



ACT I SCENE I

TIME:

Early May. Morning.

SETTING:

The living room of a Victorian home.

(The room features a formal entrance -- stage L. A door with an entrance to a kitchen, and dining room -- up stage R. Stairs leading up to two bedroom doors on the second floor -- up stage C. A TV viewing area -- stage L. A large Victorian sofa -- stage C. A fireplace against the wall -- stage L. The home is elegantly, and graciously appointed with beautiful antiques, nick-knacks and photographs, a side table is near the front entrance, a sofa and two chairs are near a coffee table -- center stage.)

Two women are dusting and polishing the living room. They are seventy-four year old widow LEONIE RUE and seventy year old spinster LOUISE MASTERSON; two sisters who have lived together since Leonie's husband died 20 years ago.

LEONIE

(singing)

Oh, what a beautiful morning.

Oh, what a beautiful day...

LOUISE

You're slipping. That's not worthy of my time. "Oklahoma".
(Thinking) "No one's there when your dreams at night get
creepy!"

LEONIE

Hmmm. A little more.

LOUISE

"No one cares if you grow or if you shrink."

LEONIE

What a depressing song.

LOUISE

"No one dries when your eyes get wet an' weepy."

LEONIE

It's a Hard-Knock Life from Annie. (Pause) Tomorrow!
Tomorrow!

LOUISE

(singing)

Please! You can't follow an "Annie" song with another song
from Annie. How about this:

(singing)

You're old. Nobody wants you. You may as well die.

LEONIE

That's not a song. You made that up.

LOUISE

It is too a song.

LEONIE

Who wrote it then?

LOUISE

Rogers and Hammerstein. It was the sequel to "The Sound of
Music" -- Maria's Revenge.

LEONIE

There was no sequel to 'The Sound of Music.'

LOUISE

There was. It was about Maria's life with all those brats
after the captain left her for a young whore.

LEONIE

(Pointing to a piece of furniture.) You missed a spot.

LOUISE

So what. It's not like anyone's going to notice. Name the
last time we had company, and don't include Nathan.

LEONIE

Why not?

LOUISE

If I thought I did this to make a good impression on your
son, I'd douse myself with Murphy's Soap and set myself on
fire.

LEONIE

Stop it. You know how it makes me feel when you belittle
Nathan like that. Does it make you happy to see me
miserable?

LOUISE

(singing) Oh, what a beautiful morning!

LEONIE

You know what your problem is? You always see the glass as half empty, where I choose to see it as half full.

LOUISE

Oh, I see the glass as half full. Your problem is you don't realize that when you weren't looking... somebody spit in it.

The PHONE RINGS and LEONIE walks over and sits at the phone table.

LEONIE

It's probably Nathan. (Answering phone) Hello. (Pause) This is Leonie Rue. (Pause) IRS? Thank God, it's you. I thought it might be Isaac's Repair Shop? I had the most awful experience with Isaac over a toaster oven. (LOUISE signals to LEONIE to keep her mouth shut.) Excuse me, Mr. Naccarato. (LEONIE holds the phone to her chest and confronts LOUISE.) What? I'm on the phone to the Internal Revenue Service?

LOUISE

Would you stop talking and find out what he wants?

LEONIE

Weren't you going to do something with the Murphy's Soap?

LOUISE hovers nervously around Leonie.

LEONIE (cont'd)

(To phone) Now what were you saying? (Pause) Audited? I don't understand. (Pause) Yes, but we don't want to be audited. (Pause) Twenty years?! (Pause) No, we haven't used an accountant since my husband died. (Pause) Let's see, twenty years ago. Mr. Naccarato, how much money are we talking about? (Pause) Oh, I'm sure you can give us some idea. For instance, would you say it's somewhere between a hundred dollars, and one million dollars? (Beat) See, now that wasn't so hard, was it? (Pause) Yes, we can come by your office. (Pause) All right. Goodbye. (LEONIE hangs up the phone as LOUISE rushes back down the stairs.) Well, imagine that. We're being audited.

LOUISE

Audited?! How much did he say we owed?

LEONIE

Somewhere between a hundred dollars and a million dollars. He wants to see us Friday at 2:00 and says we should bring our accountant. I'm sure it's nothing. He just wants to ask us a few questions.

LOUISE

Yeah, like top or bottom bunk? Leonie, did they send us any notices?

LEONIE

(Rising) We may have received some letters from the IRS, but we get so much junk mail, I may have thrown it away.

LOUISE

How could you throw out letters from the IRS?

LEONIE

I'm sorry, but everyone wants you to think their mail is important. You really have to come up with something special to catch my eye. Maybe if they put Dick Clark and Ed McMahon on their envelopes. That always gets my attention.

LOUISE

Maybe they should have sent a box with a spring-loaded hammer.

LEONIE

Would you stop worrying? It'll probably end up to be a small late charge, and that's it.

LOUISE

Leonie, this isn't like taking a video back late to Blockbuster.

LEONIE returns to cleaning.

LOUISE (cont'd)

Forget about the dusting. The only thing we'll have to clean is a prison cell.

LEONIE and LOUISE sit next to each other on the sofa.

LEONIE

They don't put people our age in prison for taxes.

LOUISE

But what if someone murdered their sister? What *then*?

NATHAN (OS)

(Calling) Mama! Aunt Louise!

LEONIE

(Calling) In here, darling! (To LOUISE) Now stop worrying. Nathan will know what to do.

LOUISE

(Whispering loudly) Nathan couldn't lace his own shoes with Velcro. How do you expect him to save us from the IRS?

NATHAN enters through the kitchen door drinking a glass of orange juice. In his forties, he's dressed casually in black slacks, a black v-neck sweater and a white shirt; fashions influenced by his frequent trips to Las Vegas.

NATHAN (OS)

Is this *fresh* orange juice?

LEONIE

Yes, dear.

NATHAN kisses LEONIE, and nods politely to LOUISE.

NATHAN

How are my girls?

LOUISE

We don't know. We haven't been able to keep track of them since our police scanner went on the fritz.

LEONIE

Don't pay any attention to her. She's a bitter old woman.

NATHAN

Like water off a duck's back, Mama.

LOUISE

First the IRS auditor, and now you.

NATHAN

Auditor? You're being audited?

LEONIE

Something about some back taxes that weren't paid? I'm sure it's nothing.

LOUISE

That's right. If we play our cards right, we'll hook up with a couple of butch dykes who'll protect us from the prison rabble.

LEONIE

Taxes were always something your father handled.

NATHAN

You haven't paid taxes since Dad died? That's twenty years.

LEONIE

Not like Irish funerals.

LOUISE

Irish movies! John Wayne's character in "The Quiet Man?"

LEONIE

Sean Thornton.

LOUISE

What was John Mill's character in "Ryan's Daughter"?

LEONIE

Michael, for which he won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.

NATHAN

If you two don't start taking this audit seriously, you'll spend the rest of your lives doing trivia from prison movies.

LEONIE

(To LOUISE) Prison movies. The warden who starred with Burt Lancaster in "Bird Man from Alcatraz."

LOUISE

(Stumped) Oh! Good one. Uhh...

NATHAN

Stop this, will you? They don't put women your age in prison.

LOUISE

Another reason to wake up in the morning.

LEONIE

I would never survive in prison.

LOUISE

You know how your mother hates to miss her soaps.

LEONIE

I'm sure they tape them for you.

LOUISE

You're probably thinking of the Mariott, dear. This is prison. I think they try to make the experience as difficult as possible. If we're lucky, we'll get "60 Minutes" on Sundays, but you can forget about "Wheel of Fortune."

LEONIE

Well, we can't go to prison if they're not going to let us watch "Wheel". Nathan, we have to do something.

NATHAN

You're damn right you have to do something. You'll probably be forced to sell the house.

LOUISE and LEONIE are stunned by NATHAN's words. The wheels start turning in NATHAN'S head, as if he's just realized the importance of what he's just said.

LOUISE

(Disbelieving) No! They can't make us sell the house. We grew up in this house.

LEONIE

Nathan, *you* grew up in this house.

NATHAN

(Distracted) I know. I know.

LEONIE

You were *conceived* in this house.

LOUISE

Knowing George, it's possible half the children in town were conceived in this house.

NATHAN

This isn't getting us anywhere. How long before you hear back from the IRS?

LEONIE

We have an appointment on Friday.

NATHAN

That gives us only two days. I know this guy... an attorney. He specializes in tax matters.

LEONIE

(Rising to hug NATHAN) Nathan to the rescue! I knew you could help us.

NATHAN

(Ignoring LEONIE, he turns away, plotting) Listen, there's a lot to do between now and Friday. Now due to the nature of your situation, he'll probably want his money up front, and he's at least two, three hundred an hour.

LOUISE

And you'll be a dear and cover that for us?

NATHAN

You know I'd love to, but you've caught me at a bad time. Mama, I'd do it if I could.

LEONIE

(Sitting on sofa) I know, honey. How much do you need?

NATHAN

I think I might be able to talk him into maybe accepting an advance for ten hours.

LEONIE

Two-thousand dollars then?

NATHAN

Better make it three. It's better to err on the safe side.

LOUISE shakes her head in disgust as NATHAN takes a checkbook from a purse sitting on the phone table and hands it to LEONIE.

LEONIE

(Writing) What's his name, sweetie?

NATHAN

Uh, I'm not sure if the check needs to be made out to him personally, or his law firm, and you know how many names are in those big law firms. You better just leave it blank.

LOUISE

Ha!

LEONIE

Honey, I don't feel comfortable with leaving it blank. It's not safe. I know! I'll just make it out to "Cash."

LOUISE

That's good thinking.

LEONIE

(LEONIE rips off the check and NATHAN snatches it.) Here you go, darling. (Looking sternly at LOUISE) Some of us really do appreciate your help.

LOUISE

And some of us licked the aluminum off too many frying pans.

NATHAN

You won't regret it, Mama. This guy's the best. I'll call you to let you know how things are going.

LOUISE

I'm sure they have plenty of phones at the track.

NATHAN kisses LEONIE, then approaches LOUISE. She holds a feather duster up, blocking his kiss.

NATHAN

(Playfully) Aunt Louise, you are such a kick. You girls be good now. Bye bye.

LEONIE

Take care, darling.

NATHAN exits back through the kitchen.
LOUISE stands shaking her head at
LEONIE.

LEONIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(Defensive) Dammit, Louise! What? (LOUISE starts to speak, but LEONIE stops her.) And don't you say a word about Nathan not being trustworthy. (LOUISE starts to speak, but is interrupted by LEONIE.) And I don't want to hear anything about Nathan taking that money and gambling it away. (Pause) Well, hells bells, Louise, aren't you going to say something?

LOUISE emits an exasperated sigh.

FADE TO BLACK

ACT I SCENE IITIME:

Late morning. Two weeks later.

SETTING:

Living room

LEONIE and LOUISE are watching "The Young and the Restless" on television. We hear the end theme music, and LOUISE punches the remote to turn it off.

LEONIE

Victor Newman is the sexiest man alive.

LOUISE

Victor Newman is a passive-aggressive Machiavellian who talks like his mouth is full of Jello.

LEONIE

He's strong, yet gentle. He built Newman Enterprises from the ground up. I admire the man.

LOUISE

You admired Lee Harvey Oswald because he learned Russian as a second language.

LEONIE

I did no such thing.

LOUISE

Victor never really commits to a relationship, so he ends up divorced from half the women in Genoa City, and then when it's over, he never cuts the strings. He doesn't allow anyone to go on with their lives. Look at Nikki!

LEONIE

They should be together for the children.

LOUISE

Nick and Victoria are in their 20's. They don't need their parents anymore. They need to grow up.

LEONIE

So there it is!

LOUISE

There what is?

LEONIE

The point you're trying to make. You think I should force Nathan to grow up.

LOUISE

No, it wasn't my point, but now that you mention it, Nathan is in his forties and from everything I've read, the forties are a good time to let your children fend for themselves.

LEONIE

You wouldn't understand. You've never been a mother.

LOUISE

No, and I've never been a proctologist, but I know an asshole when I see one.

LEONIE

Please!

LOUISE

Leonie, I was a teacher for long enough to know that a child is better off getting an "F" on an assignment than having their parents do their homework for an "A". You haven't learned that if Nathan fails, it's Nathan failing. You still think you're the one getting the 'F'.

NATHAN (OS)

(Calling) Mama! Aunt Louise!

LEONIE

(Calling) In the living room. (To LOUISE) Hush now. He's been working hard the past two weeks on our behalf.

LOUISE

Nathan never does anything on anyone's behalf, but Nathan's.

NATHAN (OS)

(Calling) Is this apple pie fresh?

LOUISE

I made it just for you. They say the extra cinnamon should cover the taste of the arsenic.

NATHAN laughs (OS) and LOUISE mimics his laugh. He enters through the kitchen door eating a piece of pie.

NATHAN

(Laughing) Arsenic. That's good.

LOUISE

How was the meeting with your high priced attorney? If there is such a person.

LEONIE

Louise!

NATHAN

(Angry to LOUISE) I've spent the past couple of weeks meeting with the attorney and the IRS, and all I get from you is attitude.

LEONIE

We know you've worked hard, honey. We're both just a bit on edge. Last night, we rented "Bitches Behind Bars" and the only redeeming quality about prison is learning to turn a spoon into a lethal weapon, and we can do that at home.

LOUISE

Be grateful they have a crafts program.

NATHAN

That's one thing I can assure you... you don't have to go to prison. Unfortunately, the rest of the news isn't so good. (He approaches LEONIE, rests on one knee, and takes her hand.) You're going to have to sell the house.

LEONIE and LOUISE are stunned.

LEONIE

(Rising) Oh, my God. I was afraid of this. (Crying) We can't possibly. We just --

LOUISE goes to LEONIE and puts her arms around her.

LOUISE

(To NATHAN) There has to be another way.

NATHAN

I'm sorry, but you have no choice. I've met with the IRS, and it looks like you owe close to four-hundred-thousand. They've given you ninety days.

LEONIE

Four-hundred thousand? Oh, my God! How could this happen?

NATHAN

Well, it's kind of complicated, but part of it goes all the way back to some buildings Dad sold where he didn't report the all the capital gains.

LOUISE

George! I knew it. I only wish that before he died, I'd have killed him.

LEONIE

Why can't the IRS leave us alone? We're American's for Pete's sake.

NATHAN

I know. I know. I'm sick about it, but it's the only way to raise that kind of money.

LOUISE

But isn't there a time limit?

NATHAN

Ninety days.

LOUISE

No! I didn't think they could prosecute you after so many years... a statute of limitations.

NATHAN

(unsure)

Yes, there is that, but you see, they feel Dad was trying to rip them off...

LOUISE

That's interesting that you would say that, because I don't think your father was fond of the IRS.

NATHAN

See... and if their was criminal intent, they just wave the statute of limitations.

LOUISE

But where would we live?

LEONIE

We won't go to a nursing home.

LOUISE

No!

LEONIE

We'll go to prison before we go to a nursing home.

NATHAN

They're not going to send you to prison when they know they can get enough money from the sale of the house. (Beat) The government's not insensitive, Mama. And besides, you won't have to go to a nursing home. I hear those senior communities are really something.

LOUISE

We know the kind of place you're talking about. Like in the movie Cocoon.

LEONIE

A Ron Howard film starring Don Ameche and Wilford Brimley.

LOUISE

That kind of thing's not for us.

NATHAN

Forget about that for now. There's someone I want you to meet.

LEONIE

Company?

LOUISE

Some other time.

NATHAN

Time is not a luxury you have here. The sooner we get the ball rolling, the sooner you can put all this behind you and get on with your lives.

LOUISE

Our lives are in this house.

NATHAN

Please! Don't make this anymore difficult. She's waiting in the kitchen. Her name is Sheila. Sheila sells real estate.

LOUISE□

By the sea shore?

NATHAN (cont'd)

The way I see it, it's either the IRS putting it on the auction block just to get what's due them, or you selling it, and making enough profit to take care of you for the rest of your lives.

LOUISE

(Surprised) This house is worth that much?

NATHAN

That's why I invited Sheila Volk. She's the best in the business. So before we get ourselves into a bother, let's see what she has to say. Fair enough?

LEONIE

(Sitting next to LEONIE on sofa) I suppose it couldn't hurt. Louise?

LOUISE shrugs her shoulders in defeat.

NATHAN

(Calling) Sheila! Ca' mon out.

SHEILA enters the living room from the kitchen door.

She is a sexy, attractive woman in her late 30's, dressed in a tight fitting, low-cut business suit. From the spray in her hair, to the silicone in her breasts, she does not come by her beauty naturally. Not smart, she makes dumb blondes feel good about themselves.

SHEILA

What a beautiful home you have.

NATHAN

Sheila, let me introduce you to --

SHEILA

No! Let me guess. (To LOUISE) You must be Nathan's Aunt Louise. (To LEONIE) And you must be Leonie.

SHEILA sits on the sofa.

LOUISE

Nathan, you never told us she'd be such a good guesser.

LEONIE

How are you, dear? Can we get you anything?

SHEILA

I'd love an espresso.

LOUISE

Well, why don't I just pop out and buy us a machine?

NATHAN

Coffee would be fine.

As LEONIE, NATHAN and SHEILA seat themselves, the others look at LOUISE. When LOUISE realizes they expect her to get the coffee, she heads towards the kitchen annoyed.

LOUISE

No! Let me get it.

LOUISE exits into the kitchen.

LEONIE

Sheila, you'll have to excuse us. This comes as shocking news.

SHEILA

I understand perfectly.

LEONIE

Nathan tells us you're in real estate.

SHEILA

I represent Stiletto Realty.

LEONIE

Like the shoes.

SHEILA

(showing off her shoes)

Thank you.

NATHAN

Sheila is one of their top five agents.

LEONIE

You must be very good at what you do.

SHEILA

I would have done better, but the other four agents in our office sold more homes.

LEONIE

Well, isn't that the way it goes sometimes? So how long have you lived on Long Island?

NATHAN

Sheila grew up in the Bronx.

LEONIE

Oh! The Bronx Bombers.

SHEILA

I wouldn't know. When I grew up, we didn't have to worry about terrorism.

NATHAN

(Forced laughter) I should have mentioned Sheila has a sense of humor.

LEONIE

(Laughing) I'll have to remember that one.

SHEILA looks at them hoping they'll let her in on the joke as LOUISE walks in with a mug of coffee, and hands it to Sheila.

LOUISE

What's so funny?

LEONIE

(Confused) I'm not sure.

As LOUISE sits, SHEILA hands her back the coffee, then reaches into a brief case, pulls out several pages of listings, and hands them to LEONIE.

SHEILA

First of all, I ran off a list of homes in the area. I have M.L.S..

LEONIE

Isn't that the one Jerry Lewis does those telethons for? One of our dear friends had that. It was tragic.

SHEILA

No, that's muscular dystrophy. M.L.S. isn't a disease--

LEONIE

That's the spirit, darling. You're very brave.

NATHAN

Mama, M.L.S. stands for "Multiple Listing Service".

SHEILA

It lists all the homes in the area for sale. These pages have all of the homes that have sold in the area during the last three months. I've highlighted with yellow marker the homes that are similar to yours. About the same age, square footage, number of bedrooms and baths.

LEONIE

(Reading) She's right, Louise. They're highlighted in yellow. Would you like to see?

LOUISE

I trust your ability to recognize yellow.

SHEILA

And from those, I compiled a list of the homes that have sold within a six block area. Those are circled in blue.

LEONIE

(Showing LOUISE) Here they are in blue, Louise.

LOUISE

(Re: SHEILA) She knows her colors.

SHEILA

And even though I haven't toured your home, I'd say you're looking at a sale price somewhere in the neighborhood of eight-hundred thousand.

Both LEONIE is surprised by the figure.
Louise stares off into space.

NATHAN

And that may be low.

LEONIE

That's so much money, isn't it Louise? (Louise is silent)
Louise, dear, did you hear--

LOUISE

(All business) I want the full ninety days in this house. I
don't want to move out in a week if the house is sold
tomorrow.

SHEILA

I'll make sure that we put it in the contract.

As SHEILA and NATHAN wait for a
response, LOUISE and LEONIE look at
each other, expressing the despair and
hopelessness of their situation.

LOUISE

(Resolved, to SHEILA) So what's next?

SHEILA

(Relieved, she rises.) First, I'd like to take a tour, and I
think we need to prepare for an open house.

LEONIE

(Brightening) We'll have guests?

LOUISE

Complete strangers? Perverts going through our linen
drawers?

LEONIE

(Rising) In that case, we'd better do some straightening up.
Can you give us a moment to make sure our bedrooms are in
order before we give you a tour?

SHEILA

Sure, honey.

LOUISE and LEONIE head up the stairs.

LEONIE

Oh, Louise. I just wasn't prepared for this.

LOUISE

I know, dear. Neither--

LEONIE

There's so much to do before we can entertain company.

Alone in the living room, NATHAN
crosses to SHEILA.

NATHAN

Well, it looks like you've got a home to sell.

SHEILA

I don't think Louise likes me.

NATHAN

Mother Teresa said the same thing about Louise. You sure you
can get eight-hundred?

SHEILA

(Sitting on the sofa.) Maybe more.

NATHAN

Eight-hundred-thousand! I can't believe it. A few days ago,
I come ready to beg my Mom for the thirty-five-G's I owe
Danny Spillo, and now, I got eight-hundred-thou fallen into
my lap. Pay back the thirty-five to Danny... the old ladies
owe Uncle Sam an even forty thouw... we'' get them set up in
one of those senior communities for about fifty-
thouw...that's one-twenty-five from the eight-hundred--

SHEILA

(Reaching for case) I think I have a calculator.

NATHAN

(Stopping her) Six-hundred and seventy-five grand. But
first you have to sell the house.

SHEILA

You don't think they'll catch on? Louise seems pretty sharp.

NATHAN

(Joining SHEILA on the sofa.) They bought the part about my
Dad not paying his taxes, no questions asked. Trust me.
It'll be a snap.

SHEILA

You mean like this?

SHEILA unbuttons the top button on her
suit and NATHAN buries his face into
the nape of her neck.

FADE TO BLACK

ACT I SCENE IIITIME:

Morning, a few days later.

LEONIE is sitting at the phone table talking on the phone. NATHAN enters from the dining room with a manila folder of papers in his hand.

LEONIE

(To phone) Not Burt Lancaster. Burt Lancaster was the *Birdman* of Alcatraz. Who was the warden? (Pause.) Not Bob Gunton. He was the warden in "Shawshank Redemption".

NATHAN

(Signalling) We need to talk.

LEONIE

(To phone) Don't you take that tone with me, young man. That is no way to get me to change long distance service. (She hangs up).

NATHAN

Good news, Mama. Is Louise still at the dentist's office?

LEONIE

(Sitting on the sofa.) It could be awhile. She likes the gas. Should we wait?

NATHAN

Actually, this doesn't concern her as much as it does you.

LEONIE

What it is?

NATHAN

I just left the attorney. He's worried about the strain this is putting on both of you. Especially you, since the house is in your name.

LEONIE

This is just as hard on Louise.

NATHAN

But legally, it's your house. Louise didn't even live here until after Daddy died.

LEONIE

(Reflecting) He didn't want her in the house. There was bad blood between those two.

NATHAN

Mama, try and stay focused. The attorney says there's a way I can alleviate all this pressure on you.

LEONIE

If only you could.

NATHAN

(Opening folder.) There's a legal way for me to handle everything on your behalf. It's called *Power of Attorney*. It means that I can protect you from having to deal with all of this, and you can focus on getting the house sold. I told him that you would trust me to do what's best for you. You do trust me, don't you?

LEONIE

Nathan, of course I do.

NATHAN

I wish Louise did. Sometimes I think she tries to turn you against me. Me! Your only child.

LEONIE

(Hugging NATHAN) Oh, honey. I know Louise is overly critical, but that's just Louise. She doesn't mean it.

NATHAN

(Rising) Maybe we should just forget it. I can't bear the thought of having Louise criticize me over this when I'm just trying to help you.

LEONIE

Let me worry about Louise.

NATHAN

Are you saying you're not even going to tell her? (Pause) Of course, there's no legal reason she has to know.

LEONIE

(She looks surprised at the suggestion, then quickly accepts it.) If there's no legal reason to tell her --

NATHAN

Then why make waves? I see what you're saying. Oh, Mama, you just made my life so much easier. I don't have to worry about Louise, and I can take good care of both of you.

LEONIE

I know you will.

NATHAN

Well, let's get this thing signed, and I can start protecting my Mama from all those bad guys out there.

LEONIE
(Lovingly) Oh, Nathan.

NATHAN sits on the sofa, pulls out a pen from his sport coat pocket, sets the papers on the coffee table and shows LEONIE where to sign.

FADE TO BLACK

ACT I SCENE IVTIME:

Morning, a few days later.

LIGHTS UP on living room as the
DOORBELL RINGS.

LEONIE (OS)
(Calling) Louise! That's the doorbell, dear.

LOUISE (OS)
(Calling) I know the sound of a doorbell. I also recognize
knocks, rings and oven buzzers.

LEONIE (OS)
I'm a little busy right now. Would you mind?

The DOORBELL RINGS. LOUISE enters from
her upstairs bedroom. She is dressed
in a simple, yet lovely dress. As she
walks down the stairs, she mumbles to
herself while she buttons her top
button. DOORBELL RINGS.

LOUISE
(Stopping to yell) I'm sliding down the bannister as fast as
I can. You'd think it was a friggin' debutante ball.

LEONIE opens her bedroom door just
enough to poke her head out. She
whispers loudly to LOUISE as she
continues down the stairs and to the
door.

LEONIE
Don't use the "F" word. Our guests might hear you.

LOUISE
I said 'frigging'. Frigging is not the 'F' word.

LEONIE
It's a derivative of the 'F' word.

LOUISE
It's not as bad.

LEONIE
That dress makes you look fat.

LOUISE
Frig you!

LOUISE opens the door. SHEILA steps inside. She carries a briefcase, and is dressed in a colorful summer dress.

SHEILA
(Cheerful) Good morning.

LOUISE looks at SHEILA smiling, then looks back up the stairs, and still smiling, returns to SHEILA.

LOUISE
This is just too good.

SHEILA
What?

LOUISE
(Yelling upstairs) Johnny, let's take a look at what's behind door number two!

LOUISE gestures with a flourish toward LEONIE'S bedroom. From the opening in the bedroom door, we see LEONIE reacting with anger, but quickly composes herself as she opens the door, and makes her entrance. LEONIE is dressed in the same dress SHEILA is wearing. For a moment, BOTH women stare at each other.

LOUISE (cont'd)
It's awkward little moments like this that make life tolerable.

LEONIE
(Recovering) What a beautiful dress, Sheila. This will be fun.

SHEILA
(Setting up materials for the open house) So where are you ladies going today? Shopping?

LEONIE
Oh no, dear. We're staying to help you.

SHEILA
Staying? People don't usually attend their own open house. People usually spend the day away, because people aren't as comfortable asking certain questions when the owners are here.

LOUISE

People will have to adjust.

LEONIE

We want to be here to welcome our guests.

SHEILA

But these aren't *guests*. These are potential home buyers.

LOUISE

Our mother used to say that we should make everyone feel welcome in our home, whether they have shoes on their feet, or a penny to their name.

LEONIE

So we have a duty to our mother to treat everyone who walks through those doors with honor and respect.

LOUISE

(Picking up a metal detector from a side table.) Leonie, put some metal in your pocket and let's see if this thing works.

SHEILA

You're not serious.

LOUISE

I wasn't comfortable with just frisking. You never know who's going to enjoy that kind of thing.

LOUISE waves the wand around SHEILA.
It goes off. SHEILA runs away.

LEONIE

(Watching) That's nice. I'll bring out refreshments.

LEONIE exits into the kitchen, as
SHEILA sets her materials on the table.
LOUISE watches her as she eyes the
photo album suspiciously.

LOUISE

You'll have to excuse, Leonie. She is somewhat deluded in her belief that you're our friend.

SHEILA

I am.

LOUISE

Let's be honest with each other. You don't want us here. You're afraid we'll get in the way.

SHEILA

Not at all.

LOUISE

But you're just selling a house. We're losing our home, and if pretending your clients are our guests makes my sister happy, then that's the way we're going to do things.

SHEILA

My goal is to sell this house before the IRS--

LOUISE

Your goal is to make a commission before the IRS takes away that opportunity.

SHEILA

You don't like me, do you?

LOUISE

Let's just say--

LEONIE enters from the kitchen, carrying a tray of glasses and a pitcher of iced tea.

LEONIE

Do you think I should prepare some fresh mint for the iced tea? Some of our guests may prefer a hint of mint.

LOUISE

We can always ask if they'd like mint.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

LOUISE (cont'd)

So soon?

SHEILA

Let me get the door.

SHEILA walks towards the door.

LEONIE

(Primping) Louise, how do I look?

LOUISE

Old. A little anemic.

LEONIE

Oh, shush!

SHEILA opens the door. Standing on the porch are PAT and MARCIA O' HARA, a yuppie couple in their early 30's. There is obvious tension between the two as if they've been arguing.

Before SHEILA can greet them, LEONIE moves towards the door with a flourish; one hand gracefully outstretched.

LEONIE (cont'd)

Welcome! Welcome! Please come in and make yourselves at home. (SHEILA stares at LEONIE in disbelief as PAT and MARCIA step forward into the living room.) My name is Leonie Rue. This beautiful young lady here is our dear friend, Sheila.

SHEILA

(trying to take control) Actually, I'm their agent. I mean, I *am* their friend *and* their agent. Do you need an agent? A friend...

LOUISE

(to Sheila) That approach needs some fine tuning, Sheila.

LEONIE

(Gesturing) And this is my sister, Louise Masterson.

PAT takes LEONIE'S hand and isn't quite sure whether to shake it or kiss it.

PAT

(Shaking hands) Hello. I'm Pat, and this is my wife, Marcia. We're the O'Hara's.

LEONIE

(Dramatic with Southern accent) Oh, Ashley, I can't bear the thought of losing Tara.

LOUISE

Too obvious. You wouldn't happen to know who played the warden opposite Burt Lancaster in "Bird Man of Alcatraz"?

As PAT and MARCIA stare at LOUISE in wonder, an embarrassed SHEILA takes an info sheet from the coffee table.

SHEILA

Feel free to look around. Let me know if you have any questions.

MARCIA

(Looking around, coolly) How old is the home?

SHEILA

It was built in --

LEONIE

1896 by our grandfather. Oh, Marcia, I wish you could have met the man. John Masterson.

(LEONIE takes a picture from the bookshelf - upstage center)
A Horatio Alger story if ever there was one. His family came over from Ireland during the potato famine.

SHEILA

(Replacing the picture) That's very interesting, Leonie, but I believe the O' Hara's are here to tour the house.

LOUISE

I'm sure the O' Hara's are interested in the background of our home. (LOUISE offers a cookie to SHEILA.) Have a cookie.

SHEILA

No thank you. I'm watching my weight.

LOUISE

That's probably for the best.

SHEILA quickly grabs a cookie and while looking at LOUISE, takes an aggressive bite from it. LEONIE takes the photo album from the side table, sits on the sofa and pulls PAT to her side.

LEONIE

Grandfather built the house expecting a large family, but sadly, our mother was their only child. They say Grandfather had difficult maintaining an erection. Remember, this was before Viagra or penile implants. Sun Tea?

MARCIA

Actually, we'd rather just look around. We have quite a few homes to see today.

LOUISE

We have lemonade.

PAT

(Looking at MARCIA for approval) Lemonade?

MARCIA

(Frustrated) Oh, all right. I'd like to see the kitchen, anyway.

LEONIE

Louise, why don't you take Marcia into the kitchen, and I'll show Pat the photo album.

MARCIA

I'd like Pat to see the kitchen, too.

LEONIE

(PAT starts to rise, but LEONIE pulls him back.) There'll be plenty of time for that, Pat.

SHEILA

(Terse) He wants to see the kitchen, Leonie.

LEONIE

Yes. And it's a beautiful kitchen, Pat. (LEONIE continues to describe the contents of the photo album.) This is our father with Grandfather and Grandmother Masterson. Taken before the home was built.

MARCIA and LOUISE walk towards the kitchen the kitchen.

LOUISE

(LOUISE stops MARCIA before the door leading into the dining room.) You're standing on the exact spot where Grandfather Masterson died. Notice the slight discoloration.

LEONIE

(Turning to MARCIA) It was a heart attack, but Grandmother thought he was choking, and performed a tracheotomy.

LOUISE

(Taking MARCIA'S arm) Suffice it to say, we chewed very carefully in front of Grandmother.

LOUISE and MARCIA exit into the kitchen.

LEONIE

(To PAT) I'm sorry, but what was your name?

Before he can answer, SHEILA grabs PAT by the arm to pull him off the sofa.

SHEILA

Leonie, I think Mr. O'Hara would much rather tour the house. After all, that is why he's here.

LEONIE grabs PAT by his other arm, tries to pull him back onto the sofa, but ends up rising herself.

LEONIE

But a tour will be much more interesting if he has some historical background on the home.

SHEILA grabs PAT'S arm again, and there ensues a tug-of-war.

SHEILA

Mr. O'Hara, why don't you and I go upstairs into the bedrooms.

LEONIE

(Pulling at PAT) Sheila, I really don't think that Mrs. O'Hara would appreciate you taking Mr. O'Hara alone into the upstairs bedrooms.

PAT

Ladies, please!

SHEILA

(Pulling at PAT) It's *my* job to show the house.

PAT

Why don't we --

LEONIE

And it's our home, and I have an obligation to make sure our guests are treated in a hospitable manner.

SHEILA

And I am a professional realtor, and as your realtor, I am obligated to show the home in a professional manner.

LEONIE pulls extremely hard, and the momentum sends SHEILA sprawling front-first onto PAT, just as the kitchen door opens and MARCIA runs out as if being chased. She is immediately followed by an irate LOUISE.

MARCIA

I have never! Pat, we're leaving!

PAT

Marcia! (MARCIA finally sees SHEILA atop PAT on the sofa. SHEILA rights herself, but accidentally pushes a hand into PAT'S crotch. PAT screams in pain.)

MARCIA looks at SHEILA and PAT in disbelief.

MARCIA

PAT! What the hell are you doing?!

In too much pain to speak, PAT lays upon the sofa agonizing.

LOUISE

(Livid to LEONIE) I'm showing her our kitchen, and she starts in about remodeling with granite counter tops, stainless steel and an island!

LEONIE

Marcia, dear, that is a very fine kitchen.

MARCIA

I was thinking out loud.

SHEILA

You can! (Crossing to challenge LOUISE) Louise, she has every right to do anything she wants with the house.

LOUISE

If she *owned* this house, she could turn the kitchen into a miniature golf course, but she doesn't own this house.

SHEILA

And you'll continue to own the house until the IRS does, because no one is going to make an offer if you act this way.

MARCIA

(Livid) Pat! I've seen enough. Let's go.

PAT shoots up from the sofa as MARCIA storms towards the door. With a burst of speed, SHEILA runs past her, and with arms stretched, bars the door.

SHEILA

No! Wait! Please don't go!

MARCIA

And *you*! What were you doing with my husband?

SHEILA

It's not what you think.

PAT

It's not. She was just trying to get me upstairs to the bedrooms.

SHEILA

But I didn't want to take your husband upstairs alone. I'd want you there too.

LOUISE

My God, Sheila! Get a hold of yourself!

MARCIA

This is incredible. *Incredible!* (MARCIA grabs SHEILA and throws her aside, sending her into PAT'S arms.) We're leaving! Let's -- (MARCIA sees PAT holding SHEILA) *PAT!* (To the women.) Someone is going to find out what happened here today.

LOUISE

In that case, you'll need her card.

LOUISE grabs a card, hands it to Marcia. SHEILA quickly takes the card away, as LOUISE rushes over to the side table, grabs the security wand and waves it up and down MARCIA'S body.

MARCIA

What on earth do you think you're doing?

LOUISE

Checking for radiation. Sheila didn't tell you about the canal?

MARCIA

PAT!

PAT grabs SHEILA's card from her hand, and shoots a parting wink at SHEILA. Once he's out the door, SHEILA turns on the sisters.

SHEILA

In all of my months as a realtor, I have never seen anything like this.

LOUISE

In all of my years, I've never insulted another woman's kitchen.

SHEILA

You can't take these things personally. You are *not* your kitchen.

LOUISE

I know. I'm a broom closet, but I can dream.

SHEILA

Listen to me, will you? I think it would be better for all of us if you just left the marketing of your home to me... if you find something else to do while I show the house.

LOUISE

What? And turn our home into some kind of real estate swinger's club? I have a better idea. Why don't you find something else to do while we show the house?

SHEILA

We have a legal contract. I have exclusive rights to market this house for the next three months.

LEONIE

She has a contract, Louise. The last thing we need is a vicious court battle.

SHEILA stiffens with fear when she hears the mention of a court battle.

LEONIE (cont'd)

Remember what happened on 'Y&R' when Jill and John fought for custody of the baby, and John had a seizure, and he's younger than we are.

SHEILA

(Smiling nervously) Ladies! We don't have to go to court.

LEONIE

Isn't this exciting, Louise? We're going to settle out of court.

SHEILA

(Wildly) This has nothing to do with court. (Recomposing herself.) We're going to think about this like adults, and I know you'll see that I'm only thinking of you when I say that it's probably best that I show the house alone so that we can avoid the kind of problems we had today.

LOUISE

And our bedrooms become the stage for your menage a trois'?

SHEILA

I'm not even going to respond to that, but I *am* going to speak to Nathan.

LOUISE

Fine. And do you know what I'm going to tell Nathan? Contract or no contract, we are going to have our Open House without you.

SHEILA

You can't do that.

LOUISE

We can do it faster than you can say "breast augmentation" Old people don't like to be told they can't do something.

We've earned the right to be as difficult and stubborn as we want to be. Trust me. In a battle of wills, never underestimate the lady with the hearing aid.

LOUISE adjusts her hearing aid.

SHEILA
You can't do this to me.

LOUISE
(Straining to hear) What?

LEONIE
(Shouting at LOUISE) She says you can't do this.

LOUISE
What?

Suddenly, NATHAN enters from the kitchen.

NATHAN
(Cheerful) Do I smell a *sale*?

They all turn to NATHAN. SHEILA goes berserk.

SHEILA
I...YOU...AHHHH!

Upset, SHEILA grabs her briefcase and storms out the door. LOUISE readjusts her hearing aid. NATHAN looks at the two upset and confused.

NATHAN
What --

SHEILA (OS)
NATHAN!

NATHAN
(Warning LOUISE and LEONIE) Don't go anywhere.

NATHAN exits.

LEONIE
Oh, my.

LOUISE
(Looking at her watch) Don't worry about it now. It's almost time for 'Y and R'.

They make themselves comfortable in front of the TV. LOUISE turns on the TV. The theme music to "The Young and the Restless" fades up.

LEONIE

I feel so bad for Nick and Sharon.

LOUISE

They should have never gotten married. They were too young.

LEONIE

And restless.

LOUISE

What really bothers me about Nicholas is that they sent him away to school in Switzerland when he was eight, and when he returns a year later, he's aged ten years.

LEONIE

Europe can do that to you.

NATHAN enters through the front door and stands directly in front of the TV.

NATHAN

Mama! Louise! How could you?

LEONIE

Can't it wait, dear? We just started watching "Y and R".

NATHAN

No, it can't wait.

NATHAN tries to grab the remote control from LOUISE. Unsuccessfully.

NATHAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

We'll tape it. You can watch it later. Right now --

LEONIE

No, we can't watch it later. It's not as good taped.

NATHAN

It's the *same* show.

LOUISE

It's not the same. It's taped.

LEONIE

We like to see it as it happen, dear. If we watch it taped, it's already happened.

NATHAN snatches the remote control away from LOUISE, and turns off the TV.

NATHAN

Live with it! What were you thinking? Sheila refuses to step foot in this house with the two of you here.

LOUISE

So it was a success.

NATHAN

Let's get one thing straight. Sheila was in the right. You were in the wrong.

LOUISE

You weren't here. She was rude and insensitive. Your mother and I feel that we can do a better job selling the house ourselves.

NATHAN

That's not your decision to make.

LOUISE

Excuse me?!

NATHAN

I'm sorry, Mama, but I have to do this. (Pause.) Louise, Mama gave me power of attorney.

LOUISE

(Shocked) What are you talking about?

LEONIE

That's something I may have forgot to tell you, Louise. He felt it was in our best interest that we not be bothered with all of the details.

LOUISE

How could you let him talk you into such a thing?

NATHAN

The house is in her name. She's the one with her ass on the line.

LOUISE

This is my house just as much as it is your mother's.

NATHAN

The house belonged to Mama and Daddy. The only way you own this house is if Mama passes away... God forbid.

LEONIE

Let's not talk about this. You're upsetting your aunt.

LOUISE

I'd appreciate it if you didn't remind me that I was related to this conniving, underhanded --

LEONIE

Louise! Please don't --

NATHAN

Let her talk, Mama. She's just bitter 'cause she never had what you had. She couldn't find a husband, and she never knew a woman's joy of giving birth or raising children.

LEONIE

(Shocked) Nathan!

LOUISE turns away from NATHAN trying not to let him see her pain.

LEONIE (cont'd)

Nathan, I think you had better leave.

NATHAN

Fine! Have your damn open house, but you've got two weeks. If you can't sell the house yourselves in two weeks, Sheila is in charge. If she wants you out of the house when she shows it, that's the way it's going to be. *Two weeks!* And if by a snowball's chance in hell you do manage to find a buyer, Sheila will take over the negotiations from there. (NATHAN exits through the front door.)

LOUISE

Leonie, how could you give him power of attorney?

LEONIE

Louise, I'm so sorry. I was just happy he was taking an interest in law. I've made a mess of this haven't I?

LOUISE

No.

LEONIE

It seems like you've spent all of your life saving me from all the stupid things I've done... all the times George--

LOUISE

Leonie, let's not. We have so much to do.

LEONIE

So you meant what you said? We'll be doing the open houses by ourselves?

LOUISE

What's the big deal? They come in the house. I show the woman the kitchen while you take the man upstairs for sex.

LEONIE

Hush. You're terrible.

LOUISE

What if he looked like George Clooney?

LEONIE

Not even if he was George Clooney.

LOUISE

How 'bout Victor Newman?

LEONIE

Victor Newman! (Pause) I'd need at least ten minutes.

BOTH laugh.

LEONIE (cont'd)

I do hope the next time we have company, it goes better. Mother had such a way with guests.

LOUISE

We are our Mother's daughters.

LEONIE

Remember what she use to say...*diet at your house...*

BOTH

...you don't diet at my house.

LOUISE

The table she would set.

LEONIE

Mmm. And the music. Always music.

LOUISE

*Always...*that was the song she would have us sing for guests before we went off to bed.

They sit smiling, remembering.

LOUISE begins to softly sing "Always", and is joined in song by LEONIE.

BOTH

(Singing)

I'll be loving you, always.
With a love that's true, always.

When the things you plan need a helping hand
I will understand, always.

At the songs end, LOUISE and LEONIE
both have tears in their eyes.

LOUISE
What do you say we get ready? You never know when someone's
going to drop by.

LEONIE
We'll have to have an open house every day. With a break for
'Y. and R.

LOUISE
And 'Wheel'.

LEONIE
Yes, and 'Wheel'.

LEONIE and LOUISE exit. An
instrumental version of *Always* fades
up. The lights fade to black.

END OF ACT I

ACT II SCENE ITIME:

Morning, a few days later

Lights fade up stage as LEONIE enters from the kitchen wearing a flapper dress from the 20's. LOUISE enters through the front door also wearing a flapper dress.

LEONIE

Did you put up the sign?

LOUISE

It's up. (re: dress) I feel like such a fool.

LEONIE

You look beautiful. You'll see. This is going to be fun. Doing a theme for our open house will help us stand out from the crowd. We'll stick in their minds.

LOUISE

Like a tumor.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

LEONIE

Places everyone! (Clapping) Places!

LEONIE walks to an antique phonograph and starts playing a record from the 1920's as LOUISE walks towards the front door.

LOUISE

Would you stop that? This isn't a damn play.

LEONIE

Answer the door.

LOUISE

I forgot my lines.

LEONIE

(Prompting.) Welcome friends. Leave the 90's behind, and step into the roaring 20's.

LOUISE

Right.

LEONIE grabs a cigarette holder with an unlit cigarette from the coffee table, and strikes a classic vamp pose. LOUISE opens the front door. Two gay men, MARK (40's) and JEREMY (early 20's) stand there smiling. BOTH stare at LOUISE in disbelief.

LOUISE (cont'd)
(Monotone) Welcome friends. Come inside and leave the 90's behind, and step into the roaring 20's.

MARK and JEREMY break into joyous laughter as they enter the living room. As their laughter fades, they see LEONIE posing, and begin laughing again. LOUISE is embarrassed by their response, but undaunted, LEONIE joins the men in their laughter.

JEREMY
This is too much.

MARK
Much too much.

LEONIE
Tea? Cookies? Charleston?

BOTH men roar with laughter again.

JEREMY
Why didn't you tell us this was a theme party? We could have dressed for the occasion. (To MARK.) You could have come as the Great Gatsby.

MARK
I would love to see you as a flapper.

JEREMY
We'll have to remember this for "The Queen's Ball".

LEONIE
You know the queen?

MARK
Intimately.

JEREMY
(Pinching LEONIE'S cheek) You are so sweet. (Tweaking LOUISE's nose) You both are. (Surveying the room.) And your home is fabulous. How long have you lived here?

LEONIE

All of our lives. Louise lived in the city for thirty years while she taught school. By the way, this is my sister, Louise. My name is Leonie.

JEREMY

I'm Jeremy, and this is Mark.

MARK

Ta da!

LEONIE

It's a pleasure. I'm so glad you could drop by. Are you father and son?

JEREMY

(Laughing) Honey, you're not trying to make friends are you?

MARK

Actually, ladies, we can't afford to buy this house, but I've passed it many times, and I've always been drawn to it. (He begins walking up the stairs.) Do you mind if we...(He suddenly gasps in shock.) Oh, my God. It's so strong.

JEREMY

You don't think --

MARK

I do think.

JEREMY

Oh, my God.

LOUISE

(To JEREMY) What is it?

JEREMY

Shush, ladies. Mark is having a moment.

MARK closes his eyes as if going into a trance. All three of them watch MARK until he opens his eyes and points towards the kitchen.

MARK

That door. That leads to the kitchen. Am I right?

LEONIE

Yes. How did you --

MARK

And upstairs? The bedrooms. Six of them?

LOUISE

Yes.

JEREMY

(He holds his arm out to LEONIE.) Feel my arm. Goose bumps.

LEONIE

(Feeling JEREMY'S arm.) He's right, Louise. Feel his goosebumps.

LOUISE

Maybe later.

MARK

I'm seeing a party.

JEREMY

Did you have parties here?

LOUISE

Yes, we had parties.

LEONIE

Wonderful parties.

JEREMY

Mark, they had parties.

LOUISE

What's he doing?

JEREMY

Mark has been here before. In an earlier lifetime.

LEONIE

Oh. Then tell him we've added cable.

MARK

Please!

JEREMY

(Kneeling before MARK) Quiet ladies, please. We must have quiet.

MARK

(MARK uses JEREMY'S head for a crystal ball.) I remember a man. A man with a pocket watch.

LEONIE

That could have been my husband, George.

MARK

His hair.

LEONIE
George didn't have much hair.

MARK
There's not much there.

LEONIE
That must be George.

LOUISE
Or any number of balding men who could tell time.

MARK
Did you have a housekeeper? Hispanic? Puerto Rican?

LEONIE
Maria.

MARK
He's kissing her. He's groping her.

LOUISE
That would be George.

MARK
His hands are all over her...not her...ME. It's me. *I'm*
Maria.

MARK begins running around the room
brushing the invisible hands away from
his body.

JEREMY
Oh, my God! It's *Maria!*

LEONIE
(To Louise.) I thought his name was Mark.

LOUISE
I think he thinks he *was* Maria.

LEONIE
But he's a man.

JEREMY
He wasn't a man back then. He was Maria.

MARK
His hands are all over me. Grabbing at me. I fight to break
away, but it only stokes the fires of his burning passion.

LEONIE
Burning passion?!

JEREMY

Please!

MARK

(He falls upon the sofa, fighting off an imaginary George.)
It's no use. He's too strong. I feel myself giving in to
him. (He subtly spreads one of his legs.)

LEONIE

(Frightened) I don't like this.

LOUISE

(To MARK) Maria, would you ask Mark to come back?

JEREMY

(To LEONIE) Shhh.

LEONIE

(To LOUISE) I can't believe this happened. Not my George.
And Maria was such a sweet girl.

MARK

(Now grabbing and holding an imaginary George.) No! Don't
stop!

LEONIE

That slut!

LOUISE slaps MARK'S face. He breaks
from his trance-like state and stares
at LOUISE in disbelief as JEREMY rushes
to MARK'S side.

MARK

What happened?

JEREMY

(To MARK.) Are you all right?

Seeing LEONIE crying, LOUISE takes her
to the sofa.

LOUISE

Is *he* all right? What about my sister? You were just about
to have sex with her husband... made all the more difficult
seeing that he's been dead for twenty years.

JEREMY

Mark isn't responsible for the actions of his former self.

LOUISE

That's the problem... people aren't willing to take
responsibility for their past lives.

LEONIE

(Hurting) I could never give George enough of what he wanted. It was my fault that he had to look elsewhere.

LOUISE

What are you saying? You loved George in every way possible.

JEREMY

(Sitting next to LEONIE.) I can't believe what he did to Maria. George was a bastard.

LOUISE

Shut up.

LEONIE

Maybe if I had done more.

LEONIE begins to cry, and is immediately comforted by MARK and JEREMY.

MARK

There, there. Let's not waste any tears over the man. He was obviously a beast.

JEREMY

A beast. A terrible, terrible beast.

MARK

He was an animal.

LOUISE

(Intense) Listen to Mark, Leonie. After all, he was there. (She gives a quick take, realizing what she just said.)

LEONIE

(Wiping away her tears) I know you're right. Thank you for allowing me this moment of weakness. What would one do without the support of friends. (Rising) Look at me. I'm not going to shed one more tear over that man. (Rising, regaining composure.) You didn't come here to discuss a tragic romance. Who would like tea?

MARK

(Crossing to the front door.) The feelings are too strong. The sooner we leave here the better.

LOUISE

But you haven't seen our home.

JEREMY

We can't possibly stay a moment longer.

MARK

Absolutely not... unless we took care of the problem.

JEREMY

Are you serious?

MARK

Honey, I've never been more serious.

MARK exits into the dining room.

LEONIE

Serious about what?

JEREMY

Are you sitting down? (They aren't.) Mark wants to exorcise the spirits.

LOUISE

Like in "The Exorcist"?

MARK re-enters from the dining room.

LEONIE AND MARK

With Linda Blair and Ellen Burstyn.

JEREMY

Exactly.

LEONIE

Don't you need a priest for that?

LOUISE

Not just any priest. A Jesuit.

JEREMY

Mark was a priest in a former life. A Jesuit saint, in fact.

LEONIE

Such a busy past.

LOUISE

Which saint?

MARK

Ignatius of Loyola.

LEONIE

Not the founder of the Jesuits?

JEREMY

Would we make something up like that?

LEONIE

The founder of the Jesuits conducting an exorcism in our home. Louise, can you imagine?

LOUISE

I'm trying.

MARK

We'll need to come back. Tonight. Say at midnight?

LEONIE

I don't think we have any plans.

LOUISE

Actually, it sounds like fun.

MARK

(Abrupt) This is not a circus, madame. Exorcising a spirit from a home is a very serious business.

JEREMY

(Excited) You'll have to wear that cassock with the sequins.

MARK

(Clapping) I've already thought of that.

JEREMY

What about *me*?

MARK

Darling, I'm going to need an altar boy.

JEREMY

(Shivering.) Oh, my God. (Holding out his arm to LOUISE.) Would you feel those goosebumps?

LOUISE

I'm just not a goosebump feeler.

MARK

Jeremy, let's go. There's much to do, much to do.

JEREMY

Coming Father. (Jeremy smiles at the ladies and wriggles excitedly to MARK. They wave goodbye, and exit.)

LEONIE

Do you think we're doing the right thing? What if we're opening the door to the dark side? What if we accidentally invite the devil into our home? I don't want to upset the devil.

LOUISE

I don't know if we're upsetting the devil, but I bet God is laughing his ass off.

FADE TO BLACK

ACT II SCENE IITIME:

Later that afternoon.

LEONIE enters from the front door carrying a stack of mail. She studies a larger manila envelope. She goes to the phone and dials. As she speaks to Nathan's answering machine, LOUISE enters from the kitchen hallway, and listens.

LEONIE

Hello, Nathan. I just picked up the mail, and there's something for you from the IRS. I know you're in Atlantic City, but it looks important, so I'm wondering if I should open it. Well, I'll wait to hear from you. I'll leave it on the dining room table. Call me.

LOUISE

Let me see it. (LEONIE hands her the envelope.) It says "Please Respond Immediately."

LEONIE

The IRS waited twenty years to audit us, they can wait another day or two.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

LEONIE (cont'd)

Places everyone...places.

LOUISE

I'm not doing a theme open house again.

LEONIE

You look wonderful.

LOUISE

I look like an idiot.

LEONIE

Are you saying *I* look like an idiot.

LOUISE

Idiot works for you.

LOUISE walks up stairs into her bedroom carrying the envelope, as LEONIE crosses to the door.

She opens the door, revealing DEX and RON, two shabbily dressed, unkept men.

LEONIE

Can I help you?

RON

You are having an open house?

LEONIE

(Surprised) You're here for the open house?

DEX

That's right, mam. We're here for the open house.

RON

We're here on behalf of our mother.

LEONIE

(Stepping aside to allow them inside.) Oh! So you're looking for a home for your mother?

RON

Yes.

DEX

She's out in the car.

LEONIE

(Peering out the door to the street.) In the car?

RON

(Stepping in front of LEONIE to block her view.) She's lying down in the back seat. She's not feeling well. She has a headache.

LEONIE

It's such a small car.

DEX

And she has no legs.

RON

(Shooting a quick, angry glance at DEX.) Yes. Uhh... since the loss of her legs, she is prone to headaches.

LEONIE

(Escorting RON and DEX into the living room.) The poor woman. Are you sure she's comfortable?

RON

Oh sure, she's got plenty of legroom. Do you live here alone, mam?

LEONIE

No, my older sister and I live together.

DEX

You don't have a man in the house?

LEONIE

My husband died twenty years ago.

DEX

Cool.

LEONIE

What?

RON

(Covering.) It's cool that you seem to be taking it so well.

LEONIE

Well, it was twenty years ago.

RON

(Looking at a photo on a side table near the sofa.) Is this your husband?

LEONIE

(Walking to DEX.) No, that's my son. His name is Nathan. A good son is such a blessing to a mother. I'm sure your mother would agree with me on that.

RON

She's asleep, otherwise we'd ask her.

A casually dressed LOUISE enters from her bedroom and walks down the stairs. At first, taken aback by the unkept appearance of the two men, LOUISE quickly composes herself.

LOUISE

Hello.

LEONIE

Gentlemen, this is my sister Louise, and my name is Leonie. Louise, these gentlemen are here to tour our home on behalf of their mother, a legless invalid sleeping in the backseat of their Fiat.

LOUISE

I used to own a Fiat.

RON and DEX look at each other anxiously.

DEX
What color?

LOUISE
White.

RON
(Relieved) Ours is blue.

LOUISE
I didn't catch your names.

DEX
I'm Rex and this is Don.

RON
Uhh... Ron and Dex. You'll have to excuse my brother. Dex has a learning problem where you mix up words.

LOUISE
Dyslexia?

RON
No. Smith. Ron and Dex Smith. We were just telling your sister what a beautiful home you have here.

LOUISE
We like it. Leonie and I were both born in this home.

DEX
(Picking up a crystal vase off the bookshelf.) You sure seem to have a lot of valuable things here.

LEONIE
That vase is Steuben.

DEX
I don't know. I kinda like it.

LEONIE
Would you boys care for some iced tea? Perhaps lemonade?

RON
That would be most nice of you. It's a little hot outside and the windows of the car don't roll down.

LOUISE
But your mother. She must be suffocating in there.

DEX
I think that's just for dogs.

RON
Don't worry. She'll be fine. We left the back door cracked.

LEONIE
You're sure?

RON
Oh, yeah. She'll be fine.

LOUISE
Well, what'll it be? Iced tea or lemonade?

DEX
Is it possible to get one of each?

RON
You could mix them.

DEX
Yeah, you could mix them.

LEONIE
Louise, while you're getting them their drinks, I'll tell the gentlemen about our home. (LOUISE exits into the kitchen via the hallway, as LEONIE points to the sofa.) Have a seat. To really get a feel for our home, you should take a look at our photo album. (DEX sits on the sofa with LEONIE as RON cases the joint. LEONIE grabs the photo album.) You know, there's something that concerns me about the two of you looking at the house.

DEX
(Defensive) We're not gonna take anything.

LEONIE
No, I'm not accusing you of taking anything. I'm concerned about your mother. This house, as beautiful as it is, doesn't have any handicap access. The bedrooms are on the second floor. We don't have an elevator. We do have a dumbwaiter --

RON
I thought you said you and your sister live alone.

LEONIE
We do, but unless you invest in an automatic stair lift, you'll have to carry your poor mother up and down the stairs.

RON
Due to the tragic loss of her legs, she's as light as a feather, but one of those automatic stair things might be something we'll have to look at.

To tell you the truth, we're more concerned with the safety of her valuables. Her diamonds.

DEX

Rings.

RON

And necklaces.

DEX

And ankle bracelets.

RON

(Covering) Although she has no more use for her ankle bracelets, there is still an emotional attachment.

LEONIE

I understand. Well, we do have a wall safe behind a painting in my bedroom where we keep our valuables, but I'm afraid it's been broken for years.

RON

You mean it doesn't lock?

LOUISE enters from the kitchen hallway carrying a tray of cookies and two full glasses.

LEONIE

It doesn't even close all the way. You'd have to replace it.

LOUISE

(Walking towards the three, LOUISE eyes the men suspiciously.) Replace what?

LEONIE

The safe. The boys were worried about their mother's valuables... where to put them for safe keeping.

RON

Yes. Our mother is very concerned about her valuables.

DEX

They're very... valuable.

RON and DEX quickly grab for the glasses and the cookies at the same time. LOUISE and LEONIE watch in wonder as the men seem to chug both the drinks and the cookies at the same time.

LEONIE

I told them they'd have to replace the safe.

LOUISE

I suppose they would.

RON

Well, that's something we can think about.

LOUISE

May I ask you about your price range?

DEX

Price range?

LOUISE

Unless we're in the right neighborhood, you may be wasting your time.

DEX

Oh, we like this neighborhood.

RON

No! She wants to know if the selling price of this house is in our price range.

DEX

It all depends on what you're asking.

LOUISE

Eight hundred thousand.

RON

It's within our price range, but I must warn you, me and Dex here can be pretty good at jewing people down.

LOUISE

(Shocked) Jewing?

DEX

You know... haggling over the price.

LOUISE

I take it you're not Jewish.

DEX

No, mam. We're Christians.

LOUISE

What if I told you my sister and I were Jewish.

RON

It's just a figure of speech, man. We have nothing against the Jews.

DEX
In fact, our mother's one.

LEONIE
Your mother's a Jew?

RON
Yup. Through and through. She's always goin' to church.

LEONIE
The synagogue?

RON
I think that's the one.

LOUISE
Why didn't she raise you in the Jewish faith?

RON
(Fumbling) Well... yeah... she tried to.

DEX
She even had us baptized Jews when we were babies.

RON
That's right. But she wanted us to make up our own minds about religion.

LEONIE
What made you decide to convert to Christianity?

RON
Oh, I don't know. Lots of stuff.

DEX
Jesus mainly.

RON
Yeah! Jesus...and his ten commandments.

DEX
Ten Commandments.

LOUISE
I'm afraid you're mistaken. God gave the ten commandments to Moses. A Jew.

RON
We saw the movie, mam. But anyone will tell you that Hollywood is pretty much run by Jewish people, so just about everything you see is gonna have a Jewish angle to it.

LOUISE

That's the most ludicrous anti-Semitic statement I've ever heard.

RON and DEX look at each other briefly, trying to interpret the meaning of Louise's statement.

RON

That's kind of you to say, mam.

LEONIE

Let's proceed with the tour, shall we? (LEONIE sets the photo album on the coffee table, and all three rise.) We'll begin with the dining room. (ALL walk towards the dining room. As LOUISE speaks, RON holds back a distance from the others.)

LOUISE

Our grandfather, when he designed the dining room, imported an antique China cupboard from Ireland.

LOUISE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(To RON) Aren't you joining us?

RON

I think I'll just go out and check on our mother. This heat can cause perspiration problems with her stumps.

RON walks towards the front door and opens it as the others exit into the dining room. Once they have exited, RON re-enters the house, closing the door behind him. Next, RON walks to the dining room door and listens. Satisfied that the others are occupied inside, RON walks quietly over to the window near the entrance, unlocks the latch, then quickly and quietly exits out the front door where he waits. LOUISE, LEONIE and DEX re-enter the living room from the kitchen hallway.

LEONIE

(to DEX) ...actually, Dex, I can't say that it has. Louise, has rubbing the silverware across the china ever made you shiver 'like (looking to Dex)... like you was taking a whiz'?

LOUISE shakes her head.

DEX

Maybe that's just for guys.

RON sees them as they enter into the living room, and enters. The others turn to him.

LOUISE

How's your mother doing?

RON

(Going to Dex) Just fine, although she did ask us to hurry things along. Maybe we could split up. Dex, how 'bout you take a look around here some more, and I'll check things out upstairs?

LEONIE

I suppose we could do that. Louise, why don't you show Dex the downstairs, and I'll take Ron upstairs.

RON

(To LEONIE.) I'd like to see your room if that's all right.

LOUISE watches as LEONIE and RON head up the stairs and enter LEONIE'S room.

DEX

(To LOUISE.) So, you got a TV?

LOUISE

Yes we do, but it doesn't come with the house.

DEX

That's cool. We don't have no problem gettin' TV's.

LOUISE sits in the chair and DEX sits on the sofa.

LOUISE

May I ask what kind of work do you and your brother do?

DEX

Go ahead.

LOUISE

So... what kind of work do you and your brother do?

DEX

We don't really work. Our family's rich.

LOUISE

If you don't mind my asking, what is your family involved in? Real estate? Industry? Oil?

DEX

Oil. We're a big oil family.

LOUISE

Did someone in your family strike oil?

DEX

(Searching) Oh, yeah... it was our ...Uncle ...Jed.

LOUISE

Your Uncle Jed? Fascinating. Did your Uncle Jed strike oil off-shore, or inland?

DEX

(Uncomfortable, he gets up and walks to the stair.) I wonder what's keeping --

LOUISE

So you were saying about your Uncle Jed?

DEX

(Unsure) Yeah, he was just a poor mountaineer, and one day he was out hunting up something to put on the table, and he shot at a possum.

LOUISE

A possum.

DEX

But he missed, and sure enough, he struck oil.

LOUISE

And I thought I'd heard it all, but I've never heard a success story quite like that.

DEX

(Proud, he sits back down.) Yeah, it is a good story. Uncle Jed just pretty much laid around by his Beverly Hills swimming pool with movie stars and it finally killed him.

LEONIE and RON exit Louise's bedroom and walk down the stairs.

LEONIE

(To RON) But there's so much more to see.

RON

I know there is, and I'm sure our mom will want to come back when she's feeling up to it. Maybe we can get mom to come back with us tomorrow.

RON motions to DEX and they walk quickly to the front entrance. LOUISE rises.

LEONIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

You just tell her not to worry about it. Chances are, we won't sell the house before tomorrow.

RON

Thanks for everything.

LOUISE

Thank you. Especially for that story about your Uncle Jed.

RON

(To DEX) Uncle Jed?

DEX

(Covering) Yeah. Uncle *Jed*. You know, the one who discovered *oil* that made our family *rich*.

RON

Oh, sure. In fact, we should stop by and see Uncle Jed and see if he wants to have dinner.

LOUISE

But Dex said your Uncle Jed was dead.

DEX

Uhh... you didn't hear that? Cousin Ellie found him.

RON

Cousin Ellie? (RON turns and sees LOUISE and LEONIE looking at him. He needs to think fast.) Uncle Jed? Dead? Did this just happen?

DEX

Yes?

Feigning affection, RON presses his fingers painfully into DEX's shoulder

RON

And you didn't tell me because???

DEX

(Unsure *and* in pain) Just... because.

RON

(To LEONIE and LOUISE) I'm sorry ladies, but we must go and mourn the unexpected death of our Uncle Jed.

RON pushes DEX out the door, and follows.

LEONIE

Nice boys. Such tragedy in their lives.

LOUISE

Tragedy, my ass! Leonie, didn't you notice how interested they were in where we keep our valuables?

LEONIE

My God! Do you think they were casing our joint?

LOUISE

That would be my guess.

LEONIE

This is serious, Louise. We have to do something.

LOUISE

You're damn right we have to do something.

LEONIE

Well, if that's their intent, then I don't care how much they offer us, we're not selling them this house.

On LOUISE'S look--

FADE TO BLACK

ACT II SCENE IIITIME:

Late at night on the same day.

The stage is low lit. A few lit candles are scattered around the room. LEONIE and LOUISE enter with two lit candles. They are dressed befitting such an occasion, in black.

LEONIE

Isn't this exciting? We're going to call up a spirit of a dead maid, have her exorcised by a dead saint, and to keep things interesting, we may even be robbed.

LOUISE

So much company. (She crosses to the window and looks out.) You're sure the police will be driving by tonight?

LEONIE

They assured me they would. Although I did tell them not to mistake St. Ignatius and his altar boy for the robbers.

LOUISE

What did they say to that?

LEONIE

Well, the desk sergeant said he could never forgive himself if he did that. But to make sure, he's going to put a couple of Catholics on surveillance.

LOUISE

Good.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

LEONIE

They're here. Wait! What if it's the robbers?

LOUISE

(Walking to the door.) Ringing the doorbell might take away the element of surprise.

LOUISE opens the door. JEREMY enters dressed in a red altar boys cassock. He holds a non-burning incense lamp and a portable boom box. He sets the boom box down, and presses play. New-Age Gregorian Chant music plays. He goes around the room swinging the incense burner as if sanctifying the room.

LEONIE
 (Bright) Hello, Jeremy.

JEREMY
 (Warning) Please.

JEREMY makes his way back to the front door. He raises his hand over the front entrance and it's grabbed by MARK, who then enters dressed in a colorful cassock with silver sequins around the sleeves and skirt, a faux diamond collar, and a glittering silver belt. He looks around the room as if searching for something.

LEONIE
 (Bowing) Saint Ignatius... welcome.

MARK holds out his ring to LOUISE to be kissed. She does. He then stops before the stairs and nods his head approvingly.

MARK
 (Intense) This is where the exorcism must be conducted.
 (Light) Love the candles.

JEREMY
 Mark has insisted on remaining celibate all day until after this is over. It's been absolutely excruciating.

LOUISE
 The man's a saint.

Suddenly, there's a KNOCK at the door. JEREMY and MARK jump as LOUISE moves to the front door.

JEREMY
 Oh, my God! It's Maria.

LOUISE
 (Crossing to the door) Maria never used the front door. It's probably the police.

MARK & JEREMY
The police!

LOUISE
 In addition to raising the dead, we're trying to catch a couple of robbers.

MARK and JEREMY look at each other and mouth the words, "Robbers" as LOUISE opens the front door. Standing at the door are two uniformed police officers, OFFICER ROBBINS and OFFICER KRUPKE.

OFFICER ROBBINS

Mam.

KRUPKE

Mam.

LOUISE

Officers. Come in, come in.

ROBBINS and KRUPKE enter the living room. MARK and JEREMY are immediately attracted to the two officers. KRUPKE eyes MARK and JEREMY suspiciously, but ROBBINS seems more interested in the features of the home.

OFFICER ROBBINS

I'm Officer Robbins, and this is Officer Krupke. (Looking around) Nice place. They don't make 'em like this anymore.

LEONIE

(Trying to remember) Krupke, Krupke. I've heard that name.

ROBBINS

Probably from West Side Story starring Natalie Wood. (Pointing up) Is that the original crown molding?

KRUPKE

(To Robbins) Natalie Wood co-starred with Tony Curtis in what film?

ROBBINS

That would be "Sex and the Single Girl.

JEREMY

(Singing) *Let me entertain you.*

MARK

Natalie Wood as Gypsy Rose Lee.

KRUPKE

Who played her mother?

LEONIE

Rosalind Russell.

ROBBINS

Bingo, mam. But who played Rosalind Russell's love interest?

LEONIE

Karl Malden.

ROBBINS

Better known for his role in "Streets of San Francisco.

MARK & JEREMY

With Michael Douglas.

KRUPKE

(To ROBBINS) What was the film Malden was in for which Burt Lancaster won an Oscar?

LOUISE AND LEONIE

(Excited) "Birdman of Alcatraz.

LEONIE

He played the warden.

LOUISE

That's right! The warden.

LEONIE

(She goes to the front door and opens it, as if to escort the officers out.) Thank you so much, gentlemen. We've had such a time with that one. We do appreciate the help.

LOUISE

(Stopping LOUISE) Leonie, they didn't come to solve a trivia question. They came to catch some robbers.

LEONIE

Ah! Dex and Ron... yes. (To officers) Cookie?

ROBBINS

No thanks, mam. Just thought we'd let you know that we'll be parked across the street in an unmarked car. We've been trying to catch these two for quite some time.

KRUPKE

That is if the two are who we think they are.

ROBBINS

I think they are.

KRUPKE

I do too.

ROBBINS

So we'll be outside for the remainder of the night.

KRUPKE

We'll never leave... in case you're worried that we might need to go get donuts or take a potty break.

ROBBINS

We're going to run down the street and take care of that right now.

KRUPKE

The donuts, mam. Not the potty break.

ROBBINS

Personally, I can go all night without having to go to the bathroom. Officer Krupke has a small bladder.

KRUPKE

But if I have to go, I'll make sure Officer Robbins watches.

JEREMY

(Grabbing Marks arm affectionately.) That's how we met.

LOUISE

Well, thank you. We feel perfectly safe.

BOTH officers move to the front door.
JEREMY and MARK bookend the two officers, and admire them affectionately.

KRUPKE

As you should, mam. (To ALL) Both Officer Robbins and I have a keen sense for anything or anyone who seems out of place. If we see anything out of the ordinary... any characters who are the least bit suspicious, we'll be on them so fast it'll make our heads spin. Good evening, ladies. (Nodding to MARK) Father.

ROBBINS

(Nodding) Ladies. Father. Son.

JEREMY curtsies, and the OFFICERS walk out the door.

JEREMY

Robbers? My God, are our lives in danger?

LEONIE

Dex and Ron. They're really very nice Christian boys. Ron has dyslexia. Or is that Dex. I get them mixed up.

LOUISE

Dex is dyslexic.

LEONIE

And they say they have a mother with no legs who didn't raise them as Jews. Don't you think that's odd?

MARK

Which part, sweetie?

LOUISE

So Mark... St. Ignatius... what do you need us to do?

MARK

(All business) Here near the stairs is the strongest point. This is probably where the door to the other side is. (He hits a light switch, and the room lights go off.) If we all gather and hold hands --

LEONIE

What can we expect? Will she appear in person? Will it be her voice?

MARK hits the switch, and the lights go on.

MARK

That depends on her.

MARK hits the light switch, and the lights go off.

LOUISE

Are you going to ask her to leave?

MARK hits the switch, and lights go on.

MARK

I'm going to ask her why she's stayed. You see, there may be something that we need to do before she feels she can leave.

MARK switches the lights off.

LEONIE

Do you think she'll ask for money?

MARK hits the switch to on.

LEONIE (cont'd)

We don't have much money. That's why we have to sell the house, you see.

LOUISE

What would a ghost want with money?

LEONIE
 (Sarcastic) I forgot, Louise, what a ghost expert you are.

MARK
 Let's sit together on the stairs, and we'll let Maria tell us what she wants.

MARK turns the lights off.

MARK (cont'd)
 Jeremy and I'll sit on the higher stairs, and you two sit below us.

JEREMY makes a couple of waves of the incense burner and ALL arrange themselves on the stairs. MARK pulls a prayer book from his pocket, opens it and begins reading.

MARK (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 En Nomini Patre et Felia Espiritu Sancti. Amen.

LEONIE
 What's he saying?

JEREMY
 Latin! Latin!

LEONIE
 Ut-whay is he aying-say?

They hear a key unlock in the back door. The door open and close as if someone's trying to be very quiet.

JEREMY
 Shush!

LEONIE
 They're coming through the back door.

LOUISE
 I locked the back door.

LEONIE
 They must have stolen a key. Where are the police?

MARK & JEREMY
 Shhhh!

A light illuminates from behind the dining room door followed by hushed voices.

NATHAN (OS)

The envelope's not here.

SHEILA

Are you sure she said the dining room table, not the coffee table?

NATHAN

Maybe. Turn off the light.

LEONIE

That sounds like...

MARK & JEREMY

Shhhh!

The light goes out. The dining room door opens slowly. NATHAN and SHEILA appear at the door. SHEILA is drunk. They walk quietly towards the coffee table, staring curiously at the candles.

SHEILA

Pretty candles.

NATHAN

Shhh! (Arriving at the coffee table.) The envelopes not here, either. Where the hell--

SHEILA

(Playful) Maybe they opened it. Maybe they found out what a bad boy-

NATHAN

Don't even think that.

LOUISE

(Sharp) *Nathan!*

Frightened, NATHAN and SHEILA freeze, then turn around to see the LEONIE, LOUISE, MARK and JEREMY huddled on the staircase.

SHEILA bolts to exit, but runs into NATHAN. Catching NATHAN off balance, they fall on the sofa; SHEILA on top of NATHAN.

NATHAN

Get off of me!

LOUISE

What the hell are you doing here?

JEREMY

(Frightened.) Mark, she's talking to the robbers.

LEONIE

No, that's my son and our real estate agent.

Standing, NATHAN approaches the stairs, while SHEILA remains near the sofa.

NATHAN

Mama, what are you doing? Who are these men?

LEONIE

Nathan, this is Saint Ignatius Loyola, and this is his altar boy, Jeremy.

NATHAN

Saint Ignatius? Mama--

LEONIE

We're having an exorcism, dear. The house is being haunted by a Puerto Rican maid. You never met Maria, did you? No matter. Unfortunately, we scheduled the exorcism before we knew Dex and Ron were going to rob us.

NATHAN

Rob you?

Suddenly, they hear a thump coming from the porch.

JEREMY

It's them.

NATHAN

Who?

LOUISE

The robbers, you idiot.

LEONIE

Hide. They may be armed.

NATHAN and SHEILA panic. Seeing the stairs are crowded, NATHAN grabs SHEILA and throws her down on the sofa, laying on top of her. SHEILA likes it.

The window near the front door slides open, and ends with a loud click.

Ha!

SHEILA

SHHH!

ALL

SHHH!

RON (O.S.)

Everyone remains quiet as another sound comes from the window. RON enters through the window, one leg at a time. He holds a dark cloth sack in his hand. DEX, holding a black pillow case with glow-in-the-dark star and moon stickers upon it, enters casually through the front door.

Dex! Ca'mon. Dex.

RON (cont'd)

DEX stands near RON playing with the flashlight, illuminating his own face. Ron turns, and jumps when he sees DEX beside him.

RON (cont'd)

(Grabbing the flashlight) Knock that off, will you.
(Noticing pillow case) What's with the pillow case?

DEX

(Proudly) It's glow-in-the-dark. (He unravels it and shows it to RON.)

RON

What are you doing with a glow-in-the-dark pillow case?

DEX

If I lose it, it's easy to spot.

RON

Oh. Cool. (A look of disgust crosses his face.) Oh, man! Did you just--

DEX

(Waving behind himself.) Sorry. I can't help it when I get nervous.

RON

Oh, man!

DEX

It's not that bad.

Someone on the stairs makes a small noise.

RON

What was that?

DEX

I don't know. You think we woke 'em up?

RON

I don't know. Listen. (RON and DEX pause to listen for several seconds. They hear nothing.) Oh, man!

DEX

Sorry.

RON

What'd you eat? Egg salad?

DEX

On garlic toast.

RON

You should eat at least three hours before we go burgle.

DEX

I think that's just for swimming.

RON

Just shut up. Okay, you remember what you're supposed to do?

DEX

I get the silverware in the dining room, and you get the valuables from the living room.

RON

Right. Then we both go up to the old lady's bedroom and open the safe. Are you ready?

DEX

Okay.

DEX walks quietly toward the dining room door and enters. RON proceeds to the bookcase against the back wall of the living room. He shines his flashlight on the shelves and selects a few items and puts them quietly into his sack. Suddenly, he hears the clanking of silverware hitting the floor in the dining room. RON steps quickly across to the door and enters.

JEREMY

Oh, my God! What are we going to do?

MARK

We could be killed.

NATHAN

Shouldn't we call the police?

LEONIE

They went to get donuts.

LOUISE

Be quiet!

JEREMY

We can't stay here.

MARK

What's that smell?

LOUISE

We have to get out of here while they're still in the dining room. Follow me. Quickly, but quietly.

ALL rise, and head for the front door when they hear footsteps walking from the dining room walking towards them. The four on the steps freeze, and NATHAN and SHEILA plop back on the sofa.

DEX and RON enter into the living room and slowly round the corner to go up the stairs. They see the four on the stairs.

RON & DEX

(Screaming) AHHHH!

LEONIE, LOUISE, MARK, JEREMY

(Screaming) AHHHH!

Instinctively, LOUISE reaches back and punches RON in the nose. He screams in agony. RON and DEX head for the window, and run into NATHAN and SHEILA rising from the sofa.

NATHAN & SHEILA

(Screaming.) AHHHH!

(Screaming.) AHHHH!

RON & DEX

Quickly, NATHAN and SHEILA jump back to their original positions on the sofa. DEX grabs RON by the arm and pulls him to the window, while MARK and JEREMY cower near the stairs.

HELP! HELP!

LOUISE

POLICE! POLICE!

LEONIE

DEX tries to shove RON through the window, but both his aim and RON'S head are too high, and RON cracks his head on the window pane and falls back into DEX'S arms. LOUISE jumps on DEX'S back.

DEX
Get off of me! Get off of me!

DEX and LOUISE fall onto NATHAN and SHEILA laying on the sofa. The momentum pushes SHEILA onto the floor, where DEX falls on top of her. Thinking NATHAN is DEX, LOUISE starts strangling him.

RON tries to escape through the window, but KRUPKE appears, and hits him in the face. RON falls back, and ROBBINS blasts through the front door. A tug-of-war ensues, until KRUPKE wins, and RON'S head meets the window pane with full force. KRUPKE lets go of RON and he falls to the ground unconscious.

ROBBINS
(Trying to assess the situation.) Nobody move. Where's the light? We need some light.

LEONIE flicks a light switch, and the room is illuminated. ROBBINS sees the tangle of bodies near the sofa, sees LOUISE choking NATHAN, DEX and SHEILA in an passionate embrace on the floor, then goes to handcuff NATHAN.

NATHAN
 Not me! I'm her son. (He points to DEX.) That's the
 robber.

LOUISE
 (Pointing at DEX) He's the robber.

ROBBINS lifts SHEILA off of DEX, and
 places her in a chair. SHEILA is
 impressed with Robbins' strength.

SHEILA
 Mmmmm.

ROBBINS
 (To Sheila) Are you okay, mam?

LOUISE
 I think so. Thank you, officer.

ROBBINS lifts up DEX, whose face is
 covered with Sheila's lipstick.

DEX
Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait! (ROBBINS stops, and DEX turns
 to SHEILA.) Can I call you?

ROBBINS continues pulling DEX away.

LEONIE
 (Rushing to LOUISE and comforts her.) Oh, honey.

LOUISE
 I'm fine, Leonie. Don't fuss. I have to go upstairs to get
 something. I'll be right back.

LOUISE passes the cops and robbers.

LOUISE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 (To DEX and RON) You two!

DEX and RON bow their heads in shame.
 LOUISE exits upstairs.

ROBBINS
 (Sniffing the air) *Oh, man!*

DEX AND KRUPKE
 Sorry!

LEONIE
 (Turning to RON and DEX) You boys should be ashamed of
 yourselves. What would your poor mother think?

RON and DEX hang their heads in shame.

RON

I hate to say this, mam, but our mother's dead.

LEONIE

(Sympathetically) Well then... it *has* been quite a day for you boys.

ROBBINS

(To LEONIE) Thank you for your help. We'll be in touch. Good luck on the sale of your home. It's out of my league, but it's a beautiful place you have here.

KRUPKE and ROBBINS exit with RON and DEX. LOUISE enters from her bedroom holding the manila envelope.

NATHAN

Mama, will you tell me what's going on?

LOUISE

(Waving the envelope.) Is this what you're looking for?

NATHAN looks at LOUISE, and then at the envelope. SHEILA grabs NATHAN'S arm. NATHAN walks towards LOUISE confidently.

NATHAN

As a matter of fact.

LOUISE

(Holding the envelope away.) It was so important that you had to come by at midnight.

SHEILA

We were in the neighborhood showing a house.

NATHAN shoot her an angry glance.

LOUISE

Really? I thought you drove up from Atlantic City.

LOUISE hands NATHAN the envelope watching for his reaction. NATHAN easily flips up the envelope's flap.

NATHAN

(Carefully) It's been opened.

LOUISE

I was going to read it, but we were interrupted by company.

NATHAN

(Perking up) Oh, well, in that case, I'll take it home with me and peruse it. No use wasting anymore of your time. (To Leonie) Mama, you've had yourself quite a night. You'd better get to bed, alright?

LEONIE

I will, sweetie.

NATHAN kisses LEONIE.

NATHAN

We'll talk tomorrow.

SHEILA waves and exits with NATHAN.
Once they're out the door, LOUISE turns to MARK and JEREMY.

LOUISE

I'm afraid we'll have to do this another time.

MARK

We'll be happy to come back anytime to finish the exorcism.

JEREMY

Let us know when your schedule doesn't include cops and robbers... well, robbers anyway.

The four exchange hugs, then MARK and JEREMY exit leaving LOUISE and LEONIE alone.

LEONIE

Well, that was just too much company for one night.

LOUISE

(Seriously.) Leonie, sit down. We need to talk about what was in that envelope. (LEONIE looks curiously at LOUISE, and slowly sits on the sofa.)

LIGHTS OUT

ACT II SCENE IVTIME:

Afternoon, same day.

LEONIE stares sadly out the front window as if in a trance. LOUISE walks down the stairs, turns and speaks upstairs to NACCARATO hiding off-stage.

LOUISE

Are you sure you'll be alright, Mr. Naccarato? Can I get you anything?

NACCARATO

(Off-stage) No. Don't worry about me. Just make sure you speak loudly enough for me to hear you.

LOUISE

Okay. (To LEONIE) He should be here any second. Are you sure you want to go through this?

NACCARATO

WHAT?

LOUISE

(Shouting upstairs) I was talking to my sister.

NACCARATO

Gotcha.

LEONIE

It feels so sneaky.

LOUISE

Did I ever tell you about the time I was teaching high school, and we'd just built a new wing, and kids were parking their bicycles along the newly painted walls. We told them to use the bike racks near the next building, but some of them didn't listen. One day, this boy *threw* his bike against the wall, and I went berserk. I grabbed his bike, and I threw it on the ground and jumped up and down on it.

LEONIE

You didn't!

LOUISE

I did. I kicked it in. And everyone saw me do it. But no one ever parked their bicycle up against that wall again. Do you understand what I'm saying here?

LEONIE

Yes, but what are the chances of Nathan riding his bike?

LOUISE

No! That's not--

LEONIE

I'm kidding. Some people won't change their behavior until you kick in their bicycle. (Suddenly, the back-door slams OS.) That must be Nathan.

LOUISE and LEONIE sit on the sofa.

LEONIE (cont'd)

Let's kick some bike.

NATHAN (O.S.

(Calling) Mama! Louise!

LEONIE

In the living room, honey.

NATHAN and SHEILA enter. SHEILA is dressed in a low cut business suit. NATHAN dressed in a black golf shirt and black slacks. They stand before LOUISE and LEONIE. Their demeanor shows that they mean business.

LEONIE (cont'd)

Hi, sweetie.

NATHAN

Mama, I'm glad you called. We need to get something straight. (To LOUISE) I didn't come here to argue. I've brought Sheila with me, because we can't waste any more time. And after what happened last night--

LOUISE

You're right, Nathan.

NATHAN

(Tough) I'm not afraid to play hardball.. (He stops, suddenly and looks at LOUISE.) I'm *right*?

LOUISE

We realize that we're not capable of handling this ourselves.

NATHAN

(Surprised) You do?

LOUISE

Your mother's right. You only want what's best for us.

NATHAN

We do? Uhh... of course we do.

SHEILA

(Going to LOUISE and LEONIE.) You've been through enough already. You don't have to worry about a thing.

LOUISE

That's so comforting. We just don't feel up to it anymore. It's too much pressure... and all that money owed on taxes. It's overwhelming, isn't it Leonie?

LEONIE

(Nervous) Oh, yes. Overwhelming.

LOUISE

How much is it that's due the IRS?

NATHAN

Four-hundred and forty-thousand dollars.

LOUISE

(Adjusting her hearing aid.) I'm sorry, it's not working. *How much?*

NATHAN

(Loudly) Four-hundred and forty-thousand dollars.

LOUISE

So much money. Isn't that a lot of money, Leonie?

LEONIE

(Yelling) Yes, that's a lot of money.

LOUISE gives Leonie a pained look.

SHEILA

(Yelling) But you don't have to worry. I'm going to sell this house for you if it's the last thing I do.

LOUISE

That's so sweet of you, but you don't have to shout.

NATHAN

I met with the IRS this morning, and asked for another extension. I cannot believe how cold and heartless they are.

LOUISE

And Mr. Naccarato seemed like such a nice man.

NATHAN

Nice? Naccarato is slime.

LOUISE

WHAT?

NATHAN

NACCARATO IS A SLIME! (Yelling) I told that bottom feeder...I said, "My mother and aunt have no one else. And if they need an extension to sell that house, you better make damn sure they get one, or I'm going to call every member of congress and the senate until you're ass is doing audits in Nome, Alaska."

SHEILA

Nathan was... NATHAN WAS SO ANGRY.

NATHAN

(Yelling) But you know what he said? He said that if I didn't leave his office immediately, he would take possession of the house right now.

LOUISE

That bastard.

LEONIE

That bastard.

NATHAN

That son-of-a-bitch.

LOUISE

Nathan, calm down. You did everything you could.

NATHAN

I just wish I could have done more.

NACCARATO appears at the foot of the stairs.

NACCARATO

You're both very, very kind.

LOUISE and LEONIE rise. NATHAN and SHEILA stare in confusion.

NATHAN

What the hell!

SHEILA

Nathan! Who is this man?

NACCARATO

Surely, you must remember me, Miss Volk. I'm the bottom-feeding slime Mr. Rue spoke about.

NATHAN
What's going on here? What were you doing hiding?

LEONIE
He wasn't hiding, dear. He was finding.

NACCARATO
And thank you so much, Miss Masterson, Mrs. Rue. I found out quite a lot.

NATHAN
(Livid) You have no right.

LEONIE
(Rising, angry.) NATHAN! He has every right!

Taken by surprise at LEONIE'S wrath,
LOUISE sits down and watches in awe.

NATHAN
But Mama!

LEONIE
But Mama, my *ass*! You were never good at math, Nathan, but there's a big difference between forty-thousand and four-hundred and forty-thousand.

NATHAN
(Pleading) But Mama!

LEONIE
(Livid) Shut up, Nathan! Sons don't do what you tried to do to me. It's time you learned that you have to be responsible for your actions. Mama's not going to save you this time, so grow up and take it like a man! (Pause) Louise, you can jump in any time.

LOUISE
You're doing fine.

NACCARATO
There's an agent waiting outside in the car. Would you two mind joining him?

NATHAN
Mama, you're not going to let them arrest me, are you?

SHEILA
You? What about *me*?

LEONIE
Nathan, I'm not the one who got the 'F'.

NATHAN

This is crazy. You have it all wrong.

NACCARATO

I don't know if I'd say much more, Mr. Rue. As soon as we get down to the federal building, you can talk all you like.

NATHAN

I'm not under arrest. I don't have to go anywhere with you.

NACCARATO

Not yet, but if that would make you feel better about joining us, I can certainly try harder convince your mother to press charges...and I am so tempted to do that.

NATHAN

I can't believe this. (Angry) Louise, if you think--

SHEILA

Just shut up. Don't make things worse. It was a stupid idea anyway. I don't know why I ever listened to you.

NATHAN and SHEILA begin to exit.

NATHAN

I'm warning you, Sheila, keep your mouth shut!

SHEILA

(Sexy to NACCARATO.) I don't know what you need to know, but I want to give you everything I have.

NATHAN

SHEILA!

SHEILA snaps to and they both exit.

NACCARATO

This was fun. I rarely have the opportunity to get out like this. Thank you again for inviting me.

LOUISE

So who's in the car?

NACCARATO

My brother-in-law... well, former.

LOUISE

You're divorced.

NACCARATO

Divorcing.

LOUISE

I'm sorry. So you're sure you won't get in trouble for this? I'm sure the IRS doesn't tolerate renegade agents.

NACCARATO

As long as we keep it our little secret. (re: Nathan and Sheila) And I sure don't see them talking to anyone.

LEONIE

So what happens now?

NACCARATO

Now I go back and I scare the hell out of them... at least so that neither of them attempts anything like this again.

LOUISE

God bless the IRS. (Beat) I can't believe I just said that.

NACCARATO

So what about you two?

LOUISE

Well, we won't be selling. Paying the IRS the forty thousand we owe in back taxes shouldn't be as big a problem.

NACCARATO

This is a lot of house for the two of you. Maybe you should think about selling it, and moving to something smaller.

LOUISE

Don't you worry about us. My sister and I are survivors. We'll find a way.

NACCARATO

Knowing you, everything's going to turn out just fine. Oh! You want me to take down that open house sign out front?

LOUISE

That would be great. If there's room in the back seat of your car, would you mind giving it to Nathan and Sheila?

NACCARATO

We'll make room.

NACCARATO exits. Seeing that LEONIE looks sad, LOUISE goes to her and holds her in her arms.

LOUISE

I'm so proud of you.

FADE TO BLACK

ACT II SCENE VTIME:

Morning, a few weeks later.

Fade up to sound of the television playing the theme to the opening of "The Young and the Restless" followed by a series of commercials. LEONIE and LOUISE are sitting on the sofa.

LEONIE

It's starting.

LOUISE

It's a commercial. We always talk during commercials.

LEONIE

Not all commercials.

LOUISE

True.

LEONIE

I wonder what happened to the little Oscar Meyer boy?

LOUISE

The boy with the wiener.

LEONIE

Baloney. Not wiener. I don't think they'd have a little boy sitting on a dock singing, "My wiener has a first name."

LOUISE

(Laughing) No, I guess they wouldn't.

LEONIE

(Laughing) It would have caught my attention if they had. Especially a wiener with a first and second name.

The front door opens, and MARK and JEREMY enter wearing running outfits. MARK is limping.

JEREMY

We're home!

JEREMY kisses both the ladies on the cheek, and then starts stretching.

LOUISE AND LEONIE

Hello, Boys.

MARK

(Angry) I told you you run too fast. Always showing off.

JEREMY

I wasn't showing off.

MARK

I'm sure I'm going to get a terrible cramp.

JEREMY

(Crossing to comfort MARK) Come up stairs to our room, and I'll rub it for you.

They look at each other affectionately, wave to the sisters, then go up the stairs and disappear into one of the bedrooms as THE DOORBELL RINGS.

ROBBINS (OS)

I'll get it.

ROBBINS enters from the stairs with a basket of laundry, and opens the front door. KRUPKE enters, passes his partner, and heads right for the TV room, sitting between the sisters.

KRUPKE

(To LOUISE and LEONIE.) Am I late?

NACCARATO enters from the dining room with a bowl of soup. He sits in a chair, next to the others.

NACCARATO

Have I missed anything?

LOUISE

(Looking affectionately at her new family.) No dear, it's just beginning.

The Y&R theme fades up.

ROBBINS

You know, you could fast forward through all the commercials if you taped it.

LOUISE, LEONIE, NACCARATO and KRUPKE look at ROBBINS as if he's out of his mind.

THE END