

BY MOUTH | Martin Garrison, Producer
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ROLE: BESS HOPE

BESS HOPE: A big, brassy, boisterous, "one of the boys" 60-year old female--both proprietor and benefactor to a gang of barflies at the Hope Bar & Rooming House. Likable to all, she hides her vulnerability behind a "testy truculent manner" but fools no one. She hasn't stepped one foot out of the place in 20 years, since her husband Harry's death. Before his death, she was going to be an Alderman but that dream was derailed. She claims she could take a walk around the neighborhood and see everyone again and be elected, which is what Hickey encourages her to do. When she does step out, though, she is terrified and rushes back inside after a short time, claiming she was almost hit by a car.

3 takes + pickups = \$1,200.

IMPORTANT: Looking for ACTIVE, natural, well-paced reads rather than SLOW, self-indulgent "actor-y" ones.

Be mindful of UNDERSCORING for emphasis--and THROW AWAY non-emphasized words (please no reads emphasising equally every word).

Don't let the above make you rush or act stilted--simply keep it in mind.

For those who want an edge (casting process will be slow), read the entire SCRIPT before auditioning.

PLEASE READ BESS HOPE LINES 678-750

BESS HOPE LINES BEGIN ON NEXT PAGE

ROCKY [frowning]: Jeez I've seen him bad before but never this bad. Look at dat get-up. Sold his suit and shoes at Solly's two days ago. Solly give him two bucks and a bum outfit. Yesterday, he sells de bum one back to Solly fer four bits and gets dese rags to put on. Now he's through. Solly's final edition he wouldn't take back fer nuttin'.

LARRY: It's a great game, the pursuit of happiness.

ROCKY: De Boss dunno what to do about him. She called up Willie's old lady's lawyer like she always does when Willie gets licked. Yuh remember dey used to send somebody down to bring him somewheres to dry out? This time the lawyer says the old lady's off Willie for keeps--that he can go to hell.

LARRY: I think he's knocking on the door right now.

WILLIE [yelling in his nightmare]: It's a God-damned lie! [begins to sob]

ROCKY: Hey you! Cut out de noise!

NARRATOR: Proprietor Bess Hope opens one eye over her spectacles.

BESS HOPE: Who's that yellin'?

ROCKY: Willie, Boss. De Brooklyn boys is after him again.

BESS HOPE: Well, why don't you give the poor bugger a drink to keep him quiet? Bejeez, can't I get a wink of sleep in my own back room.

ROCKY [indignantly to Larry in a low voice]: Listen to that blind and deaf old gal, will yuh? She give me strict orders not to let Willie have no more drinks, no matter what—

NARRATOR: Bess puts her hand to her ear.

BESS HOPE: What's that? I can't hear you. [Then drowsily irascible] You're a cockeyed liar. Never refused a drink to anyone needed it bad in my life! Told you to use your judgement. You're too busy thinking up ways to cheat me. Oh, I ain't as blind as you think--I can still see a cash register bejeez!

ROCKY [grins at her affectionately]: Sure, Boss. [flatteringly] Swell chance of foolin' you!

156 BESS HOPE: I'm wise to ya. Bejeez, you're a burglar not
157 a barkeep. Laughin' behind my back, tellin' people you
158 throw money up in the air and whatever sticks to the
159 ceilin' is my share! A fine crook you are--you'd steal
160 the pennies off your dead mother's eyes!

161 ROCKY: Aw, Boss...

162 BESS HOPE [more drowsily]: I'll fire ya, bejeez, if you
163 think you can play me for an easy mark. No one ever
164 played Bess Hope for a sucker!

165 ROCKY [aside to Larry]: No one but everybody.

166 BESS HOPE [eyes shut again--mutter]: Least you could do
167 is keep things quiet--

168 NARRATOR: Soon, Bess is asleep again.

169 WILLIE [pleading]: Give me a drink, Rocky--Bess said it
170 was all right.

171 ROCKY: Den grab it--it's right under your nose.

172 NARRATOR: With twitching hands, Willie takes the bottle,
173 tilts it to his lips and gulps down the whiskey.

174 ROCKY [sharply]: When--when! [grabs bottle] I didn't say
175 take a bath!

176 LARRY: Leave him be, poor devil. A half pint in one swig
177 will fix him for a while--if it doesn't kill him.

178 ROCKY: Aw right--it ain't my booze.

179 JOE: Whose booze--gimme some. Where's Hickey? What
180 time's it, Rocky?

181 ROCKY: Time you begun to sweep up de bar.

182 JOE: I was dreamin' Hickey come in, crackin' one of his
183 drummer's jokes, wavin' a big bankroll and we was all
184 goin' be drunk for two weeks. [Suddenly his eyes go
185 wide.] Wait a minute--I got an idea--say, Larry, how
186 'bout dat young guy came to look you up last night and
187 rented a room? Where's he at?

188 LARRY: In his room--asleep. Anyway, he's broke.

189 JOE: Dat what he told ya? Me and Rocky knows different.
190 Had a roll--didn't he--when he paid his room rent--
191 I seen it.

Enough to wake the dead, Till he heard a damsel [rap, rap, rap], On a window right over his head."

BESS HOPE [with fuming irritation]: Bejeez Rocky--can't you keep that crazy bastard quiet?

WILLIE: "Oh, come up," she cried, "my sailor lad, And you and I'll agree, And I'll show ya the prettiest [rap, rap, rap], That ever you did see."

NARRATOR: Rocky shakes Willie by the shoulder roughly.

ROCKY: What d'yuh tink dis dump is, a dump?

BESS HOPE: Go on--lock him in his room!

ROCKY: Come on, Bum!

WILLIE: No, please, Rocky--I'll go crazy up in that room alone! Please, Bess--let me stay--I'll be quiet!

BESS HOPE [immediately relents--indignantly]: What the hell you doing to him, Rocky? I didn't tell you to beat up the poor guy--leave him alone, long as he's quiet.

WILLIE: Thanks, Bess--you are an esteemed lady.

BESS HOPE [to Ed & Mac]: Leave it to that Dago to keep order and it's like bedlam in a cathouse. [brief pause] And you two barflies are a hell of a help to me, ain't ya? Eat and sleep and get drunk--all you're good for, bejeez! Well, you can take that "I'll-have-the-same" look off your mugs--there ain't gonna to be no more drinks on the house til hell freezes over!

MAC [winking at each other]: Sure, Bess.

ED: That's right.

BESS HOPE: Yeah, grin--wink, bejeez! Fine pair of slobbs to have glued on me for life!

THE CAPTAIN: Have I been drinking at the same table with a bloody Kaffir?

JOE [grinning] Hello, Captain--you comin' up for air? Kaffir--who's he?

THE GENERAL: Dot's a nigga, Joe--dot's joke on him. He's still plind drunk, the ploddy Limey chentlemen! A great mistake I missed him at the pattle of Modder River. Vit mine rifle I shoot damn fool Limey officers py da

Chief in dem days--he knew I was white. I'd saved my dough so I could start my own gamblin' joint. Folks in de know tells me: you git Bess give you a letter to de Chief. And Bess does--don't you, Bess?

BESS HOPE [preoccupied with her own thoughts] Eh? Sure. Big Bill was a good friend of mine. I had plenty of friends high up in those days. Still could have if I wanted to go out and see 'em. Sure, I gave ya a letter--what the hell of it?

JOE: I went to de Chief, see, shakin' in my boots, and dere he is sittin' behind a big desk, looking as big as a freight train. He don't look up--keeps me waitin' and waitin'. Den after 'bout an hour, seems to me, he says slow and quiet-like "You want to open a gamblin' joint, does you, Joe?" But he don't give me no time to answer. He pounds his fist like a ham on de desk and he shouts, "You black son of a bitch--Bess says you're white and you better be white or dere's a little room up de river waitin' for ya!" Den he sits down and says quiet again, "All right--you can open. Now git the hell outa here!" [chuckles with pride] Dem old days! Many's de night I come in here. Dis was a first-class hangout in dem days. Good whiskey, fifteen cents--two for two bits. I t'rows down a fifty-dolla bill like it was trash paper and says "Drink it up, boys, I don't want no change." Ain't dat right, Bess?

BESS HOPE [caustically]: Yes, and bejeez, if I ever seen you throw fifty cents on the bar now, I'd know I was delirious! You've told that story ten million times and if I have to hear it again, it'll give me the DT's for certain!

THE CAPTAIN: Thank you, Bess, my dear, I will have that drink, now you mention it, seeing it's so near your birthday.

JOE/THE GENERAL/JIMMY TOMORROW [laugh]:

BESS HOPE [puts hand to ear--angrily]: What's that--I can't hear you.

THE CAPTAIN: I fancied you wouldn't.

BESS HOPE: I don't have to hear, bejeez! Booze is the only thing you ever talk about.

672 THE CAPTAIN: There was a time when my conversation was
673 more comprehensive.

674 BESS HOPE: How much room rent do you owe me, tell me
675 that?

676 THE CAPTAIN: Sorry--addition has always baffled me.
677 Subtraction is my forte.

678 BESS HOPE: Think you're funny, eh? Showing off your old
679 wounds! This ain't no Turkish bath! Put on your clothes
680 for Christ's sake! Lousy Limey army! Took 'em years to
681 lick a gang of Dutch hayseeds!

682 THE GENERAL: Dot's right, Bess--gif him hell!

683 BESS HOPE: No lip out of you, neither, you Dutch
684 spinach! General, hell! Salvation Army, that's what
685 you'd be General in! Bragging what a shot you were, and,
686 bejeez, you missed him! And he missed you! And now the
687 two of ya bum on me. You've broke the camel's back this
688 time bejeez! You pay up tomorrow or ot you both go!

689 THE CAPTAIN: My dear lady, I give you my word of honor
690 as an officer and a gentleman, you shall be paid
691 tomorrow.

692 THE GENERAL: Ve swear it, Bess! Tomorrow vidout fail!

693 MAC [twinkle in his eye]: There you are, Bess. What
694 could be fairer?

695 ED: Ya can't ask any more than that. A promise is a
696 promise.

697 BESS HOPE: I mean the both of you, too! An old grafting
698 flatfoot and a circus bunco steerer! Fine company for
699 me, bejeez! Couple of con men living in my house since
700 Christ knows when! Getting fat as hogs, too! And ya
701 ain't even got the decency to help me upstairs where
702 I got a good bed! Let me sleep in a chair like a bum!
703 Keep me down here waitin' for Hickey to show up,
704 hoping I'll treat ya to more drinks!

705 MAC: Ed and I did our damnedest to get you up, didn't
706 we, Ed?

707 ED: We did--but you said you couldn't bear your flat
708 because it was one of those nights your memory brought
709 poor Harry back to ya.

710 BESS HOPE [face instantly turns sad; mournfully]:

711 Yes, that's right, boys--I remember now. I could almost
712 see him in every room just as he used to be--and it's
713 twenty years since he--

714 LARRY: By all accounts, Harry nagged the hell out of
715 'er.

716 PARRITT: Really?

717 JIMMY: No more of this sitting around and loafing. Time
718 I took hold of myself. Must have my shoes soled and
719 heeled--and shined--first thing tomorrow morning.
720 A general spruce-up. I want to have a well-groomed
721 appearance when I--

722 LARRY [sardonically]: Tommorow.

723 MAC [with a sigh, calculating] Poor old Harry--you don't
724 find 'em like him these days. A more decent man never
725 drew breath.

726 ED [similarly calculating]: Good old Harry--a man
727 couldn't want a better brother than he was to me.

728 BESS HOPE: Twenty years, and I've never set foot out of
729 this house since the day I buried him. Didn't have the
730 heart. Without him, nothing seemed worth the trouble.
731 You remember, Ed, you, too, Mac--the boys were going to
732 nominate me for Alderman. It was all fixed. Harry was so
733 proud. But when he was taken, I told them, "No, boys,
734 I can't do it--I haven't the heart--I'm through."
735 [defiantly] Oh, I know there was jealous wise guys said
736 the boys was giving me the nomination because they knew
737 I couldn't win. But that's a lie--I knew every man,
738 woman, and child in the ward--I'd have been elected
739 easily.

740 MAC: You sure would, Bess.

741 ED: A dead cinch. Everyone knows that.

742 BESS HOPE: Sure they do. Still, I know while he'd
743 appreciate my grief, he wouldn't want it to keep me
744 cooped up in here all my life. So I've made up my mind
745 I'll go out--soon--take a walk around the ward, see all
746 the friends I used to know, get together with the boys
747 and let 'em deal me a hand in their game again. Yes,
748 bejeez, I'll do it. My birthday, tomorrow, that'd be the
749 right time to turn over a new leaf. Sixty, that ain't
750 too old.

MAC: Why it's the prime of life--

ED: And the wonderful thing about you, Bess, you keep young as you ever was.

JIMMY: Get my things from my laundry--they must still have them. Clean collar and shirt--socks, too--I want to make a good appearance. I met Dick Trumbull on the street a year or two ago--he said, "Jimmy, the publicity department's never been the same since you got--resigned. It's dead as hell." I said, "I know--I've heard management is at their wit's end and would only be too glad to have me run it again for them." He said, "Sure, they would, Jimmy--only take my advice and wait a while until business conditions are better--then you can strike 'em for a bigger salary than you got before, don't you see?" I said, "Yes, I do see, Dick, and many thanks for the tip." Well, conditions must be better by this time--all I have to do is get fixed up with a decent front tomorrow, and it's as good as done.

BESS HOPE: Poor Jimmy's off in the land of tomorrow again. Bejeez, he takes the cake!

LARRY [guffaws sardonically]:

THE CAPTAIN: I'm sorry, General, we had to postpone our trip again this year. We'll make it next year, even if we have to work and earn our passage money, eh? England in April! I want you to see that.

THE GENERAL: And I vil enjoy it, Captain. But de veldt! Py Gott, dere is space to be free, the air like vine is, you need no booze to be drunk! My relations vill so surprised be. Dey vil not know me, it is so many years. Dey vil be so glad I haf come home at last.

JOE: I'll make my stake and get my new gamblin' joint open before you boys leave. You got to come to the openin'. If you're broke, I'll stake you to any game you chooses. If you wins, dat's velvet for ya. If you loses, it don't count.

BESS HOPE: Jimmy's got them smoking the same hop.

NARRATOR: But soon the three are asleep again.

LARRY: By God, this bughouse will drive me stark, raving loony!

BESS HOPE: What? What d'you say?

LARRY: Nothin', Bess. Just had a crazy thought in my head.

BESS HOPE: Crazy is right--yah old wise guy! Wise, hell!
A damned old fool Anarchist-I-Won't-Work-er! I'm sick of
you--and Hugo, too. You'll pay up tomorrow or I'll start
a Bess Hope Revolution! I'll tie bombs to your tails
that'll blow ya out to the street! Bejeez I'll make your
Movement move! [cackles]

MAC & ED [guffaw]:

ED: Bess, you sure say the funniest things. [pause]
Hell, where's my drink? That damn Rocky's too fast
cleaning tables--why, I'd only taken a sip of it.

BESS HOPE: No, you don't! Any time you only take one sip
of a drink, you'll have lockjaw or paralysis! Think you
can kid me with those old circus con games? Me, that's
known ya since you was knee-high, and, bejeez, you was a
crook even then!

MAC: It's not like you to be so hard-hearted, Bess.
It's hot, parching work laughin' at your jokes so early
in the mornin' on an empty stomach!

BESS HOPE: Yah! You, Mac--another crook! Who asked you
to laugh? Bejeez, Harry'd never forgive me if he knew
I had you two bums living in his house, throwin' ashes
and cigar butts on his floor. "That Mac is the biggest
drunken grafter that ever disgraced the police force,"
he used to say.

MAC: He was angry because you used to get me drunk.
But he knew I was innocent of all the charges.

WILLIE: Lieutenant Mac--are you aware you are under
oath? Do you realize what the penalty for perjury is?
Come now, Lieutenant, isn't it a fact that you're as
guilty as hell? Gentleman of the jury, the court will
now recess while the D.A. sings a little ditty he
learned at Harvard. [sings] "Oh, come up, " she cried,
"my sailor lad, And you and I'll agree. And I'll show
you the prettiest [rap, rap, rap] That ever you did
see."

BESS HOPE [threatening]: Rocky!

WILLIE: Please, Bess--I'll be quiet--don't make him
bounce me upstairs--I'll go crazy alone! [pause]
I apologize, Mac--don't be sore--I was only kidding you.

NARRATOR: Seing Bess relent, Rocky returns to the bar.

MAC: Sure, Willie, kid all you like--I'm used to it.
[pauses--then seriously] But I'm tellin' ya--some day
before long I'm going to make 'em reopen my case.
Everyone knows there was no real evidence against me,
and I took the fall for the ones higher up. This time
I'll be found innocent and reinstated. My old job on the
force. The boys tell me there's fine pickings these
days, and I'm not getting rich here, sitting with a
parched throat waiting for Bess to buy me a drink.

WILLIE: Of course, you'll be reinstated, Mac. All you
need is a brilliant young attorney to handle your case.
I'll be straightened out and on the wagon in a day or
two. I've never practiced but I was one of the most
brilliant law students in Law School and your case is
just the opportunity I need to start. You will let me
take your case, won't you, Mac?

MAC: Sure I will and it will make your reputation,
Willie.

NARRATOR: Ed winks at Bess, shaking his head, and Bess
does the same.

LARRY: I'll be damned if I haven't heard their visions a
thousand times? Why should it get under my skin now?
[pause] I wish to hell Hickey'd turn up.

ED: Poor Willie needs a drink bad, Bess--and I think if
we all joined him it'd make him feel he was among
friends and cheer him up.

BESS HOPE: More circus con tricks! Harry had you sized
up--he used to tell me, "I don't know what you see in
that worthless, drunken, petty-thief brother of mine.
If I had my way," he'd say, "he'd get booted out into
the gutter on his fat behind." Sometimes he didn't say
behind, either.

ED: Remember the time he sent me down to the bar to
change a ten-dollar bill for him?

BESS HOPE: Do I Bejeez! [cackles]

ED: I was sure surprised when he gave me the
ten-spot. Harry usually had better sense, but he was in
a hurry to get to church. I didn't really mean to do it,
but you know how habit gets you. Besides, I still worked
then and the circus season was going to begin soon, and

I needed a little practice to keep my hand in. [chuckles]
 I said, "I'm sorry, Harry, but I had to take it all in
 dimes--here hold out your hands, and I'll count it out
 for you, so you won't say afterwards I short-changed
 ya." [counting ever more rapidly] Ten, twenty, thirty,
 forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, a dollar.
 Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty-- You're
 counting with me, Harry, aren't you?--eighty, ninety,
 two dollars. Ten, twenty-- Those are nice shoes you got
 on, Harry--forty, fifty, seventy, eighty, ninety, three
 dollars. Ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, seventy, eighty,
 ninety--That's a swell new jacket, Harry, where'd you
 get it--six dollars. [chuckles] I'm bum at it now for
 lack of practice, but in those days I could have
 short-changed the Keeper of the Mint.

BESS HOPE: Stung him for two dollars and a half, wasn't it?

ED: Yes, fine percentage, if I do say so myself.
 Especially when you're dealing with someone who's sober
 and who can count. I'm sorry to say that he discovered
 my mistakes in arithmetic just after I beat it around
 the corner. Harry never did have the confidence in me
 a brother should.

BESS HOPE: You're a fine one bragging how you
 short-changed your own brother! Bejeez, if there was a
 war and you was in it, they'd have to padlock the
 pockets of the dead!

ED: I always gave a sucker some chance, Bess. There
 wouldn't be no fun in robbing the dead. [reminiscently
 melancholy] Gosh thinking of the old ticket wagon brings
 those days back. The greatest life on earth with the
 greatest show on earth! The grandest crowd of regular
 guys ever gathered under one tent! I'd sure like to
 shake their hands again!

BESS HOPE: They'd have guns in 'em! They'd shoot you on
 sight. You tapped every one of 'em--bejeez, you even
 borrowed fish from the trained seals and peanuts from
 the elephants! [Tickled with her own wit, Bess cackles.]

ED: I tell ya I've made up my mind. In a couple days
 I'll see the boss and ask for my old job back. I can get
 my magic touch with change back easy, and I can throw
 him a line of bull that'll kid him I won't be so
 unreasonable about sharing the profits next time.

There's no use in hanging around this dive, taking care of you and shooing away your snakes, when I don't even get an eye-opener for my trouble.

BESS HOPE: No! Go to hell--or the circus, for all I care. Good riddance bejeez! I'm sick of ya! [then worriedly] Say, Ed, what the hell you think's happened to Hickey? I hope he'll turn up. Always got a million funny stories. You and the other bums are beginning to give me the willies. I'd like a good laugh with old Hickey. [chuckles at old memory] Remember that gag he always pulls about his wife and the iceman? He'd make a cat laugh!

NARRATOR: Rocky appears from behind the bar and begins pushing the black curtain towards the back wall.

ROCKY: Openin' time, Boss. [grumpily]: Why don't you go up to bed? Hickey'd never turn up dis time of de mornin'!

BESS HOPE [starts]: Listen--someone's comin'.

ROCKY [listens]: Ah, dat's on'y my two pigs--it's about time dey showed.

[Rocky walks to the back door.]

BESS HOPE [disappointed]: You keep them dumb broads quiet--I'm going to catch a couple more winks here and I don't want no damn-fool laughin' and screechin'. [grumbling] Never thought I'd see the day when Hope's would have tarts rooming in it--what would Harry think? But I don't let 'em use my rooms for business--and they're good kids--good as anyone else. And they pay their rent, too, which is more than I can say for-- Bejeez, Ed, I'll bet Harry is doing somersaults in his grave!

MARGIE (laughs):

ROCKY: Quiet!

MARGIE [glancing around]: Jeez, Poil, it's de Moigue wid all de stiffs on deck. [pause] Hello, Old Wise Guy, ain't you dead yet?

LARRY [grinning]: Not yet, Margie--but I'm waitin'.

MARGIE: Who's de new guy? Friend of yours, Larry? [pause] Wanta have a good time, kid?

955 PEARL: Ah, he's passed out--hell wid him!

956 BESS HOPE: Ya dumb broads--cut the gabbin', will ya?

957 ROCKY [admonishing them good-naturedly]: Sit down
958 before I knock yuh down.

959 [The girls sit and Rocky pours drinks.]

960 ROCKY [in a lowered voice]: Well, how'd you tramps do?

961 MARGIE: Pretty good--didn't we, Poil?

962 PEARL: Sure. We nailed a coupla all-night guys.

963 MARGIE: On Sixth Avenoo. Booms from de sticks.

964 PEARL: Stinko, de bot' of 'em.

965 MARGIE: Steered 'em to to a real hotel. Figgered de was
966 too stinko to bother us much and we could cop a good
967 sleep in beds dat ain't got cobble stones in de mattress
968 like de ones in dis dump.

969 PEARL: But we was out of luck--dey wouldn't go to sleep,
970 see? I never hoid such gabby guys.

971 MARGIE: We was glad when de house come up and told us
972 all to get dressed and take de air!

973 PEARL [proud of her lie]: We told de guys we'd wait for
974 dem 'round de corner, see?

975 MARGIE: So here we are.

976 ROCKY: Yeah? I see ya--but I don't see no dough yet.

977 PEARL: Right on da job, ain't he, Mahgie?

978 MARGIE: Our little business man!

979 ROCKY: Come on--dig!

980 NARRATOR: As Rocky watches carefully, the girls pull up
981 their skirts to get money from their stockings.

982 MARGIE: Scared we's holdin' out on ya, yeah?

983 PEARL: Way he grabs, yuh'd tink it was him done de woik.
984 [Holds out bills to Rocky.]

985 PEARL: Here y'are, Grafter!

986 MARGIE: Hope it chokes yuh.

987 [Rocky counts money quickly then pockets it.]

1024 MARGIE: And her on the turf long before me and you!
 1025 And bot' of 'em ahguin' all de time.

1026 PEARL: And him swearin' ta never go on no more
 1027 periodicals! An' den her pretendin' [that she]--
 1028 It gives me a pain just to talk about.

1029 ROCKY: Of all de dreams in dis dump, dey got de
 1030 nuttiest! What would gettin' married get 'em. De farm
 1031 stuff is de sappiest part--when de bot' of 'em ain't
 1032 never been nearer a farm dan Coney Island! Dey'd get
 1033 D.T.s if dey ever hoid a cricket choip! [with deeper
 1034 disgust] Can you pitcha a good bahtender like Chuck
 1035 diggin' spuds? And imagine a whore hustlin' de cows
 1036 home! For Christ sake--ain't dat a pretty pitcha!

1037 MARGIE: Yuy oughtn't to call Cora dat, Rocky--she's a
 1038 good kid. She may be a tart, but--

1039 ROCKY: Sure dats all I meant--a tart.

1040 PEARL [giggling]: He's right about de cows, Mahgie.
 1041 Jeez I bet Cora don't know which end of de cow
 1042 has de horns--I'm gonna ask her.

1043 [Noise of a door opening in the hall and a couple
 1044 arguing.]

1045 CORA: An' how do I know yuh won't [get drunk no more]--

1046 CHUCK: Cuz I say so!

1047 ROCKY: Here's your chance--dat's dem two nuts now.

1048 CORA [gaily]: Hello, bums. [pause] Jeez, de Moigue on a
 1049 rainy night! [pause] Hello, Old Wise Guy--ain't you
 1050 croaked yet?

1051 LARRY: Not yet, Cora. It's tiring, this waiting for the
 1052 end.

1053 CORA: Aw, gwan, you'll never die--you'll have to hire
 1054 someone to croak yuh wid an axe.

1055 BESS HOPE [cocks a sleepy eye at her]: You dumb hookers,
 1056 cut the noise! This ain't a cathouse!

1057 CORA: My, Bess! Such language!

1058 BESS [grunts]: Huh.

1059 [Cora sits.]

1098 ROCKY: Dat's what we was wonderin'.

1099 CORA: He ought to be here--me and Chuck seen him.

1100 ROCKY [excited]: You seen Hickey? [nudges Bess]

1101 Hey, Boss, come to--Cora's seen Hickey.

1102 NARRATOR: Bess is instantly awake and everyone--except
1103 Hugo and Parritt--begins to rouse hopefully.

1104 BESS HOPE: Where'd you see him, Cora?

1105 CORA: On de next corner--he was standin' dere. I kidded
1106 him, "How's de iceman, Hickey--how's he doing at your
1107 house?" He laughs and says, "Fine." And he says, "Tell
1108 de gang I'll be along in a minute--I'm just figurin' out
1109 de best way to save dem and bring dem pease."

1110 BESS HOPE [chuckles]: Bejeez he's thought up a new gag!
1111 It's a wonder he didn't borrow a Salvation Army uniform
1112 and show up in that! Go out and get him, Rocky--tell him
1113 we're waitin' to be saved!

1114 NARRATOR: Rocky goes out, grinning.

1115 CORA: Yeah, Bess, he was only kiddin'--but he
1116 was...different somehow.

1117 CHUCK: Sure, he was sober, Baby--we ain't never seen him
1118 when he wasn't on a drunk.

1119 CORA [uncertain] Sure. Gee, ain't I dumb?

1120 BESS HOPE: Sober? That's funny--he's always lapped up a
1121 good starter on his way here. Well, bejeez, he won't be
1122 sober long--he'll be good and ripe for my birthday party
1123 tonight at twelve. [chuckles with anticipation; to all]
1124 Listen--he's fixed some new gag to pull on us--we'll
1125 pretend to let him kid us, see--and we'll kid the pants
1126 off him.

1127 ED: Sure, Bess!

1128 MAC: Righto!

1129 JOE: Dat's de stuff!

1130 JIMMY: We'll fix him!

1131 THE CAPTAIN: You bet your life!

1132 THE GENERAL: O' course!

NARRATOR: Rocky appears in the rear doorway, his arm around Hickey.

ROCKY: Here's the old son of a gun!

NARRATOR: They all stand and greet him.

JIMMY: Hello, Hickey!

ED: If it ain't...

JOE: It sho is.

MAC: Hickey!

WILLIE: My boy!

THE CAPTAIN: How goes it old chum?

THE GENERAL: Velcome, Hickey.

NARRATOR: Even Hugo raises his head and blinks through his glasses.

HICKEY [jovially]: Hello, Gang! [He immediately puts on on entrance act.] "It's always fair weather, when good fellas get together!" [changing to bass and another tune] "And another little drink won't do us any harm!"
[The gang cheers.]

NARRATOR: Rocky grins and goes to get drinks. Hickey comes forward and doffs his cap affectionately to Bess.

HICKEY [smiling]: Hickey, at your service, fine lady.

BESS HOPE [blushing]: Bejeez Hickey, you old bastard, it's good to see you!

NARRATOR: As Hickey shakes hands with the gang, Rocky sets out whiskey glasses and a bottle on every table.

BESS HOPE: Sit down, Hickey--sit down.

[Hickey sits.]

BESS HOPE: Bejeez Hickey, it seems natural as rain to see your grinnin' mug. This dumb broad here was tryin' to tell us you'd changed, but you ain't changed a bit. How you been doin'? Bejeez you look like a million bucks.

ROCKY: Here's your key, Hickey--same old room.

1166 HICKEY: Thanks, Rocky--I'm going up in a little while to
1167 grab a snooze--haven't been able to sleep lately an' I'm
1168 tired as hell--a couple of hours will fix me.

1169 BESS HOPE: First time I ever heard you worry about
1170 sleep. Bejeez, you never would go to bed [cackles
1171 suggestively] Get a few slugs in ya and you'll forget
1172 sleepin'. Here's mud in your eye, Hickey.

1173 WILLIE: To Hickey!

1174 ED: Hickey!

1175 JOE: To you, suh!

1176 MAC: Bottoms up!

1177 JIMMY: To your health!

1178 THE CAPTAIN: Cheers!

1179 THE GENERAL: Vat's right!

1180 HICKEY: Drink hearty, boys and girls!

1181 NARRATOR: All drink but Hickey.

1182 BESS HOPE: Bejeez is that a new stunt, not drinkin'?

1183 HICKEY: No, I forgot to tell Rocky--you'll have to
1184 excuse me, boys and girls, but I'm off the stuff.
1185 For keeps.

1186 BESS HOPE: What the hell-- [then choosing to play along]
1187 Sure! Joined the Salvation Army, did ya? Take that
1188 bottle away from him, Rocky--we wouldn't want to tempt
1189 him into sin. [chuckles]

1190 [The gang laughs.]

1191 HICKEY: No, honest, Bess, I know it's hard to believe
1192 but--[pauses then simply] Cora was right--I've changed.
1193 I mean, about booze. I don't need it anymore.

1194 NARRATOR: They all stare a bit uneasily.

1195 BESS HOPE [her kidding's a bit forced]: Yeah, go ahead,
1196 kid the pants off us, bejeez! Cora said you was coming
1197 to save us--well, go on--start the service--sing a
1198 God-damned hymn if you like--we'll all join in the
1199 chorus.

1200 HICKEY [grinning]: Oh, hell--you don't think I'd come
1201 around here peddling some brand of temperance bunk,

do ya? You know me better than that! Just because I'm through with the stuff don't mean I'm going Prohibition. Hell, I'm not that ungrateful--it's given me too many good times. I feel exactly like I always did--if anyone wants to get drunk, if that's the only way they can be happy and feel at peace with themselves, why the hell shouldn't they? Why I know all about that game from soup to nuts--I'm the guy that wrote the book. The only reason I've quit is-- Well, I finally had the guts to face myself and throw overboard the damned lying pipe dream that'd been making me miserable, and do what I had to do for the happiness of all concerned--and then all at once I found I was at peace with myself--and I didn't need booze any more. That's all there was to it.

NARRATOR: They stare uneasily. He looks around and grins affectionately.

HICKEY: But what the hell--don't let me be a wet blanket. Set 'em up again, Rocky--here. [pulls out a big roll and peels off a bill] Keep 'em comin' until this is killed--then ask for more.

ROCKY: Jeez, a roll dat'd choke a hippopotamus! Fill up, youse guys.

[They all pour drinks.]

BESS HOPE: That sounds more like you, Hickey. That on-the wagon bull-- Cut out the act and have a drink, for Christ's sake.

HICKEY: It's no act, Bess--but don't get me wrong--that don't mean I'm a teetotal grouch and can't be in the party. Hell, why d'you think I'm here except to have a party, same as I've always done, and help celebrate your birthday tonight? You've all been good pals to me, the best friends I've ever had. I've been thinkin' about you ever since I left the house--all the time I was walking over here--

BESS HOPE: Walking? Bejeez you mean to say you walked?

HICKEY: I sure did--all the way from the wilds of Astoria. Didn't mind it, either--I'm a bit tired and sleepy but otherwise I feel great. [Addressing Bess] That ought to encourage you, Bess--show you a little walk around the ward is nothing to be scared about.

NARRATOR: As Hickey winks at the others, Bess stiffens.

HICKEY: I didn't make such bad time either, considering it's a hell of a ways and I sat in the park a while thinking. It was going on twelve when I went in the bedroom to tell Evelyn I was leaving. Six hours. No, less than that--I'd been standing on the corner for a while before Chuck and Cora came along. Of course, I was only kidding Cora with that stuff about saving you. [then seriously] No, I wasn't either. But I didn't mean booze--I meant save you from your pipe dreams. I know now, from my experience, they're the things that really poison and ruin a guy's life and keep him from finding peace. If you knew how free and contented I feel now--I'm like a new man. And the cure is so damned simple, once you have the nerve. Just the old dope of honesty--honesty with yourself, I mean. Just stop lying to yourself and kidding yourself about tomorrow. [talking to himself as much as to them] Hell, this is beginning to sound like a damned sermon on how to lead the good life. It's in my blood, I guess--my old man used to whale salvation into my behind with a birch rod. He was a preacher in the sticks of Indiana, like I've told you--I got my knack of sales gab from him, too--he sold Hoosier hayseeds building lots along Golden Street! [with a salesman's persuasiveness] Now listen, boys and girls, don't look at me as if I was trying to sell ya the Brooklyn Bridge. Nothing up my sleeve, honest--let's take an example--any one of you--take you, Bess--that walk around the ward you never take--

BESS HOPE [defensively]: What about it?

HICKEY [grinning affectionately]: Why you know as well as I do, Bess.

BESS HOPE: Bejeez I'm going to take it!

HICKEY: Sure you're going to--this time--because I'm going to help you. I know it's the thing you've got to do before you'll ever know what real peace means. [pause] Same thing with you, Jimmy--you've got to try and get your old job back. And no tomorrow about it!

NARRATOR: Jimmy stiffens.

HICKEY: No, don't tell me, Jimmy, I know all about tomorrow--I'm the guy that wrote the book.

1321 PARRITT [uneasy again]: What are you talking about--
1322 you're nuts.

1323 HICKEY: Don't try to kid me, Boy--I'm a good salesman--
1324 so good the firm was glad to take me back after every
1325 drunk--and what made me good was I could size up anyone.
1326 [frowns, puzzled again] But-- [suddenly good-natured
1327 again] Never mind--I can tell you're having trouble with
1328 yourself and I'll be glad to do anything I can to help a
1329 friend of Larry's.

1330 LARRY: Mind your own business, Hickey. He's nothing to
1331 you--or to me, either.

1332 HICKEY: Hell, don't get sore, Larry--we've always been
1333 good pals, haven't we? I've always liked you a lot.

1334 LARRY: Forget it, Hickey.

1335 HICKEY: Fine--that's the spirit!

1336 NARRATOR: Hickey glances around at the others, who have
1337 forgotten their drinks.

1338 HICKEY: What is this, a funeral? Come on, drink up!

1339 [They all drink.]

1340 HICKEY: Hell, this is a celebration! If anything I've
1341 said sounds too serious, forget it! [He yawns.] I'm not
1342 trying to put anything over on you, boys and girls--
1343 it's just that I now know from experience what a
1344 pipe dream can do to ya--and how relieved and
1345 contented with yourself you feel when you're rid of it.
1346 [yawns again] God, I'm sleepy--that long walk is
1347 startin' to get me. [starts to get up but relaxes again]
1348 No, boys and girls, I never knew what real peace was
1349 until now. You know when you're sick and suffering like
1350 hell and the Doc gives you a shot in the arm, and the
1351 pain goes, and you drift off? [his eyes close] You can
1352 let go at last--let yourself sink to the bottom of the
1353 sea--there's no farther you can go--not a single damned
1354 hope or dream left to nag ya. You'll all know what I
1355 mean after you--[pauses, mumbling] Excuse...all in...got
1356 to grab some...Drink up everybody, on me--

1357 NARRATOR: Sleep overpowers him, chin sagging to his
1358 chest. All stare with uneasy fascination.

1359 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, that's a fine stunt, to go to sleep
1360 on us! [fumingly to the crowd] Well, what the hell's

1361 the matter with you bums--why don't you drink up?

1362 You're always crying for booze, and now you've got it
1363 under your nose, you sit like dummies!

1364 [They gulp down their whiskies and then pour another.]

1365 BESS HOPE: Well, bejeez, I still say he's kidding us.
1366 Kid his own grandmother, Hickey would. What d'you think,
1367 Jimmy?

1368 JIMMY: It must be another of his jokes, although--
1369 Well, he does appear changed. But he'll probably be his
1370 natural self again tomorrow--I mean when he wakes up.

1371 LARRY: You'll be making a mistake if you think he's
1372 only kidding.

1373 PARRITT: I don't like that guy, Larry--he's too
1374 damned nosy.

1375 JIMMY: Still, I have to admit there was some sense in
1376 his nonsense. It is time I got my job back--although I
1377 hardly need him to remind me.

1378 BESS HOPE: Yes, and I ought to take a walk around the
1379 ward. But I don't need no Hickey to tell me that, seeing
1380 I got it all set for my birthday tomorrow.

1381 LARRY [sardonically]: Ha! By God, it looks like he's
1382 going to make two sales of his peace at least! But you'd
1383 better make sure it's the real McCoy and not poison.

1384 BESS HOPE: You bughouse I-Wont-Work harp, who asked you
1385 to shove in an oar? What the hell d'you mean, poison?
1386 Just because he has your number-- [feels ashamed so adds
1387 apologetically] Bejeez, Larry, you're always croaking
1388 about death--it's gets my goat. Come on, gang, drink up.

1389 NARRATOR: As they drink, Bess's eyes go to Hickey.

1390 BESS HOPE: Stone cold sober and dead to the world!
1391 Bejeez, I don't get it. [bursting out again in anger]
1392 He ain't like the old Hickey--he'll be a fine wet
1393 blanket to have around at my birthday party--I wish to
1394 hell he'd never turned up!

1395 ED: Give him time, Bess--he'll come out of it.
1396 I've watched many cases of almost fatal teetotalism,
1397 but they all came out of it completely cured and as
1398 drunk as ever. My opinion is the poor sap is temporarily
1399 bughouse from overwork. You can't be too careful about

NARRATOR: Both Bess and Jimmy have been drinking heavily. Bess is touchy and pugnacious--entirely different from the usual easygoing beefing she delights in and which no one takes seriously. Now, she has a real chip on her shoulder.

Jimmy, beneath a pathetic veneer of gentlemanly poise, is obviously terrified and shrinks into himself.

Hickey grabs Bess's hand and pumps it up and down. Bess appears unaware of this handshake--then she jerks her hand away.

BESS HOPE: Cut out the glad hand, Hickey. D'you think I'm a sucker? I know you, bejeez, you sneakin', lyin' drummer! [with rising anger, to the others] And all you bums--what the hell you trying to do, yellin' and raisin' the roof--you want the cops to close the joint and take my license? [pause as Cora continues to play] Hey, you dumb tart, quit banging on that box! Bejeez, the least you could do is learn the tune!

CORA [stops--deeply hurt]: Aw, Bess! Jeez, ain't I [any good any more?]

BESS HOPE: And you two hookers, screamin' at the top of your lungs--what d'you think this is, a dollar cathouse?

PEARL [miserably]: Aw, Bess-- [She begins to cry.]

MARGIE: Jeez, Bess I never thought you'd say that--like yuh meant it. [Pause] Aw, don't bawl, Poirl--she don't mean it.

HICKEY [reproachfully]: Now, Bess--don't take it out on the gang because you're upset about yourself. Anyway, I've promised you you'll come through all right, haven't I? So quit worrying.

BESS HOPE [dismissive]: Huh!

HICKEY: Just be yourself--you don't want to bawl out the old gang just when they're congratulin' you on your birthday, do ya?

BESS HOPE [looking guilty and shamefaced--forcing an unconvincing attempt at her natural tone]: Bejeez, they ain't as dumb as you--they know I was only kidding 'em. They know I appreciate their congratulations. Don't you, gang?

2373 ED [uninspired]: Sure, Bess.

2374 WILLIE: [uninspired]: Yes.

2375 MCLOIN [uninspired]: Of course we do.

2376 NARRATOR: Bess comes forward to the two girls--with
2377 Jimmy and Hickey following--and pats them awkwardly.

2378 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, I like you broads--you know I was
2379 only kiddin'.

2380 MARGIE: Sure we know, Bess.

2381 PEARL: Sure.

2382 HICKEY [grinning]: Bess's the greatest kidder in this
2383 dump and that's sayin' somethin'! Look how she's kidded
2384 herself for twenty years!

2385 BESS HOPE [bitterly]: Huh.

2386 HICKEY: Unless I'm wrong, my good lady--and I'm
2387 bettin' I'm not--we'll know soon, eh? Tomorrow morning.
2388 No, by God, it's this morning now!

2389 JIMMY [with a dazed dread]: This morning?

2390 HICKEY: Yes, it's tomorrow at last, Jimmy. [Pause]
2391 Don't be so scared--I've promised I'll help ya.

2392 JIMMY [masking his dread behind an offended, drunken
2393 dignity]: I don't understand you. Kindly remember
2394 I'm fully capable of settling my own affairs!

2395 HICKEY [earnestly]: Well isn't that exactly what I
2396 want you to do--settle with yourself once and for all?
2397 [a confidential whisper] Only be careful of the booze,
2398 Jimmy--not too much from now on--you've had a lot
2399 already and you don't want to let yourself duck ot of
2400 it by being too drunk to move--not this time!

2401 BESS HOPE [to Margie--still guiltily]: Bejeez, Margie
2402 you know I didn't mean it--it's that lousy drummer
2403 riding me that's got my goat.

2404 MARGIE: I know. [waving her head] Come on--you ain't
2405 noticed your cake yet--ain't it grand?

2406 BESS HOPE [trying to brighten up]: Say, that's pretty.
2407 Ain't had a cake since Harry--six candles--each for
2408 ten years, eh--bejeez that's thoughtful of ya.

2409 PEARL: It was Hickey got it.

2410 BESS HOPE [her tone forced]: Well...he means well,
 2411 I guess. [face hardening] Huh--to hell with his cake.

2412 PEARL: Wait Bess--yuh ain't seen de presents from all of
 2413 us--and dere's a watch all engraved wid your name and de
 2414 date from Hickey.

2415 BESS HOPE: To hell with it--he can keep it!

2416 PEARL: Jeez, she ain't even looked at our presents.

2417 MARGIE [bitterly]: Dis is all wrong--we gotta put some
 2418 life in dis party or I'll go nuts! Hey, Cora, what's de
 2419 matter wid dat box--can't yuh play for Bess? Yuh don't
 2420 have to stop just because she kidded yuh!

2421 BESS HOPE [with forced heartiness]: Yes, come on, Cora--
 2422 you was playin' fine.

2423 [Cora resumes playing.]

2424 BESS HOPE [almost tearfully sentimental]: That was
 2425 Harry's favorite tune--he was always singing it.
 2426 It brings him back--I wish [he were]--[She chokes up.]

2427 HICKEY [grins at her--amused]: Yes we've all heard you
 2428 tell us you thought the world of him.

2429 BESS HOPE [with frightened suspicion]: Well I did,
 2430 bejeez! Everyone knows I did! [threatening] Bejeez,
 2431 if you say I didn't [think the world of him]--

2432 HICKEY [soothingly]: Now Bess, I didn't say anything--
 2433 you're the only one knows the truth about that.

2434 JIMMY [with self-pitying melancholy out of a
 2435 sentimental dream]: My Mary's favorite song was "Loch
 2436 Lomond." She was beautiful and she played beautifully
 2437 and she had a beautiful voice. [with gentle sorrow]
 2438 You were lucky, Bess. Harry died. But there are more
 2439 bitter sorrows than losing the man one loves by the hand
 2440 of death--

2441 HICKEY [with an amused wink at Bess]: Now listen Jimmy--
 2442 we've all heard that story about how you came back to
 2443 Cape Town and found her in the hay with an officer.
 2444 We know you like to believe that's what started you on
 2445 the booze and ruined your life.

2446 JIMMY [stammers]: I--I'm talking to Bess. Will you
 2447 kindly keep out of [my affairs]--[with a pitiful
 2448 defiance] My life is not ruined!

2490 [He grabs his schooner and takes a greedy gulp--
2491 then sets it back down on the table.]

2492 HUGO [in an arrogantly disdainful tone, as if he were
2493 rebuking a butler]: Dis vine is unfit to trink--it has
2494 not been properly iced!

2495 HICKEY [amusedly]: Always a high-toned swell at heart,
2496 eh, Hugo? God help us poor bums if you ever get to
2497 telling us where to get off! You'd be drinking our blood
2498 beneath those willow trees! [chuckles--then as he goes
2499 on he becomes more moved and obviously sincere] A toast,
2500 Ladies and Gents! To Bess Hope, who's been a friend in
2501 need to every one of us! Here's to the old gal, the
2502 best sport and the kindest, biggest-hearted gal in the
2503 whole world! Here's wishin' ya all the luck there is,
2504 and long life and happiness! Come on, everybody!
2505 To Bess! Bottoms up!

2506 MAC/ED/WILLIE/JOE/JIMMY/PEARL/MARGIE/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK
2507 [they've caught his enthusiasm]: To Bess!

2508 [They drain their drinks down.]

2509 HOPE [deeply moved--her voice husky] Thanks, all of ya.
2510 Bejeez, Hickey you old son of a gun, that's good of ya!
2511 Bejeez, I know you meant it, too.

2512 HICKEY [moved]: Of course I meant it! And I mean it when
2513 I say I hope today will be the best day of your life,
2514 and in the lives of everyone here, the beginning of a
2515 new life of peace and happiness where no pipe dreams can
2516 ever nag at you again. Here's to that, Bess!

2517 NARRATOR: But this time he drinks alone--in an instant,
2518 the attitude of the gang has become uneasy and
2519 defensive.

2520 ROCKY [growls]: Aw, forget dat bughouse line of bull for
2521 a minute, can't yuh?

2522 HICKEY [sitting--good-naturedly]: No, you're right--it's
2523 Bess we want to hear from. Come on, Bess! [He pounds his
2524 schooner on the table.] Speech! Speech!

2525 [The gang raps their schooners on the table.]

2526 BESS HOPE [lamely]: Bejeez, I'm no good at speeches.
2527 All I can say is--thanks to everybody for remembering me
2528 on my birthday. [bitterness coming out] Only don't think
2529 because I'm sixty I'll be a bigger damned fool easy mark

than ever! Like Hickey says, it's going to be a new day!
This dump has got to be run like other dumps, so I can
make some money and not just split even. People has got
to pay what they owe me! I'm not runnin' a damned orphan
asylum for bums and crooks! Nor a God-damned hooker
shanty, either! Nor an Old Men's Home for lousy
Anarchist tramps that ought to be in jail! I'm sick of
being played for a sucker!

NARRATOR: They stare at her in stunned bewilderment--
yet she goes on as if she hated herself for every word,
but can't stop.

BESS HOPE: And don't think you're kiddin' me right now,
either! I know damned well you're giving me the laugh
behind my back, thinking to yourselves: that old, lyin',
pipe-dreamin' bitch, we've heard her bull about taking a
walk around the ward for years, she'll never make it--
she's yella, she ain't got the guts, she's scared you'll
find out--[She glares around almost with hatred] But
I'll show ya, bejeez! [Pause] I'll show you, too, ya
son of a bitch of a frying-pan-peddlin' bastard!

HICKEY [heartily encouraging]: That's the stuff, Bess!
Of course you'll show me--that's what I want you to do!

NARRATOR: Bess glances at him with helpless dread.
Dropping her eyes, she looks furtively around the table.
All at once she becomes miserably sorry.

BESS HOPE [her voice catching]: Listen, all o' ya!
Bejeez, forgive me--I lost my temper! I ain't feeling
well--I got a hell of a grouch on! Bejeez, you know
you're all as welcome here as the flowers in May!

ROCKY: Sure, Boss--you're always aces wid us, see?

NARRATOR: Hickey again rises to his feet.

HICKEY [with the convincing sincerity of one making a
confession of which he is genuinely ashamed]:
Listen, everybody--I know you're sick of my gabbin'--
but I think this is where I owe ya an explanation and an
apology for some of the rough stuff I've had to pull on
ya. I know how it must look--as if I was a damned
busybody, not only interferin' in your private business,
but sickin' some of ya onto one another. Well I have to
admit that's true, and I'm damned sorry about it. But it
had to be done. You know old Hickey--I was never one to
start trouble--but this time I had to--for your own

2616 MAC [spitefully]: Yes!

2617 ED [spitefully]: That's right!

2618 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, you've hit it, Larry! I've noticed he
2619 hasn't shown her picture around this time!

2620 ED: He hasn't got it--the iceman took it away from him!

2621 MARGIE: Jeez, look at him--who could blame her?

2622 PEARL: She must be hard up to fall for an iceman!

2623 CORA: Imagine a sap like him advisin' me and Chuck to
2624 git married!

2625 CHUCK: Yeah he done so good wid it!

2626 JIMMY: Least I can say my Mary chose an officer and a
2627 gentleman.

2628 THE CAPTAIN: Look at him, chaps, he's sprouted horns
2629 like a bloody antelope!

2630 THE GENERAL: Pigger, py Gott--like water buffalo!

2631 WILLIE [sings his Sailor Lad tune]: "Come up," she
2632 cried, "my iceman lad, And you and I'll agree--"

2633 WILLIE/ED/JOE/THE CAPTAIN/THE GENERAL/MAC/
2634 PEARL/MARGIE/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK "And I'll show ya the
2635 prettiest [rap, rap, rap] That ever you did see!"
2636 [A roar of derisive, dirty laughter]

2637 HICKEY [joining in the laughter--enjoying the joke at
2638 his expense]: Well, boys and girls, I'm glad to see you
2639 in good spirits for Bess's party, even if the joke's
2640 on me. I admit I asked for it by always pulling that
2641 iceman gag in the old days. [w good-natured generosity]
2642 So laugh all you like.

2643 NARRATOR: But this time they don't laugh--they only
2644 stare at him with baffled uneasiness.

2645 HICKEY: Well, this forces my hand--your bringing up the
2646 subject of Evelyn. I didn't want to tell you--not yet--
2647 I wanted to wait until the party was over. But you're
2648 getting the wrong idea about poor Evelyn--and I've got
2649 to stop that.

2650 NARRATOR: As he pauses, there's a tense stillness in the
2651 room.

NARRATOR: Rocky turns on him threateningly but just then Bess enters from the hall, followed by Jimmy, with Hickey on his heels.

CHUCK: Let's get outa here!

CORA: Yeah.

[They hurry out the double doors to the street.]

NARRATOR: Bess and Jimmy both put up a front, but there is a desperate bluff to their manner, suggesting a march of the condemned. Bess is clothed in an old black Sunday dress, which gives her the appearance of being in mourning. Jimmy's clothes are pressed, his shoes shined, his linen immaculate--but he has a hangover and his eyes have a boiled look. Hickey's face is drawn from lack of sleep and his voice is hoarse from continual talking, but he beams with triumphant accomplishment.

HICKEY: Well, here we are! We've got this far, at least! I told you, Jimmy, you weren't half as sick as you pretended. No excuse whatsoever for postponing--

JIMMY: I'll thank you to keep your hands off me! I merely mentioned I would feel more fit tomorrow. But it might as well be today, I suppose.

HICKEY: Finish it now, so it'll be dead forever, and you can be free!

NARRATOR: He passes him to clap Bess encouragingly on the shoulder.

HICKEY: Your rheumatism didn't bother you coming downstairs, did it--I told you it wouldn't.

NARRATOR: He winks around at the others and gives Bess a playful poke in the ribs.

HICKEY: You're the damnedest one for alibis--as bad as Jimmy!

BESS HOPE [putting on her deaf manner]: Eh? I can't hear you. [defiantly] You're a liar--I've had rheumatism on and off for twenty years--ever since Harry died--everybody knows that.

HICKEY: Yes, the kind of rheumatism you turn on and off! We're on to you, you old pretender! [chuckling]

BESS HOPE [humiliated and guilty, by way of escape she glares around at the others.] Bejeez, what are all you bums staring at me for? Think you was watchin' a circus! Why don't you get the hell out o' here and 'tend to your own business, like Hickey's told ya?

NARRATOR: Looking at her reproachfully, they fidget as if they were trying to move.

HICKEY: I thought they'd have the guts to be gone by this time. [He grins.] Okay--maybe I did have my doubts. [Abruptly he becomes sincerely sympathetic and earnest.] Because I know exactly what you're up against, boys. I know how damned yellow a person can be when it comes to facin' the truth. I've had to face a worse bastard in myself than any of you'll have to. I know how it is to become such a coward you'll grab at any lousy excuse to get out of killin' your pipe dreams. And yet, as I've told you over and over, it's exactly those damn tomorrow dreams which keep you from makin' peace with yourself. So you've got to kill 'em like I did.

NARRATOR: They glare at him with fear and hatred.

HICKEY [His manner changing as he becomes kindly bullying]: Come on, boys--get moving--who'll start the ball rolling? You, Captain, and you, General--you're old war heroes--you ought to lead the charge--come on now, show us a little of that Battle of Modder River spirit we've heard so much about! You can't hang around all day as if the street outside would bite ya!

THE CAPTAIN [turns with humiliated rage in an attempt at jaunty casualness] Right you are, Mister Bloody Nosey Parker! Time I pushed off--was only waiting to say good-bye to you, Bess, old gal.

BESS HOPE [dejectedly]: Good-bye, Captain--hope you have luck.

THE CAPTAIN: Oh, I'm bound to, my dear--and the same to you.

NARRATOR: Pushing open the swinging doors, The Captain marches off right.

THE GENERAL: Py Gott, if dot Limey can, I can!

NARRATOR: Lumbering through the doors, The General marches off left.

3440 HICKEY [exhortingly]: Next? Come on, Ed--it's a fine
3441 summer's day and the call of the old circus is in your
3442 blood!

3443 NARRATOR: Ed glares at him, then goes to the door.
3444 Mac jumps up and follows him.

3445 HICKEY: That's the stuff, Mac.

3446 ED: Good-bye, Bess.

3447 NARRATOR: Ed goes out, turning right.

3448 MAC [glowering after him]: If that crooked grifter has
3449 the guts--

3450 NARRATOR: Mac goes out, turning left. Hickey glances at
3451 Willie who jumps up from his chair before Hickey can
3452 speak.

3453 WILLIE: Good-bye, Bess, and thanks for all your
3454 kindness.

3455 HICKEY: That's the way, Willie! The D.A.'s a busy man--
3456 he can't wait all day for you, ya know.

3457 BESS HOPE [dully]: Good luck, Willie.

3458 NARRATOR: While Willie exits and turns right, Jimmy, in
3459 a sick panic, sneaks to the bar and reaches for a glass
3460 of whiskey.

3461 HICKEY: Now, now, Jimmy--you can't do that to yourself.
3462 One drink on top of your hangover an' an empty stomach
3463 and you'd be cockeyed. Then you'll tell yourself you
3464 wouldn't stand a chance if you went up soused to get
3465 your old job back.

3466 JIMMY [pleading]: Tomorrow--I will tomorrow--I'll be in
3467 good shape tomorrow! [abruptly getting control of
3468 himself--clearing his throat] All right, I'm going.
3469 Take your hands off me.

3470 HICKEY: That's the ticket--you'll thank me when it's all
3471 over.

3472 JIMMY [in a burst of futile fury]: You dirty swine!

3473 NARRATOR: He tries to throw the drink in Hickey's face,
3474 but his aim is poor and it lands on Hickey's coat.
3475 Jimmy turns and dashes through the door, turning right.

HICKEY [brushing the whiskey off his coat--humorously]:
I needed an alcohol rub anyway! But no hard feelings--
I know how he feels--I wrote the book. There was a day
when if anybody tried to force me to face the truth
about my pipe dreams, I'd have shot 'em dead. [He turns
to Bess--encouragingly] Well, ya brave old gal, Jimmy
made the grade--now it's up to you. If he's got the guts
to go through with it--

LARRY [bursts out]: Leave Bess alone, damn you!

HICKEY [grins at him]: I'd worry about myself if I was
you, Larry, and not bother about Bess--she'll come
through all right--I've promised her that. She doesn't
need anyone's bum pity--do you, Bess?

BESS HOPE [with a pathetic attempt at her old fuming
assertiveness]: No, bejeez--keep your nose out of this,
Larry. What's Hickey got to do with it? I've always been
going to take this walk, ain't I? Bejeez, you bums want
to keep me locked up in here like I was in jail! I've
stood it long enough! I'm free, and I'll do as I damn
well please, bejeez! You keep your nose out, too,
Hickey! You'd think you was boss of this dump, not me.
Sure, I'm all right! Why shouldn't I be? What the hell's
to be scared of, just taking a stroll around my own
ward.

NARRATOR: As she talks, she's been moving toward the
door--now she reaches it.

BESS HOPE: What's the weather like outside, Rocky?

ROCKY: Fine day, Boss.

BESS HOPE: What's that--can't hear ya--don't look fine
to me--looks 's if it'd pour down cats and dogs any
minute. My rheumatism--[She catches herself.] No, must
be my eyes--half blind, bejeez--makes things look black.
I see now it's a fine day--too damned hot for a walk,
though, if you ask me. Well, do me good to sweat the
booze out of me--but I'll have to watch out for the
automobiles--wasn't none of them around twenty years
ago--from what I've seen of 'em through the winda,
they'd run over ya as soon as look at ya--not that I'm
scared of 'em--I can take care of myself.

NARRATOR: She puts a reluctant hand on the
swinging door.

3517 BESS HOPE: Well, so long--

3518 NARRATOR: She stops and looks back--frightened.

3519 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, where are you, Hickey--it's time we
3520 got started.

3521 HICKEY [grins & shakes his head]: No, Bess, I'm sorry--
3522 you've got to do this one by yourself.

3523 BESS HOPE [with forced fuming]: Hell of a guy, you are--
3524 thought you'd be willing to help an old lady across the
3525 street, one who's half blind--half deaf, too--damn those
3526 automobiles! The hell with ya! I've never needed no
3527 one's help and I don't now! [egging herself on]
3528 I'll make it a long walk now I've started--see all
3529 my old friends--bejeez, they must have given me up for
3530 dead--twenty years is a long time. But they know it was
3531 Harry's death that made me-- Well, the sooner I get
3532 started--

3533 NARRATOR: Suddenly she drops her hand from the door.

3534 BESS HOPE [with sentimental melancholy] You know, that's
3535 the one that gets me--can't help thinkin' the last time
3536 I went out was Harry's funeral. After he'd gone,
3537 I didn't feel life was worth livin'. Swore I'd never
3538 go out again. [pathetically] Somehow, I don't feel it's
3539 right for me to go, Hickey, even now--it's like I was
3540 doing wrong to his memory.

3541 HICKEY: Now, Bess--you can't let yourself get away with
3542 that one any more!

3543 BESS HOPE [cupping her hand to her ear] What's that?
3544 Can't hear ya. [sentimentally again but with
3545 desperation] I remember now clear as day the last time
3546 before he-- It was a fine Sunday morning--we went out to
3547 church together. [Her voice breaks on a sob.]

3548 HICKEY [amused]: It's a great act, Bess--but I know
3549 better, and so do you. You never did want to go to
3550 church or any place else with him--he was always on your
3551 neck, making you go out and do things, when all you
3552 wanted was to get drunk in peace.

3553 BESS HOPE [faltering]: Can't hear a word you're sayin'--
3554 you're a God-damned liar, anyway! [then in a sudden
3555 fury, her voice trembling with hatred] Bejeez, you son
3556 of a [bitch]-- If there was a mad dog outside I'd go and
3557 shake hands with it rather than stay here with you!

3598 He then abruptly makes Hickey again the antagonist.]
3599 You think you'll make me admit that to myself?

3600 HICKEY [chuckling]: But you just did--didn't you?

3601 PARRITT: That's the stuff, Hickey--show the old yellow
3602 faker up--he can't play dead on me--he's got to help me!

3603 HICKEY: You've got to settle with him, Larry. Hell,
3604 he'll do as good a job as I could at making you give up
3605 that old grandstand bluff.

3606 LARRY [angrily]: I'll see the two of you in hell first!

3607 ROCKY [calls excitedly]: De Boss's startin' across de
3608 street! She's goin' to fool yuh, Hickey, yuh bastard!
3609 [He pauses, watching--then worriedly] What de hell's she
3610 stoppin' for--right in de middle of de street--yuh'd
3611 tink she was paralyzed or somethin'! [disgustedly]
3612 Aw, she's quittin'--she's turned back--jeez, look at de
3613 old gal travel--here she comes!

3614 NARRATOR: Bess comes lurching through the swinging doors
3615 and stumbles up to the bar.

3616 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, give me a drink quick--scared me out
3617 of my head! Bejeez, that fella oughta be pinched--it
3618 ain't safe to walk the streets! Bejeez, that ends me--
3619 never again--gimme that bottle!

3620 NARRATOR: She slops a glass full, drains it and pours
3621 another.

3622 BESS HOPE [to Rocky]: You seen it, didn't you, Rocky?

3623 ROCKY [scornfully]: Seen what?

3624 BESS HOPE: That automobile, you dumb Wop! Feller drivin'
3625 must be crazy--he'd a run right over me if I hadn't
3626 jumped. [ingratiatingly] Come on, Larry, have a drink--
3627 everybody have a drink--have a drink, Rocky--I know ya
3628 hardly ever touch it.

3629 ROCKY [resentfully]: Well, dis time I do touch it!
3630 [pouring a drink] I'm goin' to get stinko, see! And if
3631 yuh don't like it, yuh know what yuh can do! I gotta
3632 good mind to chuck dis job, anyways. [disgustedly]
3633 Jeez, Boss, I thought yuh had some guts! I was bettin'
3634 yuh'd make it and show dat bughouse preacher up.
3635 [He looks at Hickey--then snorts] Automobile, hell!

3636 Who d'yuh tink yuh're kiddin'? Dey wasn' no automobile!
 3637 Yuh just quit--cold!

3638 BESS HOPE [feebly]: Guess I oughta know! Bejeez, it
 3639 almost killed me!

3640 HICKEY [kindly]: Now, now, Bess--you've faced the test
 3641 and come through--you're rid of all that nagging dream
 3642 stuff now--you know you can't believe it any more.

3643 BESS HOPE [appeals pleadingly to Larry]: Larry you saw
 3644 it, didn't you--drink up--have another--have all you
 3645 want--bejeez, we'll go on a grand old souse together--
 3646 you saw that automobile, didn't ya?

3647 LARRY [compassionately, avoiding her eyes]:
 3648 Sure, I saw it, Bess--you had a narrow escape--by God,
 3649 I thought you were a goner!

3650 HICKEY [turns on him with a flash of indignation]:
 3651 What the hell's the matter with you, Larry--you know
 3652 what I said about the wrong kind of pity--leave Bess
 3653 alone--you'd think I'd harm her--my oldest friend--what
 3654 kind of a louse do you think I am? There isn't anything
 3655 I wouldn't do for Bess, and she knows it! All I wanna do
 3656 is fix it so she'll finally be at peace for the rest of
 3657 her days! And if you'd only wait, why--! [He turns to
 3658 Bess coaxingly]: Come now, Bess--it's all over and dead!
 3659 Give up that ghost of an automobile.

3660 BESS HOPE [beginning to collapse within herself--dully]:
 3661 Yes, what's the use--now--all a lie--no automobile.
 3662 But, bejeez, something ran over me! Must have been
 3663 myself, I guess. [She forces a feeble smile--then
 3664 wearily] Guess I'll sit down--feel all in--like a
 3665 corpse, bejeez.

3666 NARRATOR: She picks a bottle and glass from the bar,
 3667 walks to the first table and slumps down in a chair.
 3668 The sound of the bottle on the table rouses Hugo.

3669 BESS HOPE [a flat, dead voice]: Hello, Hugo--coming up
 3670 for air? Stay passed out, that's the right dope--
 3671 there ain't any cool willow trees--except the ones that
 3672 come in a bottle.

3673 [He pours a drink and gulps it down.]

3674 HUGO [with his silly giggle]: Hello, Bess, stupid
 3675 proletarian monkey-face! I vill trink champagner beneath
 3676 the--[with a change to aristocratic fastidiousness]

But the slaves must ice it properly! [with guttural rage] Gottamned Hickey--peddler pimp for nouveau-riche capitalism! Vhen I lead the jackass mob to the sack of Babylon, I vill make them hang him to a lamppost the first one!

BESS HOPE [spiritlessly]: That's right an' I'll help ya pull on the rope! Have a drink, Hugo.

HUGO [frightened]: No, sank you--I am too trunk now--I hear myself say crazy sings. Do not listen, please--Larry vill tell you I haf never been so crazy trunk--I must sleep it off.

NARRATOR: Starting to put his head on his arms, he stops and stares at Bess with growing uneasiness.

HUGO: Vhat's matter, Bess--you look funny--you look dead--vhat's happened? I don't know you--listen, I feel I am dying, too--because I am so crazy trunk--it is very necessary I sleep--but I can't sleep here vith you--you look dead.

NARRATOR: In a panic, Hugo scrambles to his feet. Turning his back on Bess, he plops down at the next table--thrusting down his head on his arms like an ostrich in the sand.

LARRY [to Hickey with bitter condemnation]: Another one who's begun to enjoy your peace!

HICKEY: Oh, I know it's tough on him right now, same as it is on Bess--but that's only the first shock--I promise you they'll both be fine.

LARRY: And you believe that! I see you do--you mad fool!

HICKEY: Of course I believe it! I tell you I know from my own experience!

BESS HOPE [spiritlessly]: Close that big clam o' yours, Hickey--you're a worse gabber than that nagging asshole Harry was.

[She drinks her drink mechanically and pours another.]

ROCKY [in amazement]: Jeez, did yuh hear dat?

BESS HOPE [dully]: What's wrong with this booze--there's no kick in it.

3714 ROCKY [worried]: Jeez, Larry, Hugo had it right--
3715 she does look like she croaked.

3716 HICKEY [annoyed]: Don't be a damn fool--give her time--
3717 she's coming along fine. [He calls to Hope with a first
3718 trace of underlying uneasiness.] You're all right,
3719 aren't you, Bess?

3720 BESS HOPE [dully]: I want to pass out like Hugo.

3721 LARRY [turns to Hickey--with bitter anger]: It's the
3722 peace o' death you've brought her.

3723 HICKEY [for the first time loses his temper]: That's a
3724 lie! [controls this instantly and grins.] Well, well,
3725 you did manage to get a rise out of me that time. But
3726 you know it's damned foolishness--look at me--I've been
3727 through it--do I look dead? [pause] Just wait until the
3728 shock wears off and you'll see--she'll be a new person--
3729 like me. [He calls her coaxingly] How's it coming, Bess?
3730 Beginning to feel free, aren't you--relieved and not
3731 guilty any more.

3732 BESS HOPE [grumbles spiritlessly]: Bejeez, you must've
3733 been monkeyin' with the booze, too, you interferin'
3734 bastard--there's no life in it now! I want to get drunk
3735 and pass out--let's all pass out! Who the hell cares!

3736 HICKEY [lowering his voice--worriedly to Larry]: I admit
3737 I didn't think she'd be hit so hard--she's always been a
3738 happy-go-lucky slob--like I was. Course it hit me hard,
3739 too--but only for a minute--then it was as if a ton of
3740 guilt had been lifted off my mind--an' I saw that what'd
3741 happened was the only possible way for the peace of all
3742 concerned.

3743 LARRY [sharply]: What happened--tell us! And don't try
3744 to get out of it--I want a straight answer! [spitefully]
3745 I think it was something you drove someone else to!

3746 HICKEY [puzzled]: Someone else?

3747 LARRY [accusingly]: What did your wife die of? You've
3748 kept that a deep secret, I notice--for some reason!

3749 HICKEY [reproachfully]: You're not very considerate,
3750 Larry. But, if you insist on knowing, I guess there's
3751 no reason you shouldn't. It was a bullet through the
3752 head that killed Evelyn.

3753 [There is a moment of tense silence.]

3754 BESS HOPE [dully]: Who the hell cares--to hell with her
3755 and that stupid old nag Harry.

3756 ROCKY: Christ, ya had de right dope, Larry.

3757 LARRY [revengefully]: You drove your poor wife to
3758 suicide--I knew it! By God, I don't blame her--I'd
3759 almost do as much myself to be rid of you! It's what
3760 you'd like to drive us all to-- [Abruptly he's ashamed
3761 of himself and pitying.] I'm sorry, Hickey--I'm a
3762 rotten louse to throw that in your face.

3763 HICKEY [quietly]: Oh, that's all right, Larry. But don't
3764 jump to conclusions--I didn't say poor Evelyn committed
3765 suicide--it's the last thing she'd a done, as long as
3766 I was alive for her to take care of and forgive.
3767 If you'd known her at all, you'd never get such a
3768 crazy suspicion. [He pauses--then slowly] No, I'm sorry
3769 to have to tell you...but Eveylyn was killed.

3770 NARRATOR: Larry stares at him with growing horror and
3771 shrinks back along the bar away from him. Parritt's head
3772 jerks up and looks at Larry frightened. Rocky's eyes pop
3773 and Bess stares dully at the table, where Hugo gives
3774 no signs of life.

3775 LARRY [shaken]: Then she was...murdered.

3776 PARRITT [springs to his feet--stammers defensively about
3777 his mother]: You're a liar, Larry--you must be crazy to
3778 say that to me--you know she's still alive!

3779 ROCKY [blurts out]: Moidered--who done it?

3780 NARRATOR: Larry's eyes are fixed with fascinated horror
3781 on Hickey.

3782 LARRY [frightened]: Don't ask questions, you dumb Wop--
3783 it's none of our damned business--leave Hickey alone!

3784 HICKEY--[smiles at him with affectionate amusement]:
3785 Still the old grandstand bluff, eh Larry? Or is it some
3786 more bum pity? [matter-of-factly to Rocky] The police
3787 don't know who killed her yet, Rocky--but I expect they
3788 will before long.

3789 NARRATOR: Moving to Bess, Hickey sits beside her--
3790 his arm around her shoulder.

3791 HICKEY [affectionately coaxing]: Coming along fine--
3792 aren't you, Bess--getting' over the first shock--

3793 beginning to feel free--from guilt and lyin' hopes--
 3794 finally at peace with yourself.

3795 BESS HOPE [with a dull callousness]: Somebody croaked
 3796 your Evelyn, eh? Bejeez, my bets are on the iceman!
 3797 But who the hell cares--let's get drunk and pass out.
 3798 [She tosses down her drink with a lifeless, automatic
 3799 movement--complainingly] Bejeez, what did you do to the
 3800 booze, Hickey--there's no damned life left in it.

3801 PARRITT: [stammers]: Don't look like that, Larry--
 3802 you've got to believe what I told you--it had nothing to
 3803 do with her--it was just to get a few lousy dollars!

3804 [Hugo suddenly pounds on the table with his fists.]

3805 HUGO: Don't be a fool--buy me a trink! But no more vine!
 3806 It is not properly iced! [with guttural rage] Gottamned
 3807 stupid proletarian slaves--buy me a trink or I will have
 3808 you shot! [He collapses into abject begging.] Please,
 3809 for Gott's sake--I am not trunk enough--I cannot sleep--
 3810 life is a crazy monkey-face--always there is blood
 3811 beneath the villow trees--I hate it and I am afraid!
 3812 [He hides his face on his arms, sobbing muffledly.]
 3813 Please, I am crazy trunk--I say crazy sings--for Gott's
 3814 sake, do not listen to me!

3815 HICKEY [with worried kindness] You're beginning to
 3816 worry me, Bess--something's holding you up. I don't see
 3817 what-- You've faced the truth about yourself--you've
 3818 killed your nagging pipe dream. Oh I know it knocks you
 3819 cold--but only for a minute--then you see it was the
 3820 only way to peace--and you feel happy--like I did.
 3821 That's what worries me, old friend--it's time you began
 3822 to feel...happy...

3823 [Brief musical interlude]

3824 NARRATOR: Around half past one in the morning, the
 3825 tables in the bar have a new arrangement.

3826 Two bottles of whiskey are on each--with glasses and a
 3827 pitcher of water.

3828 At one table sit Larry, Hugo and Parritt--at another
 3829 Cora and The Captain--at another, Mac and The General--
 3830 and at the last, Willie, Bess, Ed and Jimmy.

3831 Slumbering in a chair next to the bar--asleep--is Joe.
 3832 Rocky approaches him from behind.

3987 PARRITT [starts frightenedly]: Execution? Then you
3988 do think [I did it]--?

3989 LARRY: I don't think anything!

3990 PARRITT [with forced jeering]: Because I sold out a lot
3991 of loud-mouthed fakers, who were cheatin' suckers with a
3992 phony pipe dream, and put 'em where they oughta be, in
3993 jail? [Forcing a laugh.] Don't make me laugh--I ought to
3994 get a medal! What an old sap you are--you must still
3995 believe in the Movement! [Nudging Rocky] Hickey's right
3996 about him, isn't he, Rocky--a no-good drunken old tramp,
3997 as dumb as he is, ought to take a hop off the fire
3998 escape!

3999 ROCKY [dully]: Sure, why don't he--or you--or me--
4000 what de hell's de difference?

4001 BESS HOPE: The hell with it!

4002 ED: Who cares?

4003 ROCKY: What am I doin' here wid youse two? [Pause] Oh,
4004 I got it now. [ingratiatingly] I was tinking how you was
4005 bot' reg'lar guys--I tinks, ain't two guys like dem,
4006 saps to be hangin' round a bunch o' stew bums and
4007 wastin' demselves. Not dat I blame yuh for not woikin'--
4008 on'y suckahs woik--but dere's no percentage in bein'
4009 broke when yuh can grab good jack by making someone else
4010 woik for yuh, is dere? I mean, like I do. [Pause then
4011 persuasively] So what yuh tink, Parritt--yuh ain't a
4012 bad-lookin' guy--yuh could take some gal who's a good
4013 hustlah, an' start a stable easy--I could help yuh and
4014 wise yuh up to de inside dope on de game. [Pauses--then
4015 impatiently] Well, what about it--what if dey do call
4016 yuh a pimp--what de hell do you care--any more'n I do.

4017 PARRITT [vindictively]: I'm through with whores--I wish
4018 they were all in jail--or dead!

4019 ROCKY [disappointedly]: So yuh won't touch it, huh?
4020 Aw right, stay a bum! [He turns to Larry.] How about
4021 you, Larry--you ain't dumb--sure, yuh're old, but dat
4022 don't matter--dey'd fall for yuh like yuh was deir uncle
4023 or old man or sometin--dey'd like takin' care of yuh--
4024 and de cops 'round here, dey like yuh, too--yuh wouldn't
4025 have to worry where de next drink's comin' from, or wear
4026 doity clothes. [hopefully] Well, don't it sound good to
4027 yuh?

everybody? Sorry I had to leave you for a while.
But there was something I had to get settled--it's all
fixed now.

BESS HOPE [mechanically voicing a hopeless complaint]:
When are you going to do something about this booze,
Hickey--bejeez, we all know you did something to take
the life out of it--it's like drinking dishwater--
we can't pass out--and you promised us peace.

WILLIE/ED/JOE/THE CAPTAIN/THE
GENERAL/JIMMY/MAC/CHUCK/CORA: Yeah!

HICKEY [bursts into resentful exasperation]: For God's
sake, are you still harpin' on that damned nonsense!
You've kept it up all afternoon and night--and you've
got everybody else singing the same crazy tune--I've had
about all I can stand--that's why I phoned-- [He gets
control of himself.] Excuse me, boys and girls--I don't
mean that--I'm just worried about you, when you play
dead on me like this. I was hoping by the time I got
back you'd be like you ought to be! Figured you were
deliberately holding back, while I was around, because
you didn't want to give me the satisfaction of showin'
me I had the right dope--and I did! I know from my own
experience. [exasperatedly] But I've explained that a
million times--by rights you should be happy now,
without a single damned hope or dream left to torment
ya! But here you are, actin' like a lot of stiffs
cheatin' the undertaker! [He looks around accusingly.]
I can't figure it--unless it's just pigheaded
stubbornness. [He breaks--miserably] Hell, you shouldn't
act this way with me--you're my old pals, the only
friends I've got. You know the one thing I want is to
see you all happy before I go--[rousing himself to his
old brisk, master-of-ceremonies self] And there's damned
little time left--I've made a date for two o'clock--
we've got to get busy right away and find out what's
wrong. [There's a long silence. He goes on
exasperatedly.] Can't you appreciate what you've got,
for God's sake--don't you know you're now free to be
yourselves, without having to feel remorse or guilt, or
lie to yourselves about reforming tomorrow? Can't you
see there is no tomorrow, now--you're rid of it forever--
you've killed it--you don't have to care a damn about
anything any more--you've finally got the game of life
licked, don't you see that? [angrily exhorting] Then why

[There's a shocked intake of breath from the gang.]

LARRY [bursts out]: You mad fool, can't you keep your mouth shut! We may hate you for what you've done this time, but we remember the old times, too, when you brought kindness and laughter instead of death! We don't want to know things that'll help send you to the Chair!

PARRITT [with angry scorn]: Ah, shut up, you yellow faker--can't you face anything? Wouldn't I deserve the Chair, too, if I'd-- It's worse if you kill someone and they have to go on living.

HICKEY [disturbed and repulsed]: I wish you'd get rid of that bastard, Larry--I can't have him pretending there's something in common between us--it's what's in your heart that counts. There was love in my heart, not hate.

PARRITT [in angry terror]: You're a liar--I don't hate her--I couldn't! An' it had nothin' to do with her anyway--ask Larry!

LARRY: God damn you, stop shovin' your rotten soul in my lap!

HICKEY [goes on quietly now]: Don't you worry about the Chair, Larry--I know it's still hard for you not to be terrified by death--but when you've made peace with yourself, like I have, you won't give a damn. [Pause] Listen, everybody--I've made up my mind that the only way I can make you realize how happy and carefree you ought to feel, now that you're rid of your pipe dreams, is to show you what a pipe dream did to me and Evelyn. If I tell you about it from the beginning, I think you'll appreciate what I've done for you and why I did it, and how damned grateful you ought to be--instead of hating me. [He begins eagerly.] You see, even when we were kids, Evelyn and me--

BESS HOPE [bursts out, pounding with her glass on the table]: No!--Who the hell cares?--We don't want to hear it--All we want is to get drunk an' pass out--just a little peace!

[All pound with their glasses.]

HICKEY [with wounded hurt]: All right--if that's the way ya feel--I don't want to cram it down your throats--I don't need to tell anyone--I don't feel guilty--I'm only worried about you.

BESS HOPE: What did you do to this booze--that's what we'd like to hear. Bejeez, ya done something--there's no life or kick in it now. Ain't that right, Jimmy?

JIMMY [in a lifeless voice]: Yes--quite right--it was all a stupid lie--my nonsense about tomorrow. Naturally, they would never give me my position back--I would never dream of asking them--it would be hopeless. I didn't resign--I was fired for drunkenness--and that was years ago. I'm much worse now--and it was absurd of me to excuse my drunkenness by pretending it was my wife's adultery that ruined my life. As Hickey guessed, I was a drunkard before that--long before. I discovered early that living frightened me when I was sober. I don't know why I married Marjorie--I can't even remember now if she was pretty--she was a blonde, I think, but I couldn't swear to it--I had some idea of wanting a home perhaps--but, of course, I much preferred the nearest pub. Why Marjorie married me, God knows--she soon found I much preferred drinking all night with my pals to being in bed with her. So, naturally, she was unfaithful. I didn't blame her--I really didn't care--I was glad to be free--even grateful to her, I think, for giving me such a good tragic excuse to drink as much as I damn well pleased.

NARRATOR: He stops like a mechanical doll that has run down. No one gives any sign of having heard him and a pall of heavy silence falls over the gang.

A pair of men quietly approach the bar. One pulls back his coat to show his badge.

DETECTIVE #1: Guy named Hickman here?

ROCKY: Tink I know de names of all de bums in here?

DETECTIVE #2: Listen, you--this is murder--don't be a sap--it was Hickman himself phoned in and said we'd find him here, around two.

ROCKY [dully]: So dat's who he phoned to. [He shrugs his shoulders.] Aw right, if he asked for it. He's dat one dere. And if yuh want a confession all yuh got to do is listen--he'll be tellin' all about it soon--yuh can't stop de bastard talkin'.

HICKEY [suddenly bursts out] I've got to tell ya--your being the way you are now gets my goat--it's all wrong--it puts things in my mind--about myself--it makes me

knew darned well--[A touch of strange bitterness comes into his voice.] No, sir, you couldn't stop Evelyn. Nothing on earth could shake her faith in me--even I couldn't--she was a sucker for a pipe dream. [then quickly] Well, naturally, her family forbid her seein' me--they were one of the town's best, rich for that hick burg, owned the trolley line and lumber company. Strict Methodists, too--they hated my guts--but they couldn't stop Evelyn--she'd sneak notes to me and meet me on the sly. I was getting more restless--the town was getting like a jail--I'd made up my mind to beat it--I knew exactly what I wanted to be by that time--I'd met a lot of salesmen around the hotel and liked 'em--they were always telling jokes--they were sports--they kept movin'--I liked their life--and I knew I could kid people and sell things. The hitch was how to get the railroad fare to the city. I told Mollie, the madame of the cathouse, my problem--she liked me--she laughed and said, "Hell, I'll stake ya, Kid--I'll bet on ya. With that grin of yours and that line of bull, you oughta be able to sell skunks as good ratters!" [He chuckles.] Mollie was all right--I paid her back, the first money I earned--wrote her a letter, I remember, kidding about how I was peddlin' baby carriages and she and the girls had better take advantage. [He chuckles.] But I'm ahead of myself--the night before I left town, I had a date with Evelyn--I got all worked up, she was so pretty and sweet and good. I told her straight, "You better forget about me, Evelyn, for your own sake--I'm no good and never will be--I'm not worthy to wipe your shoes." I broke down and cried--she just said, lookin' pale and scared, "Why, Teddy--don't you still love me?" I said, "Love you? God, Evelyn, I love you more than anything in the world--and I always will!" She said, "Then nothing else matters, Teddy, because nothing but death could stop my loving you--so I'll wait, and when you're ready you send for me, we'll be married. I know I can make you happy, Teddy, and once you're happy you won't want to do any of the bad things you've done any more."--an' I said, "Of course, I won't, Evelyn!"--I meant it, too--I believed it--I loved her so much she could make me believe anything. [He sighs].

BESS HOPE: Get it over, ya long-winded bastard!
 You married her, and you caught her cheatin' with the
 iceman, and you croaked her, and who the hell cares--

what's she to us? All we want is to pass out in peace,
bejeez!

THE CAPTAIN: That's right!

THE GENERAL: What's it to us?

NARRATOR: Bess drinks and the rest follow her
mechanically.

BESS HOPE [complaining with a stupid, nagging
insistence]: No life in the booze! No kick--dishwater--
I'll never pass out, bejeez!

HICKEY [goes on as if there had been no interruption]:
So I beat it to the city. I got a job easy, and it was a
cinch for me to make good--I had the knack--it was like
a game, sizing people up quick, spotting what their pet
pipe dreams were, and then kidding 'em along that line,
pretendin' you believed what they wanted to believe
about themselves--then they liked you, they trusted you,
they wanted to buy somethin' to show their gratitude--
it was fun. But still, all the while I felt guilty, as
if I had no right to be having such a good time away
from Evelyn. In each letter I'd tell her how I missed
her, but I'd keep warning her, too--I'd tell her all my
faults, how I liked my booze, and so on. But there was
no shaking Evelyn's belief in me. After each of her
letters, I'd be as full of faith as she was. So as soon
as I got enough saved, I sent for her and we got
married. Christ, for a while I was happy--and was she
happy! I don't care what anyone says, there was never
two people who loved each other more than Evelyn and me,
not only then but always, in spite of everything I did--

NARRATOR: As he pauses, a look of sadness comes over
his face.

HICKEY: Ya see I never could learn to handle temptation.
I'd want to reform and I'd promise her, and I'd promise
myself, and I'd believe it. I'd say to her "It's the
last time"--and she'd say, "I know it's the last time,
Teddy--you'll never do it again." That's what made it so
hard--that's what made me feel such a rotten skunk--her
always forgiving me. My playin' around with women, for
instance--it was only a harmless good time to me--didn't
mean nothin'--but I'd know what it meant to Evelyn.
So I'd say to myself, never again--but you know how it
is, traveling around--the damned hotel rooms--I'd get

BESS HOPE [tries to ward this off by pounding her glass on the table--with brutal, callous exasperation]: Give us a rest, for the love of Christ! Who the hell cares?

[Most of the gang pound with their glasses.]

HICKEY [simply]: So I killed her.

PARRITT [suddenly gives up and relaxes limply in his chair--in a low voice in which there is a strange exhausted relief] Well, there's no use lying any more--you know, anyway--I didn't give a damn about the money--it was because I hated her.

HICKEY [obliviously]: And then I saw I'd always known that was the only way to give her peace and free her from the misery of loving me. I saw it meant peace for me, too, knowing she was at peace. I felt as though a ton of guilt was lifted off my mind. I remember I stood by the bed and suddenly I had to laugh--I knew Evelyn would forgive me. [laughs] And I heard myself saying to her something I'd always wanted to say: "Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, ya damned bitch!"

NARRATOR: He stops horrified, as if shocked out of a nightmare--as if he couldn't believe what he had just said.

HICKEY: No! I never--!

PARRITT [to Larry--sneeringly]: Yes, that's it--her and the whole Movement pipe dream! Eh, Larry?

HICKEY [bursts into frantic denial]: No--that's a lie--I never said [that]--! Good God, I couldn't have said that--if I did, I'd go insane! Why, I loved Evelyn more than anything in life! [He appeals brokenly to the crowd.] Boys, you're all my old pals--you've known old Hickey for years--you know I'd never [do that to]-- [His eyes fix on Bess.] You've known me longer than anyone, Bess--you know I must have been insane, don't you--old friend?

BESS HOPE [at first with the same defensive callousness] Who the hell cares?

NARRATOR: Then suddenly there is an extraordinary change in her expression--her face lights up, as if she were grasping at some dawning hope in her mind.

BESS HOPE [with a groping eagerness]: Insane? You mean--
you really went insane?

NARRATOR: At the tone in her voice, all the gang stare
at her as if they, too, had caught her thought. Then
they all look to Hickey eagerly.

HICKEY: Yes--or I couldn't have laughed--I couldn't have
said that to her!

NARRATOR: The detective with the badge nods to his
partner.

DETECTIVE #2: That's enough, Hickman. You're under
arrest.

[A pair of handcuffs snap around Hickey's wrists.]

DETECTIVE #1: Come along and spill your guts where we
can get it on paper.

HICKEY: No, wait, officers--you owe me a break--I phoned
and made it easy for you--just a few minutes! [to Bess--
pleadingly] You know I couldn't say that to Evelyn,
don't you, Bess--unless [I was insane]--

HOPE [eagerly]: You've been crazy ever since. Yes--and
everything you've said and done here--

HICKEY: Yes, of course, I've been out of my mind ever
since! All the time I've been here! You saw I was
insane, didn't you?

DETECTIVE #1 [with cynical disgust]: Can it--I've had
enough of your act--save it for the jury. [addressing
the gang, sharply] Listen, yous--don't fall for his
lies--he's startin' to get foxy and thinks he'll plead
insanity--but he won't get away with it.

BESS HOPE [begins to bristle in her old-time manner]:
Bejeez, ya dumb flatfoot--ya got a crust trying to tell
us about Hickey! We've known him for years, and every
one of us noticed he was nutty the minute he showed up
here! Bejeez, if you'd heard all the crazy bull he was
pullin' about bringing us peace--like a bughouse
preacher escaped from an asylum! If you'd seen all the
fool things he made us do! We only did 'em because--
[She hesitates--then defiantly] Because we hoped he'd
come out of it if we kidded him along. [She appeals to
the others.] Ain't that right, gang?

ED: Yes, Bess!

CORA: That's it, Bess.

THE CAPTAIN: That's why!

THE GENERAL: Ve knew he vas crazy!

MAC: Just to humor him!

DETECTIVE #1: A fine bunch of rats--coverin' up for a cold-blooded murderer.

BESS HOPE [stung into recovering all her old fuming truculence]: Is that so? Well, when Saint Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland they swam to New York and joined the Force! Ha! [She cackles insultingly.] Bejeez, we can believe it when we look at you, can't we, gang?

[The gang growls in ascent.]

BESS HOPE [goes on pugnaciously.] You stand up for your rights, Hickey--don't let this smart-aleck copper get funny with ya. If he pulls any rubber-hose tricks, you let me know! I've still got friends at the Hall! Bejeez, I'll have him back in uniform poundin' a beat where the only graft he'll get will be kipin' pencils from the blind!

DETECTIVE #1 [furiously]: Listen, you cockeyed old dame! For a plugged nickel I'd [give you a slap in the]--

NARRATOR: As he controls himself, his partner turns to Hickey and yanks his arm.

DETECTIVE #2: Come on, you!

HICKEY [with a strange mad earnestness]: Oh, I want to go, officer--I can hardly wait now--I should have phoned you from the house right afterwards--it was a waste of time coming here--I've got to explain to Evelyn--but I know she's forgiven me--she knows I was insane. [turning to the officer] No, you've got me all wrong, officer--I want to go to the Chair.

DETECTIVE #1: Bull-crap!

HICKEY [exasperatedly]: God, you're a dumb copper! Ya think I give a damn about life now? Why, you bone-head, I haven't got a single lyin' hope or pipe dream left!

DETECTIVE #2: Get a move on!

HICKEY [as he is walked towards the rear--insistently]:
All I want ya to see is I was out of my mind when I
laughed at her! I was a rotten raving lunatic or I
couldn't have called her a [bitch]--Why, Evelyn was the
only thing on God's earth I ever loved. I'd have killed
myself before I'd ever hurt her!

BESS HOPE [calls after him]: Don't worry, Hickey--they
won't give you the Chair--we'll testify you was crazy--
crazy as a bedbug--won't we, gang?

CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK [yell]: Dat's right!

THE GENERAL [yell]: Dat's right!

WILLIE/ED/MAC [yell]: We won't testify.

THE CAPTAIN/JIMMY [yell]: Don't worry, Hickey.

[From the hall comes the slam of the street door.]

BESS HOPE [with genuine sorrow]: He's gone--the poor
crazy bastard! Bejeez, I need a drink.

NARRATOR: The gang all grab their glasses.

BESS HOPE [hopefully]: Bejeez, maybe it'll have the
old kick, now he's gone.

NARRATOR: She drinks--and they all follow suit.

ROCKY: Yeah, Boss--maybe we can get drunk now.

NARRATOR: They all sit still--with hopeful expectancy--
waiting for the effect of the booze.

LARRY--[his voice full of pain and pity--in a whisper,
aloud to himself] May the Chair bring him peace at last,
the poor tortured bastard!

PARRITT [leans toward him--in a strange low insistent
voice]: Yes, but he isn't the only one who needs peace,
Larry--I can't feel sorry for him--he's lucky--he's
through, now--it's all decided for him. I wish it was
decided for me--I've never been any good at deciding
things--even about selling out. It was the tart the cops
got after me who put it in my mind. You remember what
Mother's like, Larry--she makes all the decisions--she's
always decided what I had to do--she doesn't like anyone
to be free but herself.

NARRATOR: He pauses, as if waiting for Larry to comment
--but he ignores him.

That's kind. I knew you were the only one who could understand my side of it.

NARRATOR: He gets to his feet and turns toward the hall.

HUGO [bursts into his silly giggle]: Hello, leedle Parritt, leedle monkey-face--don't be a fool--buy me a trink!

PARRITT [puts on an act of dramatic bravado--forcing a grin]: Sure, I will, Hugo! Tomorrow! Beneath the willow trees!

NARRATOR: He walks into the hallway with a careless swagger then disappears.

HUGO [after Parritt stupidly]: Stupid fool! Hickey make you crazy, too. [He turns to the oblivious Larry--with a timid eagerness] I'm glad, Larry, zey take that crazy Hickey away to asylum--he makes me have bad dreams--he makes me tell lies about myself--he makes me want to spit on all I have ever dreamed. Yes, I am glad zey take him to asylum--I don't feel I am dying now. He was selling death to me, that crazy salesman. I sink I have a trink now, Larry.

[He pours a drink and gulps it down.]

BESS HOPE [jubilantly]: Bejeez, gang, I'm feeling the old kick--or I'm a liar! It's putting life back in me! Bejeez, if all I've lapped up begins to hit me, I'll be paralyzed before I know it! It was Hickey kept it from us--Bejeez, I know how that sounds, but he was crazy, and he got all of us as bughouse as he was. Bejeez, it does strange things to ya, having to listen day and night to a lunatic's pipe dreams--pretending you believe 'em, to kid him along and doing any crazy thing he wants to humor him. It's dangerous, too--look at me pretending to go for a walk just to keep him quiet. I knew damned well it wasn't the right day for it. The sun was broiling and the streets full of automobiles. Bejeez, I could feel myself getting sunstroke, and an automobile damn near ran over me.

NARRATOR: She appeals to Rocky--afraid of the result, but daring it.

BESS HOPE: Ask Rocky--he was watching. Didn't it, Rocky?

ROCKY [a bit tipsily but earnestly]: De automobile, Boss? Sure, I seen it! Just missed yuh! I thought yuh

was a goner. [Assuming the old kidding tone of the gang, but hesitantly, as if still a little afraid.] On de woid of a honest bahtender!

BESS HOPE [her old self]: Huh! Bar-robber is more like it. You and Chuck ought to have cards in the Burglars' Union!

[The gang laughs eagerly]

BESS HOPE: Bejeez, it's good to hear someone laugh again! All the time that bastard--I mean--poor old Hickey was here, I didn't have the heart--Bejeez, I'm getting drunk and glad of it! [She cackles. Bottle being picked up.] Come on, gang--it's on the house.

[Many drinks are poured.]

BESS HOPE [sentimental]: Poor old Hickey--we mustn't hold him responsible for anything he's done--we'll forget that--and only remember him the way he was before --the kindest, biggest-hearted drummer who ever wore shoe leather.

CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK: Dat's right, Bess!

THE GENERAL: Vhat's all!

JIMMY/THE CAPTAIN/WILLIE: Finest drummer!

ED/MAC/JOE: Best scout!

BESS HOPE: Good luck to you in Matteawan, Hickey! Come on, bottoms up!

[They all drink.]

NARRATOR: At his table--his hands tensely gripping the edge--sits Larry, listening intently.

LARRY [cannot hold back an anguished exclamation]: Christ! Why don't he [jump for god's sake]--!

HUGO [beginning to be drunk again--peers at him]: Vhy don't he what? Don't be a fool--Hickey's gone-- he vas crazy. Have a trink. [then as he receives no reply--with vague uneasiness] What's matter with you? You look funny. What you listen for, Larry?

CORA [tipsily]: Well, I thank Gawd me and Chuck did all we could to humor de poor nut. Jeez, imagine us goin' off like we really meant to git married, when we ain't even picked out a farm yet!

4813 BESS HOPE [looks around her in an ecstasy of bleery
4814 sentimental content]: Bejeez, I'm cockeyed! Bejeez,
4815 you're all cockeyed! Bejeez, we're all all right!
4816 Let's have another!

4817 [They pour out drinks.]

4818 HUGO [reiterates stupidly]: Vhat's matter, Larry--vhy
4819 you keep eyes shut--you look dead--vhat you listen for?

4820 NARRATOR: Larry doesn't answer. Or open his eyes.
4821 Suddenly, Hugo bolts up and backs away from the table.

4822 HUGO [mumbling with frightened anger]: Crazy fool--you
4823 is crazy like Hickey--you give me bad dreams, too.

4824 ROCKY [greet's him with boisterous affection]:
4825 Hello, dere, Hugo--welcome to de party!

4826 BESS HOPE: Yes, bejeez, Hugo--sit down--have a drink!
4827 Have ten drinks, bejeez!

4828 HUGO [giving his familiar giggle]: Hello, leedle Bess!
4829 Hello, nice, leedle, funny monkey-faces! [warming up,
4830 changes abruptly to his usual declamatory denunciation]
4831 Gottamned stupid bourgeois! Soon comes the Day of
4832 Judgment!

4833 THE CAPTAIN [good-naturedly derisive]: Sit down!

4834 CHUCK [good-naturedly derisive]: Can it!

4835 HUGO [giggling good-naturedly]: Give me ten trinks,
4836 Bess--don't be a fool.

4837 [The gang laughs.]

4838 NARRATOR: Everyone turns towards the rear as Margie and
4839 Pearl appear, drunk and disheveled.

4840 MARGIE [defensively truculent]: Make way for two good
4841 whores!

4842 PEARL: Yeah! And we want a drink quick!

4843 MARGIE: Shake de lead outa your pants, Pimp! A little
4844 soivice!

4845 ROCKY [face grinning welcome]: Well, look who's here!
4846 [He goes to them with open arms.] Hello, dere,
4847 Sweethearts! Jeez, I was beginnin' to worry about yuh,
4848 honest!

NARRATOR: He tries to embrace them but they push his arms away.

PEARL [with amazed suspicion]: What kind of a gag is dis?

BESS HOPE [calls to them warmly]: Come and join the party! Bejeez, I'm glad to see ya!

NARRATOR: The girls exchange a bewildered glance, taking in the party atmosphere.

MARGIE: Jeez, what's come off here?

PEARL: Where's dat louse, Hickey?

ROCKY: De cops got him--he gone crazy and croaked his wife.

MARGIE/PEARL [with more relief than horror]: Jeez!

ROCKY: He'll get Matteawan--but he ain't responsible. What he pulled don't mean nuttin'. So forget dat whore stuff--I'll knock de block off anyone calls you whores! I'll fill de bastard fulla lead--yuh're tarts, and what de hell of it? Yuh're as good as anyone--so forget it, see?

NARRATOR: They let him put his arms around them now--smiling and exchanging maternal glances.

MARGIE [with a wink]: Our little bahtender, ain't he, Poil?

PEARL: Yeah, and a cute little Ginny at dat!

MARGIE/PEARL [laugh]:

MARGIE: And is he stinko!

PEARL: Stinko is right. But he ain't got nuttin' on us. Jeez, Rocky, did we have some kinda time at Coney!

BESS HOPE: Bejeez, sit down, you two--welcome home--have a drink--have ten drinks, bejeez! [a host whose party is a huge success--rambling on happily.] Bejeez, this is all right--we'll make this my birthday party, and forget the other--we'll get paralyzed! But who's missing? Where's the Old Wise Guy? Where's Larry?

ROCKY: Over by de window, Boss. Jeez, he's got his eyes shut. De old bastard's asleep. To hell wid him. Let's have a drink.

LARRY [arguing to himself in a shaken, tortured whisper]: It's the only way out for him! For the peace of all concerned, like Hickey said! [snapping] God damn his yellow soul--if he doesn't soon, I'll go up and throw him off!--like a dog with its guts ripped out you'd put down out of misery!

NARRATOR: He is slowly rising from his chair when from outside the window comes the sound of something hurtling down, followed by a muffled, crunching thud.

LARRY [gasps then shudders]:

NARRATOR: Dropping back in his chair, Larry buries his face in his hands.

BESS HOPE [wonderingly]: What the hell was that?

ROCKY: Aw, nuttin'. Someting fell off de fire escape-- a mattress, I'll bet. Some of dese bums've been sleepin' on de fire escapes.

BESS HOPE [an excuse to beef--testily]: They've got to cut it out! Bejeez, this ain't a fresh-air sanitorium-- mattresses cost money.

ED: Now don't start crabbin', Bess. Let's drink up.

NARRATOR: Bess grabs her glass, and they all drink.

LARRY [in a whisper of horrified pity]: Poor devil! [A long-forgotten faith returns to him for a moment and he mumbles] God rest his soul in peace. [

NARRATOR: Larry finally opens his eyes.

LARRY [with bitter self-derision]: Ah, the damned pity-- the wrong kind, like Hickey said! By God, there's no hope--life's too much for me--I'll be a weak pitying fool looking at both sides of everything till the day I die! [with an intense bitter sincerity] May that day come soon!

NARRATOR: He pauses startled. Then--with a sardonic grin...

LARRY: By God, I'm the only real convert to death Hickey made here. From the bottom of my coward's heart, I mean that now!

4922 BESS HOPE [calls effusively] Hey there, Larry! Come over
4923 and get paralyzed! What the hell you doin', just sittin'
4924 there?

4925 NARRATOR: But Larry doesn't reply. Almost immediately,
4926 she forgets him and turns back to the gang.

4927 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, let's sing! Let's celebrate. It's my
4928 birthday party! Bejeez, I'm oreyeyed!

4929 HUGO [singing]: Dansons la Carmagnole! Vive le son! Vive
4930 le son! Dansons la Carmagnole! Vive le son des canons!

4931 [The gang howls derisively.]

4932 HUGO: Capitalist svine! Stupid bourgeois monkeys!
4933 [declaiming] "The days grow hot, O Babylon!"

4934 WILLIE/ED/JOE/THE CAPTAIN/THE
4935 GENERAL/JIMMY/MAC/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK [taking it up]:
4936 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!

4937 [They pound their glasses on the table.]

4938 NARRATOR: In his chair--staring straight ahead--
4939 oblivious to all the racket, sits Larry.

4940 [The gang roars with boisterous laughter.]

4941 HUGO [giggles]:

4942 THE END