have to split this joint, thinkin' straight, at 5:15!

RICHARD: But, Barton, Glenn told you I'd take care of the plumbers.

BARTON: You don't know what to do! Besides, they'll be down there bangin' around on the pipes all day - soon as they stop this drilling, if they ever stop! So how am I supposed to sleep? I might as well stay up with them. God! - I begged your brother to schedule the plumbers for Monday.

RICHARD: I don't think White could make it on Monday.

BARTON: Then why not the Monday after that? Glenn's staked out my ass, Richard! Why the hell must he fix that leak this week?

RICHARD: Cause there's a big fine if we wait.

BARTON: Oh, fuck the fine, nobody'll know the difference with a few days. You think they come around and check?

RICHARD: So what the hell are you yelling at me for? It's not my house! Why don't you open your mouth to

Glenn?

BARTON: I did, I pleaded with him - oh, what's the use! Imagine! He thinks I can sleep through this. He doesn't know what I go through, he's at work during the day: I have to take care of every damn thing that goes wrong here.  
(flopping into a parlor chair)  
Gimme a Barracini, will you?  
(springing up)  
Eeeeeekkk! What's this?!  
(picking up a shard of glass from the seat)  
Glass? - on the seat? Your fucking brother's out to get my ass - literally! - to cut up my ass! I told you, it's a fuckface plot, you said I'm paranoid!

RICHARD: (Handing BARTON a chocolate) Oh, Barton, please, it's too early in the morning.

BARTON: Hell - this is... it's a dagger of stained-glass! -from?  
(RICHARD points to the empty panel above)  
How many times did I warn that Glenn about the stained-glass windows? - that one, and every other one of them in this house. They're irreplaceable! They don't make this stuff anymore! Once it's gone, it's gone. I nagged and nagged him to have them remounted before they break - you could see for months this one was about to go. And the ones upstairs are nearly as bad. But does he listen to me? Oh, no, never.

RICHARD: Come on, don't exaggerate: there's a shop on the drag that makes stained-glass.

BARTON: Not like this! This is antique, it's priceless. They do that new crap - imitation art nouveau:- it looks 60s psychedelic! I mean, if ya put the joint up for sale, which he's always threatening to, I think the wammo price he expects is the original wood-paneling and the stained-glass. That's what this house is about, man!

RICHARD: So that's what this house is all about. Glad you told me: cause up to this point, I was rather puzzled.

BARTON: (Pause; a new, calmer tone) So what are you doing up this early? Lemme have another barracuda there.

RICHARD: (As BARTON grabs the candy instead) You're not gonna believe this, but just after I got to sleep almost a third of the ceiling in the top front room collapsed. So that was the end of that.

BARTON: (Calmly, turning to face RICHARD, and taking RICHARD's cup of coffee from his hands) Your sleep or the top front room?

RICHARD: The ceiling, not --

BARTON: No, no, I'm serious. There's been cracks in the walls, too, up there for years, each time it rains they get bigger. And longer. Like running blood. But does your brother call someone in? You know how often I lecture him, and get on his case to have them plastered?... He shouldn't own a house, no sir-ee, a nice quiet efficiency and that's all. Glenn can't take care of a building, what does he need a four-storey brownstone like this for?

RICHARD: (Very direct: and steady:) For you. And Jenny and Luk. And your respective friends.

BARTON: (Pensive) And you, when you come around - and your mother. He'd be better off without us....  
(pause; sipping the coffee)  
The Fall of the House of Usher....  
(long pause. An up tone:)  
So - how hot was it, really?

RICHARD: (Looking up) Thailand?

BARTON: I don't mean this coffee a half hour ago.

RICHARD: Action or weather-wise?

BARTON: Never mind the action, I know you. Probably made the princess and queen mum dowager on the same weekend, and both twice, assumin' they got them kinda things there. I mean the weather.

RICHARD: I was soaked in sweat morning, noon, 'n night, looked like I did my laundry while I was still wearing it.

BARTON: 'Cept you didn't smell as if you did.

RICHARD: Nope, I was pretty ripe.

BARTON: (Stabbing) But are you ripe for New York, now?

- RICHARD: (Standing; pointedly evasive) Actually, you didn't stink that much, cause you showered four, five times a day 'n the maids abducted yer duds soon as you discarded them.
- BARTON: And you abducted the maids.
- RICHARD: Sex isn't everything. Came to seem like nothing, after a while. Was all prostitutes, anyhow.
- BARTON: And the job was as meaningful as digging ditches.
- RICHARD: Half the time that's exactly what I thought it was. Imagine: me teaching anatomy.
- BARTON: Your specialty, no?
- RICHARD: Ugliest country I've ever seen, concrete and wasteland, non-stop traffic-jams, bottle-necks, 'n grid-locks. Air pollution that makes L.A. an asthmatic's health retreat.
- BARTON: (Searching in the cabinet) Sounds like the perfect getaway. You know, I never understood what you were looking for there. I'm looking for my mail here.
- RICHARD: Their microintervals are flip-flopping western music right now. Any composer ignoring that, is as with it these days as a Born-again Christian.
- BARTON: (Checking through his mail) Still harping on microtonality. I thought you were over that.
- RICHARD: It's nothing to be over - or that will be over.
- BARTON: (Removing the Buddha from its perch) But you can study all that shit on tapes. Or find some swami here in New York to teach it to you. You didn't have to go to Bangkok to learn it.
- RICHARD: That's like cooking curry with a recipe cut out of McCall's and thinking you know what Indian culture is all about.
- BARTON: (Sitting with the Buddha in his lap and, quite sickeningly, duplicating its semi-smile) That is what it's all about.... By the way, you still talk to yourself? I can hear everything down there in the basement, you know.
- RICHARD: (Finding it impossible to respond; pause) Are

1-2-18

you gonna wait up with the plumbers, cause I want to xerox my --

BARTON: O.K., so what were you looking for there?

RICHARD: Oh, Barton, how can you ask me that after so many years?.... I was looking for a jungle, a perfect woman, a flood, a typhoon, the Oriental fantasy Rimsky-Korsakoff promised, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, a place in which to fade happily away and not to have to write music any more.

BARTON: You think there's such a place?

RICHARD: There is, I've known them. A place to have a ball, some escape from competition, adventure!

BARTON: So why there?

RICHARD: Bangkok? -People've loved it.

BARTON: Composers?

RICHARD: I said I wasn't thinking of myself as a composer when I went.

BARTON: You're such a fool. You never stop thinking of yourself as a great composer.

RICHARD: I'm over that. When was the last time a piece of mine was played? On my trip back, I applied for a residency in every music department across the country and every door was slammed in my face. Too long, too loud, too complex, too expensive to mount, too time-consuming to learn, too difficult to play, you name it, they found a reason, and a new, a different one in every academy or college I hit.

BARTON: You gotta give it time.

RICHARD: How can you say that? I've given it years. No one has been as tenacious as I. It's twelve years since I had a major concert. Thirteen, really. And thirteen years since I've been in love. -New York!

BARTON: (Fed-up) Still looking for love!

RICHARD: Cause there has to be someone, some specific one, that work must be shared with or it has no reason to be.

1-2-19

BARTON: So who has that? You think yer kid-brother does?

RICHARD: Well: what about his wife?

BARTON: Luk? The Taiwan tart?

RICHARD: What do you mean?

BARTON: What time did she come in last night?

RICHARD: She didn't come in last night. She came in this morning, ten, fifteen minutes ago.

BARTON: So, that's what I'm sayin'. Like that every day.

RICHARD: (Astonished: and hurt) What do you mean?

BARTON: Why, you think Luk and Glenn are really married? She jist married him to get American citizenship. They don't sleep together, she hardly even sees Glenn. But got it timed so's she runs into him, on her way out usually, to hit him up for money. -Which he promptly forks over.

RICHARD: It's not my business. I really don't wanna hear.

BARTON: So, you asked, I don't gossip.

RICHARD: Then what about Jenny?

BARTON: Two-ton Jenny, pothead-extraordinaire? -What about her? She don't put out for him any more - don't you know that? She found him too unattractive, years ago. And - why - she's so out of it now -- you know she totalled the car again last week? - the third time in a single year. And who pays for it? - your kid-brother.

RICHARD: She totalled the car?

BARTON: Yup. Wouldn't tell Glenn where it was, that VW was so mangled, didn't want him to see.

RICHARD: So why does he let her drive it?

BARTON: Only way she can get to work after she drops him at the subway - out in Jersey - there's no public transportation out there. And Thank God she has that job, pigeon-holing - the bitch was unemployed for twenty months.

RICHARD: But, three times in one year!

- BARTON: It's a suicide trip. Which may be her only way to compete - with Luk, you, me even. But I think she's also just suicidal, 'n Glenn's not exactly the opposite. Last winter the cops picked her up wandering naked through the snow. Stark, raving naked, she'd taken LSD, didn't know who she was. And we didn't know where she was for two weeks, they'd kept her in Bellevue, a Ms Jane Doe.
- RICHARD: (Alarmed) But how can we stop her? - and Glenn--
- BARTON: You can't! No one can stop people when they wanna do themselves in. Look, I have been very, very close to your brother for fifteen years. Closer, believe me, than you ever were to him. And how many nights over those years have you and I wasted, discussing how we can help him? And Jenny? -They both need shrinkers, a decade apiece of intensive, Amazon Injin head-shrinking.
- RICHARD: Have you brought that up with Glenn?
- BARTON: He hates Amazons. -Oh, Richard, you're so naive! You think Glenn would ever spend a penny on himself, much less fifty bucks an hour? You see what he was wearing this morning?
- RICHARD: The blue, two-breasted jack--
- BARTON: (Getting a large Manila envelope out from the bookcase) That same piece of shit he wore to college, no? Listen, enough about them. I got this package from my agent yesterday: it's the assignment for a projected sit-com, 'bout a punk band and their "zany" screw-ups. (giving RICHARD the envelope) And they should play about one 'n a half numbers in each entry, plus the credits theme 'n lead-ins 'n lead-outs, and so on. He wants me to whip up the pilot. But I'm much too busy now. You wanna do it? -I gave you a big build-up?
- RICHARD: (Looking through the envelope) A punk pilot?
- BARTON: It'll pay the bills. Get realistic.
- RICHARD: Realistic? TV's "realistic" version of punks?
- BARTON: If it catches on, you'll have plenty of time to write, what is it? - microtonal New York ragas or whatever the hell they are, to your intellectual, and no one in the audience's, heart's content.

I gotta go down. That drilling finally stopped. Wanna make sure they don't demolish my living room. I'll tell my agent you're on.

RICHARD: But... I don't do this kind of --

BARTON: (Heading for the basement) You never tried. Now you have to. You apply yourself, you can do anything. Like me. Who would've thought I could be a composer? I was an unknown drummer for how long, a dog-eat-dog decade 'n a half?

(A loud, dry gurgling sound sputters from the kitchenette.)

RICHARD: (Startled) What's that?

BARTON: (Stopping dead) A microtonal New York raga?

RICHARD: Very humorous. It's - the - Holy Dreck!  
(rushing with BARTON back to the kitchenette)  
The electric coffee-maker! Look at this: - it's empty and still plugged in! Hot as hell! Who --  
(pulling the plug)

BARTON: Of all the heavy hippo's dick things to do! That could short the circuit 'n start a fire! -Who left it on like this? --Don't tell me:-

BARTON & RICHARD: (Together) Jenny!!

BARTON: What did I just say?! So fucked-up on dope, she'll incinerate all of us! Yup, that's her two-time loser's way out, jist a matter of time. God! this house!

(LIGHTS.)

### SCENE 3.

(Late that afternoon. The sun is long gone from the open window. GLENN trudges up outside, lugging groceries, his heavy briefcase, a tape machine and The NY Times. He looks very tired, is almost stooped. He unlocks the door, enters as if in pain, and throws his briefcase and Times on the downstage table: they upset a pail of water there which tilts and spills over on them, soaking both of them completely. GLENN cries out in what appears to be a



frighteningly abnormal over-reaction to the mishap:)

GLENN: Oh, God! Who left this water here?! Oh, God,  
OH GOD!!  
(grabbing clothes and newspapers piled on a  
chair by the table and wiping the water on  
the table and floor while cursing out loud:)  
What fuckin' shit, shit... I can't believe this--  
(RICHARD appears on the stairs as if about to  
rush down to go out)  
Who put these pails here, oh, man....

RICHARD: (Stopping short) Oh, wow, I did, Glenn --

GLENN: (Furious) For what?

RICHARD: White hadda shut off the water, so I filled tho--

GLENN: You had to leave them here!

RICHARD: I'm sorry, I wanted them out of the way.

GLENN: (Screaming) This is out of the way! right where  
I come in!

RICHARD: (Standing still) Let me help wipe --

GLENN: (Soaking more clothes) No, never mind, I'll do  
it, like every rotten job around here.

RICHARD: But let me --

GLENN: You'll make it worse, I got it, just keep away.  
(referring to the clothes)  
Jenny's crap - I told her about storing her  
shit here by the damn doorway. -Good!

RICHARD: (Not coming down) I can get some rags upst--

GLENN: Did you call that bitch?

RICHARD: Who?

GLENN: Who's subletting your apartment?!

RICHARD: Not this week --

GLENN: When?

RICHARD: I can't call her every day.

GLENN: (Clarifying) When did she say she's leaving?

RICHARD: Soon as she finds a cheap apartment.

GLENN: Well call her again. Tonight. Tell her to get her ass out, will you, or you'll be here another month!

RICHARD: (Very cowed) O.K., O.K. I will.

GLENN: Did you see my checkbook anywhere?

RICHARD: No: I don't even know what it looks like.

GLENN: (Groaning) Where did I put it?  
 (upsetting the clutter on the chairs and cabinet)  
 There's so much shit around here, ya can't find--  
 (beginning to kick about everything on the floor)  
Her junk, your papers, his goddamn mail - this fuckin' place.... I'm gonna sell it.  
 (going to the bookcase, yanking books out wildly, flipping through and throwing them on the floor)  
 Where is it? Oh, God, I left it....? I can't remember nothing.... Books, a thousand books, who reads them, who needs them, that stupid Jenny has to hide the checkbook in the bookcase, somebody's gonna steal it... WHO'S GONNA STEAL IT?! WHO THE FUCK'S GONNA COME IN HERE AND STEAL IT?!  
 (finally, raging, grabbing at a bookshelf and pulling the entire bookcase forward, crashing it to the floor with the books plunging out in stackfuls, knocking off his glasses and injuring him. RICHARD, thoroughly intimidated, and visibly shaking, retreats upstairs.)  
 I can't stand it, any more.  
 (limping to the couch and falling astride its left arm; then, speaking as if the whole world were counter his will, with a kind of seething spite and vengefulness - although completely to, and inadvertently against, himself:)  
 I'm gonna quit!  
 (screaming)  
 I'll QUIT that fucking job!  
 (rubbing his eyes, deflated and spent, shoving the bedding off the couch onto the floor)  
 Awwwwwww....

(MR. WHITE enters from the basement, and looks about.)

WHITE: (Dabbing his brow with a red hanky) Mr. Glaser?

GLENN: (Composing himself, wiping his face with an exact same hanky; a passable business tone) Uh, yes?

WHITE: We finished diggin' on the street, it'll take another day in the basement. The pipe looks corroded all the way. I hadda pull up mosta the floor-boards 'n knock away the concrete.

GLENN: What about the gutter out front, and the hole in the sidewalk?

WHITE: Can't fix that till the tar settles. Gotta leave it fer a week.

GLENN: So we won't have water for another day?

WHITE: Better not. I couldn't see how bad yer piping was before. If I hook ya up fer tonight it'll take us two, three more hours tomorrow morning.

GLENN: Oh, so don't. I prefer you get it done as quick as possible.

WHITE: We're tryin'.

GLENN: And, uh, how much is this gonna be, you know now?

WHITE: Did the boy give ya an estimate?

GLENN: Um, no, not really, he said you couldn't tell till you found the fissures.

WHITE: Yeah, 'n this here's a pretty old system, from the end of the century all these buildings, maybe before that even. I gotta go out to Queens tonight 'n look fer replacements.

GLENN: So it'll be what?

WHITE: Uh, the best I kin do... I'll knock off fer the tubing, like I promised.... uh, nineteen hundred dollars.

GLENN: (Gasping) Nineteen hund---!  
(shrieking)  
Oh God, oh God no, oh God!

WHITE: (Amazed) Mr. Glaser --

GLENN: Oh, I can't, I can't believe this, where's the money gonna come from? I just put a new refrigerator in, I got the ceiling upstairs, the whole....  
(breaking down and crying)

1-3-25

WHITE: (Awkward: at a loss: quite unprepared for such a reaction) My man's finishin' up....

GLENN: (His chest heaving with sobs) Last week the powerline, the electricity for half the building was out... that cost....

WHITE: We won't be workin' any more today. It'll be quiet, he's cleanin' up.

GLENN: (Wiping his eyes) No, it's jist - it has to be done. Yeah. Sorry.  
(pause)  
Wait a minute.  
(pause)  
Listen, could you look at the boiler downstairs too, now, while you're here?

WHITE: You want that boiler fixed?

GLENN: I think a new one. Before the winter. We lose so much heat in this house. My bills are three to four hundred a month and it was freezing last winter. All the heat stays downstairs.

WHITE: It could be a problem with yer insulation.

GLENN: I asked about that. Asbestos is the only insulation, right?  
(MR. WHITE nods affirmatively)  
I have too much covering it now - that dust flakes off and settles in every area near the boilerroom. Can't have any more, I got a tenant down there, he's breathing all that in.

WHITE: Lemme take a look at it.

(LUK struts down the stairs, evidently on her way out, "poured into" designer jeans, a boutique blouse and spikes.)

GLENN: Come here, you! I want to talk to you.  
(to MR. WHITE)  
Would you do that? Thanks.  
(MR. WHITE exits down to the basement)  
Where were you last night?

LUK: I go out, Mona Mui, friend me, Theresa Ying-Ying too. She both best friends.

GLENN: Oh, yeah, till what hour with these best friends?

LUK: (Nervous, stammering) No, I come back, I lost

1-3-26

on train, end up Canarsie, wait to 6 o'clock for train, three hours. I not understand, I ask peoples, they not know what is I want.

GLENN: Tell it to the marines!

LUK: What?

GLENN: You probably do, every one in town.

LUK: Who?

GLENN: You're supposed to be looking for a job, yes?

LUK: I go now look.

GLENN: (Bellowing) At this hour?!

LUK: (Confused, cowed) No, I got connections.

GLENN: With a whorehouse?

LUK: (Stopping at this point to stand her ground) Why you talk me like this? I not whore damn shit! what you fucking call me whore for?

GLENN: (He's gone too far) Well, you're out all night...

LUK: I not stay here for what? For watch television like you all night, I not understand what is they say, never go out house, for what I come America, can stay in Taiwan for stay home all damn day!

GLENN: We go out plenty!

LUK: When we go out? I need for have some my friends, for people my age me.

GLENN: So, you can invite them here.

LUK: I not want bother you. You have listen music and look TV, they not like this music.

GLENN: Did you call The Emerald Buddha about that waitress job?

LUK: I go now, for take interview now.

GLENN: Like that?

LUK: I go, I go tomorrow.

GLENN: So what are you lying to me for?

LUK: Cause you nuts, everything I say you make crazy!

GLENN: Cause you sleep for fifteen hours a day, when do you look for work?

LUK: I go tomorrow, I say. How I can go today, not have water for shower? I phewie! I got go see Theresa Ying-Ying now for tell me what this job.

GLENN: Oh, so now it's Theresa Ying-Ying! Bullshit!

LUK: You see, I no can talk you, always same-same this, yell scream say I lie, for what I stay here, for make crazy like you? I get this Buddha job, I swear it!

GLENN: (Exhausted, backing off) O.K., O.K.

LUK: No O.K.! You not believe.

GLENN: (Going to the table) I believe you. Wanna show ya something I got. If you have the time. It's a little wet now, cause Richard left water here.

LUK: (Suddenly curious) What is?

GLENN: (Showing her) A Walkman AM-FM cassette recorder.

LUK: (Ecstatic) Oh, is beautiful!

GLENN: (Marching to the couch, LUK follows) Sony's the best. With earphones, and a mike. O.K., listen:

LUK: (Quickly adjusting the earphones) Oh, Glenn, is wonderful. So sharp, like is right here!

GLENN: And, see, you can turn it way up: hear how loud?

LUK: (Gleeful, like a child) Oh, my God, is so loud!

GLENN: And no one next to you can even hear a peep.

LUK: Is disco, no? -I love it!

GLENN: Good, I'm glad. Cause I got it for you.

LUK: For me?!

GLENN: You don't have one, right? and all your friends do.

LUK: (Kissing his cheek and squeezing his nipple)  
Oh, my Glenn, thanks you, is beautiful, thanks  
you one million. --Listen, Glenn, tonight,  
for Mona, I not have money for buy drinks, is  
better, this how I get job.

GLENN: That's how you get the job?

LUK: You know people Taiwan. For favor always have  
pay something.

GLENN: But I thought she's your best friend?

LUK: I know, she is. But I not can go without have --

GLENN: (Opening his wallet) All right, take thirty --

LUK: (Seizing the bills) I pay this back --

GLENN: In 1995.  
(hearing the basement door open)  
In your purse, come on, it's no one else's  
business.

(MR. WHITE re-enters with BARTON, piqued, trailing him.)

WHITE: Uh, Mr. Glaser, yeah: I can put a new one in.

GLENN: Where that one is, right?

WHITE: Yeah, sure. Otherwise, to change all the piping  
around, no, it would cost too much, cause  
reassembling the hook-up's a lot of work.

GLENN: And how much you figure that will come to?

WHITE: A small one's three thousand, but it prob'ly,  
oh, it oughta be big enough for this here house.

GLENN: Three, huh? Well, that's what I thought it'd be.

WHITE: If ya wanted a second-hand one, I could --

GLENN: No, no, I have too much trouble with second-hand  
stuff. Lemons. Gotta be fixed every month.

WHITE: Yeah, yer better off.

GLENN: Know when you could do it?

WHITE: That I'm not so sure about. See, a complete  
installation job takes a good three days.

BARTON: (Gasping) Three days!

GLENN: So when will you know?

WHITE: Gotta call you back on that.  
(to BARTON)  
You let my boy out through the basement?

BARTON: Yup.

WHITE: (Pause) Uh, let's see, the money for....

GLENN: Oh, yeah, your money, I -- need my checkbook...  
Barton, you see --?

BARTON: Your checkbook? It's missing?

GLENN: I don't know where I put it.

BARTON: You look under your rubbings?

GLENN: Oh, my rub--

LUK: (Bouncing back to the end-table, hopping over  
the heaps of books) I get, I get, you stay --

GLENN: (Ashamed) Jeez, I forgot --

BARTON: Where else would you leave it, you spend so many  
hours right there workin' on that Oriental crap?

LUK: (Picking up some rubbings) Here is!  
(proudly giving the checkbook to GLENN)

BARTON: Memory's goin' fast. I should charge two-fifty  
an hour to keep notes.

GLENN: (Writing) So, that is, O.K., nineteen hun...

BARTON: (Righteous) Nineteen hundred bucks down a drain!

WHITE: (Taking the check) Thanks. Then we'll knock  
off fer today. See ya tomorrow at 7:00.

BARTON: God, 7:00!

LUK: (Seeing her opportunity, rushing with MR. WHITE  
to the street door) I got go, too!

GLENN: (Meaning it:) Luk, you have a good time!

LUK: Thanks you again for Walkman. Take care, Barton.



BARTON: You too, Luk, watch yaself. See you, Mr. White.

WHITE: Yup.

(LUK exits with MR. WHITE, both going separate ways. As soon as the door shuts, BARTON turns to GLENN with a huff:)

BARTON: What's this? about a new boiler?

GLENN: We gotta have one, Barton! You know what my bills are? 'N I don't want you breathin' in that asbestos, either - a new one won't need any.

BARTON: But you gotta put it in, now?! You realize I have a deadline this month?

GLENN: Lemme alone with your deadlines.

BARTON: I won't leave you alone, are you leaving me alone - how can I work with this chaos going on?!

GLENN: Bitch, bitch, bitch. That's all I hear. Do I tell you about my work? I got fifteen animals a day comin' in there 'n threatening to kill me if I don't put them on welfare. -Crazies you wouldn't believe when I go out in the field, slicing each other up, I never know if they're gonna turn 'n crack a mirror over my head, or try to slit my throat, too! ---...People so pathetic, some people so defeated, so crippled 'n hopeless it breaks your heart jist to go into their homes --

BARTON: But I'm not interrupting your work. Can't you wait till I finish my musical - I got producers, angels, my agent on my back every hour that phone rings "Where is it?"

GLENN: I don't wanna hear.

BARTON: No, but when you got something to do, when you need quiet.

GLENN: I never need quiet.

BARTON: Oh, no, when you're entertaining or napping, I have to turn off the stereo, how am I supposed to hear their line-readings for the damn half-hour of recitatives I gotta do?

GLENN: And if we get hit with a cold spell like what

always happens every year?

BARTON: With weather like this?

GLENN: So? in New York?: then we'll be three days without heat or hot water in the middle of winter?

BARTON: Damn you, Glenn!  
(the street door bell buzzes loudly)  
Who the fuck's that now?

(JENNY is standing at the door: she is loaded down with a broken-up plant stand and bookshelf and cannot open the door for herself: BARTON crosses to the door and opens it.)

BARTON: Oh, good afternoon, Ms Junkdealer, no, sorry, we don't want no junk today.

JENNY: Here, Barton, help me with this, it's too heavy - ugh - it's great stuff.

BARTON: (Taking the bookshelf) I'll bet.

JENNY: I found these by the park, somebody threw them out, I had to lug them all the way... That bookshelf is fantastic.

GLENN: Another bookshelf?! -for all the books you read?

BARTON: For all the books she keeps.  
(glancing back at the fallen bookcase)  
Actually, you could probably use a new bookshelf, Glenn.

GLENN: Very humorous.

JENNY: Look at this, the carving on it, it's bas relief.

BARTON: It's jist bah. I need some relief - from the two of you. -By the way, what pea-brain left the empty coffee-maker on this morning? so the whole building could burn down?

GLENN: You left the electric coffee-maker on?!

JENNY: I did not!

BARTON: (To JENNY) Then the mice must have. When's the last time you remembered to set a trap?:- they're all over the basement. Cute.

JENNY: I didn't leave it on!

BARTON: And you didn't leave the garbage cans in the middle of the street, either, this morning? Well, I'm goin' down - I can't even shower now and that orchestra pit's so full of people. It'll really be the snake pit tonight - cause I'll smell like a pork barrel there!

GLENN: Well, at least you'll look like a pork barrel.

BARTON: (Exiting to the basement) See you cruds later.

JENNY: See you, Barton.

GLENN: You have to bring more shit in here?

JENNY: Whadda you care? - it's upstairs, in my room. I pay rent.

GLENN: You didn't for the last five months.

JENNY: Glenn! you know I just got that job. I have to pay my father's loans back first. You want me to pay you, instead?

GLENN: That'll be the day.

JENNY: Look, you startin' in?

GLENN: No, I'm not startin' in. I'm so damn tired. Jist do what you want and lemme alone, huh? (putting on a cassette of contemporary music and sinking wearily onto the couch)

JENNY: (Looking at the mess; taking out her pipe and pot) What happened here?

GLENN: I had a Halloween Party fer a herda elephants. Thai elephants. Friends of Richard's. Actually, we're the elephants.

JENNY: (Out of it) Had a Halloween Par-- but it's past Halloween.

GLENN: (Watching JENNY light-up) How would you know?

JENNY: (After a puff) Glenn, listen, could you turn that Chinese torture off for a minute?

GLENN: (Wearily) What is it now?

JENNY: Wanna toke?

GLENN: (Shutting the music) Just tell me what it is.

JENNY: I think something's wrong with the car key - yesterday, I couldn't open the door.

GLENN: You sure it was the right car?

JENNY: Yeah, sure. It was. Some cop finally saw me, and came over and jimmied it.

GLENN: You got a nice, high visibility with the cops this year. You offer him a toke, too?

JENNY: And... well, today I had to schlep this stuff by foot from the park cause... the rest of the car's not working.

GLENN: Whadda ya mean? I had it overhauled on Saturday.

JENNY: Yeah, but --

GLENN: No! it can't be! That was seventy bucks.

JENNY: No, it was running O.K..... till....

GLENN: Till what?

JENNY: I had an accident.  
(pause)  
Again. I'm sorry. Someone rammed into me.

GLENN: (Pause) How bad?

JENNY: Never mind. Nothing. I'll pay for it.

GLENN: (Quietly) So bad you don't want me to see it.

JENNY: You can't: I had it towed.

GLENN: Already?

JENNY: It's nothing, but I didn't --

GLENN: Ya totalled it, huh?

JENNY: Yeah. So.

GLENN: (Long pause; gently) Ya know, I still limp from the last time you wrecked it, with me in it, Jenny. I can't stand up straight now...

1-3-34

They took fifty X rays - four different doctors.  
And can't see what's wrong.... But they don't  
believe you can do anything for it.... It's  
painful even to sit. -I can't think any more...  
it hurts so much.

(GLENN goes to the table and gathers his briefcase, The  
New York Times and a few cassettes, and crosses to the  
cabinet where he picks up his mail, looks at the bills  
and letter envelopes, and then walks, stooped and limping,  
slowly up the stairs.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE 1.

(Early on a Monday evening, two and a half weeks later. The living room is restored to its original order.

RICHARD, in workaday clothes, is seated at the table, penciling through a score. JENNY is peering over his shoulder with her pipe in hand. She is pleasantly high.)

JENNY: The pipe, your kingship?

RICHARD: (Taking the pipe) Maybe that'll help.

JENNY: Having trouble?

RICHARD: It's like shitting bricks.

JENNY: Well, boo loosens the bowels.

RICHARD: Good: cause that's just what they require.

JENNY: You sayin' they want shit?

RICHARD: They're sayin' they want shit. I'd just as soon raise the tone of this show. In fact, it's easier to raise the tone, and the orchestration, than write down to what they'd like.

JENNY: (Puffing) You got the time?

RICHARD: (Looking at his watch) It's six.

JENNY: Oops - haveta be at the doctor's. Hey, Richard, they re-run sit-coms at six. Watch one, maybe it'll inspire you.

RICHARD: To cut my throat. But that's an idea, I should. (standing, and crossing toward the TV) What're you seeing the doctor for?

JENNY: Blood tests.

RICHARD: Serious?

JENNY: Nah, my family has a history of leukemia. So all the children gotta get annual checks.

RICHARD: How do you feel?

JENNY: Fine, why? It's just a check.

RICHARD: Which doctor?

JENNY: Jacobs, down the block.

RICHARD: (Sitting and switching on the TV) He good?

JENNY: Yeah, great, we go to him for everything. See - that's a series that used a lotta music.

RICHARD: I'm glad you hear it as music. I can't.

JENNY: So have Jacobs examine your ears.

RICHARD: Very humorous. When'd you guys buy this set - the Ming dynasty?

JENNY: Glenn likes antiques.  
(sitting next to him, her hand on his shoulder)  
So, Richard, when you moving?

RICHARD: I can't, Jenny, you know that, till Ms Schmutz finds herself a studio - or another sublet. What am I supposed to do, dump her on the street?

JENNY: Why not?

RICHARD: Just that kinda craziness, the landlord'll get involved, and I'll lose my lease. Then where will I go?

JENNY: Jist go in there 'n tell her to get the fuck out, what's she stallin' for?

RICHARD: You don't find a place for what she's paying me overnight. Why, am I bothering you up there?

JENNY: No, but I pay for that room. I don't mind a guest for a few days, I enjoy your company, Ri--

RICHARD: Jenny, we've got to get along until she moves.

JENNY: But I deserve my privacy, too. Who's she?

RICHARD: You think I like living here, imposing on all you people? If Glenn hadn't promised the bitch she could always count on three to four months' leaving notice, I'd be in there by now. I know I came back unexpectedly but, still, Glenn screwed me, royally.

JENNY: Of course, cause you're the king.

RICHARD: (Lowering the TV; taking another puff) Well, she does keep my apartment nice. And she didn't sign her own lease when the landlord practically twisted her arm, so Glenn was only doing what he feels is right. He's soft-hearted that way.

JENNY: (Completely comfortable; stoned) Throw her out.

RICHARD: -Speaking of Glenn, where is he?

JENNY: Upstairs. Napping. Our daily fight did him in.

RICHARD: You had another fight today? Over what?

JENNY: Oh, you know Glenn, he goes from sugar to shit in the time it takes to say that. It has to be over something?

RICHARD: (Blank; and depressed) My brother is not happy.

JENNY: (Surprised, smiling broadly) Richard! Glenn's doin' fine, what's wrong with you?

RICHARD: Don't you have a doctor's appointment?

JENNY: You're right, I was gettin' hooked on this show.

RICHARD: Maybe you didn't see it enough times.

JENNY: Very humorous.

(BARTON enters from the basement, half-dressed in formal attire, his hair wet and slicked back reeking of cologne.)

BARTON: What's very humorous?  
(seeing RICHARD)  
What the hell's the matter with you - you're not upstairs dressing yet?

RICHARD: I've got time, it's jist after six.

JENNY: (Jarred; rising from the couch, somewhat uneased by BARTON's presence) I gotta see Dr. Jacobs.



BARTON: So: who's stopping you?

JENNY: (Automatically turning off the TV: RICHARD is puzzled/annoyed) Bye, Bart. Bye, your majesty.

BARTON: (Unable to resist a sarcastic tone) Bye, Jen.

JENNY: I'll be back in ten, fifteen minutes.

BARTON: I'll tell your secretary.  
(JENNY exits quickly through the street door)  
What's she seein' the doctor for?

RICHARD: (Turning the TV back on) Blood tests.

BARTON: And your brother's goin', also.

RICHARD: Yeah, for his back. And that leg. Everybody's seein' doctors. Maybe I should, too --

BARTON: Sure, for syphilis.

RICHARD: -- after being in Asia so long.  
(double-take)  
-Well! for more than just syphilis. People pick up every kinda bug there: mono, dysentery, typh--

BARTON: That would explain it.

RICHARD: (Politely ignoring the obvious) What?

BARTON: Why, maybe, your brain doesn't work?

RICHARD: If you mean on this TV shit --

BARTON: "Shit" - see, that's what I mean, your attitude, Richard! If it's such shit, why doesn't everybody write it and make some money?

RICHARD: Maybe everybody isn't broke.

BARTON: You are.

RICHARD: Just in spirit.

BARTON: (Changing the subject: an up tone, while going to stand on the bay window and insert a hand-painted facsimile of stained-glass in the empty panel) So - you all ready for the big night?

RICHARD: This gonna be your first award?

BARTON: (Slightly coy) Well, I didn't wanna tell you before - my third.

RICHARD: Third? Why didn't you want to tell me?

BARTON: Thought you might be jealous.

RICHARD: Why? you know I wish you the best. Besides, you and I don't do the same thing, and we have totally different goals, we're not competing.

BARTON: Good, I hoped you'd see it that way. But I didn't know, you been away a long time, Richard.

RICHARD: (Putting on reading glasses) Tell me.

BARTON: (Amused) It's so funny, seein' you with glasses!

RICHARD: It happens to everyone, just about this time.

BARTON: But I wore specs all my life. And so did your brother...

(pausing in his work to turn and watch RICHARD)  
You didn't have that onus.

(RICHARD scratches his leg and stares outward)  
So - how is our little TV pilot coming?

RICHARD: It ain't. And checkin' out vintage samples really constipates the imagination. Just listen to this: gives you an earache.

BARTON: Gives you an earache.

RICHARD: (Turning the TV off) Barton, how can I score something I can't even sit through? Scoring a series isn't composing, it's ducking in and out.

BARTON: (Having inserted the facsimile, coming down)  
Well, it's your life. I'll just keep throwin' these options your way, and you can make up your own mind. -There, this looks nice - for the time being, anyway. Painted it myself.

RICHARD: Don't think I'm not grateful --

BARTON: Listen, you're goin' through a big transition, tryin' to adjust back into the city, and the states, something'll strike you right.

RICHARD: But everything seems so pointless now, you know what I mean? I mean, when you're overseas, watching those people there go about their

business, strictly according to their social myths and values, and just so busy pursuing their established ends, it all seems so stupid what they're doing, it's so ignorant and unconscious of this century in history. And then you come back here and look at everybody thrashing around in San Francisco, L.A., and New York, it all looks so stupid to you also, so childish, so transparent: with very different ambitions and myths, O.K., but all adding up to the same nonsense, the same mindlessness, it's just inauthentic activity. What is everybody trying to achieve? to acquire? to proclaim? And for what? For some kind of parent-appeasing ego-gratification.

BARTON: Your brother's sleeping?

RICHARD: Was that what my life used to be all about? I didn't think so. But that's all that I see here. And that's about all that I see now. Yeah, he's upstairs sleeping.

BARTON: That means he's going out after one.

RICHARD: One in the morning? What's open so late?

BARTON: "The Caribbia." An ethnic swingles place.

RICHARD: Ethnic?

BARTON: Yeah, black, Hispanic. Mostly. So he can feel superior, the bigot.

RICHARD: So he feels white makes him desirable, so what? Everyone needs some thing their partner hasn't.

BARTON: Well, he can count on the crowd in "The Caribbia" to be "hasn'ts." The few nights a year they do land gigs, all them folks are in these combos - that play those dumps on Tenth. They're failures.

RICHARD: "Failures?"

BARTON: I'm tellin' you, that "Caribbia's" always the same. It's half people who never did make it and half who never will.

RICHARD: "Make" what?

BARTON: But then he'll drag Jenny Double-Jowl along, to get between him and some dark bitch, and assure

he doesn't make out anyway. It's Celibate Haven here, Richard, welcome home.

RICHARD: God, this entire distorted household with its psychotic dependency on Glenn, giving him so little in return.

BARTON: Yup, that's the way it is.

RICHARD: You, too, with your ravenous need for a foster-father, for how many years you been here now?

BARTON: I never deny that. But at least I try to open him up: I don't bleed him like his fair-weather friends or suck him dry like Luk and Jenny do.

RICHARD: You don't, don't you?

BARTON: No, I don't. I give as much - or even more than I get, that's how I feel about it.

RICHARD: And you gave him a birthday present in July?

BARTON: (Pause) Yeah.... certainly... I gave....

RICHARD: I don't think so.

BARTON: But I gave him a bottle - of Chevis Regal - a big, those commemorative quarts.

RICHARD: Are you sure? He said you didn't.

BARTON: (Uncertain) I - I'm, of course, I'm sure, I re--

RICHARD: Maybe to someone else. He mentioned it to me. And you so good about gifts - to people you jam with or never saw before, that you know how long, sometimes just met?

BARTON: Oh, he forgot, he's so damn drunk he doesn't remember I gave it to him on his birthday.  
(laughing)  
He just drank it up, Richard!

RICHARD: And did you invite him to your award ceremony tonight?

BARTON: He's not a composer.

RICHARD: He's done shows.

BARTON: This is big time. Not community quartets.

Besides, they didn't give me a ticket for him, just one for you, cause you're recognized in the field, I can't bargain with the Academy, that's not my prerogative, they don't just hand out admissions cause you ask.

RICHARD: You tried?

BARTON: Believe me, there's no way I could wangle another - it's only celebs, that's the whole audience.

RICHARD: It's for people in the field.

BARTON: Oh, Glenn's only in music because you are. He has no talent! It's floundering around cause he hasn't found his own outlet, and won't till he finds himself. Oh, Richard, don't you see how instead of trying to find out who he is, he opts to mimic you in everything - what's this crap with Luk - a Taiwanese woman - what does he want with Taiwan? It's only because you went to Asia.

RICHARD: He went there himself. That's how he met her, no?

BARTON: But only because you were over in Bangkok at the time, it's your fantasy he was living off, and cause just your being busy with a flaky career stopped you from marrying an Oriental. And I truly believe he did it thinking he could complete your life where you couldn't, he goes even that distance for you cause he loves you that much - because what's his tie-in with dragon ladies and all that exotic bullshit? That's your asinine dreamworld: he's a homebody!

RICHARD: It isn't exotic bullshit! - and hardly asinine, Barton! The world is one culture now and the remotest iota of it informs every art, like it or not - every art still wanting to be considered serious, that is, and what's not serious art's not art!

BARTON: Here we go again with serious-not serious art! Didn't we promise each other six years ago that was one thing - aesthetics, O.K.? - that we wouldn't discuss - ever? It's just a fight with you.

RICHARD: I didn't bring it up. You gotta insinuate some negative thing about my composing every chance--

BARTON: I certainly did not. Your composing's not something I lose any sleep over.

RICHARD: I'll say! - but I do! And I always did! It's what my life has been about.

BARTON: (Stabbing) But you're not so sure what your life has been about any more, are you?

RICHARD: Barton! - how can --

BARTON: Oh, come on, this is crazy!  
(going to RICHARD and hugging him)  
We gotta stop this, I understand you, why does this haveta happen every time? We got a fun night coming up. This is no way to work on a set for it. So, just relax....

RICHARD: (Allowing BARTON to massage his neck) Yeah-yeah.

BARTON: (Listening) And I think I hear Glenn stirring: Yup - no mistaking it. I better get cracking.

RICHARD: So you go down, I should spend a few minutes here with him, seeing as how the two of us are --

BARTON: You do that. -Oh, did he tell you about the boiler?

RICHARD: What?

BARTON: A new boiler that he wants put in? - right away?

RICHARD: No. Why does he want --

BARTON: Ask him. I'm furious about it. I mean, real furious. Over my dead body and I am not fooling this time. Ask him - that boiler.

(BARTON exits down to the basement. GLENN, dressed in a loose Oriental nightshift intended to hide his weight - but which attempt only draws attention to it - starts down the steps. He is refreshed from his sleep and in a very up mood. Stopping midway, he bends over the rail to peer:)

GLENN: That you down there?

RICHARD: Yeah, I'm here.

GLENN: You talking to someone? I thought I heard voi--

RICHARD: Just Barton. He went down to dress.

GLENN: (Coming into the living room) Oooo, that was a good dream I had.

RICHARD: 'Bout what?

GLENN: I don't remember. It was just good.

RICHARD: That's good.

GLENN: (Furrowing his brow) You upset about something?

RICHARD: No, I - I'm not. -It's that Barton, shit! he's such a - I think he really devotes time working on how to get my goat.

GLENN: If you let him, you're as dumb as he is. Dumb, and crazy.

RICHARD: I don't. But - he says exactly --

GLENN: (Sitting) What do you listen to him for?

RICHARD: Cause he talks! I'm not deaf, I gotta hear.

GLENN: In this house, yer better off deaf. Listen.

RICHARD: The man has no holiness in him. It's really strange how a person who's accomplished in so many ways, can have that particular deficiency - the spiritual - held so crucial a part of our make-up, it's like having one lung missing or half a heart or something.

GLENN: But for that reason, I don't know how you can take him seriously. After all, he hasn't much taste, either.

RICHARD: And the narrowest savvy.

GLENN: Is 200 per cent middle class, to boot. So.

RICHARD: I don't know why: it's compulsive on my part.

GLENN: You devote time finding something to rile you. So if Barton doesn't come up with starters, Sheila or Terry or someone else you know obliges. Can't understand why ya bother with these baboons.

RICHARD: Cause they're who's there. I suppose it's eight years of energy, mostly unchanneled.

GLENN: And largely unconstructive.

2-1-11

RICHARD: Tell me.

GLENN: I'm tellin' you. Anything else ya wanna know?

RICHARD: Just what he thinks about me behind my back.

GLENN: Oh! I wouldn't know where to begin.

RICHARD: At the liquor cabinet.

GLENN: It'll only upset you more, for no sane purpose.

RICHARD: I got the time.

GLENN: That's a lot of your problem.

RICHARD: Yeah, but how do I get a job - I mean, in a college - coming back in the middle of autumn?

GLENN: Wha'd you say about the liquor cabinet?  
(going, as he talks, to the kitchenette counter,  
and pouring gin into a colorful tumbler)  
The junk he's retailed, what he thinks about your  
composition, sometimes: said ya can't compose --

RICHARD: (Shocked) What?

GLENN: -that you're out of touch, and a toilet-full of  
other items I don't mention. In your famous old  
collaborations, when you scored for him, the  
percussion work especially, like in "The Krupa  
Story" - says it was all him, and his suggestions  
- and mostly, oh yeah, the way he phrased it that  
was good about it, what the critics raved for:-  
those're the reasons when yer "Krupa" premiered--

RICHARD: I can't believe this!

GLENN: Lotta things I don't repeat. So, now, you  
needa hear them?

RICHARD: But there was no collaboration - on that, or  
anything else we did together: he got finished  
scores, I took no suggestions whatsoever, made  
no changes for him, not one single semiquaver!

GLENN: So there ya go. Wanna drink?

RICHARD: No. The scum. I think this is gonna be one  
sober night.

GLENN: (Coming back to sit) So you can spend it



thinking about him? And re-thinking, and sulking and re-viewing and re-hashing things he's said?

RICHARD: Ya know, it makes sense. His feelings toward me. Put simply, I'm Barton's mentor. And I withhold my approval of him, and always will. Because his work will always be dishonest, and his kind of dishonesty will never date, and the world will always give him it's approval for that, so what does he need mine for? And being me, how could I give him mine?

GLENN: Sometimes lying makes it easier to live together.

RICHARD: Nah, I'd never sleep. Cause then, what's my own work about? And once I'm out of here I don't see him that much.

GLENN: You're better off.

RICHARD: So what he says to you, you can understand why. Hell-bent on killing off a father-image - before he can hunt more victims. It's textbook Freud - and Freud works now, in this age of regression that Barton virtually symbolizes... The Age of Small. -Yeah, oh, how he'd love to watch me score that TV pilot! see me come down off my - to him, unapproachable - pedestal of art, and eat crow.

GLENN: He's only trying to help. I mean, with this TV business. You did say you were interested.

RICHARD: Yeah, help - help me to stop building the sound that blocks him from an easy conscience. Cause so long as I invent - and, in some way, he knows what I'm doing is right - how can he live with himself?

GLENN: (Dubious) He knows what you're doing?

RICHARD: You think he doesn't know what I've been doing all these years?

GLENN: Nah, not only doesn't he know, but he doesn't know that he doesn't know. How else could he do what he's doing? And I'll tell you something else, Richard, he doesn't want to know that he doesn't know that he doesn't know.

RICHARD: (Pause) Well, that's something I could almost drink to, tonight.

2-1-13

GLENN: You should. Get plastered, and then forget it. Or better yet, just forget it and write me a Sanctus I can do. For St. Anne's, they asked me for Easter, they throw this big mass Easter Sunday with new cantatas, and a full orchestra.

RICHARD: (Interested) Oh, yeah?

(The telephone rings. GLENN picks up immediately.)

GLENN: "Palazzio Glasero!" hello... -Who?.... Luk?  
(shouting up)  
Hey, Luk, it's for you!

LUK: (OS) For me? O.K., I coming.  
(appearing on the stairs in disco-magnificence)  
Who is?

GLENN: Is some friend. Sounds like Mona Mui.  
(LUK darts down: handing her the phone)  
Here, take it to the table over there.  
(to RICHARD)  
What's on the tube?

RICHARD: Dreck.

LUK: Yes, Mona, hello. How you, sweet?... Leally?

GLENN: (About to get up) I need another slug.

RICHARD: Here, I'll get it for you.

GLENN: (Letting RICHARD take his glass) Make it half.

RICHARD: (Heading toward the counter) Half a tumbler?

GLENN: Saves footwork.

LUK: True... I ready... beautiful!... Oh, no!

RICHARD: (In the kitchenette) Glenn, what's this about a new boiler Barton said you're thinking of getting?

GLENN: We need one.

RICHARD: Why?

GLENN: That one doesn't work.

RICHARD: But he thinks you should wait --

GLENN: (A sudden change: to anger) I don't wanna wait!

RICHARD: Till he finishes that musical.

GLENN: So I can freeze my tits off while he fattens his bank account?

RICHARD: But he thinks you'll only have to re-do the --

GLENN: (Disgusted) What do you think?

RICHARD: Well, I don't know. I don't know anything about the one you got now.

GLENN: So I don't wanna hear!

LUK: (Giggling) Oh, that great!

GLENN: And I don't wanna hear you on that phone. Tell her what you have to, and hang up, I'm expecting a call!

LUK: O.K., I must stop talk: see you, Mon, bye.

GLENN: (As LUK hangs up) You going out?

LUK: Sure, course, Glenn, I got go see Miss Mui.

GLENN: Well I'm goin' out, too:- and have myself a blast. Think I'm gonna sit here alone all night and wait up for you? What for?

LUK: I glad you go out for enjoy. Have nice time too.

GLENN: -Wait a minute, you did your English lessons?

LUK: Yeah, I do.

GLENN: (Sarcastic) Yeah-yeah, you do!

LUK: No, I swear you, Glenn, I do many.

GLENN: That why you're conversing so fluently?

LUK: What?

GLENN: (Imitating) "What?"

LUK: What "fluently"?

GLENN: Gimme a kiss.

LUK: (Doing so) Yum-yum!

2-1-15

GLENN: (Slapping LUK on the backside) O.K., go on, get outta here. And don't come home late, you hear?

LUK: I hear. I be early. -Bye-bye, Rich.

RICHARD: (Bringing the drink) Bye, Luk, have a good time.  
(LUK rushes out the front door)  
That's some expensive outfit she's sporting there. You buy that for her?

GLENN: (Taking the tumbler) What of it?

RICHARD: Nothing. What do you buy for yourself?

GLENN: (Uneasy: trying to shrug it off) Lotta things.

RICHARD: (Indicating his nightshift) Like that schmahta?

GLENN: Look, what's it your business? I like this. 'N Luk mostly buys her own stuff, she's working now.

RICHARD: She ever buy you some stuff just to say thanks?

GLENN: What do I need? Look, Luk's a good daughter, she sends a week's salary every month to her ~~mom~~ in Taipei. And pays some rent and her long distance phone calls, so whadda ya want?

RICHARD: It's what do you want. I thought, a wife.

GLENN: (Drinking) Nah, Richard, I never expected her to be a wife for very long. I knew that back in Taiwan. I love her, that's why I did this, to give her a chance here in America, and now she has that: I think I did a good thing. I'm allowed to do what I want, I'm old enough, no? I'm not imposing on you.

RICHARD: Who said anything about imposing on me? I just think that you could do better. I mean, how about a chance for you also in America? Or don't you feel you deserve it, so minuscule is your image of yourself? Look what you wear! Look at your weight! Haven't you an ounce of respect for Glenn? - for you, yourself, Glenn?!

(The street door bursts open and JENNY re-enters, hauling a table with two smashed legs. She is flushed, bleary-eyed, and very upset. She kicks the door closed behind her and then, seeing RICHARD, rather inexplicably, exclaims:)

JENNY: You still here?!

2-1-16

RICHARD: Wha'd you expect, me to move out in the last twenty minutes?

JENNY: I could hope, no?

GLENN: (Going into the kitchenette for edibles, the previous exchange having made him anxious)  
Oh, lay off, you two!

RICHARD: I love your new acquisition: what's it supposed to do, suspend in mid-air through self-hypnosis?

JENNY: Look, Richard, I want that mirror back.

RICHARD: What mirror? -The Chippendale? But you gave me that years ago, it's been in my parlor since '75.

JENNY: It's my father's, he's asking about it!

GLENN: Oh, how would Harry remember that mirror?

JENNY: He does! - it was his grandfather's.

GLENN: That piece of shit?

RICHARD: But you gave it to me, it's the only full one I --

GLENN: Oh, return it to her, I'll find you another: the antique in my john: that's worth much more.

RICHARD: I don't want your best mirror. That one's a small fortune, you bought it upstate, no?

GLENN: (Eating) So? It's better than arguing. I want you to have it.

JENNY: Yeah, you're a charity case.

RICHARD: (She's found a vulnerable spot) Listen, Jenny, I didn't want to say anything, but you left the empty coffee-maker on again this morning.

JENNY: I did not!

GLENN: Again! Are you nuts? This place'll burn down!

JENNY: He's fulla shit! I did not leave it on!

RICHARD: O.K., so I did! I slipped over after you left and plugged it in empty so I could frame you.

JENNY: That's right, cause you're cunt-dumb stone-

2-1-17

fuckin' nuts and blame me for everything!

GLENN: Oh, Jen, drop it will you? You and I'll go to "Caribbia" in a bit 'n paint the jernt red, O.K.?

JENNY: (Suddenly, delighted) You're goin' to "The --?

GLENN: Yeah, so you come along. Why don't you take yer table upstairs now and put it on the sundeck?

JENNY: (Heading for the stairs with her quarry) Should I wear my new long shawl from Guatamala?

GLENN: I don't care what you w--... yeah, it looks real nice, wear it. And I'll do my poncho.  
(JENNY exits up the stairs; to RICHARD, flatly)  
We'll look like two dead bats the cat dragged in. -Speaking of what the cat dragged in:-

(BARTON enters from the basement in a conservative three-piece dark-blue suit, in poor taste, a rolled sheet under his arm. GLENN tries to conceal the food, but cannot.)

BARTON: What's all this shouting up here? And you're, of course, still not in uniform:- we'll be late!

RICHARD: I'm going up. It won't take me five minutes.

BARTON: That's at least smart: cause what five minutes won't fix, five hours wouldn't, either.

RICHARD: (As he exits up the stairs, flatly) Thanks.

BARTON: So how are you, baby? -Lemme have a piece of that, I'm so nervous...  
(taking a sizable portion and shoveling it down)

GLENN: How about leaving something for me?

BARTON: You just going to "The Caribbia" tonight?

GLENN: (Eating) Why?

BARTON: I thought you had an appointment with Jim.

GLENN: So, I'm breaking it.

BARTON: Did you call him?

GLENN: (Annoyed) What is this - a third degree?

BARTON: I just wanna make sure you have a good time.

2-1-18

GLENN: I will.

BARTON: Not if you keep limiting yourself to one darky bar, and cutting off all your old friends. The Butterworths also asked where yer hiding yersel--

GLENN: Look, I drink when I go out, I can't take a chance on driving back drunk all the way from the Butterworth's.

BARTON: So don't drink so much.

GLENN: Do I give you a manual for living?

BARTON: But these're the people who love you. It don't make sense to dump them. You'd be better off ditching the two dumb broads staked out here.

GLENN: And just have you?

BARTON: (Taking more food) How's your selfish brother tonight?

GLENN: Bitching as usual: over me 'n Luk, no job, the rotten state of the arts...

BARTON: Richard's crazy, you know.

GLENN: Who's not? You finished the tracing design?

BARTON: (Unfurling the tracing paper) Yeah, I did the ones for the Thai temple rubbings. -But I wish you wouldn't spend so much time on them.

GLENN: (Taking the tracing paper, examining it) Why?

BARTON: Cause you just plotz here in front of the idiot box all night, and then sneak out late 'n tank up.

GLENN: So? I enjoy doing rubbings. More than anything.

BARTON: But how many years more you going to waste, Glenn?  
(GLENN removes his glasses, wearily rubs his eyes, and doesn't answer)  
Look, baby, at some point you've got to stop and figure out what you want to do with your life!

GLENN: But you know what I want to do.

BARTON: What?

GLENN: Conduct.

2-1-19

(Long pause. RICHARD bounds down in formal suit and tie.)

RICHARD: Ready, Barton! --Catch you later, Glenn!

BARTON: (Hamming) We're off to - The Moment of Truth!

GLENN: Be good, you two.

BARTON: Can that:- tonight's for bein' wicked!  
(going with RICHARD toward the front door)

(LIGHTS.)

SCENE 2.

(Very late that night. RICHARD, JOLENE and BARTON, a slightly boisterous group, are outside the front door. BARTON, who is fumbling blindly with the locks, is rather high, but RICHARD and JOLENE are clearly sober. JOLENE is dressed elegantly in a fan-collared wrap over a modest, but unusual, three-quarter red gown - something suggesting 30s-modern: she has that eternal bohemian/lady-artist look.)

RICHARD: (To JOLENE) -And I've never worked on a vocal piece that didn't fill me with a sense of danger and risk - I don't think I could --

BARTON: Did you tip the taxi?

RICHARD: -create an opera that didn't make me afraid.  
--Twenty per cent. I mean, really paranoid.

JOLENE: That is very strange, because you are so iconoclastic. I always thought you were driven by pure bravado. But now I see that half your energy is a kind of schizoid underbelly of psychic dread. Of what? - authority?

RICHARD: (To BARTON) What are you doing?

BARTON: Opening the door - what does it look like?

RICHARD: A Peeping Tom getting off on key-holes. Gimme them, will you?  
(taking the keys)  
This is the top key, O.K.?, and this is the bottom one.



2-2-20

BARTON: (Winking repeatedly) You say that like telling the top from the bottom one is the easiest thing in the world. It ain't, you know: they can switch places in the blinking of an eye.

RICHARD: (Unlocking the door; unamused) Just go in.

BARTON: (Entering and rushing toward the liquor cabinet) You guys wanna drink? I need a double - quick - of whatever that is I was putting away there.

JOLENE: Just a brandy for me.

RICHARD: I'll have coffee.

BARTON: (Mixing and spilling) You can get that yourself.

JOLENE: Oh, boy, this house is beautiful! Look at all this elegance. -I like those rubbings.

BARTON: Here you go, Jolene. Nightcap time!  
(coming to the downstage table with drinks while RICHARD reheats coffee; downing a double:)  
Ooooo, I needed that... -Oh, what a night!

JOLENE: (Indicating her wrap) Do I just put this --

BARTON: Throw it anywhere. It's only an old spring wrap.

JOLENE: (Folding it neatly) So, Barton, you are happy?

BARTON: Am I happy? You suckers don't know the half of it you were so busy chewin' each other's ears.

JOLENE: You mean after they gave out the awards?

BARTON: Yeah! This producer came over 'n introduced himself and I said I don't talk to no producer without my agent sittin' right in-between and he said that's O.K. cause he already spent an hour at my agent's table 'n that the latter my agent already accepted his, this producer's, check of four million to back my new show --

JOLENE: (Sitting at the table) Four million!

BARTON: Precisely, Jolene, you washed yer ears out this evening. Four million minted-American cause evidently the guys owning the Broadway North - that's where they're gonna do it - already sprung for two mill almost unheard of these days the owners themselves frontin' the tab.

2-2-21

JOLENE: So you are leaping forward fast in this game?

BARTON: More'n that, sweetheart:- my star is experiencing a meteoric rise --

JOLENE: Oh, yeah?

BARTON: (Drinking) -to fame and fortune incalculable!

JOLENE: (Non-committal) Ah-ha.

BARTON: That's right: cause his partner, this producer's, offered a movie contract to boot on "Percussion Madness" - currently doing quite handsome box, thank you - with a hundred thou fer yours truly, cause they want me on skins in the flick same as the show though my agent's askin' a quarter mill we'll see what happens!

JOLENE: (Laughing) Boy! This takes away my breath... Richard, a toast is in order - did you hear?

RICHARD: (Coming to the table) Will a cup of coffee do?

BARTON: (Peering into RICHARD's cup) Irish-coffee?

RICHARD: (Sitting so that JOLENE is between them) Black.

BARTON: (Lamely) Po' black man's coffee?

JOLENE: (Toasting) To work!

RICHARD: To peace! -- of mind!

BARTON: To success!  
(they drink)

JOLENE: And what else? - you were over there a long time.

BARTON: Well, naturally, recordings. Them two partners wanna jump the Lp of "Madness" best any solo cuts sure as shit to pan out - for which Ms's Midler, Ronstadt, and - dig this - Streisand herself are bidding all their mammaries're worth!

JOLENE: I don't know if we'll be able to talk to you.

BARTON: Why? just use English I'm fluent in English:- flunked outta French.

JOLENE: Because I voted for your Dictionary of Music and Musicians Award rather tentatively, as I recall -

2-2-22

if you still recall The Dictionary of M & M Award.

BARTON: Oh, I still recall it. Listen, I'm dreadfully grateful, The Dictionary has the most prestige to people really "in," I mean, "in" the know - but I'll probably cop the Grammy and Emmy too by May since an unrelated investor locked up a TV condensation of "Madness" last week I didn't tell you two composers that before did I? And I get to re-arrange the score myself so that's extra gravy right there 'n nothin' to turn my nose up at either considerin' the life-style to which I shall no doubt rapidly adjust.

RICHARD: Perhaps you'll take us out to dinner.

BARTON: Why, yer own cookin' givin' you a tummy-ache these days?

JOLENE: (Extricating her shoulder from under BARTON's rather "heavy-handed" crasp of it) As I was saying, my vote for your Dictionary was somewhat tentative at first: but there really aren't very many more substantial composers around who haven't received it by now, so I felt a friend made more sense than some stranger.

BARTON: (Drinking) Good old nepotism...

JOLENE: But then, the rest of the board --

BARTON: How many are there?

JOLENE: Nine. --opposed me. So, in the end, I had to stand and deliver myself of a rather passionate apologia on your behalf.

BARTON: That's nice. The passionate get remembered in my will.

JOLENE: That's assuming they outlive you.

BARTON: Which is odds against favoring since their passion's more likely to consume them first. -Whadda ya mean, there aren't that many great composers around who haven't gotten the dopey Dictionary yet? Smithers is great, and you gave his "Wings of the Wounded" opera the award, too.

JOLENE: I didn't vote for it.

BARTON: You didn't? Why not?

2-2-23

JOLENE: "Wings of the Wounded" is not a great opera.

BARTON: You nuts? It's the only opera since "Salomé"!

JOLENE: Richard, you want half this brandy?

RICHARD: Oh, I was just gonna ask if you need a refill.

JOLENE: No, no, one's too much for me, and Barton made this a double.

RICHARD: So leave it, I've been drinking coffee all night.

BARTON: Oh, these Carrie Nation types.

JOLENE: Listen, you didn't exactly make me proud with your acceptance speech, either.

BARTON: I was brilliant.

JOLENE: Going on and on about this great period of experimentation in music.

BARTON: That's right, I worked all morning on that speech. Now is the greatest era of experiment--

JOLENE: How do you know that?

BARTON: Cause I don't keep plugs in my ears like some people around here. Whadda ya mean, how do I know that? - everybody knows that!

JOLENE: Everybody knows no such nonsense. Composers have been experimenting and with extraordinary results since the day some Neanderthal tapped two stones together. But our legacy is not what men or women have composed, but what patrons appreciated and commissioned. They paid for and then preserved what music exists: rulers, minor royalty, leisured aristocrats, we listen today to their limitations. For as you know patrons, publishers and critics, what could you say in favor of their taste?

BARTON: That it's excellent. The critics've always been good to me.

JOLENE: (Smiling) I, on my own, when I was in Turin on that Guggenheim last year, uncovered manuscripts in a bookstand by a contemporary of Vivaldi - each one of which is far superior to anything Vivaldi did, to say nothing of more innovative,

more chancy. I discovered them, and I'm no music archeologist, but what's survived unplayed is that abundant. And I point out this man is Vivaldi's period, since remember how recent it is that Vivaldi was discovered. So now think of how many more composers must have been working then, and who's to say not better yet, their scores still moldering in churches and garrets - though, of course, the majority are long since torn up, burnt, or decomposed.

BARTON: (Glancing at RICHARD) Well, some folks compose and some decompose.

RICHARD: This is exciting: where are these manuscripts?

JOLENE: Sitting in my files! I did the whole publishing circuit in Germany and here without scaring up the least interest. This genius being unknown, he has no hype - ergo, no market. Since he had no entré in his own time, it's that much more difficult to make the investment to make the vested interest in him now. And that's the story of musical risk and daring: most of it's disappeared and in among this disappearance I'd guess the best music ever written. How many recordings of our experiments are made? Who will know of them in ten or twenty years? I assure you, no one. In this very city, the center of new music in the world, the best that's being composed will remain forever unheard.

BARTON: Why do you say the best?

JOLENE: Because in America, there's never been room for the best. Men or music. Sometimes with luck, the second rate finds a place. But never, never the best.

BARTON: You think all critics are fools.

JOLENE: I didn't say fools and I didn't say all.

BARTON: And that the audience for music has no taste.

JOLENE: Not the whole audience, Barton, but the far majority: which will dictate probably what is played -- absolutely what is recorded, and necessarily what is sold.

BARTON: And that every successful composer is a hack, that's what you're saying, Jolene, isn't it?

- JOLENE: A pander. Try, a pander, Barton.
- BARTON: Pandas are becoming extinct.
- JOLENE: Not the human kind. There really must be enough room at this table here for you not to have to breathe down my collar. -So, Dick, what are you working on now?
- RICHARD: Something I was asked to do for United-Asia... When I was puttzing around with their acoustics - using the Sabine Formula - I discovered what a great flutter echo that hall has. So I figured microtones there would make defiant ornamentation - especially if used in a concert vocalise - you know, like they did in the late nineteen hundreds? -Which idea came from crashing here: this house's turn-of-the-century. But it's going real slow --
- BARTON: (In his cups, quieter) It sounds slow, too.
- RICHARD: Still, I'm pretty with it now - even though, if asked to do it elsewhere, we'd have to recreate Asia Hall's bad acoustics to get the same effect.
- JOLENE: You're designing a space piece, then, ignoring performers and audience. Is it another sound sculpture?
- RICHARD: No, more like a choral gesture - in the sense of performance piece - with tracheal-camera film of the all-woman chorus's expanded and contracting vocal cords projected on an orange backdrop. During which, the singing chorus tears open their rip-away girdles revealing paintings of Agent Orange infected stomachs painted on their real stomachs - since vocal cords, disarmingly enough, look like photos of displaced digestive tracts. And the text deals with Asia's innocent reception of western interference, thrust into its uterus like a fleet of invited torpedoes, seeding ugliness and genocide --
- BARTON: But we'll never hear your damn microintervals in a flutter echo without a microscopic hearing aid - and we gotta listen, on top of that, to your political browbeating - on the laying waste of formerly lovely Asia! You try to do too much - that's what's wrong with Mahler and Strauss. They gotta cram the whole universal world into one symphony, using twenty scores at once like a over-stuffed turkey. I'm sorry, ya wanna write

music people can hear, you gotta do a thing at a time, as much as an audience can absorb. You wanna embrace the entire goddamn galaxy from the beginning of time to the end, you write a book on music theory. And your professor friends can read it!

JOLENE: Well, thank you, Professor.

BARTON: No, I mean, don't you think Bach wrote too much?

JOLENE: In any particular piece?

BARTON: No, just too much, all his things. Tell me true: would you, me, and culture be any less if Bach wrote one less cantata? -Or say, twelve less?

JOLENE: How about one less double-scotch? Or Broadway musical?

BARTON: (Pouring himself another) How's about one more double-scotch? Johnny Walker Red: and tomorrow we'll be Johnny Walker Blue. But at least we won't be Bach, who never knew when to stop - writing music or fucking his wife - cause he had too many cantatas in his church and too many kids in his yard. Or, with his yard.

JOLENE: Well, it's certainly nice to have The World's Leading Authority here.

BARTON: On composing or on family-planning?

JOLENE: Barton, -- On Everything.

BARTON: So since I am The World's Leading Authority, why don't you believe me when I tell you Smithers' "Wings of the Wounded" is a great opera?

JOLENE: Look, "Wings" is about a mute who supposedly hears miraculous talk but can't express it. And we are asked to identify. So what is Smithers saying? That he can't compose the music he thinks is inside him - and that we should love him for this. So it's not only a complaint about a very private problem, but it's sentimental.

BARTON: What's wrong with being sentimental?

JOLENE: It circumvents art. Because it isn't real.

BARTON: But if it's real to him, if Smithers feels --

JOLENE: It's fakery.

BARTON: How dare you say someone is faking when he tells you what he feels?

JOLENE: When he makes an appeal for an exaggerated response to his inflated self-pity, it's fakery, it isn't the truth. When he sells me a vacuum labeled substance, that is fakery and not truth.

BARTON: But sentimentality is truth. People are sentimental.

JOLENE: (To RICHARD) Can I have a sip of your coffee?

RICHARD: Oh, I'm sorry, Jolene, you want a cup?

JOLENE: No, a sip is fine, I just need a drop, it's late.

BARTON: So if people are sentimental you can have a sentimental opera.

JOLENE: (Fed up:- as in, "Your turn!!") Richard!

RICHARD: Barton, do you know what sentimentality is?

BARTON: Sure, it's feeling nice 'n mushy.

RICHARD: No, it's the falsification of human sentiment. So it's lying. Therefore, it cannot be art - which is truth. Truth being what conforms with the facts.

BARTON: But people are sentimental, that's a fact, so that's the truth.

JOLENE: Wow! Barton, you can't distinguish between apples and oranges. We're talking about art, not actuality. Isn't there a difference to you?

BARTON: It's you two highfalutin snobs that make a difference between people and art! That's why the whole damn audience you both got together ain't half the number of people who come see my show in one week! So get off it, you two frauds - modern music isn't composing - you know that!!

JOLENE: (Astounded pause) To whom are you speaking? -Your work is, O.K., maybe good... But you are talking to masters. I never heard a composer express himself so venomously - a singer perhaps, an actor - but this is crazy. But I don't



understand your aggression. In a city called the most competitive on earth, not a person I've met is as desperately competitive as you. And you, Dick, where is your head at, if you're good friends with someone who cannot think at all and still wholesales horseshit like this?... -Now, listen to me carefully, Barton: the actual world is whatever it may be, both amorphous and moving, but nevertheless it woos us incessantly. Artists respond to that, armed with every detail then known about that song through instinct and test, attempting to redeem their compulsion to listen to it with that singular vision which may be the end product of a serious life, and belonging to one mind and no other, and which honesty alone makes possible. And greatness is measured by how nearly this vision approximates a thinkable universe. That equivalence is called truth, and when an artist renders it, it is called art. And when he has made real art, nothing in knowledge to come ever removes it:- because a man standing in reality has no end - although new generations must nudge him a bit to make room for what they have learned. So what Bach or Beethoven, or Ives, Mahler or Strauss scored can never be invalidated now by any one in this community, though as persons who live, too, we may hope, humbly, to addend their accomplishments. I think that I regret giving you the award.

Richard, could you take me home now?

(RICHARD gets JOLENE's wrap and they exit in silence. The second the street door closes, a loud and hideously hollow laugh is heard from the basement: a bellow, forced both in volume and extensiveness. GLENN flings open the basement door and emerges, holding a box. Red-faced and extremely drunk, he immediately attacks the refrigerator, yanking out a tureen weighted with the carcass of a large roasted chicken. Spotting BARTON in a brown study near the dimly lit bookcase, he renews his eery, empty laugh as if it were the dreadful greeting from some hellish, other world.)

GLENN: How ya doin', Barton-baby! Burnin' the midnight oil by yer lonesome? -Have a chicken leg!

BARTON: (Sulking and shaking; looking away) Who is she, a old woman who goes around doing in people....

GLENN: (Opening the box) I let myself in through the basement, I thought you'd be working down there. Here, I brought you this, someone was sellin' it at the bar - a toy drummer. Genuine 40s kitsch.

2-2-29

BARTON: (Staring at the bookcase) Jist a vengeful hag, Elaine said that, she knows her for years.

GLENN: You wind it up... Look how they made these things then, the detail: he's a clown 'n has a dunce cap, see? You'd pay a fortune in a thrift shop but I chiseled the crook down a little he was drunk. Like it? For your award night.

BARTON: And Susan Hatman told me the same thing. She takes revenge, writes poison-pen letters to screw ya outta jobs 'n grants. Who is she, anyway?

GLENN: Who?

BARTON: Jolene. A bitter, old woman.

GLENN: Oh, who cares about Jolene tonight? Have a succulent roasted chicken wing. Heaven itself! (laughing fiercely again: that frightening sound)

BARTON: (Taking it) You gonna demolish this, now? How--

GLENN: (Shouting) So what?!

BARTON: How many times did you eat today?

GLENN: (Shoving a thigh at the toy) Oh, shut up! Here, drummer-boy have a drumstick yer a drummer so eat a dru-- so's me 'n Bart don't eat the whole thing.

BARTON: (Still trembling) She said, she just said I w--

GLENN: I don't give a shit what Jolene just said.

BARTON: (Angry) You don't give a shit how much ya shovel down your damn maw either, all day and all night.

GLENN: What's it any of your goddamn business what I do?

BARTON: I'll tell you what's my goddamn business that you do! - puttin' in a new boiler down there in the basement is my business, that's where I live!

GLENN: I live here too: 'n Luk, Richard 'n Jen and we --

BARTON: But you wanna remodel the whole basement, don't you, and make it into a real apartment? I mean, eventually?

GLENN: So fuckin' what?

BARTON: So you kin throw me out 'n move your mother in?

GLENN: Nobody's throwin' you out yer so stupid insecure.

BARTON: So do it after the winter, remodel the basement then and then put in a new boiler, you do it now and you'll only have to re-do the whole thing then - move all the pipes and realign them, 'n recess the girders to move the boiler somewhere else, you're throwing out money now, that's three or four thousand dollars right there.

GLENN: It's my money, what's it to you?

BARTON: What's it to me? - I just got a telegram from ICM, now I have two movies to score by Jan--

GLENN: Fuck your movies!

BARTON: You're not letting me work, Glenn!

GLENN: Look, Mr. Broadway-Hollywood movie man, if White calls and says he can put in a new boiler next week, I'm havin' him put it in!

BARTON: (Astonished) If he calls and says --

GLENN: And if he doesn't call, I won't.

BARTON: Wait a minute --

GLENN: (Screaming) I said shut your fuckin' mouth now about White, the boiler, Jolene, my eating and anything else you got to tell me how to run my life!

BARTON: Well, I'll tell you just one more thing, you asshole, you let White come into my apartment just once more and start bangin' around down there and I'll move!

(Freeze, and  
LIGHTS.)

## SCENE 3.

(Early the next morning. The chicken carcass, cups, and drinking glasses are still on the table. The usual, awful "morning cacophony" of slamming doors and gagging sounds from above. RICHARD is in a bathrobe under the blanket on the couch, his hands covering both ears and his knees propped up supporting music sheets. The second the lights come up, JENNY dashes down the stairs, half-dressed.)

JENNY: Good morning, King Richard, sleep well?

RICHARD: 'Morning, Jenny: no, I didn't go to sleep yet.

JENNY: (Tearing into the kitchenette) Oh? -Hung-over?

RICHARD: Not at all. I did not drink last night.

JENNY: How unusual, your majesty.

RICHARD: Why? I never touched a drop when I was in Asia.

JENNY: (Searching about) Where's the coffee-maker?

RICHARD: Oh, sorry about that, hon. You left it on again when you came back last night. I got in after you from Jolene's, and found it on and empty. It was burning hot, just about to explode.

JENNY: So where is it?

RICHARD: (Pencil in notes) Packed away.

JENNY: What do you mean?

RICHARD: Well, after all, it's mine. And it's packed away safe now and we're all safe now and so you don't have to worry about leaving it on any more.

JENNY: You packed it away?

RICHARD: I'm afraid I did.

JENNY: (Angry) Who told you to do that, you crank, I gotta have my coffee to wake up 'n go to work!

RICHARD: So use the old percolator.

JENNY: Who has the time, we're already late!

RICHARD: Get up five minutes earlier.

JENNY: (Shrieking, quite suddenly) How dare you tell

me to get up earlier! I live here! Who are you?

(BARTON lunges in from the basement, very tired and still dressed in the previous evening's formal wear.)

BARTON: He's King Richard the Free-loader. Been here for weeks 'n you don't know who he is?

JENNY: He took back his coffee-maker without telling me!

BARTON: Oh, Jenny, get lost.

JENNY: How dare you tell me to --

BARTON: Been sixteen years since you quit makin' it with Glenn, so I dare tell you anything I want! And we're tellin' ya now you'll use no more plug-in automatics to burn up the Palazzio. For you, ya restored old cherry, it may be jist a Joan of Arc complex, but to us off-duty fire fighters that makes ya one of history's most dangerous women.

JENNY: Don't talk to me that way --

BARTON: Oh, get dressed, will you, I can't stand seein' yer sacks sag when you haven't had yer cup of coffee in the morning.

JENNY: (Deeply humiliated, retreating upstairs) You two will pay for this shit, you better believe me.

BARTON: I always get paid for my shit. -But that isn't true for everyone we know, is it, King Richard?

RICHARD: Oh, shit pays well. It's non-shit that's a bitch.

BARTON: You hear what your brother's gonna do? Kick me out 'n move your mother in.

RICHARD: (Bored) He's made no such decision.

BARTON: To drive her nuts. That's what I'm afraid of. Me, it's no problem, I got the cash to move now.

RICHARD: Barton, how often do I tell you, he's not --

BARTON: You think I can't read his mind by now? And someone livin' with their mother, that's a mistake: on principle!

RICHARD: She's old, Barton, and can't manage everything by herself. She's blacked out several times.

And she got mugged last month. I don't like to see her there all alone in her place, either.

BARTON: So what do you think he should do?

RICHARD: I don't know. Cause not a one of us here likes to live by themselves. I have your anxieties too.

BARTON: But Glenn's planning this just to isolate me!

RICHARD: (Engineering BARTON toward the basement) Oh, boy! Every day I gotta listen to the same story.

BARTON: Then what about the new boiler story? You know what he told me? That if White calls and says he can put it in soon, then he'll let him put it in. That's not a way to do it - if White calls.

RICHARD: He said that?

BARTON: I'm telling you, how crazy he is! You don't run a house that way: you know if you want to do it, or not.

RICHARD: Why don't you go downstairs and let me talk to him? Anything you say now he's going to do the opposite.  
(the bell rings: MR. WHITE is at the front door)  
Go ahead, I'll get it. And get some sleep, huh?

BARTON: (Exiting reluctantly) Yeah, I'm dead tired....

(GLENN, sloppily dressed for work, runs down the stairs.)

GLENN: I'll get it! I'll get it! stay where you are.

RICHARD: (By the basement door) I kin --

GLENN: Never mind. I got it. God, what a hang-over, I think I'm still high.

WHITE: (As GLENN opens the door) Uh - 'lo, Mr. Glaser.

GLENN: Oh, Mr. White, how are you? Good morning.

WHITE: Hope I didn't wake ya, I wanted to catch you before ya left for work.

GLENN: No, it's fine. We're all up.

WHITE: Well, the job I had lined up fer this month fell through. And I just put a extra man on yesterday.

2-3-34

GLENN: Uh-huh.

WHITE: So I'll be able to install a new boiler for you next week, if ya still want it.

GLENN: Yes. I want it.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE 1.

(Shortly after noon, two weeks later. The doors to the basement and the street are open. The intermittent thump of malfunctioning pipes, at times quite loud and jarring. Occasionally, we hear voices from the street, calling out, instructing, etc., and the slamming doors of a van. LUK, dressed-down almost as carefully as she would be dressed-up, is deeply and excitedly involved on the telephone.)

LUK: George, baby-dahring, oh yes.... Soon, my love  
.... Oh, where?.... In Staten Island: oh, yes,  
I love Staten Island.... Way out?.... O.K.,  
anywhere, it not matter me....

(GLENN comes through the basement door and heads for the refrigerator, wiping his hands on his extra-large, hanging shirttails, as if having soiled them while working in the basement. Involved as she is, LUK does not hear him: but GLENN pauses when he overhears her, rattling on in an animated voice, and then stands there, unseen, listening.)

LUK: I not can wait, George, I must live with you  
forever.... You so good for Luk... You velly  
beautiful.... My life come true, all my dream  
.... George, yes, you most wonderful big man in  
America I see.... You love Luk, too? Then --  
(GLENN crosses into the living room and stands  
silently staring at her: she looks up and gasps)  
Oh, God me! I got get off.... Yes, George, I  
call back, I.... bye, goodbye, now.  
(hanging up; nervously searching GLENN's face)  
You hear?

GLENN: I heard.

LUK: For what you listen, I talk friend, I not listen  
you on phone!

GLENN: (Steadily) Who is he?



LUK: Friend me. I can have, no?

GLENN: Who?

LUK: You not know.

GLENN: (His temperature rising) I know George.

LUK: So, you know. So for what you ask?

GLENN: You're gonna leave me and move away with him?

LUK: Boy, well, you got know sometime. George, he understand me - this one understand he same-same.

GLENN: When?

LUK: Not know: I not move: what you talk?

GLENN: (Grabbing her arm) I said when?

LUK: I not care! Maybe never.

GLENN: George don't have one fucking cent to his name! And no job. He came to my office on Tuesday to ask me to get him one in my division.

LUK: I not care this, for what you tell?

GLENN: You put him up to that, didn't you? You thought you could ball George behind my back and then get me, the fat, dumb push-over, to hire him! So that soon as I do, you 'n that pig can shack-up! You cheap butterfly! - what kinda fool-asshole you take me for?

LUK: (Truly surprised) You not hire him job?

GLENN: You bet your sweet ass I not hire him job!

LUK: I not care, not matter to me. I have go now.

GLENN: You're not going nowhere till you tell me what--

LUK: I not have tell anything! - what you think, you own me something? All time tell me what do, not go there, not wear this, not see good friend, not go great movie, come back early, sit here talk. Fuckoff! You want have pet, buy one dog, buy cat!

GLENN: You ungrateful hooker! the fortune I squandered

getting you working papers and legal status in the States, the clothes and jewelry I bought you - gave you two rooms upstairs while I'm left only one - that jock won't drop a penny on pussy-for-pay like you, you better believe that salami, sweetheart!

LUK: I not need George give money: he beautiful, he young! big! strong! -I got job myself now!

GLENN: But you used me to bring you here and bribe yer green card outta immigration: it took me months, it cost me thousands! And the very week it's yours, you start compulsively playin' dragon lady again! Well, I'll get even with that son of a bitch - I'll veto his wormin' into Civil Service if I live to be ninety and it's the only thing I ever have time for! -Don't hit me, hoer!

(BARTON limps in from the street, dusting off his jeans.)

BARTON: Good, that's finally finished - did you see any-- (spotting LUK and GLENN struggling together) Hey! what's this rough-house here, cut it out! (jumping between them and holding them apart)

GLENN: (Hysterical) She's moving away with her lover!

LUK: (Crying) I not moving! He crazy!

GLENN: (Stomping off) Who gives a shit, the bar-bitch's never here any more anyhow.

BARTON: -That's right:- don't give a shit.

LUK: I say I not move.

BARTON: (Pulling their hands together and forcing them to sit on the couch) O.K., so sit down, then - both of you. And calm down - instantly! I'm the one who's moving. And I'd like a moment of your respective quarreling times to say stay well, if that's all right with you two goons. --You spot any crap I might have overlooked down there?

GLENN: (Fighting hard for control) No, it's all packed, I put the last two cartons out by the door.

BARTON: (Limping to the cabinet to get the Buddha, and wrapping it in old newspaper) Well, thank you.

GLENN: You supposed to be imitating me or something?

BARTON: What a rampant persecution complex! My amplifier fell on my foot so I'm limping, you mind?

GLENN: Yeah? Looks like a "perfectly-timed" witticism.

BARTON: At an imperfect time like this? what bad taste! Speaking of bad taste, no point leaving my Buddha behind: you 'n Richard got Asia up the ass.

GLENN: So, then, all your stuff's in the van? So g'bye.

BARTON: Wait a minute, whadda ya mean "g'bye"? I'm jist movin' up the drag - I'll be in the ritzy Hotel Homeless Persons - I'll still be seein' ya, it's not that far away.

GLENN: (Pointed) It is very far away. Like Asia.

LUK: Yes, is far.

BARTON: Luk: yer such a great yes-man, right to the end.

LUK: What "yes-man"?

BARTON: Ask Glenn after. He should think about it, too - in the list of things he settles for. -Listen, - (a thumping pipe is heard) I don't mean to the pipes: I got fabulous news:- I'll be getting a Grammy for "Screechin' Skins" - and a Gold Plate, to boot: it broke the half-mill mark. Ain't that wild?

GLENN: (Impatient, trying to rise) You expected it, no?

BARTON: (Pushing him back) Not so fast, not as of Friday!

GLENN: (Very tense) Well, so, congratulations.

LUK: Yes.

BARTON: (Imitating her) "Yes." -But dig this:- CBS is gonna do a whole docudrama - on my life!

LUK: (Impressed, wildly enthusiastic) TV docudrama?

BARTON: Yeah, a scored, full thirty minutes! It's what I always dreamt of! They'll follow me around for a week: cooking, shopping, riding the subway, making up in my dressing-room, undressing in the john after the show, shaving, showering 'n everything --

GLENN: Sounds wonderful, the whole world can watch you

take a shit. Just what we all need, right?

LUK: (Innocent) Everybody watch us take shit?

BARTON: Well! you dishwasher-dull sons of bitches...

LUK: How we can watch? - TV on blink.

BARTON: But you'll get it fixed, won't you? To see me --

LUK: (Getting up) I bored. I need have sleep. Hey, Glenn, I prefer stay here. What good George, he not have job? -Talk you later. Good night. (exiting, rather grandly, up the stairs)

BARTON: -See, dummy, she's stuck here, same as Jen. 'N you goin' bats! -Richard's at your mother's?

GLENN: (Getting a magazine) He'll be back any minute.

BARTON: Then I'll wait. The movers'll love this anyhow, they're bein' paid by the hour. -But how come you're home today?

GLENN: (Pretending or trying to read) I took off work.

BARTON: That's gettin' to be a habit.

GLENN: It's my leg. I gotta see Jacobs at 1:00.

BARTON: It's not your leg, Glenn: it's psychological. Look, here's what I wanna say, now that I'm finally splittin' the Palazzio:- Quit that ball-bustin' job! It's enough, twenty years case-workin'. Cause it's not your leg and it's not your back, it's that empty, unfulfilling, insane job that's destroying you. It has no effective purpose in society - and you have no belief in or meaningful attachment to it. And tryin' to make up for that with something like conducting --

GLENN: But I want to conduct, I'm good at --

BARTON: That's not to the point, baby, whether you conduct or not-conduct. Conducting's just whipped-cream on the apple pie, don't you understand? It's your apple pie that's no good - that's too stale or too cold --

GLENN: (Fuming) Stop talking, will you!

BARTON: (The pipes knock loudly) You stop reading! -

cause talkin' about cold, do you know how cold it is in the basement at night? Yer new boiler - ha! Just listen to it go - or not go! -That's some crooked deal White pulled there - and for that completely broken boiler, Glenn, you edged me out. This was my home! -So fuck you good! Your whole life is buying a pig in a poke, with trichinosis!

(RICHARD enters from the street, trying to close the door.)

RICHARD: Hi, guys. I see you got the moving van out there.

BARTON: Leave the door: it's latched. How's your mother?

RICHARD: My mother is very much like Glenn here. When you take time to sit down and talk to her reasonably, she is quite reasonable. Intellectual, even. 'N then, five minutes later, every point you made is absolutely forgotten and she's back to groundless fantasies, impossible demands, and total illogic. But with a smile, of course... A bitter one.

GLENN: (Abruptly exiting) You, too! I gotta go!

RICHARD: (Astonished) Somethin' buggin' him?

BARTON: His unsuccessful life! For which he blames every person except himself - me, you, White, George --

RICHARD: His unsuccessful life?

BARTON: Yes, and you'll waste your own, if you continue to concern yourself. Glenn is quite beyond help.

RICHARD: Don't say that! No one is. And he's my brother. There's got to be a way to help him, and I've got to try if it means from now on no more traveling, teaching, composing, screwing, or anything else!

BARTON: Look, the movers are waiting for me, I'd rather take this time to settle the business with Jolene.

RICHARD: And I'd rather not. How indiscreet can you be? Its consequence was my losing out, not either of you. Friends being rarer than successful lives.

BARTON: But that passé, envious, destructive woman was --

RICHARD: Bart, why not simply stop, and try to understand what Jolene was telling you, for your good?... About intrusiveness, yours, in areas that you're unqualified to deal with. Cause the world-over,

the surest sign of pure ignorance, is arrogance.

BARTON: My arrogance? What about yours?

RICHARD: Mine?

BARTON: Yes, yours: your intellectual arrogance. In your stuffed-shirt, stand-offish life! You think you're too good for me!

RICHARD: I never said I was too --

BARTON: Listen, Richard: do you think I'm a sell-out?

RICHARD: (Pause: thinking; then:) No, Barton, I really don't. A man must have started from a moral position to sell out. That, you never did.

BARTON: How fucking holier-than-thou can you get?! And for just that, Richard, you and your inscrutable Olympian output, serial and melodic, is gonna end as one big tax-shelter for the rest of your family! Who works! -And who learned their irresponsible approach to their whole lives from you - from the king's, irresponsible handling of his talent! (the pipes crank loudly again)  
Oh! Shit! I'm goin' deaf from that goddamn sound - it's a dead ringer for your last two quartets! (shouting upstairs)  
Hey, Luk, good luck! -And good luck to you, Richard, your non-existent career's gonna need more than any composer who ever lived ever had that unlistenable direction you're pushing your oeuvres! your "masterpiece" oeuvres!

(Wildly upset, BARTON runs through the open front door. After a moment, GLENN steps from behind it where he has been quietly hiding, pulls the latch, closes it and enters.)

RICHARD: (Quietly) You're back?

GLENN: I didn't go. I just had to get out of there, I couldn't take him today. ...Our beast in the basement. Hope I don't start missing him now.

RICHARD: (Sitting; pause) Well, my dream this morning was about two birds sharing the same small cage, year in and year out. And yet they didn't seem to know each other, at all. ...Ya know, Glenn ... it was very much like a cage.

GLENN: (Fixing a pipe) Cause we know what we wanna

know: mostly, what we're doing, that's why you don't see what's going on right next to you. And all those years, half the 70s 'n 80s, while you and America were hiding your ostrich heads in shame, he was quite busy downstairs, studying Pop charts 'n TV shows. And today, he's fake, fat, rich and famous. While you're authentic, thin, poor and idle. Wanna puff?

RICHARD: It's too early, I need to do some --

GLENN: Better have a puff. It's good stuff.

RICHARD: But, Glenn, I thought in my dream that other bird in the cage... might be you.

(They stare at each other. Long pause. The phone rings.)

GLENN: That's Gorgeous George, I'm sure, calling to -- (picking up while handing RICHARD the pipe) "Celibate Haven," hello... Yeah?... Uh-huh.... Really?.... Fantastic.... I'll tell him: Bye. (hanging up)

Guess who? -Big mouth. He's callin' from the corner. He forgot to announce that he also got the Musicians' Guild Award this week for best composer of the year for a dramatic musical. Made me swear to tell you right away, he wants to make sure you know. Well, to them what hath shall be given and to them what hath not shall be taken away. -Howda ya take away somethin' from them what hath not? I never understood that. Well, Richard, nothin' to worry about - seein' as you, child, haven't a fuckin' thing, what could they take away? The pot you ain't got to piss in? Certainly not the pot you smoke - I supply that.

RICHARD: (Puffing; then:) Guess Bart's what you'd call "on top" now. And at the age of thirty. They expect his new one to be the biggest Broadway show in twelve-fifteen years.

GLENN: (Smoking and working on his rubbings) And he really hurt no one on his way to the top. Which is rare - our beast is kinda unique.

RICHARD: Depends on if you consider sellin' shit, however classy, to be not hurtin' anyone. Not that it's intentionally fraudulent, or people wouldn't buy it up like they do. It's what he really feels. But felt or not, baloney replaces real food.

GLENN: But that's just it, it is classy shit, and so it sets some kind of higher standard.

RICHARD: Nah, it weakens our stomachs, and only sets a whirlpool of more baloney in motion, which helps to flush the whole country down a hole to hell.

GLENN: I'm so bored when I don't go to work. Much as that job is boring, it's a horror, it beats -- but I'll get back at Barton - I won't return the rent he paid for the rest of December. And I'll get back at that George, can you believe him pretending to be my friend all these months while chasing tail, my own wife's --

(A sudden ear-splitting series of cranking and banging in the pipes. A cry is heard from upstairs while RICHARD covers his ears. LUK, in a nightgown, her hair undone, is seen atop the stairs rubbing her eyes, greatly agitated.)

LUK: Glenn, I no can sleep! this noise!

GLENN: (Shouting) You can't sleep cause no one's screwin' you, not the noise!

LUK: I leave, I goin' leave this bang! bang! BANG! shit house!!

GLENN: So fucking leave, bitch! - who needs you! Go fuck your way into somebody else's bank account!

LUK: (Exiting in a fury) I will, I leave you bastard son of bitch! I pack up now!!

GLENN: (Pause. Then, sadly, turning to RICHARD with a choke in his voice) I'll have to have White re-do the whole job.

(LIGHTS.)

## SCENE 2.

(An evening two weeks later. The sound of highly unusual contemporary music bridges the brief moments between scenes 1 and 2, and when the lights come up we realize this music is on a tape that GLENN, wearing a heavy sweater under a jacket and still shivering, is listening to intently. Rags



are stuffed against the window frames to break the draft. RICHARD appears at the top of the stairs hauling a suitcase and an overcoat. A huge duffel is strapped on his back.)

RICHARD: Guess I didn't have that much stuff here...  
 (descending the stairs)  
 Took me less than two hours to pack. But when ya wanna go, ya wanna go real quick, right? And how do you like Ms Schmutz getting out so fast? Called me at 8 AM, 'n split my place before 5:00 this afternoon. So I'll be sleeping in my own apartment again - in my very own bed tonight. It's been four years! I can't believe it...  
 -Glenn, could you lower that a little?  
 (GLENN turns down the stereo and RICHARD slips off the duffel and parks his suitcase: but in doing so cuts his hand on its metal lock)  
 Boy, and I bet you thought I'd never leave.

GLENN: It was beginning to seem like that.

RICHARD: Glenn, I know you felt like I was spying on you here. You weren't free to do what you do when you have this house to yourself, jist lay around 'n goof off or whatever. But that really couldn't be helped, you know. I wasn't spying. Or judging you, at all.

GLENN: Your hand's bleeding. She found her own place?

RICHARD: Ms Schmutz? Nah, jist another sublet. She'll probably go through life living in everybody's place but her own. Some people are like that.

GLENN: (Giving RICHARD a handkerchief) Ya need cash?

RICHARD: (Tying it on his hand) No, no, I have plenty.

GLENN: You sure?

RICHARD: Glenn, I never borrow.

GLENN: I don't know why not, everyone else does.

RICHARD: (Pause) Is something wrong?

GLENN: Jist that - Jenny. She's been at the doctor's for hours. I'm really worried now.  
 (turning the tape back up; then, the bell rings)  
 Ah! there she is.

RICHARD: Ringing the bell?

GLENN: (Heading, happily, for the door) Sure: probably lost her keys again, like she would her head if it weren't screwed on backwards!

(He unlocks and opens the door: JOLENE is standing on the stoop, in a huge overcoat, red scarf and attractive hat.)

JOLENE: (Sincerely pleased) Hello fellow, Glenn, babe!

GLENN: Oh, Jolene. How are ya? Come in - quick - I don't wanna keep the door open.

RICHARD: Jolene! - how nice! What brings you out here?

JOLENE: A contract for Michael Brig, the flutist. He's working "The Feast or Famine" this week, over by the park, you know the bird?

RICHARD: Sure, Mike, he did a coupla concerts for me, years ago, he's great.

JOLENE: (Hearing the tape) Speaking of great, and flutists, that's one of your pieces, isn't it?

RICHARD: (Surprised) You know it?

JOLENE: Do I know it? It's your Symphony Number 4, no? That's one of my favorite symphonies. And the flute in that - hell! - it's good to hear it again.... God, it's even better than I remember.

GLENN: Kids, I wanna run over to Jacob's 'n see what's keeping Jenny. -Sorry to split on you like this, Jolene, ya jist came in, but I'm kinda worri--

JOLENE: No, go right ahead. First things first. I have some business to discuss with Richard here anyhow.

GLENN: Good, see ya later, if you're still around...  
(pulling on his coat and going out the door)

JOLENE: (Unbuttoning her coat) Boy, it's cold in here.

RICHARD: Better leave your coat on. Our boiler broke down. And it was just put in. A month ago - less. Here, sit, want coffee?

JOLENE: No, I'm coffeed-out, thanks. And I only have a few minutes. -Richard, listen, I dropped by because I think I can say one or two things to you which might help you out.

RICHARD: (As JOLENE takes a chair by the bookcase) Oh?

JOLENE: I came to this country seventeen years ago, so I was, what? about thirty-five when I left Europe, a mature woman. And I was an architect when I lived there, not a bad one, for a firm consigned to church reconstruction. So even though I've actually done all my composing here, I am, by my apprenticeship then, as an artist, a European.

RICHARD: (Turning off the tape and coming to sit facing JOLENE) Yes, I read that in your biographies.

JOLENE: And as such, I never had instilled in me certain, well, delusions is what they really are - that you Americans seem to nurture. And refuse to give up, as if they were somehow your legitimate birthright in a democracy. And yet these prized delusions cause a lot of unnecessary suffering.

RICHARD: (Pretending, nervously, to joke) Name two!

JOLENE: Well, one is that most of you people believe that a product need only be made to be sold. A second is that if that product is good, that it will sell so much the more. A third is that if it's truly superior, its marketing is virtually unlimited. And a fourth is that should the product be actually great, why then, it must by nature garner recognition, awards, wealth, love, even lovers, and so on into democratic paradise.

RICHARD: That's funny, I never thought of it in those --

JOLENE: But Europeans have no such paradise. And so we anticipate nothing. Except, perhaps, a sliding scale in reverse. Nothing, by way of outside reward, I'm saying. Because for me, when those day-to-day music sheets show a steady succession of notes and notations, I am in a state of two, true ecstasies - and those are the arms of my lover. And if there are two people in the concert hall, just two, I feel then completely fulfilled. And require, by my training I say, no more.

RICHARD: (Softly) And me?

JOLENE: Answer that yourself, Richard.

RICHARD: When the hall is half empty, I am half insane.

JOLENE: And morose and depressed for months. For you are also very proud. Yet what does a full house mean? It is a major error for an artist to believe that because his work has been accepted, it is therefore understood. This is serious self-deception and it can have debilitating and disastrous consequences for an artist.

RICHARD: (Very uncomfortable) You have my old address?

JOLENE: I'm sure, or I can get it later. Right now, there's something else on my mind. This problem with Barton. The night of the awards, when we came back here. -Why were you silent when he needled you, hammering at your soul, jabbing pins in, dozens of little pins to let blood from a hundred hidden places? I was forced to go into battle for you because you sat here so tight, as if somehow you earn his assaults. Or is it that, perhaps, the proud do not bleed?...

RICHARD: I wasn't aware --

JOLENE: Well, then, maybe awareness is your problem. But you really disappoint me. I had a similar feeling when I saw your last opera, what was it? - "A Rose That April's Here"? Your hero, that California jock with the Redford face and not a coloring in his interpretation that defies movie notions of what a tenor executes. I had to turn away and focus at the back of the auditorium, trying to hear what might be in that score that's you. I thought, "What is Dick doing identifying with a clone like that? And he's chosen that conventional tenor, too, so it must be how he's reading himself." I wondered if you knew when you put that piece together, who you were any more. And that was years ago, yes? five or six, before you went to Asia. But now, since you've been back, what I see confirms my fears, only more so, very sadly more so. What are you doing letting someone like Barton stomp all over you?

RICHARD: He's my friend. I don't have many. His faults just have to be accepted.

JOLENE: And if you were healthy, you could afford that. But you are poisoned music-wise, and discouraged. And that makes his competitive influence dubious. Look, Barton's energies do not coalesce for the writing of good music which accidently happens to bring fame: but rather for fame, via any kind

of work, good, bad, or indifferent. And what he seeks no amount of attention will satisfy - because his drive is an insatiable craving for approval. But for all that boy's abrasive push, there is one person among us even more driven - and he is yourself. Your ambition though, needs a nobler standard for fulfillment: because it is Schoenberg that you hear, and the Schoenbergs of every known civilization, you hear them very exactly. So it is they that you still need to measure yourself against. For that is also how we will measure you in the end, by their stature, and whether you shall bear up or not.

Richard, what I am trying to tell you, is that you've seen "success" and been de-balled....

(A very long pause. RICHARD fidgets with his piano-fingers. With effort, they at last come to lie still in his lap.)

JOLENE: So I believe you can recall finally, and will finally now accept, that inescapable and all but crushing artistic dread that still lies waiting to challenge you. Remember who you are, Richard. Find your courage, and face it once again. (RICHARD looks up at JOLENE and smiles weakly) And as for New York, I think you should stay here. New York is where it happens, even when it doesn't happen, this is where it doesn't. And though you may never, really, ever receive the recognition you deserve, and perhaps, to be truthful, could use, you may well even so still have your best composing ahead of you. And believe me, there are people here who like you. And who know pretty much what you have done.  
-What are you thinking about?

RICHARD: (Distracted; and then, only half focusing:) I - I was thinking about something that happened once, a lot of years ago. It was my brother's birthday, and a friend of his and I took him out to dinner at The Tavern on the Green, that real elegant place in the park. They had this very elaborate menu there and, you know, my brother, he always makes the wrong choice, you can count on him for that, on just about everything. And so he ordered something, I can't remember what it was, but it simply wasn't very good. In fact, it was awful. However, his friend and I are fairly selective, and we were more experienced, and so we both ordered dishes that were splendid. I mean, truly sumptuous. And I sat there throughout the meal eating mine, and watching

Glenn eat the lousy thing he got, and feeling all that time what a pity, because it was his, Glenn's birthday. We should just have given him one of our orders, it was his birthday, or at least pooled our plates, with everybody sharing equally. But his friend never thought of that... And I didn't, either. I didn't, Jolene - the thought never even entered... my mind....

(The door opens: JENNY, looking gaunt, enters with GLENN.)

GLENN: Brr, it's colder here than outside: shut the door!

JENNY: Hello, Jolene. Glenn told me you stopped by.

JOLENE: (Smiling broadly) How are you doing, Jenny?

JENNY: I'm all right.

RICHARD: (Brightly) You look better than that! Seein' the doc must have it's points: you seem, well, ten pounds thinner, jist for the exercise.

JENNY: (Closing the door) Richard, you never change.

RICHARD: Here: put your hand in my pocket. I want you to feel my change.

JENNY: Lemme take a rain-check on that, O.K., big boy? With tall guys, it's largely wasted space anyway.

JOLENE: Dick, will you wait outside with me till I catch a cab? You folks have a gorgeous home, but it's not exactly in the safest of neighborhoods.

GLENN: Woulda cost me triple if it were one block east.

JOLENE: Don't I know! By the way, Glenn, will you conduct for me sometime? The last thing you did, that Jerry Bellerman piece, I really loved it.

GLENN: Thanks. Sure, Jo: jist mail me the score.

JOLENE: Good. See you people.

RICHARD: (To GLENN) I'll be right back.

GLENN: O.K.

(RICHARD escorts JOLENE out, and closes the door.)

GLENN: (Sitting) Well, what did he say?

JENNY: (Very tired) Who?

GLENN: Jacobs!

JENNY: I'll tell you later. I wanna go up.

GLENN: No later. Now!

JENNY: (Looking about) Where's the pipe?

GLENN: No pipe! Wha'd he say?

JENNY: (Screaming) What do you think he said, asshole? Leukemia!

GLENN: What?!

JENNY: (A howl, quite mournful) Leukemia, like my father - and my uncles! Ned and Allen!

GLENN: (Half standing) He's sure?

JENNY: Yes, he's sure. He's been testing me six months.

GLENN: (Shocked) I don't believe it!

JENNY: He knew for a long time. He told me four weeks ago that's what he thought. That night before you ordered the boiler. So now he confirmed it.

GLENN: (Weakly) How bad?

JENNY: How bad?? How bad, Glenn? I could be promoted any time now, that's how bad.

GLENN: (Incredulous; fighting back tears) "Promoted"?

JENNY: Yeah, promoted! That's what you told me they call it in Taiwan, no? -Promoted, go over, let go! Any day it could happen. In December even!

GLENN: Wait - we should see more doctors --my mom's doc--

JENNY: I've seen more doctors. All my family's. Seven of them. Glenn, I wanna go upstairs, do you mind? I didn't sleep this week.

GLENN: Jen, stop - maybe it's your weight - you could slim down. You weren't always heavy: ya started overeating here with me, jist because I ate...

JENNY: (Very flat) Glenn, what're you saying?

3-2-17

GLENN: That you don't have leukemia! -You were so beautiful when when you were young.... All blond 'n rosy, no sickness, you can't have that! Jenny!

(RICHARD re-enters. GLENN wipes his face and glasses.)

RICHARD: Boy, no shortage of cabs in your neighborhood, is there? We got one right outside.

JENNY: Richard, don't forget your blanket over there. That's your favorite color, indigo, isn't it? So don't leave it. And you can take the full-length mirror back, too, that's my present.

RICHARD: (Surprised; staring at JENNY) The Chippendale?

JENNY: (At the stairs) Yeah, it looks good in your apartment. I remember how you had it.... By the harpsichord. It made the room look bigger. (exiting, as they both watch her, up the stairs)

RICHARD: (Pause) It's such a funny thing about some faces. Have you noticed how her face has lost, not gained, definition over the years?

GLENN: You have everything?

RICHARD: You wouldn't, cause you see her all the time. But it was very obvious to me when I returned. And it seems even more so, tonight. Yes, I believe I have everything.

GLENN: Should I help you out?

RICHARD: No, there's jist these two pieces, right now. Considerin' which, they're relatively light. I can manage them easy - with the blanket, too.

GLENN: (Standing) So, if you're all set --

RICHARD: (Getting the blanket) But I'd just like to get a few things straight before I go.

GLENN: You can call me, Richard, tomorrow, it's very late.

RICHARD: But I finished the Asian propaganda piece, and I'm going right to work on my new project tomorrow. The big one, that magnum opus I've been waiting to do for so long now: I don't wanna call anyone then.



GLENN: (Sitting back down, reluctantly) O.K., so what is it? Quick, huh?

RICHARD: Well, it's hard to say everything quick. But, uh, why don't you think a little about how we both were brought up - really, just to work and worry and skimp. And so that's what you do --

GLENN: (More than impatient) Is this a prepared speech?

RICHARD: Yeah, I suppose, but - so don't make it any harder for me than it already is... Anyhow, I think about it every time I see Mommy, it's so plain at her place. -To work, first of all, preferably at something we hate, because otherwise it's not work, you know what I mean? I mean what I do, composing, that's not seen as work. It's goofing off, jist fucking around and wasting time. And God forbid, having fun. But what you do, suffering all these years, oh yeah, that's good, that's what work should be. So you bought the whole package and pay every blessed day for it - you should try to change that now. Go and do something else, Glenn.

GLENN: (Edgy and annoyed) Like what?

RICHARD: That's for you to spend time finding out. I think you never knew what because Mommy 'n Daddy had it all prefigured for you - they wanted an engineer or a mathematician. But that was screwy, they fucked you over good, and so you ended up case working jist to bide time --

GLENN: What do you think I should do? Meddle, like you?

RICHARD: At least study painting, you have real talent with these rubbings you spend half the night on--

GLENN: (His voice rising) It's too late!

RICHARD: Too late for what? -For what? It's your life, to do what you want with. It is never, never too late, Glenn, to do whatever you would like in life!

GLENN: I don't want to do anything.

RICHARD: What do you mean, you don't --

GLENN: Richard, I'd like to retire. And I have just twelve years left till I can collect my pension.

3-2-19

And that's what I'm waiting for, O.K.?

RICHARD: And that's what your life is about?- waiting for most of it to pass as quickly as possible, so you can do nothing with the rest of it?

GLENN: Yes, that's it, exactly, O.K.?!

RICHARD: Retire? And do what? -Sit around staring at TV, sleep half the day, play the fuckin' stereo - you can't just retire in twelve years and do nothing. And with the pittance your pension'll be! O.K. - how'll you pay for this house, then?

GLENN: I'll sell it. Cheap, so it'll go quickly. And live off the sale. -What else?

RICHARD: (Incensed) You see, you'll sell it cheap! The only good investment you ever made! Penny-wise and pound-foolish - right to the end! -Shit, man, you might take some trips, instead, see what occurs to you somewhere else --

GLENN: But I'm not interested in traveling any more. I'm even more bored in foreign countries.

RICHARD: Well, boredom is one of your barriers. Along with your insufferable, preposterous impatience! When's the last damn time you sat through a complete concert? Or better yet, went to one?

GLENN: I feel uncomfortable when I go out. Besides, I've heard everything ya could.

RICHARD: No one has - or could!  
(Sitting next to GLENN, trying to be clamer)  
Look, you have to ask yourself where this boredom originates. In anxiety, no? You block out any intake you think will upset you. So while good and helpful intake is always pressing all around us, your rejecting of it out of disbelief creates your boredom. But boredom is no protection against upset, it's only a principal source of more anxiety. And so on in circles.

GLENN: (Weakening) But what creates the initial anxiety?

RICHARD: Shouldn't you be seeing a psychiatrist for that?

GLENN: (Quickly, bored) I don't have the cash.

RICHARD: If you'd stop buying your friends and wives, so

you can get rid of your salary, or just giving that salary away in order to deny that you're working a job that wastes your life, you'd have the cash to spend on getting that life together, instead! What could be more important? Your sense of priorities is so warped. But I don't say I blame you for that, it's the one you were taught, and like a dutiful son follow: slave, save on yourself, and worry. About everyone except yourself. -It's a sin not to worry, isn't it?

GLENN: (Unconsciously glancing upstairs) I think I have things to worry about--

RICHARD: (Not noticing his gaze) And somehow the single outlet allowed is complaining - which you do with creative relish. Complain about everything, alter nothing. Hold grudges like tumors growing inside you, dream of settling scores because everyone, except yourself, who is, appears to be against you - internalize your cravings, soak your frustrations in alcohol, stuff your fears with food, collapse your whole fight inward. Move out, Glenn, move out!

GLENN: (Laughing his grotesque laugh, and grotesquely joking to obviate RICHARD's barrage) Like Luk?

RICHARD: What?

GLENN: Luk moved out! Three days ago. You didn't notice, perceptive scrutinizer? Went to live with George, the body beautiful.

RICHARD: (Pause) Well, fuck her! I think it's an improvement.

GLENN: With all the women you can get, you would. You, who are older than me and always looked ten years younger!

RICHARD: (Stymied) It's hard to talk to you, isn't it?

GLENN: If you saw what I do when you stood in front of a mirror, you'd be hard to talk to, also.

RICHARD: Everybody has limitations they have to work with. I have --

GLENN: You have your composing - never forget that - if you have nothing else ever in the world, you

3-2-21

have that - and that makes your existence at least bearable. What do I have?

RICHARD: (Starting to lose control again) Whatever it is you've never fingered, Glenn. Maybe a shrink can bring it out - and define that hideous laugh of yours, your inner voice - exercise, will you! stop smoking, stop this immobile vegetating, this substitution for living - and your suicidal overeating! you're killing yourself this way - don't you care? I care! Glenn, return to life!

GLENN: (Suddenly shrieking, his face turning blood-red, the veins popping from his neck) Look! look! Richard! you fucker! - I am half-blind and fat and bald and ugly - and old! -And old!!

(A long silence. Finally, RICHARD stands and reaches for his duffel. Silently, he straps it on. Then, quietly:)

RICHARD: Like America, Glenn, you never grew up. But had, necessarily, to grow old... Did she really leave - Luk? I mean, for good?

GLENN: (Staring blankly ahead) Yeah, she left for good. I loved her, Richard... You could never believe that.

RICHARD: (Touching GLENN's arm; softly:) Still - you still have Jenny.

GLENN: Yeah... I still have Jen....

(GLENN grasps RICHARD's hand and bursts into tears. They flow profusely and freely now, he makes no attempt to stop them. RICHARD looks down at him for several moments, in slight pain because the soaked handkerchief unwinds and comes off in GLENN's grasp. Then he takes the stained handkerchief from him, gathers his overcoat, blanket, and suitcase, and walks toward the door. GLENN, too weakened to rise, turns about in his chair to look after him. He says, choking:)

GLENN: Wait a minute.... You want me to drive you?

RICHARD: No, I said I'm O.K. There's plenty of cabs.

(RICHARD puts the luggage down by the door. Carefully, he reties the handkerchief, pulls on his gloves, and wraps his long red scarf about his collar several times. He bites his lip to suppress a sob.)

GLENN: It's bitter cold in here. I wanted to have a new boiler so everybody would be warm. I just wanted all of you to be nice and comfortable and warm. That's all, I wanted... But I made it cold, instead.  
(doubling up in his chair and crying bitterly)  
I try so hard, Richard... So hard....

(RICHARD goes through the door and closes it quietly behind him. After a pause, GLENN dries his eyes, rises with difficulty, and limps to the stereo where he switches on the "Symphony Number 4." Then he makes his way to the center of the suddenly barren room and, as the music whelms up, slowly raises his hands and there, standing alone in a narrowing spot, begins to conduct the Symphony.)

CURTAIN.