

CHARACTERS

SUSAN: 20s/30s

MIKE: 30s/40s

SAM: 30s

CARLINO: 30s/40s

ROAT: 30s/40s

GLORIA: 12-14

PLACE

A basement apartment of an old brownstone
in Greenwich Village.

TIME

October 1944

ACT ONE

Scene 1: Friday evening.
Scene 2: Saturday afternoon.

ACT TWO

About an hour later.

THE SET

Stage right are two big windows high up in the wall, with bars on the outside. Inside are Venetian blinds. A complete blackout can be effected by covering both windows with black drapes.

Up center is the kitchen area — stove, sink, cabinets, and ice box. On the kitchen wall is a clock without glass on its face.

Stage left is the door to the bedroom. On the stage left wall is a workbench with photographic equipment. There are developing pans, bottles of chemicals, etc. On the bench is a lamp (goose-neck type). It can be operated from both the light switch by the bedroom door and at the base of the lamp itself. In the wall, above the bench, are two fuse-boxes.

On the stage left wall next to the bedroom door is a large walk-in closet. Its door swings out. Propped up next to it is a tall photographer's studio lamp.

Stage right is a short flight of stairs leading up to the hall door — the only entrance to this apartment. This door opens onto a short hall that leads to the unseen street level door off right. Downstage right is a steel safe, but it is covered by an Italian flag, so as to make us think that underneath it is a chest or foot locker. Above it, on the stage right wall, is a mirror.

In the kitchen area, there is a table with wooden chairs. A vase of flowers and a telephone are set on the table.

Down stage center is a sofa with one side table and a coffee table in front of it.

The furniture is mostly inexpensive secondhand stuff. The general appearance of the room is masculine/practical but there are the occasional dollops of New York bohemia: "interesting" wall colors, drawings (nudes, abstracts), framed photographs, lots of books, a *Time* magazine cover photo of Henry Luce used as a dart board (hence lots of holes and tears in Luce's face). A military raincoat and cap. A cane.

WAIT UNTIL DARK

ACT ONE

Scene 1

At rise: The stage is dark except for a few slivers of light coming through the Venetian blinds and a yellowish shaft from under the hall door. The bedroom door is open. The closet door is closed. The old icebox is humming loudly. There is complete silence for several seconds, and then we hear the offstage street door open, then close quietly. We hear a soft footstep. Beat. The sliver of light from under the door goes out. A moment passes and the hall door opens. In the gloom we can just see —

Carlino, a bearish man in a heavy overcoat. He looks down into the living space. He slowly comes down the steps and places something on the coffee table, making a "clink" sound.

He goes to the open bedroom door and peers in.

He goes to the closet door, tries it. Locked.

He stands in the middle of the room. He takes a stick of gum out of his pocket, unwraps it, and pops the gum in his mouth, the wrapper still in his hand.

He goes to the kitchen area and opens the icebox's upper freezer section. He sticks his hand in and feels around. After a moment he pulls out a \$20 bill. He looks at it, then pockets the bill and shuts the upper door.

He opens the lower refrigerator section next. The light from inside gives us our first good look at him. He's chewing away on his gum, staring into the icebox. After a long moment, he

takes out a plate of meatloaf. He sniffs the meatloaf. He takes the gum out of his mouth and puts the wad of gum and its wrapper into an ashtray on the kitchen counter. Then he pulls off a chunk of meatloaf and stuffs it into his mouth.

Sound: The offstage street door opens and closes.

Carlino reacts, puts back the meatloaf, closes the icebox, and hurries to the bedroom, leaving the door open.

The hall door opens and we see —

Roat, standing there. He looks into the apartment before he steps over the threshold. He wears a black leather jacket and gloves. He comes down the steps to the living area. He sees something on the table. He picks it up and goes back up the steps and exits into the hall, leaving the door open.

Sound: Lightbulb screwing in.

Carlino enters from the bedroom, stealthily.

The offstage front hall light comes back on, allowing in enough light for Carlino to glimpse —

A butcher's knife on the kitchen table.

Roat reenters, carrying a rolled-up carpet. He closes the hall door, throwing the apartment back into its gloom. He comes down the steps and leans the carpet up against a table. He turns on the lamp on top of the table.

The light reveals Carlino behind him reaching for the knife. He is just picking it up when —

ROAT. I wouldn't touch that. (Carlino puts down the knife, takes a badge out of his pocket, and flashes it at Roat.)

CARLINO. Wanna tell me what you're doin' here? Passin' by, I saw that hall light out, thought I better check.

ROAT. Thank you for explaining yourself, officer. Why didn't you use your gun?

CARLINO. What's that?

ROAT. You went for the knife, why not just pull out your gun? Guns

are what policemen carry to go along with their badges, aren't they? If I were a policeman, I'd carry my gun all the time, especially when I break into people's apartments because the lights are out and some criminal type might still be inside. That bulb was hot, burned my fingers almost. Come on. Show me that badge again. You're dying to.

CARLINO. How about you tell me who you are.

ROAT. Me? I'm Harry Roat, Junior. From Scarsdale.

CARLINO. (Eyes narrow.) ... What is this?

ROAT. You got a phone message one hour ago at the Hotel Belle-claire, "Come to Forty-eight Bank Street. Nine P.M. Two hundred bucks. Lisa."

CARLINO. I don't see any Lisa here.

ROAT. She was standing right where you are now, used that phone to make the call. (Takes out a wad of cash.) Two hundred. (Carlino moves to take the money. Roat moves it just out of reach.) First, may we have weapons on the table?

CARLINO. I'm clean.

ROAT. I know you don't have a gun, but your brass knuckles are making a bulge in your right pocket, and I cannot negotiate in an atmosphere of mistrust.

CARLINO. (Hesitates, then takes out a pair of brass knuckles and drops them onto the coffee table.) What do you have to protect yourself?

ROAT. Geraldine. (Roat takes out a thin ivory statue of a girl, about five inches long.) Isn't she beautiful? (He flicks his wrist and out of Geraldine flashes a switchblade.)

CARLINO. May we have Geraldine on the table too?

ROAT. We may not.

CARLINO. How come?

ROAT. Because Geraldine gets itchy when she can't feel my fingers. (Roat closes the blade and returns the knife to his pocket, along with the brass knuckles.)

CARLINO. All right, so give me the money.

ROAT. Don't you want to know what it's for?

CARLINO. What it's for is it's what she owes me.

ROAT. She owes you more than two hundred.

CARLINO. Lisa tell you that?

ROAT. Among other things. (As Roat talks, he lights a cigarette from a gold case and lets the ash grow long, and [later] takes from his coat an empty baby food jar with a screw top which he carefully uses as an ashtray.) I admire people who can work with other people.

Especially in a business where success is dependent on knowing your partners so well that you can anticipate their moves without exchanging a word. To take an example: a girl, the kind you'd have to be dead not to go for, she specializes in "emotional types," "femme fatales." The guy, he's good at house dicks, detectives, police sergeants. Others of their kind get brought in to play the roles of the lover or the jealous husband, but the girl's the brains, and it gets irritating all the time having to share, so one day after a big score, she sets a time and place to divvy up the proceeds, makes an anonymous call to the nearest precinct, and so long, sarge. She took the money, you took the fall.

CARLINO. (*Darkly.*) I wasn't the only one.

ROAT. You were the only one who got to bunk three years at the state's expense. Least it kept you out of the draft. (*Roat tosses the cash to Carlino. After a beat, Carlino counts the money.*) If you're wondering, there *is* more. For services yet to be rendered.

CARLINO. Such as what?

ROAT. Recovery of an object of value. Your part is worth that two hundred, the two thousand Lisa stole from you, plus another five, payment upon retrieval of said object tomorrow night.

CARLINO. What is it?

ROAT. A doll. Child's doll. Plays a little tune.

CARLINO. What's so special about it?

ROAT. The doll, nothing, it's what's inside.

CARLINO. You gonna tell me what that is?

ROAT. I don't think so.

CARLINO. ... Where's it supposed to be?

ROAT. Here. Somewhere in this apartment.

CARLINO. This doll belong to Lisa?

ROAT. I'll answer that question another way; it was *in Lisa's possession* prior to it being not. This morning she took the train down to Philadelphia to pick up the doll, returned around noon, sat next to a nice-guy type in case he'd come in handy. As the train pulls into Penn Station, there on the platform she sees police. Reasoning, not unreasonably, that they might want to speak to her about her trip, she slips the doll out of her purse and into Nice Guy's satchel. The satchel has his name and address on it, so Lisa knows she'll be able to track it down once she's given the slip to the police, which she does, and when she comes downtown to this address, she explains to Nice Guy that she'd bought a little doll at a drug store to give to her

niece out in Rockaway, but she must have slipped it into his bag by mistake, and did Nice Guy happen to find it? Nice Guy says, "As a matter of fact, I did," and he gets the satchel and he opens it and much to his surprise, the doll's not there. Nice Guy looks around, Lisa watches him, he searches the whole apartment. Finally, pretending it really wasn't so important, she leaves. An hour later the phone here rings. An actress, calling to make an appointment with Nice Guy — he's a photographer, you may have gleaned — to take some portraits of her this evening at his studio. Nice Guy and wife — evidence: the apron — left here just before seven. Wife went to the pictures, husband went to his studio where —

CARLINO. Where he is still waiting. I know the actress con. Italian, right? What'd she call herself?

ROAT. Liciana.

CARLINO. (*Laughs, shakes his head.*) "Liciana." So Lisa gets 'em outta here so she can tear the place apart. How long's the husband gonna wait?

ROAT. (*Picks up phone, as he dials.*) Hand me those plates, please.

CARLINO. What?

ROAT. (*Dialing.*) Those two plates behind you there. (*Into phone.*)

... 'Allo? Mr. Hendrix? (*Carlino gives the plates to Roat. Into phone:*)

... This is Giano from Giano's Restaurant. I have a message from Miss Liciana. She says she is so sorry she is late ... (*Makes noise with plates.*) Wait, please ... She is so sorry she is late, but to tell you I put

her in a taxi two minutes ago so she is on her way now ... (*Makes noises with plates.*) *Il taxi per la signorina Liciana subito* ... So you will be kind and wait for her? ... *Grazzi, signore, grazzi, goodbye.*

(*Roat hangs up the phone and tosses the two plates back to Carlino. Carlino returns them to the sink.*)

CARLINO. (*Puzzled.*) Hasn't Lisa been here already tonight?

ROAT. (*Nods.*) She searched and searched and still she did not find it.

CARLINO. She search the closet? 'Cause it's locked.

ROAT. It's not in the closet.

CARLINO. How do you know?

ROAT. Lisa went into the closet. (*Carlino looks around the room. His eyes find the safe.*)

CARLINO. Lisa check the safe?

ROAT. No combination. Also, it's bolted into the floor.

CARLINO. So we make the husband open it when he gets back.

ROAT. What if it's not there?

CARLINO. Five to one the doll's in the safe.

ROAT. What do you do with him once he hands it over?

CARLINO. What's it matter to you?

ROAT. (*Deadpan.*) Lisa *said* you were the brawn of the operation. (*Carlino fumes at the insult.*) We don't deal with the husband at all. We deal with the wife. The wife hands it over of her own free will.

CARLINO. Lisa say *how* we do this?

ROAT. She said you would know something called "The Four-Sided Triangle."

CARLINO. (*Remembers.*) ... Haven't done that one since Wilkie. When's this supposed to happen?

ROAT. Tomorrow morning a proud patriot residing in the rustic hamlet of Westport will phone here asking Mr. Nice Guy to come up and take pictures of his only son just returned from liberating the cafés of Paris. Son's off to the Pacific Theater the day after, it's short notice, but he'll pay double plus expenses, money wired in advance to the Western Union office. Nice Guy will say yes, especially after having been stood up tonight. The trip out and back will keep him occupied six or seven hours. (*As Roat speaks, Carlino surveys the room, looking for clues that will give him information about the apartment's inhabitants: Photos on the walls, books, bills, mail. In doing this, he moves a chair a foot or so to get a better look at something.*) The photographer's name is Sam / Hendrix —

CARLINO. (*Re: mail, etc.*) Sam Hendrix. Used to take pictures for the magazines, saw some action overseas, maybe too much, now he does glamour snaps and baby pictures.

ROAT. Very good, sergeant.

CARLINO. You know this isn't a one-man job.

ROAT. This I understand.

CARLINO. We'll need an outside phone, place to wait.

ROAT. Look across the street. See the milk truck at the corner?

CARLINO. (*Looks through blinds.*) Yeah? Oh. Phone booth.

ROAT. (*Hands him a slip of paper.*) Its number is WASHINGTON 4-5302, the number here is WASHINGTON 4-3792. The milk truck is for our use. You'll be pleased to know there is no milk in it. Lisa said you prefer rye. She also said you'd appreciate the blinds.

CARLINO. (*Notices the blinds.*) Yeah, two sets of blinds is good. Signal Corps stuff. (*Carlino flips the blinds open and shut, making a "shunk-shunk" sound.*) Open and close 'em, one, two, then ten seconds later —

ROAT. The phone here rings. So Lisa said.

CARLINO. Lisa told you a *lotta* stuff, didn't she? "The femme fatale." "The Four-Sided Triangle." I know Lisa a long time, she'd never tell you any of that stuff unless she had to.

ROAT. What's your question?

CARLINO. When does she show? (*Beat as Roat considers. Then he tosses a key to Carlino. Carlino and Roat hold each other's stare. Carlino looks at the closet, then at Roat. Carlino goes to the closet, unlocks it and opens it enough to see a thing that horrifies him.*)

ROAT. What did you think the carpet was for? I was very firm in my conviction that Lisa knew where the doll was. She was very firm in her denial that she did not. I was forced to issue threats, and once threats were made, I was forced to follow through on them, lest my word be meaningless. (*Carlino slams the closet door, throws his money to the floor, and runs up the stairs. Roat's voice stops him.*) It's too late, Sergeant Carlino. You're already involved in this.

CARLINO. I can prove where I was when you did this!

ROAT. When was that? An hour ago? Ten minutes ago? Just before you came in? By the way I am not a two-time loser just out on parole, and there is not a police department in this state that has ever heard of me.

CARLINO. Someone must've seen you with her!

ROAT. Nope. Until this evening, I never got within a block of her. Although the part about her seeing the police at Penn Station was a lie. That was *me* Lisa saw on the platform. But for all that, we never actually met until she walked in here tonight.

CARLINO. She told you all that stuff tonight?

ROAT. Fast talker when you got her going. Recommended you right out of the gate.

CARLINO. You got her body in there!

ROAT. That's why I had you come downtown. I can't very well get rid of her by myself. (*Carlino opens the hall door and starts to exit. Roat bellows:*) CARLINO! If you walk out now, I will leave Lisa exactly where she is! You've signed your name all over this apartment. (*Carlino closes the hall door, comes down the steps, and starts desperately rubbing his fingerprints off everything he can remember touching, only he can't remember.*) Even if you *could* remember everything you've touched, it'd take at least an hour to wipe all the prints. Don't forget the safe, sergeant. And the icebox. And the meatloaf. (*Carlino is frantic, looking from the safe to the icebox and back.*) It'll be so much

easier if you just do what I tell you. *(Carlino stops and looks at Roat, helpless, his eyes almost begging to be told what to do.)* One. Pick up the money. *(Beat. Carlino gathers up the money.)* Two. Roll her up in this *(Kicks carpet.)* — and dump her in the abandoned lot at the end of the street. Not out in the open, but don't hide her so good it'll take a Boy Scout to find her. Three. Tomorrow we make the wife give us the doll. There is just one minor difference, that being that instead of working for Lisa, you are now working for me. *(Sound: The offstage street door opens and shuts. Roat whispers:)* Don't move. *(Sound: We hear an offstage tapping, getting closer. Carlino reaches to turn off the lamp on top of the safe, but Roat flashes Geraldine at him, the blade out. Carlino freezes. Roat goes to the bottom of the steps as — The hall door opens, and Susan, in a raincoat, with a white cane, enters.)*

SUSAN. Sam? *(As Susan comes down the steps, Roat takes one step back out of her way, his knife at the ready. Susan stops close to Roat, then continues, passing Carlino as she crosses to the open bedroom door.)* ... Gloria? *(Susan goes into the kitchen area and feels for the clock. She touches the hour and minute hands. Then she goes to the phone and dials. Into phone.)* It's me. Is she what you expected? ... La Liciana. ... I'm home. ... I left twenty minutes in ... Because it was a silent movie. ... Yeah, next time let's call to find out what's playing. ... I tried to walk, but I got turned around, and a taxi took pity on me. At least he said he was a taxi. When will you be home? ... You're kidding! Then I'm definitely coming over. I'll bring a bottle of our worst Chianti. *(Susan hangs up. She opens the closet. Its door unlocked, it swings open easily, and we see — Lisa's body hanging on the hook of the door. She's been strangled. Susan goes into the closet, comes out with a bottle of red wine, and closes the door. Lisa's body disappears. Susan goes to the steps, but on her way she bumps into the chair Carlino moved earlier.)* Jesus! *(Puts chair back in its place.)* You ... are supposed to be there! *(Susan starts up the steps. As she passes Roat again, she stops.)* ... Gloria? I know you're there. You can't fool me. *(Susan listens another moment. Thinking she must be wrong, she continues up the steps, picks up her cane, and exits, closing the door. We hear the cane trail along the other side of the wall. The offstage street door opens and shuts. Carlino exhales. Roat smiles at him.)*

ROAT. See?

Scene 2

Time: Saturday, late afternoon. At rise: The stage is completely dark. The apartment is being used as a darkroom. The blackout curtains cover both windows. Both doors are closed. We can see nothing. We only hear Sam's voice as he works at his bench and Susan's voice across the room. After a few seconds —

SUSAN. Hear about the murder?

SAM. Quiet. *(The light in the photo enlarger comes on for exactly two seconds, during which we see Sam at his workbench, developing a photo, and Susan at the foot of the steps, near the blackout curtains. The light goes off again.)* You were saying?

SUSAN. The police found a body this morning. Just down the block.

SAM. Where'd you hear this?

SUSAN. It was on the radio.

SAM. You're making this up.

SUSAN. Why would I make up a dead body? *(The workbench lamp comes on. We might now notice that most of Sam's camera equipment is packed at the foot of the steps, ready to go.)*

SAM. It's a ploy to keep me from walking out on you. You can open 'em up now. *(Susan pulls open the blackout curtains. It's gray and rainy outside.)*

SUSAN. You'd walk out on a helpless little blind girl?

SAM. You bet.

SUSAN. What if I turn out to be the killer?

SAM. If you can kill someone and hide the body all by yourself, you're not so helpless.

SUSAN. You're just saying that to make me feel good. Women are easier to kill than men.

SAM. Not in my limited experience. Was it a woman?

SUSAN. That's what they said.

SAM. Where'd they find her? *(Sam crosses to the closet and opens the door. We might expect to see Lisa hanging there, but when the door opens we are grateful to see she is not.)*

SUSAN. At the end of the street in that vacant lot. *(Sam gets a tripod out of the closet and shuts the door.)*

SAM. They sure it wasn't an accident?

SUSAN. She was strangled.

SAM. *(Considers for a moment.)* ... I could stay.

SUSAN. You're going to tell that nice old man with his Purple Heart son you're not coming? The police have probably made an arrest by now.

SAM. Do you want me to stay?

SUSAN. ... No. *(Sam decides to test her.)*

SAM. What's the phone number for the police?

SUSAN. Dial the operator and yell: "I'm blind, get me the police!"

SAM. Operators get busy.

SUSAN. Police get busy too.

SAM. I'm serious. What's the number? *(Susan plucks a pencil from a coffee can on the workbench and air-writes rapidly.)*

SUSAN. Sixth Precinct: WA-4234. Hospital: WA4-1477. Fire Department: WA3-9091. Chinese laundry —

SAM. Okay, you don't have to kill the ball. *(Puts money on top of the safe.)* I'm leaving five singles on top of the safe for Gloria.

SUSAN. Gloria's not getting near this place today.

SAM. Who's going to pick up the groceries?

SUSAN. Not Gloria.

SAM. Come on, she's a nice kid.

SUSAN. She's a bitch.

SAM. *(Laughs.)* I think you're just jealous. *(Susan suddenly, angrily throws the pencil at Sam. It misses him and lands on the floor. His manner cools.)* Pick it up. You could hear where it fell. *(Beat. Susan fumes and gets down onto the floor and feels around for the pencil.)*

Think. Did it hit wood or linoleum?

SUSAN. It hit the floor. Am I anywhere near? Give me a hint at least.

SAM. What if I weren't here?

SUSAN. If you weren't here, I wouldn't have thrown it at you!

SAM. Okay. If you can't do it, you can't do it. *(Sam gives in. He picks up the pencil.)* Catch. *(Sam tosses it to her. Susan barely catches it, but she does. Sam lights a cigarette.)* What's your real beef with Gloria? You say you don't like being alone all the time.

SUSAN. So get me a dog.

SAM. A dog can't do your shopping.

SUSAN. Dogs can't rearrange the furniture either.

SAM. What the hell's that mean?

SUSAN. She moves things when I'm not here. Then I come back and I bang into chairs, trip over rugs —

SAM. She doesn't do that.

SUSAN. How would *you* know?

SAM. Look, things are a mess up there right now. Her mother's a dipso, her father walked out on them. And she just got glasses.

SUSAN. Glasses. Such a burden.

SAM. Yeah, well, you're not supposed to know. It's not like you have to be chatty with her. The two of you can defrost the icebox while I'm gone. All you do is pull the plug and put a pan under it.

SUSAN. You spoil me.

SAM. And after, if it stops raining you can walk to my studio and back, but no asking for help.

SUSAN. I never ask for help.

SAM. You asked that old lady on Sixth Avenue last night.

SUSAN. *She asked me!* Why do I have to be the world's champion blind woman? *(She plops the pencil into the empty coffee can on the workbench. Sam stubs his cigarette out in the ashtray on the kitchen counter.)*

SAM. The world's a dangerous place. I'm holding out my hand for you. *(Susan doesn't budge. Then she slowly crosses to Sam and feels for his hand. Sam raises it but keeps moving it around so she can't find it. Finally she grabs it and laughs. They kiss, embrace.)*

SUSAN. Don't ever walk out on me.

SAM. Why would I do that?

SUSAN. Because you're done playing "I Married a Blind Girl" ...?

SAM. *(Beat, then he breaks away from her.)* I'm going to be late. *(Sam grabs up his photography things and his raincoat and goes up the steps.)*

SUSAN. Sam? *(Sam stops at the hall door, looking like he's about to lose his temper.)* Where does the icebox plug into the wall?

SAM. *(Softens.)* Feel around, you'll find it.

SUSAN. And if I don't?

SAM. Call Gloria. *(Sam opens the door, exits, and closes it behind him. We hear the street door open and close, and see him walk past the windows outside. Susan sighs — a lonely, uneventful day ahead of her. She exits into the bedroom and reenters carrying an armful of laundry. While she is in the bedroom, the ashtray on top of the safe begins to smoke. Susan stops and sniffs around, trying to locate the direction of the smoke.)*

SUSAN. *(Calling.)* Sam? ... Gloria? SAM?! *(Susan panics and runs*

up the steps, but she stumbles and drops the laundry. She goes back down the steps and crosses to the phone. She fumbles with it, trying to pick up the receiver, then dials zero. During this, we see a man pass the window outside on his way to the street door. Into phone.) Fire department, please, hurry! (Pause.) Hello? ... I hate to ... Hello? ... I hate to ask you, but I think there's something burning ... I said I think something's burning. And I'm blind. ... I can smell it! I smell smoke! Could you send someone over? (Sound: Door buzzer. Into phone.) Hang on, someone's at my door. (Calls.) Wait a minute! (Sound: Door buzzer. Susan puts the receiver down and runs up the steps to the door.) I'm coming! I'm coming! (Susan opens the door and — Mike enters. He wears a Marine lieutenant's uniform with tie, cap, and military trench coat. He carries a duffel and a package.)

MIKE. Mrs. Hendrix — ?

SUSAN. Am I on fire?

MIKE. What?

SUSAN. There's a fire, something's burning! (Susan turns, starts back down the steps, and trips. Mike grabs her just in time.)

MIKE. Easy now!

SUSAN. Can you see it anywhere? I'm blind!

MIKE. (Looks around.) I got it. (Mike sets down his duffel and the package and grabs the ashtray off the kitchen counter. He dumps it into the sink, turning on the faucet just long enough to put out the burning butt.) All clear. Fire's out.

SUSAN. Thank God ... What was it?

MIKE. Ashtray. Cigarette caught a gum wrapper on fire.

SUSAN. Little...! Where was it?

MIKE. The ashtray? On the thing under the mirror.

SUSAN. I don't know why I can't tell where smoke's coming from! I can smell it, but I can never find where it is! ... I don't know you, do I?

MIKE. Uhm, no. My name's Mike Talman. I was in Italy with Sam Hendrix.

SUSAN. In the Marines?

MIKE. We were attached to the same unit.

SUSAN. Ohh! You just missed him.

MIKE. You're kidding.

SUSAN. He won't be back 'til late tonight. Oh! I'm Sam's wife, Susan.

MIKE. Nice to meet.

SUSAN. He's going to be so sorry he missed you.

MIKE. It's my fault, I shouldn't have let it go until the last minute. I'm headed down to Washington this afternoon.

SUSAN. Do you live in New York?

MIKE. No, I was on forty-eight-hour leave. Me and four other guys got a suite up at the Astor. I was on my way to the station when it hit me this is where Sam ended up.

SUSAN. Are the other fellows from the same unit?

MIKE. Actually ... (Picks up the laundry from the steps.) Here, you lost some of your, uhm, lady things.

SUSAN. Thanks.

MIKE. Actually, these are guys from back in boot camp, Sam wouldn't know 'em from Adam. Can I give you a hand with that, Mrs. Hendrix? (Susan is trying to put the laundry back in the basket.)

SUSAN. Susan. No, I have to do this by myself. You never know when you might have your underwear all over the place and no passerby to swoop down and save you. This is Sam's reasoning.

MIKE. Sounds like Sam's way of getting out of doing laundry.

SUSAN. The thought had occurred to me. (Susan gets most of the laundry back into the basket. A sock hasn't made it, and Mike notices. Without telling her, he picks it up and drops it into the basket quietly so as not to let her know.) I missed that one, huh?

MIKE. Impressive.

SUSAN. (By way of explanation.) A brush of air and the scent of bleach. Did you know immediately when you came in?

MIKE. That you can't see?

SUSAN. Thank you for that. Most people say, "You're blind." Like, "This is what you are," not, "This is what you can't do anymore."

MIKE. So it's not something since birth...?

SUSAN. I was in a car accident a year and a half ago. They were able to fix everything but the headlights. Doctor's joke.

MIKE. I met Sam in a car accident.

SUSAN. (Almost laughs.) Really?

MIKE. I was driving our Jeep outside Palermo. Suddenly Sam yells, "Down!" and shoves my face into the steering wheel. He'd seen a reflection up ahead. Piano wire. The Germans string it across roads and bridges to slow us down. If you're going just 20 miles an hour, it'll decapitate you. The one Sam saw cut right through the windshield.

SUSAN. ... He never told me that.

MIKE. That surprise you?

SUSAN. No.

MIKE. (*Moves to the framed photos on the wall.*) These photos on the wall, have you ever seen them?

SUSAN. No, I didn't meet Sam 'til after.

MIKE. A couple I remember being there when he took them. That town square, some ... Hey, look, that's one of me. ... I'm sorry. Idiot.

SUSAN. They tell you when you lose your sight, your other senses will start to work overtime. Which is true. Every scratch behind the wall, the perfume coming off a waitress — it gets so cranked up you can't stand it. But I can smell and taste a photograph as much as I like: nothing.

MIKE. Well, I'm no expert, but I think Sam's stuff is pretty great.

SUSAN. Yeah, Sam's great at everything. He's really the one who should be blind, he'd be terrific at it. (*Sound: Door buzzer.*)

MIKE. You want me to get that?

SUSAN. No, I should ... Actually, yes, thank you, I'd love it if you would. (*Mike goes up the steps and opens the hall door. Carlino stands there. He wears the same bulky overcoat he wore the night before, now with a cheap suit, tie, and a fedora, which he leaves on his head.*)

CARLINO. This the Hendrix apartment?

MIKE. Yes.

CARLINO. Mr. Hendrix?

MIKE. No, I —

SUSAN. I'm Mrs. Hendrix, can I help you?

CARLINO. (*Takes out badge, flashes it, puts it back.*) I'm from the police, Sergeant Carlino. May I come in?

SUSAN. Yes, certainly. (*Carlino enters, Mike closes the door. They come down the steps.*)

CARLINO. Is your husband at home, Mrs. Hendrix?

SUSAN. No. I expect him back late tonight, though.

CARLINO. (*To Mike.*) And you're...?

MIKE. My name's Talman.

CARLINO. (*Re: his uniform.*) Lieutenant, huh?

MIKE. Yeah.

SUSAN. Lieutenant Talman ... Mike, right?

MIKE. Mike, yes.

SUSAN. Mike was in the Marines with my husband. He's a friend.

CARLINO. Uh-huh. Mrs. Hendrix, I don't know if you heard, but there was a body found on this street this morning.

MIKE. A body?

SUSAN. A woman was strangled. It was on the radio.

CARLINO. She was found in the weeds down next to the laundry. Young, pretty, blonde. We've been asking the residents around here if anybody knew her.

SUSAN. You're going to have a hard time getting a positive identification from me, sergeant.

MIKE. You don't have a name or...?

CARLINO. Nah. No purse, no jewelry, labels were torn out of her clothes.

SUSAN. Seems like the killer wanted to make it hard to find out who she was.

CARLINO. Well, he's succeeding so far. Last night, did you see any ... I mean, did you *hear* anything out of the ordinary?

SUSAN. No. (*As Carlino speaks, he moves to the icebox and, unnoticed by Mike, wipes the handle with a handkerchief.*)

CARLINO. Not a scream, maybe an argument?

SUSAN. ... Nothing I can think of.

MIKE. You're assuming the woman was killed in the neighborhood.

CARLINO. Here or close to. The guy didn't make a big effort to hide her.

MIKE. How do you know it was a man who did it?

CARLINO. Strangling's not women's work. A dame'll put a bullet in you or stick you with a kitchen knife, but you wanna strangle somebody, that's a man's job. (*Takes out a card.*) Mrs. Hendrix, I'm gonna leave you my number at the precinct in / case you —

SUSAN. / I know the —

CARLINO. — or your husband think of anything. (*Carlino starts to offer the card to Susan before realizing his faux pas, then gives it to Mike, who sets it down next to the phone.*)

SUSAN. I'll tell him.

CARLINO. Thanks. I'll show myself out. (*Carlino goes up the steps, opens the hall door, exits, then closes it.*)

MIKE. A murder right down the street. Not what you want to hear when the sun's starting to set.

SUSAN. Mike? What was Sergeant Carlino doing at the icebox?

MIKE. The icebox?

SUSAN. It sounded like he went over to the icebox when he was asking about last night.

MIKE. I don't know. I didn't notice anyway. Look, I better get going, my taxi's outside, and the meter's prob —

SUSAN. Yes, of course. *(Mike picks up his duffel and starts up the steps. Susan follows and puts out her hand. They shake over the railing.)*
MIKE. Tell Sam I'm very sorry I missed him.
SUSAN. I will.
MIKE. Oh, Carlino's phone number, in case Sam ...
SUSAN. Just put it next to the phone. *(Mike does so.)*
MIKE. It's off the hook.
SUSAN. ... Jesus! I left the fire department hanging on the line!
MIKE. Here. *(Hands it to her.)*
SUSAN. Thanks!
MIKE. I gotta —
SUSAN. Go, go! Thank you! *(As Mike exits, Susan hurries to the phone. Into phone:) Hello?! ... Hello, are you still there? ... Oh! I am so sorry! ... No, I'm glad you stayed on the line, you're the fire department. ... No, no, the fire's out. Sorry. ... I'm sure, a friend came and put it out. (We hear the street door open and close, then see Mike go off past the windows.) ... No, some idiot left a wrapper in the ashtray and it caught fire ... (The hall door opens slowly, silently. Then — Gloria enters. She wears glasses and is pretty in a dark, sullen kind of way. She stands at the top of the steps, watching Susan.) ... Yeah, a kid. ... No, not mine! If she were, I'd strangle her. ... Thank you. ... Goodbye. (Hangs up.) Christ!*
GLORIA. I'm not a kid. *(Susan starts, then she puts on her coolest, calmest, most sarcastic voice.)*
SUSAN. I'm sorry, Gloria, I didn't hear the buzzer, or I would've let you in.
GLORIA. Sam says I should let myself in, so you don't have to run up the stairs to open the door. He says you trip. I saw the soldier you had down here. Aren't you afraid Sam'll be jealous?
SUSAN. Why, was he handsome?
GLORIA. For a fat, bald guy. *(Gloria goes straight to the icebox, opens it, grabs a Coke, and walks away, leaving it open.)*
SUSAN. Did you open the icebox?
GLORIA. Yes.
SUSAN. Is the door closed? *(Gloria gets the opener from the sink, pops open the bottle, and drinks it down.)*
GLORIA. Uh-huh.
SUSAN. I didn't hear it shut.
GLORIA. Maybe it didn't, then.
SUSAN. Will you check?

GLORIA. Okay.
SUSAN. Well?
GLORIA. You're right. It didn't shut.
SUSAN. Will you shut it, please?
GLORIA. It's right next to you.
SUSAN. I'd appreciate it if you'd shut it for me.
GLORIA. Sam says I'm not supposed to do things you can do yourself.
SUSAN. You opened it, you shut it. *(Gloria goes to the icebox and slams it shut.)* Why, thanks. I'd ask why you didn't notice it was open the first time, but maybe you're not used to your glasses yet.
GLORIA. *(Turns purple.)* I don't wear glasses.
SUSAN. Just like you don't leave gum wrappers in the ashtray?
GLORIA. What?
SUSAN. Just like you don't smoke cigarettes down here when we're not home? The place stank to high heaven last night when we came back.
GLORIA. I don't know what you're talking about.
SUSAN. Look in the sink, Gloria. Or do you have to get those glasses adjusted first?
GLORIA. I told you I don't wear glasses!
SUSAN. Sam said you did.
GLORIA. Probably so you wouldn't get jealous.
SUSAN. Of you?
GLORIA. *(Whisks off her glasses and sticks her face close to Susan.)* Feel!
SUSAN. *(Grabs the sides of Gloria's nose.)* What made the two dents on the sides of your nose, pigeons?
GLORIA. I was wearing sunglasses.
SUSAN. In the rain? *(Gloria explodes, sweeping her arm across the kitchen counter and knocking the ashtray to the floor.)* Pick that up. *(Gloria is about to throw down the Coke bottle next, but at the last moment she opens a drawer and throws its contents — forks, knives, spoons, etc. — onto the floor instead.)*
GLORIA. You want me to tell Sam about your boyfriend? *(Grabs up the package Mike left behind.)* "Lieutenant Michael Talman, War Department, Washington, D.C." He left a package on the safe. I'm sure he'll be back, though, right?
SUSAN. Pick up those things you threw on the floor.
GLORIA. Pick them up yourself. *(Susan keeps her cool. She gets down onto the floor. She feels around, gathering everything she can find into one pile. Gloria stands at the top of the steps and watches.)*

SUSAN. You should go now, Gloria. I don't need you today. In fact, I never want to ... I don't want you to come down here again. (*Beat. Gloria sees Susan miss things by inches.*)
GLORIA. You're missing —
SUSAN. Just go upstairs to your apartment.
GLORIA. But you keep missing the —
SUSAN. Go home, Gloria!
GLORIA. ... I can't. My's mother's got someone with her. (*Susan stops, realizing what Gloria means.*)
SUSAN. Well, if you're gonna help, help. (*Gloria comes down the steps and picks up a large knife that Susan has missed twice and puts it into Susan's hand.*)
GLORIA. Watch it, it's sharp.
SUSAN. Thanks. (*Gloria picks up the rest of the cutlery and puts it back into the drawer.*) Is anything broken?
GLORIA. I never throw things that can break.
SUSAN. Where'd you learn that trick?
GLORIA. My father. Every time he and my mom'd fight, he only threw things that wouldn't get busted: coffee cans, buckets, the phone book. My mother finally got wise and said, "Can't you break just one thing?" So he broke her nose. (*Sound: Door buzzer.*) Do you want me to get the door? (*Sound: Door buzzer.*)
SUSAN. (*Deadpan.*) Well, I can't do it, I might trip. (*Gloria runs up the steps. Sound: Doorbell rings again.*)
GLORIA. Coming! (*Gloria opens the door, revealing — Roat. He seems to have become a man of about seventy, eccentric in appearance, even a little crazy. He wears a hat over white, tousled hair. His voice is old and husky.*)
ROAT. Is Sam Hunt at home?
GLORIA. Uhm ... (*Roat has now pushed past Gloria.*)
ROAT. Where is Mrs. Roat?
SUSAN. I beg your pardon?
ROAT. Mrs. Harry Roat, where is she? (*Roat is now coming down the steps, quickly.*)
SUSAN. There's no Mrs. Roat here. You must have the wrong address.
ROAT. No, this is the address.
SUSAN. Wait, what are you / doing? Gloria?
ROAT. This I know for certain is the right address. Out of my way, please. (*Roat pushes past her and exits into the bedroom. From offstage.*) I know what I'm looking for!

SUSAN. Sir? Excuse me? Where are you going? Gloria? Are you here? What's going on? (*Gloria is frozen at the top of the steps.*) Gloria...? (*Sound: Drawers opening, things being knocked over, etc.*) Gloria, I can't see what's happening! (*Roat marches out of the bedroom, waving a thin, flat, leather-bound object.*)
ROAT. You tell him, tell Sam Hunt if he doesn't leave her alone, I will kill him! (*Roat reaches the steps as — Mike appears at the hall door.*)
MIKE. Mrs. Hendrix, I left a package, are you / all — ?
SUSAN. Mike? Mike, stop him! Stop that man! (*Roat hurries up the steps. Mike tries to block his way.*)
MIKE. Hang on, what're you — ? (*Roat shoves Mike and he stumbles down the steps.*) Oh!
SUSAN. Mike!
ROAT. Do not touch me! Do not put your hands on me! (*Roat hurries out. Gloria glances down at Mike, then runs after Roat. Offstage.*) Taxi!
MIKE. What the hell was that?
SUSAN. (*Scared.*) I don't know. The, that man just ... came in, and then the door slammed and he went into the bedroom...! Are you all right?
MIKE. Yeah. He just ... knocked the wind outta me. (*Gloria enters, out of breath. She closes the hall door behind her and comes down the steps.*)
GLORIA. He got into a taxi. I couldn't get the number.
SUSAN. Gloria, were you here the whole time?
GLORIA. ... I ...
SUSAN. Did he hurt you?
GLORIA. ... No, I ... was scared.
SUSAN. ... We should call the police.
MIKE. I think so.
SUSAN. The telephone number —
MIKE. (*Picks up the card.*) It's okay, I've got Carlino's card. (*As he dials.*) Better make sure that door's locked.
SUSAN. What?
MIKE. Lock your door, that guy could come back and walk right ... (*Into phone.*) Yeah, Sergeant Carlino, please. ... Tell him an intruder broke into the apartment of Mrs. Hendrix, the woman he visited about half an hour ago. She was assaulted.
SUSAN. (*Whispers.*) Tell them I'm blind!
MIKE. (*Into phone.*) And she's blind. (*To Susan.*) Forty-six Bank...?
SUSAN. Forty-eight.

MIKE. *(Into phone.)* Forty-eight Bank Street, the basement apartment. ... Thanks very much. *(Hangs up.)* Carlino's in a radio car, he'll be here in two minutes.

SUSAN. Thank God.

MIKE. *(To Gloria.)* Who are you?

GLORIA. Gloria.

SUSAN. Gloria lives upstairs.

GLORIA. I help.

SUSAN. Did you get a good look at the man?

GLORIA. I could identify him if I had to.

SUSAN. That's a lucky thing, isn't it?

MIKE. Sure.

SUSAN. Mike ... what if he comes back?

MIKE. Don't worry. I'll stay with you 'til Sam gets home.

SUSAN. But your train, don't / you have to — ?

MIKE. It's, it's okay, I can get a later one.

SUSAN. *(Relieved.)* ... Thank you.

MIKE. I hate to ask, but ... I could use a drink.

SUSAN. There's some whiskey in the cupboard over the sink.

MIKE. You want one?

SUSAN. Oh, yes.

GLORIA. Me too.

SUSAN. Yeah, pour her a shot of Ovaltine, neat. *(Mike finds the whiskey and pours two glasses. He hands one to Susan.)*

MIKE. Here.

SUSAN. Thank you. *(Sound: Door buzzer. Susan gives a little start.)*

GLORIA. I'll get it.

SUSAN. No! Let Lieutenant Talman open the door. *(Mike goes up the steps and opens the door. Carlino enters and comes down the steps.)*

CARLINO. Mrs. ... *(Carlino gives Gloria a "Who the fuck are you?" look.)* Mrs. Hendrix, you had an intruder, I understand?

SUSAN. Yes. I ... Gloria, describe him for the sergeant.

GLORIA. He was old, about fifty, medium / height —

CARLINO. Hey, hey, one leg at a time, huh? You live in the building?

GLORIA. Upstairs, 1-A.

CARLINO. Then go there, I'll find you if I need you.

GLORIA. But I saw the / man!

SUSAN. She *did* see him, sergeant.

MIKE. I saw him, too. Sixty-something, medium height, mustache, dark suit, overcoat, glasses.

CARLINO. *(To Gloria.)* You got anything to add to that?

GLORIA. *(Resentful.)* No.

CARLINO. Your assistance is no longer required. *(Gloria gives Carlino a dirty look, then goes up the steps and exits, closing the door behind her.)*

SUSAN. You didn't have to bully her.

CARLINO. I didn't want the kid to hear anything she shouldn't. Now did this man assault you in any intimate way?

SUSAN. He never touched me.

CARLINO. He take anything?

SUSAN. I don't know.

MIKE. It looked like he had a book in his hand.

SUSAN. A what?

MIKE. A book, he was waving it around. Leather cover.

CARLINO. *(Goes to the windows.)* Excuse me, Mrs. Hendrix, it's a little dark in here. *(As Susan goes to the light switch by the bedroom door and feels for the switch — Carlino pulls the blinds twice. "Shunk-shunk." Susan finds the switch in the "on" position. She looks puzzled.)* What else did you notice missing?

SUSAN. ... I don't know, there could be other things. My husband will have to check to make sure.

CARLINO. Did the fella say anything while he was doin' whatever he was doin'?

SUSAN. Yes, first he asked if there was a Sam Hunt living here, then when I told him no, he said, "Where's Mrs. Roat?"

CARLINO. *(Ears prick up.)* Roat?

SUSAN. "Tell Sam Hunt to leave Mrs. Roat alone. If he doesn't leave her alone, I will kill him ..."

MIKE. Guy's a nutcase. *(Carlino nods, then he starts up the steps to the door.)*

CARLINO. Mrs. Hendrix, we're gonna get right on this. When your husband comes back, if he does find anything missing, let me know, okay?

SUSAN. Yes, and thank you for coming so quickly.

CARLINO. I hadn't gotten far. *(Carlino starts up the steps and opens the door just as — The phone rings. Susan picks it up.)*

SUSAN. *(Into phone.)* Hello ... Yes, just a minute. *(Calls.)* Sergeant Carlino, are you still here?

CARLINO. Yeah.

SUSAN. It's your office. *(Carlino comes down the steps and takes the phone from Susan.)*

CARLINO. One of those days ... *(Into phone.)* Carlino ... You're kiddin'. ... What'd he do, walk in off the street? ... What kind of doll? *(Susan reacts.)* Very interesting. Figure I'll be back ten minutes, tops. *(Hangs up and looks at Susan.)*

MIKE. Who walked in off the street? Did they catch the guy?

CARLINO. *(Ignores Mike.)* Mrs. Hendrix, the woman found this morning, the morgue says she was killed between eight and ten o'clock last night. Were you and your husband here at that time?

SUSAN. No, we left at a quarter to seven and came back around eleven-thirty.

CARLINO. Together?

SUSAN. Yes. ... I came back though, once, in between, by myself, but it was just for a few minutes.

CARLINO. When was that?

SUSAN. Nine or so. My husband was still at his studio. He was supposed to take some pictures last night, but his appointment didn't show.

CARLINO. The appointment a man or a woman?

SUSAN. A woman, an actress.

CARLINO. You catch her name?

SUSAN. Liciana.

CARLINO. Italian?

SUSAN. Yes. Well. I don't know. I didn't speak to her. My husband never mentioned a last name, just that she had an accent.

CARLINO. And your husband's where now?

SUSAN. *(Uneasy.)* Westport. A man wanted a portrait of his son, he's shipping out tomorrow.

MIKE. Sergeant, what's this got to do with the woman who was murdered?

CARLINO. Just wondering if Mrs. Hendrix's husband knew her, by any chance.

SUSAN. Of course not.

CARLINO. But ... and no offense ... how would you know? *(Susan stiffens, but she doesn't answer.)* How long you been married, Mrs. Hendrix?

SUSAN. A year, almost.

CARLINO. Met where?

SUSAN. Hospital. I was a patient.

CARLINO. Was Mr. Hendrix taking pictures there?

SUSAN. No. *(Pause.)* He was a patient too.

CARLINO. Not a blind one, though.

SUSAN. ... He was in the psychiatric ward. He'd been overseas.

CARLINO. Where'd he see action?

SUSAN. Italy.

CARLINO. *(Smiles, ready to leave.)* Well. If he *had* known this Liciana, at least they would've been able to pass the time. You've got my number, Mrs. Hendrix. *(Carlino goes up the steps and exits, closing the door behind him. We hear the street door open and close.)*

MIKE. He's not even going to look for the guy. He could be in the Aleutians by now.

SUSAN. Mike, is it dark in here?

MIKE. No. Why? *(Sound: Door buzzer. Susan makes a move to answer it.)* Stay put. Probably Carlino with an insinuation he forgot to make. *(Mike goes up the steps and opens the hall door to reveal — Roat, now playing the part of Harry Roat, Junior, a henpecked husband in a suit and glasses. He holds his hat in his hand.)*

ROAT. Uhm, Mr. ... Hunt?

MIKE. No.

ROAT. Is Mr. Hunt in?

MIKE. There's nobody named Hunt here.

ROAT. *(Looks at slip of paper.)* This is Forty-eight Bank Street?

MIKE. Yeah, but there's nobody by that name.

ROAT. May I ask if an elderly gentleman dropped by earlier today?

SUSAN. Excuse me, who are you, please?

ROAT. Uhm, my ... my name is Harry Roat, Junior.

MIKE. Roat?

SUSAN. Are you related to the man who came here a little while ago?

ROAT. He *was* here, then?

SUSAN. Yes.

ROAT. That was my father.

SUSAN. Mr. Roat, why don't you come in.

ROAT. Thank you, very kind. *(Roat enters. Mike closes the door and leads him down the steps.)*

MIKE. Mr. Roat, I'm Mike Talman. Just so you know, Mrs. Hendrix isn't able to see.

ROAT. Oh. I ... yes. *(As Roat approaches, Susan suddenly recoils, an instinctive movement of fear.)*

MIKE. Susan, you all right?

SUSAN. *(Composes.)* ... Yes, sorry. Mr. Roat, sit down, please.

ROAT. *(Sits.)* Thank you. I want to assure you, my father would never harm anyone.

MIKE. Even though he told Mrs. Hendrix that he'd ... *(The door opens and — Gloria appears at the top of the steps, carrying a large grocery bag.)*

GLORIA. It's me. With your groceries.

SUSAN. I didn't give you the money.

GLORIA. Mr. Pantangelo said "next time."

SUSAN. Leave them on the counter, will you? *(As Gloria speaks, she comes down the steps and crosses to the kitchen area, looking at Roat with considerable interest.)*

GLORIA. You want me to put them in the icebox? There's eggs *(Roat looks at Gloria, to unnerve her.)* ... and milk.

SUSAN. No, I'll do it.

GLORIA. That policeman didn't come to find me.

MIKE. You didn't miss out on anything.

GLORIA. You want me to stay with you, Susan?

SUSAN. We're fine, Gloria, thank you.

GLORIA. 'Kay. *(Gloria exits, closing the door behind her.)*

ROAT. What did my father say, Mrs. Hendrix?

SUSAN. He said he would kill a man named Sam Hunt if he didn't leave Mrs. Roat alone.

ROAT. Yes, well. Mrs. Roat is my wife. Six months ago she was in Philadelphia, where — my father claims — she met a man, a photographer named Sam Hunt, with whom — again it's my father who claims this — with whom, ever since, she has been having an affair.

SUSAN. Mr. Roat, my husband is a photographer, and his name's Sam, but it's not the same person. There's a picture of Sam and me in the bedroom, it's our wedding photo. I'll get —

ROAT. Please, you don't / have to —

SUSAN. We can clear this up right now.

ROAT. It won't matter. I've never seen Sam Hunt. I don't know what he looks like.

MIKE. ... But your father does?

ROAT. No, he's never seen him either.

SUSAN. ... Then ... how did he...? ... Why does he think Sam Hunt lives at this address?

ROAT. *(Hesitates.)* ... Because ... he followed my wife here last night. She'd been going down to Philadelphia a lot. One visit, she came back with this doll and —

SUSAN. A doll?

ROAT. Yes, a little doll, played a tune. Nothing special, but it seemed special to *her*. Then yesterday she takes the train down in the morning, and when she comes back — we live in Scarsdale — I can tell she's been crying. My father was taking us into town for dinner, it was our anniversary, but the minute we get to the restaurant, my wife says, "I've got to see a friend." My father gets very exercised, he says, "Who is this friend you have to see on your anniversary that you can't stay with your husband?" Finally she yells: "My friend's name is Sam Hunt, and I have to see him because he has my doll!" And out the door she goes. My father says, "On my life, it is this Sam Hunt person who *gave* her that doll, and that's where she's going now." And out *he* goes. Me, I went back to Scarsdale. This morning I find a note my father has slipped under the front door. "Sam Hunt, photographer, Forty-eight Bank Street."

MIKE. ... This was last night?

ROAT. Yes. I wouldn't dream of coming here and bothering you with this, except when Liciania didn't come home / last night —

SUSAN. Who?

ROAT. What?

SUSAN. You said ... your wife didn't come home?

ROAT. Yes, Liciania. She's stayed out late before, but she always comes back. But it's been almost twenty-four hours, and we haven't heard a thing. *(Susan looks like all the air has been knocked out of her.)* Mrs. Hendrix, you wouldn't have an aspirin, would you? I didn't get any sleep last night, / and —

SUSAN. *(As if in a trance.)* Yes, sure. Mike, there's some aspirin in the bathroom.

MIKE. Sure —

SUSAN. In the medicine cabinet.

MIKE. I'll get it.

SUSAN. I'll get you some water. *(Susan goes to the sink, gets a glass, and pours water into it.)*

ROAT. Thank you. Erm, would you mind if I shut those blinds? The streetlights are coming on and my head ... *(Roat pulls the blinds shut. It makes the "shunk" sound. Then he quietly pulls them open again, making much less of a sound. Susan reacts. Roat notices her reaction. He stares at her as he moves closer to her, taking a woman's scarf out of his sleeve.)*

SUSAN. ... Your ... *(Offers glass.)* water, Mr. Roat.

ROAT. *(Takes it.)* Thank you. The little girl, Gloria? Is she yours?

SUSAN. She lives upstairs.
ROAT. I'd like to introduce her to my little girl, Geraldine. *(Mike reenters from the bedroom. Roat quickly pockets the scarf.)*
MIKE. Aspirin? *(She hands Roat the glass and pours out pills from a bottle for him.)*
ROAT. *(Takes the pills, drinks.)* Thank you. That's better. I hope I haven't upset you. I guess I'm like any husband if his wife went missing, like *your* husband would be if *you* were missing and — *(The phone rings. Rings again.)*
MIKE. You want me to get that? ... *(Susan does not reply, so Mike picks up the phone. Into phone.)* Hello ... Yeah, sure. *(To Susan.)* Susan, Carlino's on the phone.
SUSAN. ... I don't want to talk right now.
MIKE. *(Into phone.)* She can't come to the phone, she's speaking with Mr. Roat ... Yes...? *(There's a long pause as Mike listens. Into phone, somber.)* ... Uhm, yeah; sure. *(To Roat.)* Mr. Roat, could you get on the line?
ROAT. Why?
MIKE. It's the police. About your wife.
ROAT. Did she come home?
MIKE. The sergeant just said to put you on the line. *(Roat takes the phone from Mike.)*
ROAT. Hello ... speaking ... Yes. ... No, tell me now. *(Roat listens for several seconds. Susan senses something is wrong and stands still, trying to listen to other end of phone. Roat has gone pale. He drops the phone and runs up the steps.)*
MIKE. Mr. Roat...? Mr. Roat! *(Roat exits, leaving the hall door open. We see him run past the window. Mike hangs up the phone and goes upstairs to close the hall door.)*
SUSAN. She's dead. Mrs. Roat. Someone identified the murdered woman's body, didn't they?
MIKE. The old man. After he left here, he went straight to the precinct. How did you know?
SUSAN. The way Mr. Roat reacted to the sergeant's call ... I have to find Sam. I have to talk to / Sam right now!
MIKE. Hey, calm down, don't get all in a twist because some nutcase is calling Sam Hendrix "Sam Hunt" and has him going down to Philadelphia all the time / like he's —
SUSAN. Sam does go to Philadelphia all the time, his parents are there, he visits when they're sick, at least when he *claims* they're sick.

MIKE. *(Sarcastic.)* And he's all the time hauling dolls back and forth, too.
SUSAN. No. That he only did yesterday.
MIKE. What?
SUSAN. Yesterday when he came back from this last trip, I thought I'd show off and help him unpack, and I knocked something onto the floor. It played a few notes. It was a doll. I thought it was a present for me, but Sam said he didn't have any idea how it got into his satchel. An hour later a woman came to the door. She said she'd sat next to Sam on the train and now she couldn't find a doll she'd bought for her niece, and did Sam find it in one of his bags.
MIKE. How'd she know Sam's address?
SUSAN. She saw the tag on his valise.
MIKE. She remembered the address from *that*?
SUSAN. That's what she *said*. Anyway, Sam told her, yes, the doll's here, but when he went to look for it, he couldn't find it. Then she left.
MIKE. Did she give you her name? In case the doll showed up?
SUSAN. *(Realizing that's odd.)* ... No. *(It dawns on her.)* She must have been Mrs. Roat. And the Liciana who called, that was Mrs. Roat too. *(Susan suddenly rushes into the bedroom. We hear her knock over some bottles.)*
MIKE. Susan...? What are you doing? *(Susan runs out of the bedroom.)*
SUSAN. Mike, is there a wedding picture in a leather frame sitting on the dresser? *(Mike exits to the bedroom ...)* Is there?! *(Mike returns.)*
MIKE. No.
SUSAN. It wasn't a book. The thing Mr. Roat was waving around when he left. It was our wedding photo. He took it so he'd know what Sam looks like ...
MIKE. Tell you what. I'm gonna phone Carlino and / say, "Look —"
SUSAN. No, don't! Sergeant Carlino said — when he was talking to his precinct — he said something about a doll. And all those questions about where Sam was last night and did he know the dead woman? Carlino thinks Sam killed Mrs. Roat.
MIKE. Carlino's a cop, he's got to look into / every lead —
SUSAN. I don't trust him! When he went to the icebox, and that thing with the blinds!
MIKE. I'm not following here. What thing with the blinds?
SUSAN. Sergeant Carlino opened the blinds and then he closed them. Mr. Roat did the same thing when *he* was here.

MIKE. ... Uhm, I don't know about blinds opening and closing, but ... tell me what you want me to do, and I'll do it.

SUSAN. Find that doll. Before they do.

MIKE. If you say so. You should get some rest, though. Take a little nap at least.

SUSAN. No.

MIKE. Ten minutes. I'll stand guard.

SUSAN. ... Okay. Ten minutes.

MIKE. *(Mock stern.)* And not one minute more.

SUSAN. *(Smiles.)* Yes, lieutenant. *(Starts to the bedroom.)* Mike? Thank you.

MIKE. Hey. I owe Sam a lot more than this. *(Susan exits to the bedroom. Then the door shuts from inside. Mike stares at the bedroom door for a beat. Then he crosses to the windows and pulls the blinds once — "shunk.")*

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Time: About an hour later. At rise: The blinds are closed. From the looks of the apartment, it has been searched from top to bottom.

Mike, alone, looks at his watch. With a glance at the bedroom, he goes to the window and makes the "shunk-shunk" signal with the blinds. The blinds are closed, but not all the way, allowing some light and shadows to filter through. Mike goes to the phone.

MIKE. ... Come on, ring. *(The phone rings. Mike grabs it up and speaks loudly so he can be heard in the bedroom.)* Hello? ... Yes, we sent a telegram to Westport an hour ago. ... The 6:05. ... You're sure?

SUSAN. *(From offstage.)* Is that the station?

MIKE. *(Calls offstage.)* No one saw him get on the 6:05!

SUSAN. *(From offstage.)* Let me speak to them! *(Susan hurries in from the bedroom and runs into a chair, knocking it over and falling to the floor. Mike hangs up and goes to help her.)*

MIKE. You okay?

SUSAN. No! That's the third thing I've knocked over in half an hour!

MIKE. Let me help you / up —

SUSAN. Leave me alone! *(She sobs.)* ... Why hasn't he called? *(Mike looks away from her. A moment passes while she continues to cry. Susan suddenly gets an idea and feels her way into the bedroom. We hear sounds of drawers opening and closing offstage. Mike goes to the bedroom door.)*

MIKE. Susan, What are you doing? *(Susan reenters, carrying a bundle of letters.)* What're those?

SUSAN. Letters. Sam keeps them in the dresser underneath his socks. He thinks I don't know.

MIKE. Yeah, I saw those when I went / through —

SUSAN. You were afraid they were from an old girlfriend ... or maybe a new one. Open them.

MIKE. You think these are letters from Mrs. Roat because her husband and father-in-law say she came here last night looking for a *doll*?

SUSAN. Maybe Sam gave her the doll! Then they broke things off, and she gave it back but decided later she wanted the doll as a keepsake. Or *she* broke it off, and Sam took the doll because that way she'd *have* to meet him one more time ... Can you see to read them? (*Susan feels the light switch by the bedroom door.*)

MIKE. Yeah.

SUSAN. If they are from her, don't read them to me, just burn them in the sink. (*Mike flips through the letters. He looks at Susan. He is tempted. This would clinch it. He goes to the sink, then turns and puts the letters in her hand.*)

MIKE. They're from you.

SUSAN. All of them? Are you sure?

MIKE. There's nothing more romantic than a typewritten love letter.

SUSAN. ... I didn't know he kept them. (*Susan goes back to the light switch.*) Mike, this switch controls the light that hangs down from the ceiling, doesn't it?

MIKE. I guess.

SUSAN. (*Switches the overhead light off, then on.*) Is it on now?

MIKE. Yeah. Why?

SUSAN. Carlino said he had to open the blinds so he could see, but / I know —

MIKE. Not the blinds again.

SUSAN. I *know* this switch was on. I *felt* it.

MIKE. Susan, / we've —

SUSAN. And Mr. Roat opened the blinds the same way, only he said it was too *bright*.

MIKE. So what are we saying here?

SUSAN. Remember when Mr. Roat, Junior came in? When he came down the steps and I jumped?

MIKE. I don't know, maybe.

SUSAN. You asked me what was the matter.

MIKE. Okay, you jumped.

SUSAN. I suddenly got scared because I thought he was the old man.

MIKE. ... You thought *both* of them were here?

SUSAN. No, there was only one pair of footsteps. One man. But the same shoes.

MIKE. You mean they *sounded* the same.

SUSAN. No, the same shoes. One of them squeaked.

MIKE. Lots of shoes squeak.

SUSAN. Yours don't. You're wearing shoes with heavy rubber soles. Sam wore shoes just like them when he left the hospital; soon as he got to a Florsheim's, he threw 'em in the trash.

MIKE. You're saying the Roats are so hard-up they have to share shoes?

SUSAN. And how is it they came and went so fast? Sergeant Carlino, too! I've lived in the Village ten years, people call in shootings, stabbings, four-alarm fires — no cop has ever showed up as fast as Carlino did! ... Could...? Do you think they could have been watching us?

MIKE. What do you mean?

SUSAN. Look out the window. (*Mike goes to the window. He makes a noise at the blinds, although he does not look outside.*) Are you looking?

MIKE. Yeah.

SUSAN. Is there anyone on the street watching the house?

MIKE. ... Uhm, I don't ... Wait. There's a squad car parked outside the laundry.

SUSAN. The precinct told you Sergeant Carlino was in a radio car. Is there anyone inside?

MIKE. Two guys in the front seat.

SUSAN. Is Sergeant Carlino one of them?

MIKE. Could be.

SUSAN. I know this sounds crazy, but ... is the other one Mr. Roat?

MIKE. Why would Roat be in a police car?

SUSAN. What if Roat is really a policeman? (*Mike is relieved Susan is so far off.*) Carlino does something with the blinds, then the phone rings, the police want to speak to him. Mr. Roat does something with the blinds, the phone rings again, Sergeant *Carlino* wants to speak with *him*.

MIKE. They're sending each other messages by way of the Venetian blinds? I don't think police work like that.

SUSAN. ... I sound like I'm insane, don't I?

MIKE. No. You sound like you've convinced yourself of all sorts of things based on some very flimsy evidence. Roat, Carlino. Sam.

SUSAN. It's not so flimsy. Not about Sam, at least.

MIKE. What do you mean?

SUSAN. He thinks he made a mistake. He met me when he wasn't very strong. I gave him a chance to be strong again, to be the guy

he used to be, who could save a person's life like he did with you, but ... it's one thing to save a hurt puppy on the side of the road, it's another to live with it and watch while it doesn't get better.

MIKE. I don't believe that.

SUSAN. He's always saying to me, "What if you were alone?" like he's preparing me for the day he leaves!

MIKE. That's just him saying, "What if you happened to be / alone ..."

SUSAN. Mike! Sam isn't the same man you knew in Italy. He went over there to take pictures, but ... the things he was taking pictures of ... he couldn't look through the camera lens anymore, so he ended up in Ward 7, across the way from me. The first time he told me about it, I said, "You know what you need? You need to take some baby pictures." So we went to the obstetrics ward and Sam got his camera out, and in an album over there are the most beautiful pictures of thirty-six babies.

MIKE. That you've never seen.

SUSAN. Doesn't matter, they're beautiful. *(Pause.)* Tell me he's ugly.

MIKE. He's repulsive. Sam Hendrix is so repulsive if that piano wire had cut off his head, it'd be an improvement.

SUSAN. *(Laughs.)* You're handsome.

MIKE. Where'd you get that idea?

SUSAN. I can tell. You have a handsome voice. You have a confident way of moving.

MIKE. You can tell things like that about a person, huh? Without being able to see?

SUSAN. One touch of your face. If I touched your face, I'd know for sure ... That's what I forgot.

MIKE. What?

SUSAN. Thinking all these terrible things about Sam because Roat said this and his father said ... I *know* Sam! I don't know Mr. Roat. Or his father. Or Sergeant Carlino ... *(Mike decides to switch tactics.)*

MIKE. All right, you know Sam, we both know he couldn't have killed that woman, but that doesn't mean he can't have secrets.

SUSAN. What are you talking about?

MIKE. Well, what's he got a safe for if there isn't something to hide in it?

SUSAN. There's no secret about the safe. The woman who used to live here tried to sell it to us but when we said we wouldn't buy it, she left it here without the combination. We can't even pick it up.

MIKE. Susan, I don't blame you for not wanting to open your safe in front of a complete stranger, / but if —

SUSAN. You're not a complete stranger.

MIKE. You met me two hours ago.

SUSAN. Mike, I wish the doll *was* in that safe, it's just not possible!

MIKE. How do you *know* the woman didn't leave the combination?

SUSAN. Sam said so.

MIKE. What if that's not true? What if she gave Sam the combination, he just *told* you she didn't.

SUSAN. Why would he do that? Did he think a year later he'd need to hide a doll?

MIKE. He'd want it for whatever he'd want: cash, private papers, letters. Then one day he needs to hide a doll. You know, the cops can drill it open if they want.

SUSAN. They're welcome to try.

MIKE. ... Well, I'd just feel a lot better if I knew for sure it *wasn't* in there before Carlino shows up with his safecracking tools. *(Mike puts on his trench coat.)*

SUSAN. What're you doing?

MIKE. I'm gonna find a locksmith. I passed one when the taxi dropped me.

SUSAN. But it must be past six.

MIKE. It had a name like ... Triple-A All-Night Locksmith. It's two blocks away.

SUSAN. Can't you call them? We have a phone directory right over there. *(Mike, realizing he's been checked, goes to the table and picks up the telephone directory. He makes flipping-pages sounds.)*

MIKE. ... Here it is, Triple-A. *(Dials.)* Triple-A-A-A Twenty-four Hour All-Day All-Night Locksmith Service. *(Into phone.)* Yes, I have a job at Forty-eight Bank Street, do you have a man available? ... Combination safe. ... No, we lost it ... How much? ... No, no, we want you to do it. I'll come right over. *(Hangs up.)* Guy wants twenty in cash before he'll leave his shop. Now I *have* to go.

SUSAN. Oh! Wait! *(Susan goes to the icebox, opens it, and feels around in the back of the freezer section.)*

MIKE. What are you looking for?

SUSAN. There should be a twenty-dollar bill at the back of the freezer. Do you see it anywhere? We put it there when we moved in, for an emergency.

MIKE. I don't see anything.

SUSAN. You sure? ... Sam must've taken it with him.
MIKE. Maybe the kid stole it.
SUSAN. Gloria? ... I was just starting to like her.
MIKE. You can be likeable and still be a thief. It's kind of a requirement, actually. Look, don't worry, I got plenty of cash.
SUSAN. Well, tell me the number.
MIKE. What?
SUSAN. Of the locksmith's. In case Carlino shows up or one of the Roats / comes —
MIKE. Susan, I'll be back before / you —
SUSAN. Please.
MIKE. *(After a beat.)* Let me look it up again.
SUSAN. I'm sorry, I know / I'm —
MIKE. *(Makes flipping noises again.)* No, no. WA4 —
SUSAN. That's the same as ours.
MIKE. WA4-5302.
SUSAN. Five, three, oh, two. Fifty-three, oh ... No. Five minutes to the subway, I'll be thirty in three years, zero in the bank ... Five minutes, three years, zero bank ... and ...
MIKE. Two for tea.
SUSAN. What?
MIKE. It takes two for tea. I mean, tango! Two for ... two to tango, tea for two ...
SUSAN. Two?
MIKE. Yeah, two.
SUSAN. Five, three, zero, two!
MIKE. You have to do that every time someone gives you a phone number?
SUSAN. Yes, so hurry. *(Mike goes up the steps.)* Oh, and lock both doors when you go, this one and the street door. *(Mike opens the hall door, slips the catch.)*
MIKE. Okay, locked.
SUSAN. Mike...?
MIKE. Yes?
SUSAN. I do not know what I would have done today if you hadn't been here. *(Mike looks at Susan.)*
MIKE. Keep ... searching. *(Then decides not to and exits, closing the door behind him, locking it. A beat later we hear the street door close and lock. Susan goes into the bedroom. The stage is empty for several seconds, then we hear someone try the handle of the hall door. Pause. Then a key*

is fitted into the lock. Gloria creeps in. Seeing no one, she tiptoes down the stairs. She glances through the open bedroom door, then takes the doll out from under her sweater. She puts it on the floor under the side table by the sofa, as if it fell there by accident. She creeps back up the stairs.)
SUSAN. *(From offstage.)* Who is that? ... Mike? *(Susan enters from the bedroom. Gloria freezes.)* Mike?
GLORIA. It's me.
SUSAN. ... Gloria, how did you get in here?
GLORIA. The door was unlocked.
SUSAN. No, it wasn't. How did you get in here, Gloria?
GLORIA. You'll get angry. Sam gave me a key.
SUSAN. That's how you get into the apartment when we're not here?
GLORIA. ... Yes.
SUSAN. So you *did* move that chair last night and put the wrapper in the ashtray and —
GLORIA. No! I didn't do any of that! I only came down here when I had to get away from *her!* *(Gloria starts to cry.)* ... Are you going to tell Sam?
SUSAN. That he gave you a key? I think he already knows that.
GLORIA. About me coming in when you're not here.
SUSAN. *(Thinks.)* ... Not if you do something for me.
GLORIA. What?
SUSAN. Gloria, go to the window. Can you see that police car down the street? *(Gloria climbs up on the stool and opens the closed blinds just enough to peek out.)*
GLORIA. I can see the street, but there's no police car.
SUSAN. Look carefully, are you sure?
GLORIA. There isn't any police car that I can see.
SUSAN. It was there less than five minutes ago. Can you see a policeman anywhere?
GLORIA. No.
SUSAN. Anyone who might be watching this house?
GLORIA. *(Shakes her head.)* There's a man getting out of the milk truck.
SUSAN. Milk truck?
GLORIA. It's been parked next to the phone booth all day. He's talking to someone inside.
SUSAN. Is it the old man?
GLORIA. He's taller than him.
SUSAN. The police sergeant?

GLORIA. Might be.

SUSAN. Come down before they see you. (*Gloria gets off the stool, having left both blinds open.*) Gloria. Have you seen a doll anywhere around the apartment?

GLORIA. ... No.

SUSAN. It belonged to the woman who was murdered last night. If the police find it, it might make them think Sam had something to do with it. (*Carlino can be glimpsed through the slightly open blinds. He peers in. Gloria sees him and ducks behind the sofa.*)

GLORIA. (*Whispers.*) Susan, someone's looking through the window! (*Susan goes to the sink.*)

SUSAN. (*Without moving her lips.*) You see who it is?

GLORIA. It's the police sergeant. (*She reaches for the doll under the sofa.*)

SUSAN. Does he see you?

GLORIA. No. (*Gloria pulls the doll towards her, very slowly. It bumps the chair leg and plays its little tune for a few seconds before Gloria snatches it up to silence it. Susan turns sharply. Carlino moves away from the window.*)

SUSAN. Gloria! Where did — ? (*Sound: Street doorbell rings. As Susan speaks, she crosses to the windows and closes the blinds.*) You've got to hide that doll! Now, Gloria, put it in the trash can. (*Gloria puts the doll inside the kitchen trash can and covers it with newspaper.*) Where was it?

GLORIA. Under the chair.

SUSAN. Lieutenant Talman searched every inch of this room! (*Sound: Street doorbell rings.*) Tell me the truth!

GLORIA. ... I saw it yesterday when Sam came back from Philadelphia. I thought it was for me, but Sam said no. So I stole it. You can hate me.

SUSAN. Gloria, listen to me, I need you to do something very dangerous. Can you see that phone booth from your apartment window?

GLORIA. I think so.

SUSAN. You know our phone number?

GLORIA. 'Course.

SUSAN. Go up to your apartment and watch the phone booth, do not take your eyes off it for a second. If anyone gets out of the milk truck and uses that phone booth, call me down here the moment he hangs up. Understand?

GLORIA. If anyone gets out of the milk truck to use the phone booth, call after he hangs up.

SUSAN. You call the moment he hangs up!

GLORIA. I got it! (*Gloria runs to the top of the steps.*)

SUSAN. When you call, I won't answer. Just let it ring twice, then hang up, like a signal.

GLORIA. When Daddy was still living with us, those were the only kind of calls we got! (*Gloria is about to open the hall door when — Sound: Hall door buzzer rings. Gloria jumps back from the door and almost shrieks.*)

SUSAN. Shh! (*Sound: Door knock. Susan motions for Gloria to come down the steps to her.*)

CARLINO. (*From offstage.*) Mrs. Hendrix? It's Sergeant Carlino.

SUSAN. (*Beat; calls.*) Come in, sergeant, I'm just on the phone! (*Whispers to Gloria.*) Get inside the closet under the stairs! (*Sound: Carlino tries to open the door.*) Don't come out until you're sure he can't see you, then go up to your apartment quick as you can! I'll signal you to come back with three bangs on the pipe!

GLORIA. Okay! (*She runs to the closet under the stairs and goes inside.*)

CARLINO. (*From offstage.*) It won't open!

SUSAN. ... What's that?

CARLINO. (*From offstage.*) The door's locked! Mrs. Hendrix, do you want me to get the landlord to open this?

SUSAN. (*Going up the steps.*) Wait! I'm almost there! (*Gloria closes the closet door just as — Susan unlocks the door. Carlino enters, and Susan immediately grabs for his hand and pulls him down the steps.*) Here, come quick, please!

CARLINO. Where are we going?

SUSAN. The bedroom! I found something! Hurry! (*Susan pulls Carlino into the bedroom. From offstage.*) There!

CARLINO. (*From offstage.*) What?

SUSAN. (*From offstage.*) On the floor. What's that? (*Slowly the door under the stairs creaks open. Gloria creeps out and starts for the steps. We see Carlino's back in the doorway. He hasn't gotten far into the bedroom. Gloria freezes.*)

CARLINO. (*From offstage.*) Is what what?

SUSAN. (*From offstage.*) Is that the doll? (*Carlino is pulled out of view again and Gloria takes this opportunity to dash up the steps, quietly and quickly, and out the hall door, closing it behind her.*)

CARLINO. (*From offstage.*) It's a towel, Mrs. Hendrix. Just a balled-up towel.

SUSAN. (*From offstage.*) Oh, I am so embarrassed ... (*Susan comes out*

of the bedroom holding a towel. Carlino follows her, suspicious.) I'm so jumpy today. I didn't mean to make you wait so long. Was our door...?
CARLINO. Locked. So was the street door. I had to buzz upstairs. Your neighbor let me in.

SUSAN. Yes, she's very hospitable. Tell her to be more careful 'til the murderer is caught.

CARLINO. So, Mrs. Hendrix, you've been looking for a doll, huh? Why's that?

SUSAN. I heard you say something about a doll when you were on the phone, then Mr. Roat said his wife had been looking for *her* doll, so I wondered ... might it be the same doll?

CARLINO. You wondered right. What made you think it could be here? 'Cause maybe you heard Mrs. Roat come here yesterday to get it back, and your husband / didn't —

SUSAN. My husband didn't know Mrs. Roat.

CARLINO. Her father-in-law says he *did*. He recognized your husband from a photograph.

SUSAN. The photo he stole from our bedroom?

CARLINO. Know where I think that doll is? I think it's inside this little safe. Why don't we open it up and see?

SUSAN. I don't have the combination.

CARLINO. Who does?

SUSAN. My husband. If you just wait until he gets home —

CARLINO. We're not gonna wait, Mrs. Hendrix. We'll force it open and we'll do it *before* your husband gets back. Unless you help us.

SUSAN. Sergeant, is Mr. Roat still at the precinct?

CARLINO. The old man?

SUSAN. His son. I have something I need to tell him.

CARLINO. He's probably left by now.

SUSAN. Do you have his phone number at home? I'm sure he must have given it to you.

CARLINO. Not on me.

SUSAN. Oh. *(Susan goes to the phone and starts to dial.)*

CARLINO. Who're you calling?

SUSAN. Your precinct. Someone there will have Mr. Roat's number, won't they?

CARLINO. *(Quickly takes the phone from her.)* It's faster to dial my office direct. *(Dials.)*

SUSAN. That's very kind of you, sergeant. I should send a thank-you note to your precinct. I feel like I have my own personal policeman.

CARLINO. Yeah, this is your lucky day. *(Into phone.)* This is Carlino, is Mr. Roat still there? ... Junior ... Mrs. Hendrix wants to speak to him ... *(Carlino puts the phone in Susan's hand.)*

SUSAN. *(Into phone.)* Mr. Roat? I just wanted to tell you how sorry I was to hear about your wife ... Not at all ... Yes. Goodbye. *(Susan hangs up. Carlino stares at her, suspicious.)* I can't imagine what that poor man must be going through. But then you see this sort of thing all the time.

CARLINO. Mrs. Hendrix, I'm gonna go now, but when the guys get here and open that — *(The phone rings. Carlino looks at the phone and starts to reach for it, expecting that it's for him. Susan steps in front of him, lets it ring a second time, then picks up.)*

SUSAN. *(Into phone.)* Hello ... Hello? ... Must have been a wrong number. *(Hangs up.)* I'm sorry, you were saying? *(Carlino, still suspicious, goes up the steps and opens the door.)*

CARLINO. I'll be back about that safe, Mrs. Hendrix.

SUSAN. I'll be here. *(Carlino exits, but as he closes the door he slips the catch so that it is not locked. We hear the street door open and close. Susan mutters rapidly to herself and picks up the phone.)* WA4-35 ...

No! Yes! WA4-5302! WA4-5302! *(Dials.)* Operator, give me WA-5302-to-tango. Thank you. *(Long pause.)* ... Hello, is this Triple-A Locksmith? ... Is there a man, a Marine lieutenant there? ... May I speak to him? ... Mike? ... I've got the doll. ... I'll explain when you get here, bye! *(Susan hangs up. She starts to the steps to check if the door is locked when — The phone rings. Susan turns at the sound of the first ring. The phone rings a second time. Susan moves to the phone. She is about to pick up the receiver when she realizes the phone has stopped ringing. Susan's reaction to this is delayed. She stands absolutely still for several seconds until the truth dawns on her. Then, in a near panic, she crosses to the trash can and takes out the doll. She is halfway across the living room heading to the bedroom when we hear someone running outside. Susan stops. The street door opens. There we hear the sound of someone trying to open the hall door.)* Who is that?

MIKE. *(From offstage.)* It's Mike! *(For a long beat, Susan doesn't know what to do, then she goes to the icebox and, wrapping the doll in a towel, puts it in the back of the freezer. From offstage.)* Susan?!

SUSAN. I'm coming! *(Susan closes the icebox as quietly as possible, goes up the steps, and opens the hall door. Mike enters, out of breath. Susan goes back down the stairs. Mike closes the door, pretending to*

lock it, but immediately opens it again, so it is open. He comes half down the steps and pauses, tense.)

MIKE. Well? (Susan turns to face him but does not reply. Carlino enters from the hall. He stands at the top of the steps, staring at Susan.)

You said you found it.

SUSAN. ... I did. (Roat enters silently, still dressed as "Roat, Jr.," except the glasses have been removed, and he looks quite sinister. He stares at Susan.)

MIKE. Where is it? (For a beat, Susan stands there facing the three men. Then she calls up the steps —)

SUSAN. Gloria? (The three men look at one another.)

MIKE. ... Gloria isn't here.

SUSAN. ... I thought ... I heard someone on the steps.

MIKE. Just the door, it didn't close all the way. (Mike goes up the steps, but Roat holds out his hand for Mike to stop. Roat closes the door himself.) There. Shut.

SUSAN. Is it still raining out?

MIKE. A little. Where's the doll, Susan?

SUSAN. I'm going to get it now. (Susan exits into the bedroom. Carlino moves as if he's going to follow her, but Mike stops him. Susan enters from the bedroom, wearing a raincoat and carrying a purse.)

MIKE. What's this?

SUSAN. I need my cane. Do you see it?

MIKE. No. Is the doll in the safe?

SUSAN. No. But I *did* look there.

MIKE. When?

SUSAN. Right after you left.

MIKE. What about the woman who wouldn't leave a combination?

SUSAN. I was lying. (The three men exchange glances.) You said yourself: I don't know you. Really. At all. I didn't want to hurt your feelings, so ... when you'd gone, I opened it and felt around. It was completely empty. (Susan crosses to the sink.)

MIKE. You told me you found *the* doll.

SUSAN. I told you I knew where it is.

MIKE. No, you said "I've got / the —"

SUSAN. It's at Sam's studio. (Susan feels around the counter for the knife. Mike turns to Roat. Roat's eyes never leave Susan, but he makes a hand-winding sign, "Keep her talking ...")

MIKE. Why do you think it's there?

SUSAN. Gloria told me.

MIKE. Is Gloria upstairs now?

SUSAN. No! She called me. While I was looking in the safe, Gloria called from the drug store, she wanted to know if I needed anything, and I thought: Better ask her if *she* saw a doll, and she said this morning she went over to Sam's studio and she saw a doll on his desk, and the moment he saw her looking at it, he put it in a drawer and locked it. She said to Sam, "Why did you lock up that doll?" And Sam said, "This is a doll so special there are people who would kill to get their hands on it."

MIKE. (Glances at Roat.) And you believed her.

SUSAN. I know, kids lie, but it sounded odd, the way real things sound odd. She's probably still at the drug store if you want to ask her yourself, it's on the corner of Sixth and Fourth. (Carlino makes a move to go, but Roat stops him. Susan has found the knife now and puts it in her purse.)

MIKE. Why are you taking the knife with you?

SUSAN. To cut up the doll into pieces and throw them in the sewer. (Carlino's eyes widen in horror. Roat points at Mike, à la "You stop her now." Mike blocks Susan from going up the steps.)

MIKE. Susan. Let me go. You can't do this.

SUSAN. I walk to Sam's studio every day, no helpers.

MIKE. And I'll be a hundred times faster.

SUSAN. What if the police see you go in?

MIKE. No one will see me. What's the address?

SUSAN. 318 West Fourth.

MIKE. Do I need a key?

SUSAN. You need two of them. The large one lets you in, the small one opens the desk. You unlock the middle drawer and they all spring open. (As Susan speaks, she fishes in her purse for her key ring, takes off two keys, and hands them to Mike. Meanwhile: Roat slips a notebook out of his pocket and scribbles a quick few words on it. Roat shows Mike what he has written. Mike reads.)

MIKE. Does Sam's ... Is there a phone at the studio?

SUSAN. Yes. (Roat mimes a phone call at Mike, then points to the phone and shakes his head.)

MIKE. I'll call you when I've got the doll, so keep off the line.

SUSAN. All right. (Roat nods, "Good." Susan takes off her raincoat and lays it on the back of the sofa.) Promise me there won't be any of it left?

MIKE. I promise.

SUSAN. You better go. Lock this door and the street door as you leave.

MIKE. I will. *(Mike opens the hall door. The three men exit. The hall door closes, makes the sound of it locking, but it's not locked. Susan listens to make sure they're gone. Then Susan crosses to the sink, finds a heavy utensil, and feels around until she finds the water pipe that leads up the wall. She bangs on it three times. After a moment there are three muffled knocks on the pipe from above. A few more seconds pass. The hall door opens. Gloria enters, shuts the door behind her, locking it.)*

GLORIA. Did you get my two signals?

SUSAN. They were perfect. One day you're going to make someone a wonderful mistress. Now, what did you see out there?

GLORIA. The first time the phone in the booth rang, the man with the mustache and glasses answered it.

SUSAN. That's Mr. Roat. And the second time the phone in the booth rang?

GLORIA. Mr. Roat answered, then gave the phone to Sam's friend ... They were both in the milk truck with the sergeant. Are Sam's friend and Mr. Roat detectives, too?

SUSAN. They're not milkmen.

GLORIA. Then what are they?

SUSAN. I don't know. ... If they're not police ... I should call the police. Shouldn't I?

GLORIA. My mother says if you ever get in trouble, don't call a cop. *(Susan thinks for a beat, then picks up the phone and starts to dial. Then she stops, listens, jiggles the cradle, listens again.)*

SUSAN. ... Gloria, is the phone cord plugged in?

GLORIA. *(Looks.)* Yeah.

SUSAN. Check.

GLORIA. *(Checks it, tugs it.)* It's fine ... *(Susan takes the cord from her and pulls. It's firm. She listens again. Nothing. She hangs up the phone.)*

SUSAN. It's dead.

GLORIA. You want me to go up and call / from — ?

SUSAN. No. No, your phone will be dead, too. They cut the wire outside ... *(Beat. Susan pulls open the blinds just enough to see Carlino in silhouette standing outside on the sidewalk.)*

GLORIA. Susan, it's the sergeant, he's outside the window.

SUSAN. Is he looking at us?

GLORIA. No. He's like he's standing guard, facing the other way.

SUSAN. ... Okay. Okay ... Gloria. I need you to be very brave. Can

you do that for me? *(As Susan speaks [above], she closes the blinds and the blackout curtains and makes an arrangement whereby they cannot be opened the normal way [i.e., 1. If the blackout is a sliding shutter manipulated by a cranking handle, she simply pulls out the handle and hides it; 2. If the blackout consists of curtains manipulated by a cord, she stands on a stool and ties a knot in the cord so that it is too high to reach, or tucks the cord behind the curtain].)*

GLORIA. ... I ... Yes. *(Susan grabs the five-dollar bill off the safe and hands it to Gloria.)*

SUSAN. Take it with you. Is five dollars enough for a taxi to Grand Central?

GLORIA. I never took a taxi anywhere.

SUSAN. The sergeant will see you if you leave by the street door, so go upstairs to your apartment and climb out through one of the back windows. Take the first taxi you see, take it to Grand Central, and wait for Sam to come in on the train from Westport. Tell him everything: the doll, the three men, everything we've talked about.

GLORIA. Okay. Should I go now?

SUSAN. Not yet. Before you go ... *(Susan opens the fuse box. Note: There are actually two fuse boxes, a large one and a small one just above it.)* I want you to turn on all the lights in the apartment, starting in the bathroom.

GLORIA. On or off?

SUSAN. *(Impatiently.)* On! On!

GLORIA. Okay! Okay! *(Gloria exits into the bedroom. Then several lights go on in the bedroom, one after the other. Susan opens the fuse box and is feeling for the screw fuses. Gloria enters.)* They're all on.

SUSAN. Are they on in here too?

GLORIA. Yes.

SUSAN. Now I'm going to take out each fuse, and you tell me which light goes with which fuse.

GLORIA. 'Kay. *(Gloria runs back into the bedroom. As Susan unscrews each fuse and drops it into her purse, Gloria calls out from offstage.)* Bedroom out! ... Bathroom out! ... *(Enters.)* Ceiling out! ... Lamp out!

SUSAN. That one I want to keep on. *(She screws that fuse back in again. The table lamp comes back on.)* Is it on now?

GLORIA. Yes. *(Susan unscrews the last fuse.)* Wall lights out.

SUSAN. Is that all of them?

GLORIA. Except for the one / on the —

SUSAN. The table one, I know. Okay ... okay ... *(Susan feels*

around until she finds the table lamp. She turns off the lamp at the lamp itself. The stage is now thrown into complete darkness.)

SUSAN. Can you see anything?

GLORIA. No.

SUSAN. Nothing at all? It's completely black?

GLORIA. Yes.

SUSAN. Can you see me? I'm moving around, I'm —

GLORIA. I can see you waving your hands a little.

SUSAN. Where's there still light?

GLORIA. Uhm ... It's coming from under the door.

SUSAN. Damn it ... (Susan switches on the bench lamp.) There's a broom in the stair closet. Go get it! Go! (Gloria runs to the stair closet and gets a broom.)

GLORIA. Got it.

SUSAN. Go up into the entry hall and smash every bulb you can see until you can't see a thing!

GLORIA. Thank you! (Gloria runs up the steps, unlocks the hall door, and goes offstage. Through the open door we can see the light swinging as she strikes once, twice, three times at the bulb. Then there's a bang and the light goes out. Another bang and the hall is completely dark. Gloria enters and shuts the door.) Success! (Susan switches off the bench lamp again. We're in complete darkness.)

SUSAN. See anything now?

GLORIA. Nothing! (Susan switches on the table lamp.)

SUSAN. Put the broom back. (Gloria returns the broom to the closet.) All right, you know what to do?

GLORIA. Grand Central. Train from Westport. Tell Sam everything.

SUSAN. When you go, lock the hall door and the street door, then it's upstairs and out the window and run!

GLORIA. Okay! (Gloria runs up the steps and stops.) Susan? There's no reason to be jealous of me. I do wear glasses. (Gloria exits, locking the hall door. Susan remains still for a moment, thinking hard: "What else should I do?" She goes to the table and accidentally knocks the knife to the floor. She goes down on her knees and feels around until she finds it. She stands, wondering where to put it. Then she goes to the icebox, opens it, and hides the knife under the doll. She closes the icebox. She feels around on the floor behind the couch. She finds what she was looking for. It's small and black and fits inside the palm of her hand. We may notice a cord running out of it down to the floor. She puts the small black thing behind the sofa-back cushion. She finds her purse, opens it, and takes out

a pack of cigarettes and matches. She lights a cigarette, places the matches on the edge of the table, then sits on the sofa, smoking. As she does all this, we can hear the sounds of Greenwich Village early on a Saturday night: automobiles passing, brakes, tires splashing in puddles, a car door shutting, Gloria getting into a taxi perhaps, a radio or a record playing popular songs like the intro to "Suspense!" or Hoagy Carmichael singing "Hong Kong Blues,"* footsteps on wet pavement, dishes clanking together in a nearby restaurant kitchen. Susan suddenly becomes alert. She puts out her cigarette. The hall door handle has begun to turn quietly. Someone is trying to open it. Then there is a quiet knock. Susan does not move.)

MIKE. (From offstage.) Susan. (Susan does not move. From offstage.) Susan, open the door. (Susan does not move. We hear something being fitted in between the door and the lock. Susan now stands, tense. The door opens. Mike enters. He returns a small tool to his pocket and closes the door. He comes down the steps, angry.)

SUSAN. I thought you were going to call. (Pause.) Did you manage to get into the studio? (Mike's answer is to throw the keys on the floor.) No doll?

MIKE. No doll, no desk. How long have you known?

SUSAN. About you? Not as long as I should have.

MIKE. Do you know where the doll is?

SUSAN. For a price.

MIKE. How much?

SUSAN. Not money, answers. Sam and Mrs. Roat, true or false?

MIKE. I'm not playing / any more games —

SUSAN. My husband Sam Hendrix was having an affair with Mrs. Roat, true or false!

MIKE. I can't make a deal with you if you don't know where the doll is.

SUSAN. It's in the apartment.

MIKE. Where in the apartment?

SUSAN. Sam and Mrs. / Roat, true or false.

MIKE. If I tell you, if I tell you ... you'll give me the doll?

SUSAN. Yes.

MIKE. They didn't know each other, they only met when she sat next to him on the train yesterday.

SUSAN. Sergeant Carlino is a policeman, true or false.

MIKE. False. He was a cop, once, a long time ago, but ... no.

SUSAN. You and Sam are old war buddies, he saved your life, you

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on Copyright Page.

owe him. *(Pause. Mike is starting to look sick.)* False. The murdered woman was real, though. Did she have anything to do with this? Or you...?

MIKE. ... She and Carlino and I ... used to work together. Carlino called me last night, said he needed me to help him pull a con, lot of money involved. Told me about your husband, Italy, things I'd need to know.

SUSAN. Did Carlino kill the woman?

MIKE. No.

SUSAN. Did you?

MIKE. No!

SUSAN. Roat? *(Beat.)*

MIKE. Is the doll in the safe?

SUSAN. ... Yes.

MIKE. Then what's the combination?

SUSAN. I won't tell you. *(She starts to back away from Mike. He follows.)*

MIKE. Give it to me.

SUSAN. You'll have to hurt me. More than you imagine. I don't think you can do that.

MIKE. You don't know me.

SUSAN. Some people you can know very quickly, under extreme circumstances.

MIKE. Don't bet on that.

SUSAN. You won't be able to do it. You might hit me once, but that'll be too much for you.

MIKE. It won't be too much for Roat. You wanna know what *Roat's* like under extreme circumstances? Ask Carlino. He's seen him. He's seen his *work!*

SUSAN. Anything he does to me, you'll be doing too! You won't be able to live with that! *(Sound: A sudden and violent revving-up of a truck engine outside. We hear a shout and a crash. Then the truck roars off, its tires screeching.)* ... What was that? *(Mike exits to the bedroom. She calls to him:)* What just happened? *(Mike reenters.)*

MIKE. Roat's dead.

SUSAN. ... Is this another lie to make me tell you / the ...

MIKE. No, it's not a lie! ... Roat killed that woman. He would've killed us too, once we got the doll for him. So we flipped a coin. I would convince Roat to go around and check in the alley, and Carlino would drive two tons of steel through the back of his head.

SUSAN. ... What happens now? ... Mike.

MIKE. ... If we go ... if we leave you alone ... what will you tell the police?

SUSAN. What *can* I? I can't describe you. I don't know who you are.

MIKE. *(Sad smile.)* ... You do, actually.

SUSAN. What about Carlino? The doll / isn't ...

MIKE. I don't want to know. I just wanna get out of here. It's not like we ever knew what's inside of the thing. Could be it's nothin' but stuffing!

SUSAN. *(Almost laughs, eyes wet.)* Yeah.

MIKE. I'll tell Carlino a story, you called the cops before we cut the wire, somethin' ... Give us a running start?

SUSAN. Sure.

MIKE. Thanks. *(For a moment, we can see a faint flicker of light under the hall door, as if someone has struck a match.)*

SUSAN. If that twenty-dollar bill was still at the back of the freezer, I'd give it to you.

MIKE. Fatso said he took *that* yesterday. *(Susan and Mike laugh. He takes her hand. She puts her other hand up to feel his face, but he takes it gently with his other hand and pulls it down.)* No see, no tell. *(Mike turns and goes up the steps.)*

SUSAN. Good luck, lieutenant. *(Mike opens the hall door and turns to Susan.)*

MIKE. You know the funny thing? I actually *was* a lieutenant once. It wasn't in the — *(Suddenly Mike stiffens. His eyes go wide. He pitches forward and falls down the stairs, clutching at the railing until he collapses at the foot of the steps, dead.)*

SUSAN. Mike? MIKE! *(Roat enters and closes the hall door, locking it. He wears gloves. He wipes his knife and puts it away.)*

ROAT. All the children have gone to bed now, Susan. Now we can talk. *(Roat attaches the chain, padlocks the door, and starts down the steps.)* I knew they'd try something. When Carlino saw the truck coming at him, he did seem awfully taken aback. *(As Roat continues to speak, he checks to make sure Mike is dead, then shoves his body out of our view.)* I understand you noticed my shoes. Wanna know why they squeak? They're orthopedic. Club foot. I wasn't born with it. When I got my draft notice, I wore a work boot two sizes too small for a week and a half. Day I go down for my physical, my foot's bent backwards almost. I get my 4F, but not for the club foot. "Mental Exception." Doctor didn't even *look* at my feet. Well, you know the saying: "The good they take, the bad get to

play with blind girls." The doll's in the safe, yes? *(No reply from Susan.)* We have time. Sam is just arriving at St. Vincent's Hospital about now. When his train got in — he *was* on the 6:05, by the way — he was given an urgent message that you'd been hit by a milk truck trying to cross Sixth Avenue. By the time he's gone around to every doctor and nurse in the place, "Where's Susan? Where's my poor blind Susan?" you and I will have finished.

SUSAN. I won't give it to you.

ROAT. *(Mocking her.)* "I won't give it to you, I won't, I won't!" You remind me of a girl who talked just like that. In this very room, too. Only she said "I don't know where it is, I don't, I don't!" They always say, "I don't, I can't, I won't," but they always do. *(Roat takes out a chiffon scarf and flings it into the air so it almost floats down over her head. She recoils from it violently, as if someone had tossed her a snake. It lands on the floor. Roat watches this like it was an experiment.)* You frighten pretty easily. That instructs me. My scarf, please. It's just in front of you on the floor. Would you pick it up? *(Instead, Susan backs away until she touches the back of the sofa. As Roat picks up the scarf himself, Susan grabs the matches from off the table where she left them, clutching them in her fist.)* I ask you with great courtesy to please pick up my scarf for me, and you deny me, without even an attempt at explanation. What lesson should I take from this?

SUSAN. I'm not giving you the doll.

ROAT. *(Lightly mocking.)* "I won't, I don't, I can't!" *(He picks up the scarf himself and takes from his pocket a metal can of gasoline. He splashes its contents all over the carpet and around the bedroom door and into the bedroom. When he comes out of the bedroom, he puts the can on top of the safe. Susan feels around the table until she finds the matches and clutches them in her fist.)* This is some gasoline here in a little can. The sound you hear is me splashing the gasoline around. Can you smell it? When I'm done, I'm going to light it. All you have to do is choose whether you want to be outside on the street when the place goes up or do you want to be locked in here with Lieutenant Mike? *(Roat has moved closer to Susan.)* I'm not going to ask you again, Susan. From this point forward, what I want from you must be offered to me, like a gift. *(Susan's hand slips behind the sofa back.)* Let's go into the bedroom. *(Susan pulls the small black thing from behind the sofa cushion. It's a squeeze bulb connected to the studio lamp. Susan squeezes. The lamp pops to an incredibly bright light. Roat tries to shield his eyes, but Susan has maneuvered him right into its line of fire. Now the lamp goes off.*

*Roat, blinded by the light, covers his eyes as Susan makes a dash for the bench lamp, hitting a chair and stumbling. This gives Roat a chance to recover. He sees what she is aiming for and reaches the lamp before her. But Susan has heard him move and changes direction. Hurling herself across the room she reaches the light switch by the bedroom door [let us call this the bedroom light switch]. Roat makes a frantic dash to get to her before she can switch it off, but he is too late. Susan switches the bench lamp off from the bedroom light switch. The stage is now completely dark. We cannot hear Susan moving. But we hear Roat as he gropes for the bedroom light switch. When he switches on the bench lamp from the bedroom light switch we see — Susan has now moved across to the bench lamp and is feeling for it. In the dark, they have changed places, which is exactly what she intended. As she touches the bench lamp, Roat flicks out his knife and takes aim.] Don't touch it! *(Susan lifts the lamp to smash it. Roat throws his knife. We see it stick and quiver in the back wall just above Susan's head. Susan smashes the lamp against the wall. Complete darkness again. Roat's first move is to the back wall to retrieve his knife. We hear him searching. Then we hear Susan speak. She has now moved close to the safe.)**

SUSAN. I have your knife, Mr. Roat. *(Neither speaks now for several seconds. Roat is standing perfectly still and his breathing gradually quietsens until we cannot hear him at all. Roat strikes a match. He is still over by Sam's bench. Susan is next to the safe with Roat's knife in her hand.)*

ROAT. I see you. You're standing next to the safe. *(Susan, using her free hand, feels around on top of the safe until she finds the can of gasoline and goes straight for him. As he sees what she is about to do he shouts.)* No! *(The match goes out.)* It's out! I've blown it out! It's out! *(Susan, aiming at his voice, starts to douse him with the gasoline.)* Hey! Stop! Stop!

SUSAN. You want to light another one? You've got a whole box full. *(She strikes a match and holds it out at Roat, whose face is dripping with gasoline.)* Throw the matches on the floor, or I'll set you on fire.

ROAT. *(Throws his box of matches to the floor.)* They're on the floor.

SUSAN. *(Blows out her match.)* Now stand perfectly still, where you are, and listen. *(Silence for a few seconds, then we hear Roat start to tiptoe towards the stairs.)* I hear you, Mr. Roat! *(Roat stops. Susan's voice now comes from the bedroom door.)* Now, walk slowly to the bedroom door, walk so that I can hear you, make noises. *(We hear Roat start towards the bedroom and bump into the side table.)* Keep walking, Mr. Roat.

ROAT. I don't know where I am.

SUSAN. Would you like my cane? *(We hear Roat make his way to the bedroom. We hear him bump the door.)*

ROAT. Okay. I'm by the door.

SUSAN. Knock on it. *(Roat knocks once, very hard. Susan's voice now comes from above the sofa.)* Go into the bedroom, close the door, then knock from the other side. *(We hear Roat feel around.)*

ROAT. There's a key in the door.

SUSAN. I'm going to lock you in.

ROAT. Let me sit at the table ... *(As Roat speaks we can hear him moving from the bedroom door to the steps. They creak.)* I'll keep knocking on the table so you'll know I'm there. *(Roat suddenly makes a dive for the hall door, but before he gets near enough Susan strikes a match. She is already ahead of him. She holds the match out in front of her at arm's length. He stops dead on the steps.)* No! Put it out! Put it out! *(Holding the lighted match in one hand and Roat's knife in the other, Susan comes down the steps after him. Roat backs away. Her match goes out, and we hear him fall down the last few steps. Then in the darkness, we hear him scramble to the table and start to bang on it loudly.)* I'm at the table now! Okay, I'm sitting at the table! I'm banging on it so you'll know where I am! *(We hear Roat move a chair and sit.)* I'm sitting down at the table. *(Roat starts tapping loudly on the table with his knuckles, a continuous tapping but not in rhythm. After several seconds he stops tapping.)*

SUSAN. Keep tapping. *(Roat continues tapping. Neither speaks for several seconds.)*

ROAT. You know ... you're one clever blind girl.

SUSAN. Keep tapping. *(Roat continues tapping as before, with intermittent knocks on the table. During his next speech the taps change gradually into a more precise rhythm, until he is finally beating a hard, sharp, slow rhythm to punctuate what he's saying. At the same time the sinister tone creeps back into his voice, as if he has an idea and is daring her to guess what it is.)*

ROAT. Because when most people plan something, no matter how clever they are ... *(Tap, tap.)* there's always some little thing ... *(Tap.)* they overlook ... *(Stops tapping.)* But you —

SUSAN. *(Sharply.)* Keep tapping! *(Roat does not tap.)* I said keep tapping! *(Roat's voice now moves away from the table.)*

ROAT. ... You didn't forget anything ... Did you? *(Roat opens the icebox, throwing a wide beam of light straight across at Susan, who is standing at the bottom of the stairs. The icebox immediately starts*

its loud hum, which goes on and on. Susan goes straight for the icebox as fast as she can with the knife held in front of her. But before she reaches the icebox, Roat snatches up a towel and loops it up over the hinge of the door, so that when she slams it shut, it only swings wide open again. She does this frantically several times. Roat watches her.) Won't shut? *(Susan leans against it, but it won't shut all the way. There is always at least a certain amount of light. In trying desperately to do this, though, she drops the knife to the floor. Roat calmly kicks it out of her reach. She goes down on her knees to feel around for it.)* Don't bother, blind girl. I'll get it. *(Roat picks up his knife.)* I have the knife in my hand. Get up and go over where you were standing before.

SUSAN. *(Terrified.)* I'll give it to you ... I'll give you the doll...

ROAT. Fuck the doll. *(Susan is now standing so as to be lit by the light from the icebox. Roat takes a chair and places it so that it holds the icebox door wide open. The icebox continues its loud hum. Roat goes to the sink and, as he talks, washes the gasoline from his face and front. This is the only time he takes off his gloves, and when he finishes drying himself he puts them on again.)* Back a bit to your left. Hands by your sides.

SUSAN. I'll give you the doll, just promise to leave us alone! *(Beat.)*

ROAT. "Please." You have to say, "Please, may I give back the doll?"

SUSAN. Please may I give back, may I give you back the doll! *(A long pause while he puts on his gloves.)*

ROAT. Yes. You may. *(Roat watches her as she feels her way to the icebox and opens it. As she searches inside, her body blocks him from seeing what she is doing. She searches for several seconds and then brings out the doll. We may or may not notice that she has slid the kitchen knife up the sleeve of her sweater. Roat is surprised to see where the doll was hidden.)*

In the icebox. You don't know how appropriate a hiding place that is. Put it on the table. *(Susan places the doll on the table.)* Go back to your place. *(Susan moves down center and stands with her back to the audience. During what follows we see her slide the kitchen knife out of her sleeve and hold it behind her back. Roat uses his knife to cut open the back of the doll. A dozen or so diamonds splatter to the table top. Roat, more carefully now, pulls the doll apart and removes a black velvet bag. Shakes diamonds.)* Know what that is, blind girl? *(Shakes diamonds.)* Give you a hint: It ain't ice. I'd give you one, but the facets would be lost on you. *(There's a hole in the bag, through which those diamonds fell. Now Roat opens the pouch all the way and slowly pours the rest of the diamonds onto the table, making a large pile. As he does this the music starts to play. Roat takes a bank deposit bag out of his pocket and*

scoops all of the diamonds into it. He puts on his raincoat and is now ready to go. He looks around until he sees his box of matches on the floor. He picks them up and rattles them for Susan's benefit and tosses them onto the top stair.) Now. The bedroom, please.

SUSAN. You have what you want! I can't identify you! Can't you just go?

ROAT. All I'm going to do to you is what you were going to do to me.

SUSAN. I wasn't going to kill you!

ROAT. You threatened to. And a threat must be considered equal to the act itself, lest the threat have no meaning. If you threaten to burn me alive, I must respond as if I'm on fire. "I'm burning! I'm burning." Now get in the bedroom. (Roat puts his hand on her elbow, but she shakes it off and starts to walk obediently to the bedroom. He follows just behind her. As Susan reaches the doorway, Roat suddenly tries to push her inside, but she turns and grabs his coat. At first he does not see the knife in her other hand as she stabs at him once, twice, three times, each time just missing. Then he sees the knife and tries to back away but she is holding on to his coat and won't let go. In the struggle they have now turned around so that as he tries to get away from her he backs into the bedroom, and she puts her head down and goes in after him, stabbing violently and wildly. They remain in there for at least ten seconds. Then Susan falls in through the door, stumbling, dropping the knife. She feels around for it frantically but cannot find it on the floor. She gives up and stands, rushing in the wrong direction and smashing into the safe, almost knocking herself out. She recovers her bearings. She stumbles up the steps and tries to open the door, but the chain prevents her. She then turns and comes down the steps again. As she reaches the bottom of the stairs, Roat suddenly lunges in from the bedroom and lands several feet into the room, grabbing at Susan. Susan falls. Roat grabs at her leg, just missing it. He sees the knife on the floor and grabs it. Susan crawls to the icebox. She flings the chair aside and tries to close the icebox door, but the towel still keeps it springing open. Roat stabs his knife into the floor ahead of him and pulls himself along the floor towards Susan. He does this again and again, sliding along the floor like a reptile. Susan freezes with fear, listening as he comes nearer and nearer. She makes a wild effort to find the electric cord on the side of the icebox.)

SUSAN. Help! Help! HELP! Help me! Help me!

ROAT. I'll help you, Susie. I'll help the poor blind girl!

SUSAN. Where's the plug? Where's the plug? Where's the fucking

plug! (Finds it, pulls.) AHHHH! (Roat swings the knife high in the air and — Blackout. Complete darkness and silence. A few seconds pass, then we hear footsteps and shouting. There's a banging on the hall door, then it breaks open with a splintering crash. Sam stands at the top of the stairs, his figure backlit by a flashlight held by an unseen second person.)

SAM. Susan! (Sam rushes down the stairs and pulls open the blackout curtain, letting in the light from outside, which includes street lamps, headlights, and an approaching police beacon, accompanied by its siren. Sam runs into the bedroom.) Susan! Susan! (The person holding the flashlight, Gloria, enters and comes down the steps. The beam of the flashlight darts around the stage, picking up sudden flashes of — Mike's body, the safe, the disemboweled doll, and Roat, his body caught between the open door and the icebox itself. Roat is in a grotesque position, half-hanging, his weight so placed as to hold the icebox door wide open. Gloria gasps, backs away to the bedroom door. Sam runs in from the bedroom and sees Roat in the flashlight's beam. Suddenly, Roat falls away from the icebox and the door starts to close, revealing Susan, trapped between the door and the kitchen counter. Susan, as though in reply, strikes a match and holds it straight out in front of her, quite still, arm outstretched, holding the lit match as if it were her last and only means of protection.)

SUSAN. ... Sam...? (Sam makes a move to help.) No. ... I can do it myself. (Gloria moves the fallen chairs, tables, etc., to clear the way so Susan can move in her usual manner, without help. Sam reaches his hand out for her. Susan, as if sensing he has done so, reaches out and clasps his hand.) See? (Curtain.)

End of Play