



THE WORKINGMAN
WALMSLEY
PULP

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TOM WALMSLEY

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THE WORKINGMAN

A Play in One Act by
Tom Walmsley

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HOT & COLD
WATER

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A Play in One Act

by Tom Walmsley

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This play was originally produced by the New Play Centre at the du Maurier Festival of Canadian Plays on May 2, 1975. It was directed by Pamela Hawthorn.

CAST

GENE.....Wayne Robson

MICHAEL.....Robb Smith

CHARLENE.....Kayla Armstrong

THE MAN.....Jerry Wasserman

All enquiries concerning performing rights, readings or reprinting of this script can be directed to the author c/o thad@thefutureofpublishing.com

TIME: The seventies.

PLACE: Unfurnished room in Winnipeg. The room has a window, a kitchen door and two chairs, one of which is folded, leaning near the other.

THE PEOPLE: Gene, Michael, and Charlene. Three casually dressed people in their twenties; the Man—age unimportant, wears overcoat, sports-jacket, shirt and tie.

The stage is dimly lit. We hear footsteps.

(Entrance door is flung open and GENE and MICHAEL lurch in dragging a mattress which they drop immediately after crossing the threshold. MICHAEL sprawls onto it.)

GENE: At fucking last! *(gropes for light switch, illuminates stage.)* Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL: *(rising)* Let's push it so it's in the corner.

(MICHAEL pushes and kicks mattress downstage right while GENE hangs his coat on a nail on the wall. MICHAEL sits heavily onto mattress. GENE moves to centre stage, massaging his shoulders, etc. CHARLENE enters.)

CHARLENE: *(glancing about)* WOO!

(She moves to the chair, removes coat, hat, boots while walking around. GENE joins MICHAEL on the mattress.)

MICHAEL: Gimme a cigarette.

(GENE rises, crosses to his coat and gets package of cigarettes. Returns, tosses cigarette to MICHAEL, puts one in his own mouth, then extends package to CHARLENE.)

CHARLENE: Just put one out, thanks.

MICHAEL: You had plenty of time to smoke one, up five fucking flights.

CHARLENE: I offered to help.

MICHAEL: It's all right.

(MICHAEL lights cigarette. GENE takes match and lights his own.)

GENE: There isn't much you could have done. If the goddamned thing had handles, it would have been different. (*looks around*) What do we use for an ashtray?

CHARLENE: Oh, just anything. The floor, I guess. It really doesn't matter much for now.

(GENE *flips match towards her. CHARLENE moves to kitchen door, opens it, makes some expression. of dismay and enters.*)

MICHAEL: Well shit.

GENE: No picnic eh?

MICHAEL: What do you think?

GENE: Well....

MICHAEL: About the room?

GENE: (*glancing*) It'll be all right.

MICHAEL: Sur. (*stands, looks around*) It'll be worth it.

GENE: Look, Michael . . .

MICHAEL: Oh, I don't mean the money. I'm not worried about that.

GENE: You seem a bit...uh....

MICHAEL: No. I can handle it. (*sits up*)

GENE: Everything was cool on the train.

MICHAEL: Everything's still cool. We're not on the train now.

(*rises, removes coat and hangs it up beside GENE's*)

Well, I guess I got this ball rolling to begin with.

CHARLENE: (*coming out of kitchen*) Not exactly the Deer Park, is it?

GENE: It'll be all right.

MICHAEL: (*crosses, takes CHARLENE in his arms*) Well, hopefully it's going to look a helluva lot different in a couple of days. What about electrical outlets?

CHARLENE: There's only two, but we can use batteries for most of your stuff.

MICHAEL: Lights could be a problem.

CHARLENE: Well, I was thinking we could take out that bulb and screw in one of those...you know, like plugs? So you can plug things in? Couldn't we do that for the big lights?

MICHAEL: Yeah, I think we probably could. When we're using the camera.

GENE: How about the kitchen?

CHARLENE: Oh, it's a fair size. Big enough to keep our stuff out of the way. This whole room will be one complete thing, just like we planned.

GENE: (*sarcastically*) Gee, the whole room?

MICHAEL: (*laughing*) Yeah. Little on the seedy side, isn't it?

Why don't we just leave it like it is? You know, naked people under a fly-specked bulb doing unspeakable things.

GENE: That's an idea. Your basic low-budget construction worker porno flick—as it stands—no curtains, no velvet, no trimmings...

CHARLENE: Oh, no! Not after all this! We'll have black curtains over everything—it'll look completely different. Wait till we get your stuff from the train station.

MICHAEL: I don't even want to talk about lugging the rest of that crap up here.

GENE: Tomorrow. After we've rested up.

CHARLENE: Oh, I don't know how much rest I'm going to give my boys.

(*CHARLENE kneels on mattress between them, grabbing for their crotches.*)

MICHAEL: (*moving away*) Better save your energy, honey. Long haul ahead:

CHARLENE: Why don't you just admit rm too much for the both of you?

(*GENE is kneeling behind her, fondling her breasts.*)

MICHAEL: I'll admit it. GENE: Now, now.

MICHAEL: No, I mean on the nerves. I mean it's hard on the nerves. I wouldn't have thought it would be.

CHARLENE: It's because you and Gene take it so seriously. I think it's exciting. It's fun.

GENE: Well that's what makes it good you're here.

MICHAEL: You must take it fairly seriously...

GENE: Sure, fairly.

CHARLENE: Oh, sure, serious that way, sure. I'm interested, it's a very...interesting thing.

GENE: Very horny thing.

MICHAEL: Well, it's like we said before: do or die. If we believe it, we'll do it. And if we don't...

CHARLENE: (*moving over to MICHAEL, touches the back of his neck*) You both sound way too tense. We should stop talking about it-I mean the idea behind it all-from now on. I think you're just tensing yourselves up. Just let it happen.

GENE: Well, it's gotta be right.

CHARLENE: Oh, I know, I know. But let's go through with the plan-Just do the things. You two can stay up for weeks after, reasoning it all out. Don't you think that's the best way? Just to do it?

MICHAEL: (*caressing her in return*) Sure, honey, absolutely.

We're just nerved up. The train ride, everything...

CHARLENE: Oh, I know that.

(*They cuddle. GENE stands up, crosses to kitchen door and peers briefly inside. Returns and looks down at the two.*)

GENE: Winnipeg. What a town. Well, we picked the right place not to be bothered.

MICHAEL: I don't guess we'll be going out much, anyway.

CHARLENE: I don't think I'd want to, in this weather.

GENE: No, it isn't a good town for walks. Not this time of year. The winter lasts forever here.

CHARLENE: Well, I wouldn't imagine it would be as bad as someplace like Edmonton. (*grabs MICHAEL suddenly by crotch*)

MICHAEL: (*sits up, moves away*) No, and Edmonton's not as bad as the North Pole, either. What the hell, Charlene?

GENE: Anyway, it's warm enough in here.

CHARLENE: Oh, I think it should get pretty hot. (*leans forward and bites MICHAEL on the thigh*)

GENE: I hope so. The sleeping bags are at the station.

MICHAEL: Maybe we should go down there...

CHARLENE: Oh, no! No, Michael, think how exciting it'll be with no covers...

MICHAEL: And chilly.

CHARLENE: We'll cuddle. It'll be exciting when we wake up.

MICHAEL: It could be freezing too.

CHARLENE: Well, I've got the baggage tickets and if you want them, you'll have to take them.

MICHAEL: We could sleep in our clothes...

CHARLENE: Oh! Am I in the right place?

MICHAEL: Just for tonight.

CHARLENE: I thought we could do sort of our last straight thing tonight.

MICHAEL: Straight! Oh, yeah.

GENE: I guess that's a matter of definition.

CHARLENE: Comparatively speaking, then.

(*GENE and CHARLENE fondle, etc. while MICHAEL sits up*)

MICHAEL: I don't know, I don't know—everything's happening so fast. It seems like... Christ, I don't know. Maybe after a night's sleep. My head's running around.

CHARLENE: Train lag.

GENE: Must be it. Hurling across the continent at nearly seventy miles an hour...

(CHARLENE begins giving GENE a back rub which rapidly increases in vigour.)

CHARLENE: No, I'm serious. You spend forty hours or so sitting down, looking out the window, eating, getting up and going to the bathroom...

MICHAEL: Covering Charlene's head in your lap with your jacket...

CHARLENE: (*laughs*) Yes, that too. Then you come to some strange place where it's forty below zero and don't know the names of the streets and you find a room somebody rented for you and carrying a mattress up five flights of stairs...that old hag. I wonder what she thinks?

GENE: You're awfully speedy for someone with train lag.

CHARLENE: (*halting rub*) I have to make up for you two.

MICHAEL: Now what was it exactly your friend told the landlady anyway? We're a married couple just coming in to town...

CHARLENE: With your brother, and we'd need a mattress until our furniture arrived. We'll be here six months shooting a movie for the National Film Board.

MICHAEL: Six months?

GENE: Why this film board thing?

CHARLENE: Oh, that was just window dressing—just making conversation. At least when she sees the camera equipment she won't go calling the burglary squad. Anyway be-my friend—used to live in this building. We won't even see the old bat.

MICHAEL: Why six months?

CHARLENE: Honey, nobody wants to rent out a place just for a month. (*kisses MICHAEL*)

GENE: (*standing*) The National Film Board. Can't you just see it? (*deepens voice.as though a news commentator*) Three young Canadians decide to record the ultimate in audio-visual stage productions, at the same time freeing themselves from sexual and religious hangups—calling a showdown, as it were...

MICHAEL: ...culminating in a celebration of Our Lord and Saviour's birthday by defecating on the holiest of books...

CHARLENE: ... using crucifixes for dildoes...

GENE: Yes, at the risk of seeming passé. With much oral sex, anal sex...

MICHAEL: ... rampant homosexuality...

CHARLENE: Not to mention floggings, bathroom trips...

MICHAEL: Yummy.

GENE: Well, I don't know. I guess we'll see (*he sits on the mattress beside MICHAEL*)

MICHAEL: I guess we'll all have to see. I know we're not going to like all of it...

CHARLENE: *I* am. Except maybe the religious thing.

MICHAEL: The least of my worries.

GENE: I don't know, that *is* going to be weird. Freaky. Especially on Christmas day.

CHARLENE: You guys have a lot of guts. Really. It doesn't mean the same to me, but... I guess you guys really are do or die.

MICHAEL: Guts is really all there is, babe.

GE: Yeah, sure. Let's not get carried away. We're not exactly Scott on his way to the Pole. Or are we doing that next, Mike?

MICHAEL: I'm ready.

CHARLENE: (*encircles both of them with her arms*) My men. (*They grapple with her, tickling, etc. GENE rubs his head between her legs, CHARLENE laughing: "oh ecstasy", etc.*)

There is a knocking at the door .GENE and CHARLENE continue their shenanigans while MICHAEL looks up.)

MICHAEL: What the hell?

CHARLENE: Probably just the landlady.

(The knock is repeated, more loudly. MICHAEL goes to the door, tucking his shirt more securely into his jeans. As he begins to open it, the door is forced smoothly the rest of the way open, and the MAN enters, all in one

fluid motion. As he steps into the room, he raises a small wallet towards MICHAEL's face, opening it one-handed very briefly, snapping it shut and dropping it into his jacket pocket.)

MAN: Police.

(MICHAEL stares stupidly for a moment, then jerkily moves around the MAN, closing the door. GENE and CHARLENE halt their activities and look at the MAN. GENE mumbles something and disentangles himself. rising. CHARLENE kneels up.)

MICHAEL: *(closing door)* Oh. Oh sure.

MAN: *(moving to stage left, briefly scanning the room)* Stand over there with your friends please.

(MICHAEL does this, standing near GENE)

MAN: Just sit down, will you? Both of you.

(GENE flops onto mattress, MICHAEL lowering himself a little uncertainly.)

CHARLENE: Well, what's this all about?

MAN: What's your name?

CHARLENE: My name is Charlene. Charlene Lee.

MAN: Do you have some identification?

CHARLENE: Well, yes, but... I mean...my *purse...**(gestures toward purse hanging on chair back, upstage.)*

MAN: I don't want to see it.

GENE: *(to Charlene)* What'd he ask for?

(MAN moves over to chair, pats the pockets of CHARLENE's coat, which is also draped over the back, and glances into the purse.)

MAN: Have all of you been present here for the past hour? GENE: *(rising)* No. No we haven't. We just got off the...

MAN: *(turning toward him)* Sit down. What's your name?

GENE: Eugene Joseph McCoy.

MAN: *(moves nearer the mattress)* Uh huh. And you say you weren't present here during the last hour, Mr. Eugene Joseph McCoy.

GENE: That's right, yes. None of us were.

(The MAN crosses to the coats and goes through the pockets.)

MICHAEL: Has there been...is there some kind of trouble?

MAN: *(continuing searching of coats, examining various articles from the pockets)* There is a police officer stationed at the end of this corridor, there is another officer standing near the front entrance of this building, and another covering the rear. There is no way out of this building.

MICHAEL: Well we...

CHARLENE: We haven't done anything.

MAN: Where does that other door lead?

CHARLENE: The kitchen.

MAN: Who is in the kitchen?

GENE: Three dead rats and a cockroach.

CHARLENE: No one. *(gets off the mattress, approaches MAN)* If you would just tell us ..

MAN: Miss Lee. *(pauses, sighs deeply. He takes CHARLENE by the arm and walks her back to the mattress, then returns her to a kneeling position by pressing down on her shoulders.)* Miss Lee, I have a job to do. There is a man on every floor doing what I am doing right at this moment. This is a very serious matter. I have some questions to ask, some questions to ask all of you. I am asking for co-operation. •

MICHAEL: Well, sure.

GENE: We're glad to help you if we possibly can. But we only got into town and...

MAN: Mr. McCoy, would you stand up, please?

(GENE gets to his feet.)

MAN: *(not moving)* Mr. McCoy, I'll ask you to please accompany me into the kitchen, where I'll ask you a few questions. I'll ask your friends to please remain where they are.

GENE: *(nodding)* Yes. Okay. *(pauses, then walks to kitchen door)*

MAN: Go right inside.

(GENE opens door and. steps out of view, leaving door open.)

MAN: (*moves unhurriedly toward the door then as CHARLENE giggles, stops. He looks at the two on the mattress and smirks briefly*) Nothing to worry about, Miss Lee.

(*He enters kitchen, closing the door behind him.*)

CHARLENE: Michael?

MICHAEL: Take it easy, take it easy. We haven't done anything.

CHARLENE: But what do you think he wants?

MICHAEL: I don't know, but I know it isn't us. There must have been a holdup, a murder or something . . .

(*There is a short sharp crack of a light-calibre handgun from the kitchen. CHARLENE jumps convulsively. MICHAEL gets quickly to his feet and turns wide-eyed to the kitchen door, which opens immediately. The MAN steps into the room, very calmly. He is holding a long-barreled revolver at chest height, his right arm almost fully extended. The gun is pointed very steadily at MICHAEL.*)

MAN: Move a muscle and you're a dead sonofabitch.

CHARLENE: Oh my God. O Jesus Christ.

MAN: (*staring unblinkingly at MICHAEL, he moves to center stage*) Lie down on the bed lady.

CHARLENE: Oh God in heaven.

MAN: Lie down lady.

MICHAEL: (*pushing CHARLENE away from him, talking quickly*)

All the money I got...

MAN: You. Get one of those chairs over there. MICHAEL: If it isn't enough . . .

MAN: Do it. Do it now.

(*MICHAEL, his eyes never leaving the MAN, walks to the chairs until he stumbles into them. The MAN motions him with the pistol to downstage left, where MICHAEL drags the chair. Neither the MAN's gaze nor the gun waver from him as he does this.*)

MAN: Sit down.

(*MICHAEL numbly seats himself*)

CHARLENE: (*trembling, beginning to sob*) Gene! What have you done to Gene?

MAN: Lady, I'll tell you once to be quiet. That's all I'll tell you.

(*CHARLENE continues to tremble, but the sounds she makes are low, animal.*)

MAN: Kid, this is kind of an interesting situation, wouldn't you say so?

(*MICHAEL opens his mouth, but no sound emits. He closes it. There is an audible click as the MAN cocks the revolver. CHARLENE twitches slightly to the sound*)

MAN: say this is a kind of interesting situation. What do you say, kid?

MICHAEL: (*very strained*)... don't think know what's going on.

MAN: Yeah. Think that could be it. I think that could be your whole problem.

(*He steps over to the mattress, slowly kneeling onto it, keeping the gun trained on MICHAEL. CHARLENE whimpers. He reaches out and places his left hand on her hip. Her back toward him, she starts violently and just as suddenly he exerts pressure on the hip till his arm trembles.*)

MAN: (*still watching MICHAEL*) You better tell your girlfriend not to move. I have very strong hands. If either of you want to live through this, you better tell her not to move.

MICHAEL: Charlene...

CHARLENE: What are you going to do to me?

MAN: Nothing. Not a thing. Not as long as your boyfriend does what I tell him to.

MICHAEL: I'll do anything you say.

MAN: Fine, just fine. All I want is a little co-operation.

CHARLENE: And what about Gene?

MICHAEL: Shut up, Charlene.

MAN: Oh that's all right, quite all right. I just didn't like his face. You know how that can get you when you don't like a guy's face?

MICHAEL: Sure.

MAN: I like .his face better now.

(CHARLENE breaks into hysterical, weeping, but her position—semi-fetal—is basically unchanged. She is facing MICHAEL. The MAN strokes her thighs.)

MAN: There, there. You don't have anything to worry about. (to MICHAEL) You love her pretty much don't you?

MICHAEL: Yes.

MAN: How's that?

MICHAEL: Yes. Yes, I love her.

MAN: Fine. That's just fine.

(The MAN, still kneeling, relaxes his posture, his spine unbending, his thighs coming to rest on his calves. At the same time he lowers the gun, placing it behind him on the mattress. He shrugs off his overcoat. With a lightning movement of his right hand, he snatches the gun up and draws a bead on MICHAEL, snapping his arm out full length. MICHAEL stiffens suddenly in fright and CHARLENE twitches.)

MAN: That's all right now. There, there. Just showing you I can get it when I want it. *(He replaces gun on the mattress. Grabbing CHARLENE between the legs with one hand and the nape of her neck with the other, he yanks her over onto her back.)*

CHARLENE: Please don't hurt me.

MAN: Oh, I'm not going to hurt you. You're too beautiful to hurt. As long as our friend here does as I say.

MICHAEL: Please. Mister. Tell me what you want me to do.

MAN: *(seems not to have heard MICHAEL, continuing to caress the girl, staring straight ahead)*

I'm not from around here, you know. Originally I mean. No, I was born a good deal south of here. Not South—just south of here. My parents weren't very well off and we lived in a place smaller than this one. Or so I'm told. On the sixth floor. *(pause)* One day in the dead of winter, three men that neither my mother nor my father had ever seen before

walked into the apartment. Two of them carried automatic pistols and the third one had a large hunting knife. I was only six months old at the time, sleeping in my crib. As you can imagine, my mother became hysterical when the man with the knife leaned over the crib as though he were about to stab me. At the same time I woke up and began to cry. (*pause*) The men gave my father this choice. He could obey their instructions and my mother would be unharmed. If he chose to disobey them, I would be disemboweled. My father wasn't a very big man. He had light blue eyes. It was all my mother seemed to remember, afterwards. His blue eyes. But all the same, he wasn't a big man. The men—the strangers—still warned him that if he had any ideas of attacking them, they would immediately carry out my execution. (*pause*) And my mother's. They would shoot him only to wound. They claimed to be expert marksmen. He had no reason to doubt them. (*pause. Looks at MICHAEL*) Now wouldn't you say that was an interesting situation?

MICHAEL: It sounds... uh...

MAN: (*quickly*) Don't you know what they wanted my father to do? Don't you want to know?

MICHAEL: What? What did they want?

MAN: My father was to walk to the window, open it, and jump. Just that. Jump from the sixth floor window to the stone courtyard below. If he did this, the men would leave. There was even a good chance he would survive the fall—people have fallen from greater heights and lived. (*pause*) Yes, he very well might have lived. But he didn't. Oh, he jumped. From what I know of him, my father was the kind of man to say he had no choice. Other men might say otherwise, I suppose. But my father jumped. And died: My mother used to say it was the one time his blue eyes didn't help him. (*There is a lengthy pause as he and MICHAEL stare at each other. The MAN's hands have stopped moving.*) I think you got a pretty good idea of what you gotta do, kid.

MICHAEL: (*staring dumbly*)... I don't...

MAN: We're on the sixth floor, kid.

CHARLENE: Oh, Michael.

MICHAEL: I don't want to die.

MAN: Neither did my old man, maybe you'll be lucky.

MICHAEL: But... but why... why do I.

MAN: Why him? Why my father? I'm not three men, just one. All I got is a twenty-two. I don't claim to be an expert with it. You may have a chance if you rush me. There's only one bullet in the gun. (*he smiles*) You have my word on that.

MICHAEL: Mister, I don't want...

CHARLENE: Are you going to kill me?

MAN: No, no, I'm not going to hurt you. Your boyfriend's going to jump out the window:

MICHAEL: What... what will you do if I don't?

CHARLENE: Oh, Michael.

MAN: (*stroking her*) There, there. I'm not the man those others were. If you don't want to jump, don't jump. That's all. Just stand up and walk out of here and don't come back. That's pretty fair, don't you think? Considering.

MICHAEL: Just...leave?

MAN: That's it. And your girl stays with me. (*He grabs CHARLENE by the hair and yanks her into a half-kneeling position, bending her head back and holding the barrel of the pistol near her temple*) Call the police or do anything stupid and there's nothing on God's green earth that can stop me from killing her. I mean this. (*He shoves his hand roughly down the front of her blouse*)

MICHAEL: But . . .what are you going to do to her?

CHARLENE: For Christ's sake Michael, what's the matter with you? Jesus, Jesus, you've got to ... oh, Christ? Do something! Michael, please! *Do something!*

MICHAEL: Charlene, listen . . .

MAN: (*standing quickly*) He's not going to jump. I know that. You better just leave, kid. Come back in, say, twenty-four hours. I'll be gone then.

(*CHARLENE is sobbing, face against the mattress.*)

MICHAEL: Charlene, I don't think he's going to hurt you...

MAN: Oh, I won't hurt her. We'll have fun.

MICHAEL: If you just do what he says...

MAN: Just a little co-operation.

CHARLENE: (*raising her head*) You gutless sonofabitch! You bastard! Leave, then. Leave me with him and let him do what he wants to do! Just fuck off, asshole!

(*MICHAEL stands quickly and the MAN cautions him with the gun. He moves upstage, making a wide circle of the MAN until he reaches his coat. The MAN follows his progress.*)

MICHAEL: Uh... well... twenty-four hours.

MAN: Just twenty-four.

CHARLENE: No. If you walk out of here, keep going. I'll take care of the rest of it. You piece of shit.

MICHAEL: I'm sorry.

MAN: I think you better hit it kid.

(*MICHAEL leaves, closing the door behind him.*)

CHARLENE: Well that gutless bastard. (*begins to rise*)

MAN: (*tucking pistol into his belt, he steps over to the mattress*)

Just sit back down.

CHARLENE: Look, Mister ...

MAN: I just want to take a look at you. A good look.

CHARLENE: I'll do anything you want me to do.

MAN: Oh, I know. I never doubted it. But that's what your friend said, too. You might say he broke his word.

CHARLENE: I promise. I won't try anything.

MAN: Try anything you want.

(CHARLENE makes a sudden lunge off the mattress and just as suddenly the MAN grabs her hair, twisting her head back and forcing her to her knees. He kneels beside her, releasing her hair and holding her face in his hands.)

MAN: Now, now. *(glances toward kitchen door)* It's the other one, isn't it? The one in the kitchen. I didn't hurt him.

CHARLENE: Is...is Gene . . .

MAN: Oh, oh I see. I mean to say he didn't suffer.

(CHARLENE gives a cry and, twisting her head, bites the MAN's hand. She breaks free and runs for the entrance door. Immediately the MAN is upon her.)

MAN: Goddamn you!

(He seizes her by the arms and twists her away from the door.)

CHARLENE: Don't! Don't!

MAN: *(grabs her shoulders, shakes her)* Don't what? Don't what? Don't touch you? *(releases his grip, moving his hands in front of her face, backing her downstage left)* Hmmmm? Don't you want me to touch you? *(his hands are darting out, touching her face, her breasts, very quickly)* Don't you like being touched, Miss Lee? Charlene? *(hands darting faster now, mauling. He has backed her near the chair MICHAEL previously occupied.)*

(CHARLENE is doubled over, turned away from him, as he makes hard fast grabs at her body)

CHARLENE: STOP IT!

MAN: *(twisting her around, gripping her arms very tightly above the elbows)* Now, now. You're going back on your promise to me. You do what I say, I won't hurt you. You don't want me to go back on my part, do you? Do you? *(yanks her completely upright so they are face to face.)* Do you? *(she shakes her head)* Well that's just fine.

(He steers her back to the mattress and throws her down on it. Walks upstage of mattress, examining her.)

MAN: (unbuckling his belt) I was never much good with women's things. Why don't you save us both a lot of trouble? Take them off, lady.

(CHARLENE edges away slightly.)

MAN: You know, I hate repeating myself. It's a waste of time and it irritates me: Now I told you once. I'm not telling you twice.

CHARLENE: I... I'll do it. *(She slowly undoes two buttons of her blouse. The MAN stands, watching her, belt unbuckled. He steps onto the mattress.)*

MAN: Come on.

CHARLENE: *(reaching quickly for the next button)* No, please. I'll take them off.

MAN: *(grabs her wrists, twisting her arms)* Up. Up!

(He forces her to her feet, pulling her off the mattress. She is obviously in great pain as he reverses the twist on her wrists, spreading out her arms.)

MAN: I think you got a problem. Oh now, don't worry, I'm good with problems. Yeah, I think maybe you're the kind of woman just can't be satisfied by one man, you know what I mean? Well sure, I could see it right away. What we need is someone to take up the slack, right? Let's see what we can find in the kitchen.

CHARLENE: No! *(yanks one hand free, turning, the MAN quickly grabbing her arms from behind and jerking her around, holding her in front of him, close to his body)*

MAN: Now, now, it's all right. A bit messy, but let's try and be broad-minded. It's only his face, is all. But then, I never liked his face anyway. I think I said that.

(CHARLENE begins choking, gasping as the MAN moves her toward the kitchen door.)

CHARLENE: Oh, Jesus, please!

(The kitchen door opens and GENE, his face hideously distorted by a nylon stocking, bursts into the room emitting a loud roar inches from CHARLENE's face. CHARLENE screams, falling back against the MAN)

and convulsing, dropping on her side to the floor and throwing the MAN off balance.)

MAN: Shit!

GENE: *(tearing off stocking)* Yeah, I didn't expect that. *(he kneels beside her, touches her face)* Get me her purse, quick! Her pills! *(runs to her purse and brings it back, rummaging through it, kneeling beside the body)*

MAN: Pills! What the hell is this? What are you talking about, pills?

GENE: *(clutching CHARLENE)* Oh baby, come out of it, I didn't mean it.

MAN: *(moving towards them, reaching out for GENE)* Listen, buddy
...

GENE: Jesus, I think she's dead! Get a doctor! Get a doctor!

MAN *(buckling belt, scooping up coat)* You can settle this up yourself, you fucking jerk.

GENE: *(getting to his feet)* Look, I didn't know this would happen. You gotta help me, man.

MAN: Don't tell me what I gotta do! You started this goddamned thing, now finish it. I think you're all nuts anyway. *(GENE motions toward the MAN)* Make a move on me kid and I'll break you in two. *(He opens the door.)* Tell the cops the little game you planned. Tell them that. Tell them you knocked off your old lady playing a game. Asshole.

(He leaves quickly, without closing the door. GENE closes door quietly, looks down at the body, then paces downstage left where he sits on the chair, hands behind his head.)

GENE: Baby, you are some damned actress.

CHARLENE: *(begins to giggle, then laugh, sits up)* Yeah, but honey, look at the director I've got. *(crawls over to GENE)*

(GENE strokes her head, begins to laugh. This builds quickly until they are both laughing loudly. CHARLENE rocks back and forth against GENE's legs. He holding her shoulders.)

GENE: Oh God!

CHARLENE: *If you could have seen Michael.*

(*GENE lunges forward and gives the same roar as before. CHARLENE gives a mock cry and falls onto her side, imitating her convulsions. This breaks them up again. CHARLENE points her finger at GENE.*)

CHARLENE: You got 10 seconds kid, then you're gonna jump onto that fire escape. It's a six inch drop but you got a chance.

GENE: Why me? I could sprain my money.

CHARLENE: I could hardly keep a straight face.

GENE: You sounded pretty damn convincing.

CHARLENE: Oh I got a little pissed off... but at the beginning! When the guy made him sit down-God! I thought I was going to faint.

GENE: I thought of that.

CHARLENE: You think of everything, huh? GENE: Oh, I try Charlene.

CHARLENE: Did you catch that one about the money? .

GENE: Oh yeah, I thought he was going to write the guy a cheque.

CHARLENE: Right on the tip of his tongue "How much do you cost, Mister?"

GENE: Well, that's Michael. That was Michael.

(*CHARLENE snuggles closer to GENE, kneeling as he sits stroking her head.*)

CHARLENE: Let's go somewhere warm. GENE: I thought we agreed on all this before.

CHARLENE: Oh, I know, but now we're halfway there.

GENE: (*gives her a pat and rises, crosses to mattress*) A couple of things to do first. I'll get his shit from the station in the morning—lot of bread in that equipment.

CHARLENE: Do you have a buyer?

GENE: Everything's taken care of. This time tomorrow we'll be flying. (*flops onto mattress*)

CHARLENE: (*crosses to mattress and jumps on GENE;*) Oh baby, I'm flying right now. (*kissing, groping, etc. pause after long embrace*) Jeez, that other guy—was weird. You can really pick them.

GENE: I recruited that charmer myself, sweetheart. Goes anywhere, does anything. But a nut. Not a very expensive nut either. (*laughs*) We still owe him a hundred.

CHARLENE: I'll go put the arm on Michael for it! (*laughs—pause*)
I was a little scared Gene.

GENE: What's that?

CHARLENE: That guy—every time he touched me, he hurt me—just for a second there I thought he *had* shot you.

GENE: Take it easy. (*extricates himself from clinch, gets off mattress, starts gathering up stocking, purse, etc.*) Yeah, those two make quite a pair. Him and Michael.

CHARLENE: And what does that make us?

GENE: (*tossing over her boots*) Two people on top of it, sweetheart.
(*GENE puts on his coat, checking the room over while CHARLENE, still on the mattress, tugs on her boots.*)

CHARLENE: Gene, what would you have done? In Michael's place?

GENE: Oh, Jesus.

CHARLENE: No, really.

GENE: What difference does it make?

CHARLENE: Come on, Gene, answer me. Would you have jumped?

GENE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I would have jumped right onto that fire escape.

CHARLENE: But he didn't know.

GENE: That's right, that is exactly right. He didn't know. I did. That's the big difference between Michael and me. What is this stuff?

CHARLENE: Would you have jumped with no fire escape?

GENE: Are you crazy? Nobody would make a jump like that. Least of all Michael.

CHARLENE: Or you.

GENE: All right. Or me. There, are you satisfied now, Charlene? I wouldn't have jumped. I would have gone out that door. But I would have come back.

CHARLENE: You would have come back! You would have left me here with that . . .that . . .

GENE: Look Charlene, I'm warning you, I'm gonna go nuts. Now will you for Christ's sake leave it?

CHARLENE: My God—he left, you would have left—what's the point?

GENE: The point is that he's gone and I'm here, all right? CHARLENE: No, it's not all right, it's bullshit!

(Pause. CHARLENE glaring at the mattress. GENE walks over to her and kneels down, touching her.)

GENE: Okay, okay. I just never thought about it before.

CHARLENE: You would have left me.

GENE: No, I couldn't have left you, not like that. I would have taken my chances against the gun.

CHARLENE: But you wouldn't have jumped.

GENE: No, I wouldn't have been much use to you with a broken leg, now would I? I'd have gone against the gun.

CHARLENE: Do you mean that?

GENE: Look, do you want me to go find that guy and bring him back?

CHARLENE: *(glancing at door)* Maybe we should...

GENE: Just what I was thinking.

CHARLENE: Let's get out of here.

GENE: *(giving her a short kiss on the lips)* You bet.

(They get up, CHARLENE putting on her coat, slinging her purse over her shoulder, GENE buttoning his coat. When this is completed they embrace, stage left. The entrance door opens quietly behind them. MICHAEL enters carefully, a sawed off shotgun trained on the mattress, then looks up at

the two embracing. Short bewildered pause, then he kicks door shut behind him. GENE and CHARLENE jump apart, turning.)

MICHAEL: What the fuck?

GENE: Hey, Michael...

MICHAEL: *(quickly crossing to kitchen door, peeks inside)* What's going on? Where's that other guy? What is this?

GENE: Jeez: Michael, we're glad you came back. We were wondering. . .

MICHAEL: *(pointing shotgun at GENE)* Where's that guy? GENE: *(advancing toward him)* Hey, Michael. . .

MICHAEL: Just a second. *(GENE reaches tentatively for the gun and is shoved violently back)* I said just a goddamned second! *(looks at the two of them standing near each other)* Well, I'm a sonofabitch!

GENE: Look, I don't know what you're thinking, Michael...

MICHAEL: Shut up! I'm thinking you fucked me Gene, and I think I'm gonna blow your head off for real this time!

CHARLENE: Michael...

MICHAEL: *(swinging gun towards her. He is quite close to them.)* You're gonna get it right here I think, Charlene, you goddamned little slut. Don't say a word. I busted my ass getting back here—thinking you're with a psycho, my best friend's dead—*(expression of disgust)*

GENE: *(stepping toward him)* Easy with that thing, Michael.

(MICHAEL hits GENE on the shoulder with the gun, backhanded, sending him sprawling upstage where he falls against the wall.)

CHARLENE remains where she is, terrified.)

MICHAEL: I thought I told you to button it, Gene: Now shut your fucking mouth. Oh, I'm a little rocky, but nothing you have to worry about—this'll be in your mouth when it goes off. *(whirling on CHARLENE)* And yours too, you fucking... Anything that's all right for Charlene is all right, isn't it? Isn't it, you goddamned little pig? *(backs away, toward mattress)* I can see it's all true. You were putting me through, weren't you?

GENE: You haven't given us much chance to say anything.

MICHAEL: Make your next word a good one, you fucking weasel, because you open your mouth again, it's your last. Shit, man, you think you can talk your way out of anything! You two are really the perfect couple—you and her, I mean. I don't know about the other guy—maybe he was going to make up the threesome, huh?

GENE: Michael, you don't even know how it was;

MICHAEL: I got eyes, you sonofabitch!

GENE: (*picking himself off the floor*) Yeah, and all you see is your best friends—and we're about your only friends, Michael—Christ—happy to be alive. But I guess you don't want to hear that, do you? I guess you just want to come in here all bombed up and be Jesse James for five minutes so you can spend the rest of your life in jail for some lunatic who's on the street laughing at us right now. You're gonna kill us Michael? For what? For being scared shitless while that guy—cop—whatever the hell he was—was putting us through all that? Jesus, I don't know what the hell you think was going on!

MICHAEL: A lot of bullshit.

GENE: Listen Michael, he took me in that kitchen and told me if I moved a muscle or made a sound he'd kill all of us. Then he fired a shot through the window. Look—you believed him. Well, I believed him too. I wasn't going to try anything when he had a loaded gun and was that close to Charlene. What would you have done in my place, for chrissake?

CHARLENE: Look honey, what could I say? I thought Gene was dead, I thought you were running out on me. I guess I was a little hysterical. Oh Jesus, Michael, what could I do?

MICHAEL: You can shut up for now.

GENE: Oh, beautiful. Love sure is great, ain't it? I really don't believe this, I really don't. You're sure saying a helluva lot for Charlene and me.

MICHAEL: Just hold it. Don't say nothing. I wanna know what happened to that guy.

GENE: He left.

MICHAEL: You're telling me he just walked out of here, just like that?

GENE: I'm telling you just what happened. Look, we're all together. We're all safe. That's all that matters.

MICHAEL: Stay put. I gotta think this out.

GENE: Ah, this is too much! Look, I can't prove that I'm telling you the truth. You'll just have to trust us or shoot us. Shoot us! God damn it, Michael, do you believe what we're saying here? We've been through a lot of shit together, man, you and me.

MICHAEL: I don't know. All this stuff, I don't know a damned thing. But nobody fucks with me.

GENE: Well, you proved that, Michael. I would have walked out that door myself. Anyone would have.

MICHAEL: I was gonna blow his goddamned head off.

GENE: I believe you. It took a lotta guts making that play, Michael. But listen, let's cut out. this cowboy action, huh? We're together now, let's stick together. What do you say?

(GENE has been moving nearer to MICHAEL throughout and is now about an arm's length away. There's a knocking at the door.)

CHARLENE: Gene!

MICHAEL: Don't worry, you two stay out of the way. I'll take care of this.

(He faces the door as GENE drags CHARLENE into the kitchen, closing the door behind him.)

MICHAEL: Who is it? *(silence)* Who. is it? Come on in.

(He has the gun levelled at the door, braced against his hip. No answer from the door, no further knocking. MICHAEL stands to one side of the door, holding the shotgun one-handed. With his free hand he yanks the door open a couple of feet, at the same time poking the gun barrel through the opening. MICHAEL gives a scream and jackknifes forward as the MAN, in a low crouch, pushes him back into the room. He is holding the gun—still

in Michael's grasp—with one hand, while with the other he seems to be supporting MICHAEL by the midsection. He hurls MICHAEL away from him, downstage right, tearing the shotgun from his grip. We see that the MAN is holding a bloody hunting knife in his other hand. He kicks the door shut behind him, checks to see if the gun is loaded. then with both weapons crosses to the kitchen door. He flings it open, stepping to one side, scanning the room with his gun hand. Turns back MICHAEL who is moaning, clutching himself, dragging his body onto the mattress.)

MAN: Left you to guard, did they? Well, they'll be back. *(walking to chair, watching MICHAEL bleeding and making noises on the mattress)* The gut wounds are the bad ones, aren't they, kid?

Even if I'd shot you, they take a while. And then again, I couldn't very well have shot you with a blank pistol, could I? Sorry it has to be this way. Well, no. No, I'm not sorry at all. *(he sits in the chair)* It didn't even take me long to figure it out. Not that I really figured anything out except that I'd been made a damned fool of. I don't know what the hell you kids thought you were up to. Maybe I'll ask your friends when they come back. In any case, it doesn't matter much, does it?

(MICHAEL is coiling into a fetal position.)

MAN: Yeah, that's the way. Bring your knees up and cover yourself with a nice warm blanket. That's hemorrhage, kid. I hope you enjoy yourself.

(He places knife on the floor. Stands up and walks upstage, covering entrance door with gun. He picks up the folding chair, giving it a jerk that brings it open, and returns to his previous position, placing the folding chair in front of the other.)

MAN: It's this simple, so simple: you fucked with the wrong guy, that's all. In fact for most of my life I wasn't even the wrong guy. But you get to the point where enough is enough. Some of us do. Some people never get there at all. I guess you just caught me at a bad time. I always figured I'd end up killing someone someday. *(picks up knife, places shotgun on folding chair)* I was the only one who figured it. *(advances on*

MICHAEL, knife extended. By the time he has finished talking he is leaning over MICHAEL'S body holding the knife near his face) Why the hell don't you give a guy a chance? You try something and it always turns out to be someone else's game. I didn't even get paid for this! Jesus Christ, do you think you can just walk over people and do any damned thing you want? You deserved what you got, you little bastard! You earned it.

(MICHAEL is now completely inert.)

MAN: Tired of talking, eh, kid? *(he wipes the blade, both sides, on MICHAEL'S knee)* Well, me too. TALK talk talk talk talk. I'm good and goddamned tired. *(walks back to chair, sits, placing the knife with the shotgun on the other chair in front of him. He removes a pack of playing cards from the pocket of his overcoat, snaps off the rubber band, shuffles deck, and begins to lay out a hand of solitaire on the chair.)*

MAN: Yeah, I guess I'll wait. Sooner or later they're coming back. Maybe they just went out for something to eat. It doesn't matter. That's one thing I am good at: waiting.

(He continues to play out his hand on the chair, snapping out his last card and laying it down. He stares at the cards.)

MAN: Oh, yeah. I'll wait. I don't care how goddamned long it takes. *(pause)* I'll wait.

(He stares at the entrance door ahead of him, unseeing, unmoving. The lights dim to blackness.)