

BY MOUTH | Martin Garrison, Producer
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ROLE: **HICKEY**

HICKEY (Theodore Hickman): A beloved traveling salesman in his 50's with a salesman's gift of gab who visits the bar once a year and buys everyone drinks and tells jokes. This time, though, he is changed; he no longer drinks and says he is committed to helping everyone realize what he realized - one must give up their pipe dreams to truly have peace, free from delusion. Although he's still friendly, the gang sours on his advice and urging. Eventually he reveals he killed his wife to free her from the pain of loving him.

3 takes + pickups = \$2,500.

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 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 HICKEY LINES 1228-1270

HICKEY LINES BEGIN ON NEXT PAGE

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.

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

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

WILLIE: To Hickey!

ED: Hickey!

JOE: To you, suh!

MAC: Bottoms up!

JIMMY: To your health!

THE CAPTAIN: Cheers!

THE GENERAL: Vat's right!

HICKEY: Drink hearty, boys and girls!

NARRATOR: All drink but Hickey.

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

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

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

[The gang laughs.]

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

NARRATOR: They all stare a bit uneasily.

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

HICKEY [grinning]: Oh, hell--you don't think I'd come 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.]D

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.

JIMMY: I don't understand you--I admit I've foolishly delayed, but as it happens, I'd just made up my mind that as soon as I could get straightened out--

HICKEY: Fine--that's the spirit! And I'm gonna help you. You've been damned kind to me, Jimmy, and I wanna prove how grateful I am. When it's all over and you don't have to beat yourself up any more, you'll be grateful to me, too! [pause] And all the rest of you are in the same boat, one way or another.

LARRY: By God, you've hit the nail on the head, Hickey! This dump is the Palace of Pipe Dreams!

HICKEY [grins, kidding] Well, well! The Old Grandstand Foolosopher speaks! You think you're the big exception, eh? Life don't mean a damn to you any more, does it--you're retired from the circus--you're just waiting impatiently for the end--the good, Long Sleep! [chuckles] Well I think a lot of you, Larry, you old bastard--I'll try and make an honest man of you, too!

LARRY [stung]: What the devil are you hinting at, anyway?

HICKEY: You don't have to ask me--do ya?--a wise old guy like you?

PARRITT [watching Larry's face with satisfaction]: He's got your number all right, Larry! [to Hickey] That's the stuff, Hickey--show the old faker up! He's got no right to sneak out of everything.

HICKEY: Hello. A stranger in our midst. I didn't notice you before, Brother.

PARRITT: I'm an old friend of Larry's.

NARRATOR: Parritt sees Hickey sizing him up.

PARRITT [defensively]: Well--what are you staring at?

HICKEY: No offense, Brother, I was just trying to figure-- Haven't we met before someplace?

PARRITT [reassured]: No. First time I've ever been East.

HICKEY: No, you're right--that's not it. In my game, to be good at it, you teach yourself never to forget a name or a face--but still--I know I recognized something about you.

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

ED: I'll miss the Doc. I bet he's standing on a street corner in hell right now, telling those damned suckers that there's nothin' like snake oil for a bad burn.

HICKEY [raising his head a little and forcing his eyes open]: That's the spirit! All I want is to see you happy--

NARRATOR: As Hickey slips back into sleep, they all stare at him--their faces puzzled, resentful, uneasy.

Later on, around midnight, the back room has been decorated for a party.

Four tables have been pushed together to form an improvised banquet table, which is covered with old table cloths and laid with glasses, plates and utensils before each chair. Bottles of whiskey have been placed at the reach of any sitter--and an old upright piano with stool has been moved in.

On a separate small table is a birthday cake with six candles, and several wrapped presents.

The floor's been swept clean of sawdust and the light fixtures have been adorned with red ribbon.

Chuck, Rocky and the three girls have dressed up for the occasion. Cora arranges flowers in a large schooner glass on top of the piano. Chuck, who has turned so he can watch Cora, sits in a chair at the banquet table.

A few chairs away sits Larry, staring straight ahead, a drink of whiskey before him, deep in disturbed thought.

Next to him, passed out, is Hugo.

Rocky stands by Margie and Pearl as they arrange the cake and presents.

Though all of the gang are trying to act in the spirit of the occasion, there's something forced about their manner, an undercurrent of nervous irritation and preoccupation.

CORA [standing back from piano to regard the effect of her flower arrangement]: How's dat, Kid?

CHUCK:[grumpily]: What de hell do I know about flowers?

HICKEY [booms with rising volume] Well! Well!! Well!!!
Here I am in the nick o' time--give me a hand with these
bundles, somebody.

NARRATOR: Margie and Pearl start taking them and putting
them on the table. Now that Hickey's here, what Cora
said is true: they can't help liking and forgiving him.

MARGIE: Jeez, Hickey, yuh scared me half ta death,
sneakin' in like dat.

HICKEY: You were all so busy drinking in words of wisdom
from the Old Wise Guy here, you couldn't hear anything
else. [He grins at Larry.] From what I heard, Larry,
you're not so good at playin' detective--ya got me all
wrong--I'm not afraid of anything now--not even myself.
You better stick to the part of Old Cemetery, the
Barker for the Big Sleep--that is, if you can still
let yourself get away with it! [chuckles]

CORA [giggles]: Old Cemetery--that's him--we'll have to
call him dat.

HICKEY [with a simple persuasive earnestness]:
Startin' to do a lot of puzzling about me, aren't you,
Larry? But that won't help you--you've got to think of
yourself. I can't give you my peace--you've got to
find your own. All I can do is help you and the
rest of the gang by showin' ya the way to find it.

NARRATOR: He pauses, and for a moment they stare at him
with resentful uneasiness.

ROCKY [breaks the spell]: Aw, hire a church!

HICKEY [placatingly]: All right--all right--don't get
sore, boys and girls. I guess that did sound too much
like a lousy preacher--let's forget it and get busy with
the party.

NARRATOR: The gang looks relieved.

CHUCK: Is dose bundles grub, Hickey--ya bought enough to
feed an army.

HICKEY [with boyish excitement]: Can never be too much!
I want this to be the biggest birthday Bess's ever had.
You and Rocky go in the hall and get the big surprise--
my arms are busted from luggin' it.

NARRATOR: Catching his excitement, Chuck and Rocky go out, grinning expectantly. The girls gather around Hickey, full of thrilled curiosity.

PEARL: Jeez, yuh got us all heated up--what is it?

HICKEY: I got it as a treat for the three of ya more than anyone. I thought to myself: I'll bet this is what'll please those whores more than anything.

NARRATOR: Before they have a chance to be angry...

HICKEY [affectionately]: I said to myself: I don't care how much it costs, they're worth it--they're the best little scouts in the world, and they've been damned kind to me when I was down and out--nothing's too good for them. [earnestly] I mean every word of that, too--and then some! [jubilantly]: Look--here it comes!

NARRATOR: Chuck and Rocky enter carrying a huge wicker basket full of champagne.

PEARL [with childish excitement]: Look Mahgie--it's dat wine wid bubbles! Jeez, Hickey, you is a sport!

NARRATOR: She gives him a hug, forgetting all animosity, as do the other girls.

MARGIE: I never been soused on dis kinda wine--let's get stinko, Poil.

PEARL: You betcha--de bot' of us!

NARRATOR: A holiday spirit has seized them all. Even Joe stands up to grin at the champagne--and Hugo raises his head to blink at it.

JOE: You sure is hittin' de high spots, Hickey. [boastfully] Man, when I runs my gamblin' joint, I'm gonna drink dat old bubbly water in steins! [He stops guiltily--then with defiance] I's goin' to drink it dat way, too, Hickey--soon's I make my stake! And dat ain't no pipe dream, neider!

ROCKY: What'll we drink it outa--we ain't got no wine glasses.

HICKEY [enthusiastically]: Joe has the right idea--schooners! That's the spirit for Bess's birthday!

HUGO [with his silly giggle]: Ve vill trink vine beneath the villow trees!

HICKEY [grins at him]: That's the spirit, Brother--and let the lousy slaves drink vinegar!

HUGO [mutters]: Gottamned liar!

NARRATOR: He puts his head back on his arms and closes his eyes--but this time his customary pass-out looks like hiding.

LARRY [in a low tone of anger]: Leave Hugo be! He rotted ten years in prison for his faith--he's earned his dream. Have you no decency or pity?

HICKEY [quizzically]: Hello, what's this--I thought you were in the grandstand.

LARRY [dismissive]: Huh.

HICKEY [with simple earnestness]: Listen--Larry--you're gettin' me all wrong. Hell ya ought to know me better--I've always been the best-natured slob in the world--of course I have pity. But now I've seen the light, it isn't my old kind of pity--the kind yours is--the kind that lets itself off easy by encouraging some poor guy to go on kidding himself with a lie--the kind that leaves the poor slob worse off because it makes him feel guiltier than ever--so his lying hopes nag at him and eat at him until he's a rotten skunk in his own eyes. I know all about that kind of pity. I've had a bellyful of it in my time, and it's all wrong! [with a salesman's persuasiveness] No, sir, the kind of pity I feel now is the kind that will really save the poor guy, make him content with what he is and quit battling himself--so he can find peace for the rest of his life. Oh, I know how you resent the way I have to show you up to yourself--I don't blame ya--I know from my own experience it's bitter medicine, facin' yourself in the mirror with the old false whiskers off--but you'll forget that, once you're cured--you'll be grateful--when all at once you find you're able to admit, without shame, that all the grandstand foolosopher bunk and the waiting for the Big Sleep stuff is a pipe dream. You'll say to yourself: I'm just an old man who's scared of life--and even more scared of dyin'--so I'm stayin' drunk and hanging on to life at any price--and what of it? Then you'll know what real peace means, Larry, because you won't be scared of life or death any more--you simply won't give a damn. Any more than I do!

1898 LARRY: By God, I'm starting to think you've gone mad!
1899 [with a rush of anger] You're a liar!

1900 HICKEY [injured]: Why that's no way to talk to an old
1901 pal who's trying to help ya. Hell if you really wanted
1902 to die, you'd just hop off your fire escape, wouldn't
1903 ya? And if you really were in the grandstand, you
1904 wouldn't be showin' pity to everyone. Oh, I know the
1905 truth is tough at first--it was for me. All I ask is
1906 for you ta give it a chance. I'll absolutely guarantee--
1907 Hell, Larry, I'm no fool--ya think I'd deliberately
1908 set out to get under everyone's skin and put myself in
1909 dutch with my old pals--if I wasn't certain, from my own
1910 experience, it would mean happiness in the end for all
1911 of you? [long pause] As for my being bughouse--hell,
1912 I'm too damned sane--I can size up guys--and turn 'em
1913 inside out--better than I ever could. Even where they're
1914 strangers like that Parritt kid. He's licked, Larry.
1915 I think there's only one possible way out you can
1916 help him take. That is, if you have the right kind of
1917 pity for him.

1918 LARRY [uneasily]: What do you mean? [attempting
1919 indifference] I'm not advising him. Except to leave me
1920 out of his troubles. He's nothing to me.

1921 HICKEY [shakes his head]: I think you'll find he won't
1922 agree. He'll keep after you until he makes you help him.
1923 Because he has to be punished--so he can forgive
1924 himself. He's lost all his guts--he can't manage it
1925 alone--you're the only one he can turn to.

1926 LARRY: For the love of God, mind your own business!
1927 [with forced scorn] A lot you know about him--he's
1928 hardly spoken to you!

1929 HICKEY: No, that's right--but I do know a lot about him
1930 just the same. I've had hell inside me--I can spot it in
1931 others. [frowning] Maybe that's what gives me the
1932 feeling there's something familiar about him, something
1933 between us. [He shakes his head.] No, it's more than
1934 that--I can't figure it. Tell me about him. He's not
1935 married, is he?

1936 LARRY: No.

1937 HICKEY: But he's mixed up with some woman. I don't mean
1938 tarts--I mean the real love stuff that crucifies you.

1939 LARRY [encouraging him along this line]: Maybe you're
1940 right--I wouldn't be surprised.

1941 HICKEY: I see--you think I'm on the wrong track and
1942 you're glad I am. Because then I won't suspect whatever
1943 he did is about the Great Cause. That's another lie you
1944 tell yourself, Larry, that the Cause means nothing to
1945 you any more.

1946 LARRY [blows thru lips in dismissal]:

1947 HICKEY: But that isn't what's got him stopped---it's
1948 what's behind that. And it's a woman--I recognize the
1949 symptoms.

1950 LARRY [sneers]: And you're the one who's never wrong!
1951 Don't be a damned fool--his trouble is he was brought up
1952 a devout believer in the Movement--and now he's lost his
1953 faith--it's a shock, but he's young and he'll soon find
1954 another dream just as good. [sardonically] Or as bad.

1955 HICKEY: All right, I'll let it go at that. But I'm glad
1956 he's here because he'll help me make you wake up to
1957 yourself. I don't even like the guy, or the feeling
1958 there's anything between us--but you'll find I'm right
1959 just the same, when you two get to the final showdown.

1960 LARRY: There'll be no showdown! I don't give a tinker's
1961 damn [what you say]--

1962 HICKEY: Sticking to the old grandstand, eh? Well, I knew
1963 you'd be the toughest to convince--of all the gang. And
1964 you're the one I most want to help.

1965 NARRATOR: He puts an arm around Larry's shoulder.

1966 HICKEY: I've always liked you a lot, you old bastard!

1967 NARRATOR: Getting up, he reverts to his bustling party
1968 self--glancing at his watch.

1969 HICKEY: Well, well, not much time before twelve--let's
1970 get busy, boys and girls. [Pause] Cake all set--good.
1971 And my presents, and yours girls--and Chuck's and
1972 Rocky's--fine. Bess'll certainly be touched by your
1973 thought of her. [back to the girls.] You go in the bar,
1974 Pearl and Margie, and get the grub ready so it can be
1975 brought right in. There'll be some drinking and toasts
1976 first, of course--we'll use the champagne for that, so
1977 get it all set. I'll go upstairs and root everybody out.
1978 Bess'll be the last--I'll come back with her. Somebody

light the candles on the cake when you hear us coming,
and Cora you start playing Bess's favorite song. Hustle
now, everybody--we want this to come off in stye.

CORA: Jeez, I ain't laid my mits on a box in Gawd knows
when.

[She begins to play "The Sunshine of Paradise Alley"]

LARRY [suddenly laughs--in his comically intense, crazy
tone] By God, it's the second feast of Belshazzar, with
Hickey doing the writing on the wall!

CORA [while playing]: Aw, shut up, Old Cemetery--always
beefin'!

NARRATOR: Willie emerges from the hall in a terrible
state--his face pasty, his eyes sick and haunted.

CORA: If it ain't Prince Willie! [then kindly] Gee, kid,
yuh look sick--git a coupla shots in yuh.

WILLIE [tensely]: No, thanks--not now--I'm tapering off.

NARRATOR: He sits down next to Larry.

CORA [astonished]: What d'yuh know--he means it!

WILLIE [confidentially--in a low shaken voice] It's been
hell up in that damned room, Larry! The things I've
imagined! [He shudders.] I thought I'd go crazy. [with
pathetic boastful pride] But I've got it beat now. By
tomorrow morning I'll be on the wagon. I'll get back my
clothes the first thing. Hickey's loaning me the money.
I'm going to do what I've always said--go to the D.A.'s
office. He was a good friend of my Old Man's. He was
only assistant, then. He was in on the graft, but my Old
Man never squealed on him. So he certainly owes it to me
to give me a chance. And he knows I was a brilliant
law student. [self-reassuringly] Oh, I know I can make
good, now I'm getting off the booze forever. [moved]
I owe a lot to Hickey--he's made me wake up to myself--
see what a fool-- It wasn't nice to face but-- [with
bitter resentment] It isn't what he says--it's what you
feel behind--what he hints--Christ, you'd think all I
really wanted to do with my life was sit here and stay
drunk. [with hatred] I'll show him!

LARRY--[masking pity behind a sardonic tone] If you want
my advice, you'll put the nearest bottle to your mouth
until you don't give a damn about Hickey!

2296 like, I can't spend my life sitting here with you,
 2297 ruining my stomach with rotgut. I'm tapering off, and in
 2298 the morning I'll be fresh as a daisy. I'll have me a
 2299 private chat with the Commissioner. [with forced
 2300 enthusiasm] Man alive, from what the boys tell me,
 2301 there's sugar galore these days, and I'll soon be
 2302 ridin' around in a big red automobile--

2303 ED [derisively--in a Chinese accent]: One Lung Hop put
 2304 fresh peanut oil in lamp and cook Lieutenant nice fine
 2305 poppy! It Lieutenant night off!

2306 MAC [stung--pulls back a fist threateningly]:
 2307 One more crack like that and I'll [knock your]--!

2308 ED [putting up his fists]: Yeah? You start it--!

2309 ROCKY: Hey--are you guys nuts--it's de Boss's boithday
 2310 party--sit down and behave!

2311 ED [grumpily]: All right--only tell him to lay off me.

2312 MAC [grumpily]: And tell him to lay off me.

2313 NARRATOR: Hickey bursts in from the hall, excited.

2314 HICKEY: Everything all set? Fine--half a minute to go--
 2315 Bess's starting down with Jimmy. I had a hard time
 2316 getting them to move--they'd rather stay hiding up
 2317 there, kidding each other along. [He chuckles.]
 2318 Bess don't even wanna remember it's her birthday now!
 2319 [There's a noise from the stairs.] Here they come!
 2320 [urgently] Light the candles! Get ready to play, Cora!
 2321 Stand up, everybody! Get that champagne ready, boys!

2322 NARRATOR: Rocky and Chuck go behind the bar. Margie and
 2323 Pearl light the candles on the cake. Cora puts her hands
 2324 over the piano keys. Everybody at the table stands up--
 2325 Hugo the last, suddenly coming to and scrambling to his
 2326 feet. Bess and Jimmy appear from the hall, and Hickey
 2327 looks up from his watch.

2328 HICKEY: On the dot--it's twelve! [like a cheerleader]
 2329 Come on now, everybody:

2330 HICKEY/WILLIE/PEARL/MAGGIE/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK/JOE/
 2331 THE CAPTAIN/THE GENERAL [spiritless except Hickey]:
 2332 Happy Birthday, Bess!

2333 [Cora begins playing.]

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 you
2402 know I didn't mean it--it's that lousy drummer riding me
2403 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!

2449 HICKEY [ignoring this--with a kidding grin]: I'll bet
 2450 when you admit the truth to yourself, you'll confess you
 2451 were pretty sick of her hatin' you for getting' drunk.
 2452 I'll bet you were really damned relieved when she gave
 2453 ya such a good excuse. [pause] I know how it is, Jimmy.
 2454 [then losing his confidence and becoming confused]
 2455 I know how it is...

2456 LARRY [seizing on this with vindictive relish]:
 2457 Ha! So that's what happened to you, is it? Your iceman
 2458 joke finally came home to roost. [He grins tauntingly.]
 2459 You should have remembered there's truth in the old
 2460 saying you'd better look out what you call because in
 2461 the end it comes to you!

2462 HICKEY--[himself again--grins to Larry kiddingly]
 2463 Is that a fact. Well, well! Then you'd better watch out
 2464 how you keep calling for that Big Sleep! [abruptly
 2465 changing back to his jovial, master-of-ceremonies self]
 2466 But what are we waitin' for, boys and girls? Let's start
 2467 the party rollin'! [He shouts to the bar] Hey Chuck and
 2468 Rocky--bring on the big surprise! Bess, you sit at the
 2469 head of the table, here. Come on, girls, sit down.

2470 ROCKY [with forced cheeriness]: Real champagne, bums!
 2471 Cheer up! What is dis, a funeral? Jeez, mixin' champagne
 2472 wid Bess's redeye'll knock yuh paralyzed--ain't yuh
 2473 never satisfied?

2474 NARRATOR: After he and Chuck finish filling up the
 2475 schooners, they grab the last two themselves and
 2476 sit down in the remaining chairs. As they do, Hickey
 2477 rises--schooner in hand.

2478 HICKEY: This time I'm going to drink with you all,
 2479 Larry--to prove I'm not teetotal because I'm afraid
 2480 booze would make me spill my secrets, as you think.
 2481 [brief pause] I don't need booze or anything else any
 2482 more but I wanna be sociable and propose a toast in
 2483 honor of our good friend, Bess, and drink it with ya.
 2484 [pause] Wake up our demon bomb-tosser, Chuck--we don't
 2485 want corpses at this feast.

2486 CHUCK [gives Hugo a shake]: Hey, Hugo, come up for air--
 2487 don't yuh see de champagne?

2488 HUGO [giggling]: Ve will eat birthday cake and trink
 2489 champagner beneath the willow tree!

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

good! I had to get ya to help me--and I saw I couldn't do it alone--not in the time I had. I knew when I came here I wouldn't be able to stay long--I'm leavin' on a trip, see--so I knew I'd have to hustle and use every means I could. [with a joking boastfulness] Why if I had enough time I'd sell my line of salvation to each of ya personally--like in the old days, when I traveled house to house to convince some dame, who was sicking the dog on me, her house wouldn't be properly furnished unless she bought another washer. And I could do it, all right, hell, I know every one of ya, inside and out, by heart. I may've been drunk when I've been here before, but old Hickey could never be so drunk he couldn't see through people. I mean--everyone except himself. And, finally, he had to see through himself, too.

NARRATOR: As he pauses, they stare at him--bitter, uneasy but riveted.

HICKEY [deeply earnest]: Now, I swear I'd never act like I have if I wasn't absolutely sure it'll be worth it to you in the end, after you're rid of the damned guilt that makes you pretend you're something you're not--and the remorse that nags at you and makes you hide behind lousy pipe dreams about tomorrow. You'll be in a today where there is no yesterday or tomorrow to worry you. You won't give a damn what you are any more. I wouldn't say this unless I knew. Because I've got it-- here--now--right in front of you--you can see it! You remember how I used to be! Even with two quarts of rotgut under my belt--joking and singing "Sweet Adeline" I still felt like a rotten skunk. But you can see I don't give a damn about anything now. And I promise you, by the time this day is done, I'll have every one of you feeling the same way! [long pause] Well...I guess that'll be it from me, boys and girls--for the present. So let's get on with the party, eh?

LARRY [sharply]: Wait! [insistently--with a sneer] I think it would help us poor pipe-dreaming sinners if you explained what happened that converted you to this great peace you've found. [with deliberate taunting] I notice you didn't deny it when I asked about the iceman. Did this great revelation of the evil habit of dreaming about tomorrow come to ya after you found your wife was sick of ya?

WILLIE [taunting sneer]: Ah, ha!

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.

2652 HICKEY [quietly]: I'm sorry to tell you, friends--
2653 my dearly beloved wife Evelyn is dead.

2654 [A quick intake of breath is heard from the gang.]

2655 LARRY [aloud to himself with a superstitious shrinking]:
2656 By God, I felt the touch of death on him!

2657 NARRATOR: Then suddenly he's ashamed of himself.

2658 LARRY [stammers]: Forgive me, Hickey--I'd like to cut my
2659 dirty tongue out!

2660 CORA: Sorry, Hickey.

2661 MARGIE: We're sorry, Hickey.

2662 PEARL: Yeah.

2663 HICKEY [in a kindly, reassuring tone]: Now look here,
2664 everybody--don't let this be a wet blanket on Bess's
2665 party. There's no reason-- You're getting me all wrong
2666 see--I don't feel any grief.

2667 NARRATOR: They gaze at him startled.

2668 HICKEY [with convincing sincerity]: No, I'm glad--for
2669 her sake. Because she's at peace--she's rid of me at
2670 last. Hell, I don't have to tell you--you all know what
2671 I was like. You can imagine what she went through,
2672 married to a no-good cheater and drunk like I was. And
2673 there was no way out of it for her. Because she loved
2674 me. But now she's at peace like she always longed to be.
2675 So why should I feel sad? She wouldn't want me to feel
2676 sad. Why, all Evelyn ever wanted out of life was to make
2677 me happy.

2678 [Significant Musical Interlude]

2679 NARRATOR: It's now the morning of Bess's birthday.

2680 Joe moves around, a box of sawdust under his arm--
2681 throwing it onto the floor. His manner is sullen, his
2682 face gloomy. When he runs out of sawdust, he goes behind
2683 the counter and begins cutting loaves of bread.

2684 Behind the bar, Rocky washes glasses--looking sleepy,
2685 irritable and worried.

2686 At a table without a drink, deep in thought, sits Larry.
2687 Next to him, Hugo's asleep on his arms, a whiskey glass
2688 beside his hand.

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 damndest 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.

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

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

HICKEY: That's the stuff, Mac.

ED: Good-bye, Bess.

NARRATOR: Ed goes out, turning right.

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

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

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

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

BESS HOPE [dully]: Good luck, Willie.

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

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

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

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

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

NARRATOR: He tries to throw the drink in Hickey's face, but his aim is poor and it lands on Hickey's coat. 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.

BESS HOPE: Well, so long--

NARRATOR: She stops and looks back--frightened.

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

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

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

NARRATOR: Suddenly she drops her hand from the door.

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

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

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

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

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

NARRATOR: She pushes the door open and strides blindly out into the street.

ROCKY [in amazement]: Jeez, she made it--I'd a given yuh fifty to one she'd never [go out]--

NARRATOR: He moves to the end of the bar to look out the window.

ROCKY [disgustedly]: Aw, she's stopped. I'll bet yuh she's comin' back.

HICKEY: Of course, she's coming back--so are all the others. By tonight they'll all be here again--that's the whole point.

ROCKY [excitedly]: No, she ain't neider--she's gone to de coib--she's lookin' up and down--scared stiff of automobiles--jeez, dey ain't more'n two an hour comes down dis street, de old scaredy pants!

NARRATOR: He watches as if it were a race he had bet on, oblivious to what happens in the bar.

LARRY [turns on Hickey with bitter defiance]: And now it's my turn, I suppose. What am I to do to achieve this blessed peace of yours?

HICKEY [grins at him]: Why, just stop lying to yourself, Larry.

LARRY: So when I say I'm finished with life--an' I'm tired of watching the stupid greed of the human circus--and that I'll welcome closing my eyes in the long sleep of death--you think that's a coward's lie?

HICKEY [chuckling]: What do you think, Larry?

LARRY [with increasing bitter intensity, as if he were fighting with himself more than Hickey]: I'm afraid to live, am I?--and even more afraid to die! So I sit here, with my pride drowned on the bottom of a bottle, keeping drunk so I won't see myself shaking in my boots with fright, or hear myself whining and praying: Dear Lord, let me live just a little longer at any price--if it's only for a few days more, or a few hours even, have mercy, Almighty God, and let me clutch greedily to my yellow heart this sweet treasure, this jewel beyond price--the dirty, stinkin' bit of withered old flesh which is my beautiful little life! [He laughs with a sneering, vindictive self-loathing, contempt and hatred.

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]

3677 But the slaves must ice it properly! [with guttural
3678 rage] Gottamned Hickey--peddler pimp for nouveau-riche
3679 capitalism! Vhen I lead the jackass mob to the sack of
3680 Babylon, I vill make them hang him to a lamppost the
3681 first one!

3682 BESS HOPE [spiritlessly]: That's right an' I'll help ya
3683 pull on the rope! Have a drink, Hugo.

3684 HUGO [frightened]: No, sank you--I am too trunk now--
3685 I hear myself say crazy sings. Do not listen, please--
3686 Larry vill tell you I haf never been so crazy trunk--
3687 I must sleep it off.

3688 NARRATOR: Starting to put his head on his arms, he stops
3689 and stares at Bess with growing uneasiness.

3690 HUGO: What's matter, Bess--you look funny--you look
3691 dead--vhat's happened? I don't know you--listen, I feel
3692 I am dying, too--because I am so crazy trunk--it is very
3693 necessary I sleep--but I can't sleep here vith you--
3694 you look dead.

3695 NARRATOR: In a panic, Hugo scrambles to his feet.
3696 Turning his back on Bess, he plops down at the next
3697 table--thrusting down his head on his arms like an
3698 ostrich in the sand.

3699 LARRY [to Hickey with bitter condemnation]: Another one
3700 who's begun to enjoy your peace!

3701 HICKEY: Oh, I know it's tough on him right now, same as
3702 it is on Bess--but that's only the first shock--
3703 I promise you they'll both be fine.

3704 LARRY: And you believe that! I see you do--you mad fool!

3705 HICKEY: Of course I believe it! I tell you I know from
3706 my own experience!

3707 BESS HOPE [spiritlessly]: Close that big clam o' yours,
3708 Hickey--you're a worse gabber than that nagging asshole
3709 Harry was.

3710 [She drinks her drink mechanically and pours another.]

3711 ROCKY [in amazement]: Jeez, did yuh hear dat?

3712 BESS HOPE [dully]: What's wrong with this booze--there's
3713 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--

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Brief musical interlude]

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

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

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

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

LARRY [with sardonic pity]: No, it doesn't sound good,
Rocky--I mean, the peace Hickey's brought ya. It isn't
contented enough, if you have to make everyone else a
pimp, too.

ROCKY [pushes his chair back and gets up, grumbling]:
I'm a sap to waste time on yuh--a stew bum is a stew bum
and yuh can't change him. [Pauses] But like I was sayin'
to Chuck--if anyone asks, yuh don't know nuttin',
get me--yuh never even hoid he had a wife. [His voice
hardens.] Jeez, we all oughta git drunk and stage a
celebration when dat bastard goes to de Chair.

LARRY [vindictively]: By God, I'll celebrate with you
and drink long life to him in hell! [then guiltily and
pityingly] No, the poor mad devil--[then with angry
self-contempt] Ah, pity again--the wrong kind! He'll
welcome the Chair!

PARRITT [contemptuously]: And what are you so damned
scared o' death for--I don't want your lousy pity.

ROCKY: Christ, I hope he don't come back--we don't know
nuttin' now--we're on'y guessin'--but if de bastard
keeps on talkin'--

LARRY [grimly]: He'll come back--he'll keep on talkin'--
he's got ta--he's lost his confidence that the peace
he's sold us is the real McCoy, and it's made him uneasy
about his own. He'll have to prove it to us--

NARRATOR: Suddenly Hickey can be seen in the
rear doorway. He's lost his beaming salesman's grin
and he looks uneasy, baffled, resentful.

HICKEY: That's a damned lie, Larry--I haven't lost my
confidence a bit--why should I? [boastfully] Whenever
I've made up my mind to sell someone something I knew
they ought to want, I've sold 'em! [He suddenly looks
confused--haltingly] I mean--it isn't kind of you,
Larry, to make that crack when I've been doing my best
to help [set them free]--

ROCKY [threatening]: Keep away from me--I don't know
nuttin' about yuh, see?

NARRATOR: As Rocky retreats behind the bar, Hickey sits
next to Larry.

HICKEY [strained attempt at his old affectionate jolly
manner.] Well, well--how are you coming along, gang?

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
yourselfs, 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
the hell don't you get pie-eyed and celebrate--why don't

you laugh and sing "Sweet Adeline"? [with bitterly hurt accusation] The only reason I can think is, you're putting on this rotten half-dead act just to spite me--because ya hate my guts! [He breaks again.] God, don't do that, gang--it makes me feel like hell to think you hate me--it makes me feel you suspect I must hate you--but that's a lie! Oh, I know I used to hate everyone who wasn't as rotten a bastard as I was! But that was before I faced the truth and saw the one possible way to free poor Evelyn and give her the peace she'd always dreamed of.

NARRATOR: He pauses and everyone in the group stirs with awakening dread--tense on their chairs.

CHUCK [with dull, resentful viciousness] Aw, put a cork in it--to hell wid Evelyn--what if she was cheatin'--an' who cares what yuh did to her--dat's your funeral--we don't give a damn, see?

CORA: Yeah!

ED: That's right!

MAC: We don't give a damn!

JOE: Xactly!

CHUCK [dully]: All we want outa you is ta keep de hell away from us and give us a rest.

[The gang grunts in agreement.]

HICKEY [as if he hadn't heard this]: The one possible way to make up to her for all I'd made her go through--and to rid 'er of me so I couldn't make her suffer any more--and she wouldn't have to forgive me any more! I saw I couldn't do it by killin' myself--like I wanted to for a long time--that would have been the last straw for her--she'd have died of a broken heart--she'd have blamed herself for it, too--and I couldn't just run away--she'd have died of grief and humiliation if I'd done that. She'd a thought I'd stopped loving her. [He adds with a strange simplicity] You see, Evelyn loved me--and I loved her--that was the trouble. It would have been easy to find a way out if she hadn't loved me so much--or if I hadn't loved her. But as it was, there was only one possible way. [He pauses--then adds simply] I had to kill her.

[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

think: if I got it twisted about you, how do I know I haven't got it twisted about myself? And that's just dumb--because when you know the story of Evelyn and me, you'll see there wasn't any other possible way out of it for her sake. Only I've got to start at the beginning or you won't understand. [He starts his story, his tone again becoming musingly reminiscent.] You see, even as a kid I was always restless--I had to keep on the go. You've heard the old saying, "Ministers' sons are sons of guns."--well, that was me, and then some. Home was like a jail--I didn't fall for the religious bunk. Listening to my old man whooping up hell fire and scaring those Hoosier suckers into shelling out their dough only gave me a laugh, although I had to hand it to him, the way he sold them nothing for something. I guess I take after him, and that's what made me a good salesman. Anyway, as I said, home was like jail--and so was school--and so was that damned hick town. The only place I liked was the pool room, where I could smoke, and mop up a couple of beers, thinking I was a hell-on-wheels sport. We had one hooker shop in town, too. Of course, I liked that--not that I hardly ever had entrance money--my old man was a tight bastard--but I liked to sit around in the parlor and joke with the girls, and they liked me because I could kid 'em along and make 'em laugh. Well, you know what a small town's like--everyone got wise to me--sayin' I was a no-good tramp--but I didn't give a damn what they said--I hated everybody in the place--that is, except Evelyn--I loved Evelyn--even as a kid--and Evelyn loved me.

PARRITT: I loved Mother, Larry--no matter what she did! I still do! Even though I know she wishes now I was dead! You believe that, don't you? Christ, why can't you say something?

HICKEY [goes on in a tone of fond, sentimental reminiscence]: Yes, as far back as I can remember, Evelyn and I loved each other. She always stuck up for me--she wouldn't believe the gossip--or she'd pretend she didn't. No one could convince her I was no good. Evelyn was stubborn as all hell once she'd made up her mind--even when I'd admit things and ask her forgiveness, she'd make excuses for me and defend me against myself. She'd kiss me and say she knew I didn't mean it and wouldn't do it again. So I'd promise--I'd have to promise, she was so sweet and good. Though I

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

seein' things in the wall paper--I'd get bored as hell--lonely and homesick--and at the same time sick of home--I'd feel free and I'd want to celebrate a little. I never drank on the job, so it had to be dames. Any tart or tramp I could be myself with without bein' ashamed. Someone I could tell a dirty joke to and she'd laugh.

CORA [with a dull, weary bitterness]: Jeez, all de lousy jokes I've had to listen ta and pretend was funny!

HICKEY [goes on obliviously]: Sometimes I'd try some joke I thought was a corker on Evelyn--she'd always make herself laugh--but I could tell she thought it was dirty, not funny. And Evelyn always knew about the tarts I'd been with when I came home from a trip. She'd kiss me and look in my eyes, and she'd know. An' I'd see in her eyes how she was trying not to know, and then telling herself even if it was true, he couldn't help it, they tempt him, he's lonely, he hasn't got me, it's only his body anyway, he doesn't love them, I'm the only one he loves. She was right, too--I never loved anyone else--couldn't if I wanted to. [He pauses.] She forgave me even when it all came out into the open. You know how it is when you keep takin' chances--you may be lucky for a long time, but in the end it gets ya. I picked up the clap from some tart in Altoona.

CORA [dully, without resentment]: Yeah--and she picked it up from some guy--it's all in de game--what de hell of it?

HICKEY: So I had to do a lot of lying and stalling--but it didn't do any good--the quack I went to got all my dough--tellin' me I was cured when I wasn't--and poor Evelyn-- But she did her best to make me believe she fell for my lie about salesman getting things from drinking cups on trains. Anyway, she forgave me--the same way she forgave me every time I'd turn up drunk. You all know what I'd be like at the end o' one--you've seen me--like something from the gutter no cat would dare drag in--something they threw out with the garbage--something that oughta be dead but isn't! [Pause--his voice convulsed with self-loathing.] Evelyn wouldn't've heard from me in a month--she'd be waitin' there alone, with the neighbors shakin' their heads and feeling sorry for her out loud. That was before she got me to move to the outskirts, where there weren't any next-door neighbors. An' then the door would open and in I'd

stumble into her home, where she kept everything so spotless and clean--an' I'd sworn it would never happen again, and now I'd have to start swearin' again that this was the last time. I could see disgust havin' a battle with love in her eyes. Love always won. She'd make herself kiss me, as if nothing had happened, as if I'd just come home from a business trip--she'd never complain or bawl me out. [He bursts out in a tone of anguish that has anger and hatred beneath it] Christ, can you imagine what a guilty skunk that made me feel! If she'd only admitted once she didn't believe the pipe dream any more that some day I'd change! But she never would--Evelyn was stubborn as hell--once she'd set her heart on somethin', you couldn't shake her faith that it had to come true--tomorrow. It was the same old story, for years and years--it kept pilin' up, inside her and inside me--god, can you picture all I made her suffer, and all the guilt she made me feel, and how I hated myself! If she only hadn't been so damn good--if she'd been the same kind of wife I was a husband--god, I used to pray sometimes she'd-- I'd even say to her, "Go on, why don't you, Evelyn--it'd serve me right-- I wouldn't mind--I'd forgive you." Of course, I'd pretend I was kiddin'--like I joked about her being the iceman. She'd have been so hurt if I'd said it seriously--she'd've thought I'd stopped lovin' her.

NARRATOR: He pauses and looks around at the gang.

HICKEY: I suppose you think I'm a liar, that no woman could have stood all that and still loved me--that it isn't human for any woman to be so forgiving. Well, I'm not lying, and if you'd ever seen her, you'd know I wasn't--it was written all over her face--sweetness and love and pity and forgiveness. [He reaches mechanically for the inside pocket of his coat.] Wait, I'll show ya--I always carry her picture.

NARRATOR: Suddenly he looks startled. Staring before him, his hand falls back quietly.

HICKEY: No, I forgot--I tore it up--afterwards--I didn't need it any more.

CORA [with a muffled sob]: Jeez, Hickey! Jeez!

PARRITT [to Larry in a low insistent tone]: I burned Mother's picture, Larry. Her eyes followed me all the time. They seemed to be wishing I was dead!

HICKEY: It got so I hated myself more and more--that I'd curse myself in the mirror every time I shaved. It drove me crazy--you wouldn't believe a guy could feel such pity. It got so every night I'd wind up hiding my face in her lap, bawling and beggin' her forgiveness--and, of course, she'd always comfort me and say, "Never mind, Teddy, I know you won't ever again." Christ, I loved her, but I began to hate that pipe dream! I began to think I was going bughouse, because sometimes I couldn't forgive her for forgiving me. I even caught myself hating her for making me hate myself so much--there's a limit to the forgiveness and the pity you can take--you've gotta start blaming someone. I got so sometimes when she'd kiss me it was like she did it on purpose to humiliate me--but I saw how rotten of me that was, and it made me hate myself all the more. And as it got closer to Bess's birthday, I got nearly crazy--I kept swearing to her that this time I really wouldn't--until I'd made it a final test to myself--and to her. And she kept encouraging me, saying, "I can see you really mean it now, Teddy--I know you'll conquer it this time, and we'll be so happy, dear." When she'd say that and kiss me, I'd believe it, too--then she'd go to bed, and I'd stay up alone cuz I didn't want to disturb her, tossing and turning. I'd get so lonely, thinking how peaceful it was with the old gang, getting drunk and joking and laughing and singing and swapping lies. And finally I knew I'd have to come--and I knew if I came this time, it was the last--I'd never have the guts to go back and be forgiven--and that would break Evelyn's heart because to her it would mean I didn't love her any more.

NARRATOR: The gang listens--mesmerized.

HICKEY: So that last night I drove myself crazy trying to figure some way out for her. I went to the bedroom--I was goin' to tell her it was the end. but I couldn't do that to her. She was sound asleep--I thought, God, if she never woke up, she'd never know! And then it came to me--the only possible way out, for her sake. I remembered I'd given her a gun for protection while I was away and it was in the drawer beside her. She'd never feel any pain, never wake up from her dream. So I--

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!

4614 HICKEY [as he is walked towards the rear--insistently]:
4615 All I want ya to see is I was out of my mind when I
4616 laughed at her! I was a rotten raving lunatic or I
4617 couldn't have called her a [bitch]--Why, Evelyn was the
4618 only thing on God's earth I ever loved. I'd have killed
4619 myself before I'd ever hurt her!

4620 BESS HOPE [calls after him]: Don't worry, Hickey--they
4621 won't give you the Chair--we'll testify you was crazy--
4622 crazy as a bedbug--won't we, gang?

4623 CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK [yell]: Dat's right!

4624 THE GENERAL [yell]: Dat's right!

4625 WILLIE/ED/MAC [yell]: We won't testify.

4626 THE CAPTAIN/JIMMY [yell]: Don't worry, Hickey.

4627 [From the hall comes the slam of the street door.]

4628 BESS HOPE [with genuine sorrow]: He's gone--the poor
4629 crazy bastard! Bejeez, I need a drink.

4630 NARRATOR: The gang all grab their glasses.

4631 BESS HOPE [hopefully]: Bejeez, maybe it'll have the
4632 old kick, now he's gone.

4633 NARRATOR: She drinks--and they all follow suit.

4634 ROCKY: Yeah, Boss--maybe we can get drunk now.

4635 NARRATOR: They all sit still--with hopeful expectancy--
4636 waiting for the effect of the booze.

4637 LARRY--[his voice full of pain and pity--in a whisper,
4638 aloud to himself] May the Chair bring him peace at last,
4639 the poor tortured bastard!

4640 PARRITT [leans toward him--in a strange low insistent
4641 voice]: Yes, but he isn't the only one who needs peace,
4642 Larry--I can't feel sorry for him--he's lucky--he's
4643 through, now--it's all decided for him. I wish it was
4644 decided for me--I've never been any good at deciding
4645 things--even about selling out. It was the tart the cops
4646 got after me who put it in my mind. You remember what
4647 Mother's like, Larry--she makes all the decisions--she's
4648 always decided what I had to do--she doesn't like anyone
4649 to be free but herself.

4650 NARRATOR: He pauses, as if waiting for Larry to comment
4651 --but he ignores him.