

Michael Bettencourt

Full-Length Plays: Volume 6

Block & Tackle Productions Press



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**Pictures At An Exhibition • Prisoner A-7
Dancing At The Revolution**

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Block & Tackle Productions Press



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To María Beatriz - always in all ways

Pictures at an Exhibition

DESCRIPTION

Margaret Pasqualini, a professional photographer, is arrested at a photo lab for taking nude pictures of her son, pictures she said were part of an exhibit she was putting together as a final project for her class in advanced photographic techniques. Police had been notified by the lab owner about the pictures and were forced to arrest Pasqualini when she refused to accompany them to the station. Rather than agree to a plea bargain in her subsequent conviction for malicious destruction of property and disorderly conduct, she instead chooses to go to jail for 30 days. There she meets Vera Cortez, serving 25 years for being an accomplice in the murder of her own child. Their month-long relationship opens up the possibility for a real and vital connection between people who, though from completely different classes and experiences, can find common ground as parents raising children in a dangerous world. Pictures At An Exhibition also raises intriguing questions about how we do and do not protect our children and the thin line between art and exploitation.

PRIMARY CHARACTERS

- Margaret Pasqualini, photographer
- Matthew Pasqualini, her husband
- Alex Pasqualini, their son, 4 years old (or a child that looks that age); is mute, must sign ASL
- Vera Cortez, prisoner, around 31 years of age, from East Harlem; she must be predominantly Hispanic

MULTI-CHARACTERS (Note: Three men and three women should be sufficient to cover all the multi-character roles. They should run a range of racial and ethnic types, ages, body shapes, etc. The more varied, the better)

- A (male) = Philip "Flash" Gunn, photo lab owner; Videographer
- B (male) = John Twyman, a lawyer; TV news anchor
- C (female, older) = Judge; Reporter 1
- D (female) = Reporter 2; Lab Technician; Assistant D.A.
- E (male) = Reporter 3; Police Officer (at photo lab); Radio Host
- F (female) = Photographer; Police Officer (at photo lab); Prison Guard

SETTING / TIME

- Any American city / present, spring

LIGHTING

Lighting suggestions are made throughout the script, but the director and lighting designer are free to make whatever changes necessary to produce the show.

SET

- Two beds, a footlocker at the foot of each.
- A table and two chairs
- CORTEZ's bookshelf, overflowing with books that show her beliefs
- On the back wall CORTEZ has two posters which indicate Puerto Rican/ Latino pride
- A small Puerto Rican flag
- A diploma hanging on the wall -- associates degree in communications
- On stage right is MARGARET's area; stage left, CORTEZ's area. In each area are various props which the actors will use to recreate scenes that take place outside the prison. They should be easily accessible but not block the audience's view.

* * * * *

Scene 1

There are two tables, one mid-stage right, one mid-stage left, angled, with chairs. Sound comes up: something from Steve Reich/Pat Metheney or a similar kind of music. Lights go to half, then out. Sound out as lights go out, then the sound of a metal prison door closing.

Immediately, lights bump up on MARGARET. Music underscoring begins. She sits on the floor slightly downstage of center.

The NEWS ANCHOR sits at the table stage left. One of the multi-characters stands behind the ANCHOR with a sign that looks like of those banners the chiron operator puts on the screen over the shoulder of the anchor.

MARGARET carries a 3x5 or 4x6 notepad and pen. She writes a line or two, closes it, puts it in her back pockets, and begins.

NOTE: Though not required, if the actor and director feel comfortable, the actor could do stylized movements to accompany all the inter-scene speeches, movements which embody the sense of the words. The choreography is up to the director, actor, and any other collaborators.

MARGARET

I started with the clearest of motives. I began with the cleanest of hands. No protection -- that gave us no protection. At all. Against the rain of shit. Against the downpour of shit and blindness that -- Focus. We get judged by what we do. But we do not always do what we get judged for. We do not always do what we get judged for. Yet the judgement sticks. And then it feeds. Like a parasite. In a body not yet dead. Stop that. Stop this. Three days. I have three days. I have three days to find an answer. I have three days for an answer to find me.

Lights bump immediately to black

* * * * *

Scene 2

Lights bump up immediately on LOCAL NEWS ANCHOR at the stage left table. Sound effect: a gunshot that starts a race, loud, or the first bars of the opening fanfare of the Kentucky Derby. MARGARET sits on the floor in front of him, in shadow.

NEWS ANCHOR

Picked up for porn -- that's what police are saying tonight after arresting a student photographer for alleged child pornography. Alerted by a photo lab, two officers arrested Margaret Pasqualini when she and her four-year old son came to pick up pictures she said she had taken for a photography project. The pictures allegedly showed the son in the news -- excuse me, in the nude.

ANCHOR changes focus to a second camera. Chiron sign flips over and moves over other shoulder.

NEWS ANCHOR

When asked to go to the station, Pasqualini, according to the officers, tried to grab the pictures. They were forced to handcuff and remove her from the lab. Pasqualini will be charged with disorderly conduct and malicious destruction of property. Child pornography charges may be brought.

ANCHOR returns to original camera. Chiron sign backs off.

NEWS ANCHOR

This is one story I'm sure we'll work for quite some -- work on for -- quite some time.

As if speaking to a fellow news anchor, hearty tone.

NEWS ANCHOR

Boy, I hope no one ever, ever looks at my photo albums!
Jeez Louise!

Simultaneous: sound of a movie set clapper and light bump out on LOCAL NEWS ANCHOR; ANCHOR and CHIRON exit. Light bumps up on MARGARET. She is writing.

MARGARET

Just the facts, ma'am.

MARGARET puts away the notebook.

MARGARET

All right. I did fight back -- pissed beyond whatever "beyond pissed" is! -- they cuffed me and hauled me away! All that -- Grade A certified fact. But once in the air, pulverized -- Christ, then, then, like everyone snorting lines, such craziness!

She makes as if she's skeet shooting.

MARGARET

Pull.

She follows the arc of the "clay pigeon," makes sound like a gunshot.

MARGARET

Gossip came sniffing up like a razor in heat. Pull. Death by a thousand public cuts. Pull. Imagine -- Imagine if raw meat had feelings while the lioness breathed on it -- that lioness breathed on me. Other "facts": I started with the clearest of motives. I began with the cleanest of hands. Those facts, however -- not useful.

She follows the arc of the "clay pigeon," makes sound like a gunshot.

* * * * *

Scene 3

Light out on MARGARET, who exits. There is music while the rest of the cast moves on stage for the "perp" walk: Steve Reich or something similar.

Lights up; with it, background sound of crowd conversation. Reporters, photographer, and videographer are "shooting the breeze," waiting for MARGARET's "perp walk." They **must** have working equipment. They can be sitting on the tables and chairs. MARGARET and JOHN TWYMAN, her lawyer, enter, and the crowd descends on her to get a comment and pictures. As JOHN escorts MARGARET, he is constantly shouting "No comment" to the questions of the reporters. The questions can be asked willy-nilly because she is not going to answer them.

However, the last question is asked by REPORTER 2, and it should be something heard very clearly: "Ms. Pasqualini, have you taken any more pictures of naked kids?" She is led off-stage left, and the reporters and photographers talk among themselves as they prepare to leave.

As they talk, they pack up equipment, light cigarettes, check date books, pagers, cell phones, etc. The pace of the dialogue and the business should be brisk.

REPORTER 2
(to the VIDEOGRAPHER)

Get anything?

VIDEO
Head bowed, five seconds. Slice of the crowd.

REPORTER 2
Should do it.

VIDEO
Enough for the low-brows at six.

REPORTER 2
I wish she had spit something out.

REPORTER 3
A closed mouth gathers no feet.

REPORTER 2

Make my job easier.

REPORTER 1

The human race does not exist to snag you the Pulitzer.

REPORTER 2

Not for chickenshit like this.

VIDEO

Chickenshit, brok-brok --

REPORTER 3

Yeah, for this chickenshit you get the Pullet Surprise --

General groan.

PHOTO

What's she tagged for?

REPORTER 1

What cave you been in?

PHOTO

My editor just sends me to take pictures. "I know nah-think."

REPORTER 2

They clipped her for taking pics of her naked son.

PHOTO

The one trashed the photo lab?

REPORTER 3

That be the one, girl.

PHOTO

(said distinctly)

I hear her son's a mute.

VIDEO

How do you hear a mute?

REPORTER 2

It's a "mute" point.

REPORTER 3

Creepy, huh? A mute.

REPORTER 1

I'm speechless.

REPORTER 2

Hope no one fingers my negatives -- I'd be jailed for life.

VIDEO

What don't I come over and fing[er] --

REPORTER 2

Save your batteries.

REPORTER 3

She called it aht.

REPORTER 2

Justify a lot of selfish shit with that word.

PHOTO

Anybody seen the pictures?

REPORTER 1

No one has.

PHOTO

So what happened?

REPORTER 1

Thirty days.

VIDEO

Chickenscat.

REPORTER 1

(ignoring the comment)

Judge lobbed her a softball: fine, community service, probation, letter of apology --

REPORTER 2

-- privileges of her class --

REPORTER 1

-- but you could see it in her eyes: "No fucking thank you, Judge, fuck you," and off to jail for principle --

REPORTER 2

-- another privilege --

REPORTER 3

Yeah, tomorrow you'll read, "A source for the defense said -- "

REPORTER 2

Sanctimonious shit --

REPORTER 3

" -- she intended to say f, dash, dash, dash" --

REPORTER 2

Tired of it.

VIDEO

(to REPORTER 2)

The woman's got a point --

REPORTER 2

Blah, blah, blah.

PHOTO

You were there?

REPORTER 1

Every day.

VIDEO

(to ALL)

The woman's got a point. She's got a point. I mean, you can't let the Gestapo tell you --

REPORTER 2

Sieg heil --

VIDEO

C'mon, Eva Braun, this is serious. Who's to say what a person can and can't say?

REPORTER 2

This isn't about that -- she fucked her kid over.

VIDEO

(to ALL)

Who would you want telling you what not to say?

REPORTER 3

A brief pause for philosophical introspec --

VIDEO

C'mon -- would you do any different to protect your sources?

REPORTER 3

Completely diff --

At this point, MATTHEW walks on, clearly not expecting the crowd.

REPORTER 3

Her husband, it's her husband --

Everyone rushes him, and he's trapped before he knows what to do.

VIDEOGRAPHER and PHOTOGRAPHER press in close.

REPORTER 2

(checking her notes)

What's his fucking name?

REPORTER 1

Matthew Pasqualini --

MATTHEW

(slightly stunned)

Matt.

REPORTER 1

What do you think of your wife's sentence?

MATTHEW

| --

REPORTER 2

Are the pictures pornographic?

MATTHEW

No --

REPORTER 3

Do you intend to appeal?

MATTHEW

I can't --

At this point the REPORTERS can ad lib questions to him. MATTHEW doesn't answer them. He moves forward, realizing he has to get away; they pursue him. Just before he exits, REPORTER 2 shouts out the following question.

REPORTER 2

Matthew Pasqualini, are you sure your child is completely safe with you?

MATTHEW is stunned, and even the others pause for a moment to look at REPORTER 2. She repeats the question.

REPORTER 2

Are you sure Alex is completely safe with you?

The VIDEOGRAPHER continues taping. MATTHEW escapes.

REPORTER 2

(to VIDEOGRAPHER)

Get that?

VIDEO

Yeah.

REPORTER 2

Priceless. Okay, let's get ready to --

REPORTER 3

You going to use --

REPORTER 2

Legit question, I can't be responsible for --

REPORTER 1

But you accused the guy --

REPORTER 2

Just asked him a question.

REPORTER 3

Yeah, but --

REPORTER 2

Can't be responsible for how delicate he is -- or you.

(to VIDEO)

Ready?

VIDEO

Yeah.

REPORTER 2

Let's get out of here, then.

(to the others)

Kiddie fashion festival to cover.

PHOTO

Off to take pictures of kids, huh?

VIDEO

With their clothes on.

REPORTER 2

Pulitzer, come to mama!

REPORTER 2 leaves.

PHOTO

(to VIDEO)

Beware of the lioness.

VIDEO

She's already been fed today.

VIDEOGRAPHER roars as he leaves.

REPORTER 1

(motions to REPORTER 3)

Let's book.

(to PHOTOG)

Gotta cover the governor's testimony on battered women.

PHOTO

A big fan of it?

REPORTER 1

An election year, so -- start a task force.

REPORTER 3

Low cost trolling for the women's vote.

REPORTER 1

What he really prefers is sucking the toes of rich contributors.

PHOTO

Tasty.

REPORTER 1

Watch for next Sunday's "Metro."

REPORTER 3

Just you?

REPORTER 1

We're a team all the way, honey.

PHOTO

Great -- more shittaking. Just what we need.

REPORTER 3

Nature of the biz, sister. Muck may suck --

REPORTER 1 & REPORTER 3

-- but it sells.

* * * * *

Scene 4

Transitional music: a snippet of Paul Simon's "Kodachrome." FLASH comes to the stage right table and sits. A light up downstage left. MARGARET walks into it during the music, carrying the pad. She puts the pad away.

MARGARET

How does something like this begin? How does the mote in the eye, that tiny nothing, infect light into darkness? The pictures of Alex, my Alex, my lovely lovely Alex -- he was simply an assignment for the course. No motives ulterior -- Freudian, Jungian, Satanic, or otherwise. Through my eyes I simply saw Alex's four-year old innocence; through theirs -- Well, I can now say what they saw. They saw their own dark selves, their own caged filth. And when the keys were offered, they turned everything loose on us like dogs.

* * * * *

Scene 5

Light out on MARGARET; she sits and watches in shadow. The lights come up on FLASH. He is wearing a lab coat; he takes several rolls of film out of his pocket and puts them on the table. He also takes out a small notepad or ledger book and writes in it. In the background the audience can just barely hear a machine that does color prints. A LAB TECH comes out to the desk. The conversation should move briskly.

LAB TECH

Flash --

FLASH

Yeah?

LAB TECH

Flash --

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

Flash -- you gotta look --

LAB TECH and FLASH several contact sheets.

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

Here.

FLASH takes them and shuffles through them. LAB TECH talks as he does this.

LAB TECH

Do you think --

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

Well?

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

Do you think what I think?

FLASH

What do you think?

LAB TECH

Well, I don't know --

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

What do you think? Look at the pictures.

LAB TECH starts pointing out individual pictures to FLASH.

LAB TECH

Naked little boy --

FLASH

Wait! Let me at least look at them.

LAB TECH

Can't you see?

FLASH

See what?

LAB TECH

A naked little boy!

FLASH

Slow down! What's the matter with --

LAB TECH

Look -- here, and here --

FLASH

Back off for a sec, okay?

FLASH looks.

FLASH

Okay -- what?

LAB TECH

Don't you see?

FLASH

I'm missing it. Whose order?

LAB TECH

Pasqualini. Taking the course --

FLASH

Well, then, there you are.

LAB TECH

What do you mean?

FLASH

Nicely done. Good composition.

LAB TECH

How can you s --

FLASH

That's her son.

LAB TECH

Aren't we --

FLASH

They're --

LAB TECH

-- going to --

FLASH

-- for a course.

LAB TECH

-- do something? Aren't we going to do something?

FLASH

Do something? That's her son -- what something? What's bothering you?

LAB TECH

(holds up pictures)

About this!

FLASH

What's this?

LAB TECH

You're telling me you don't know --

FLASH

Nothing's there.

LAB TECH

You're telling me you don't know? What kind of person --

FLASH

Not her.

LAB TECH

-- what kind of person would take posed pictures --

FLASH

That's her son.

LAB TECH

-- of a naked little boy?

FLASH

They're for the course --

LAB TECH

That makes her exempt? They make me feel --

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

Don't they make you f --

FLASH

No. Not really.

LAB TECH

What was I going to say?

FLASH

I don't know. I don't know how you feel.

LAB TECH

No, you don't.

FLASH

They're fine. We get naked kid pictures every day.

LAB TECH

Not like these.

FLASH

(overlapping)

These -- more formal, that's all --

LAB TECH

Just look again.

FLASH

They're fine.

LAB TECH

Look at them -- you'll see what I see --

FLASH

I don't know what you see.

LAB TECH

Yes, you do -- you see it, too.

FLASH

No, I don't --

LAB TECH picks up the contact sheets.

LAB TECH

Look at this one -- look at where she has him hold the stuffed animal --

FLASH

Please!

LAB TECH

And the way he's spread here -- And the way he's touching --

FLASH makes a gesture of dismissal.

LAB TECH

Deny -- go ahead -- doesn't make it right --

FLASH

What's wrong?

LAB TECH

You know.

FLASH

No, I don't know. Two minutes ago I was writing up the weekly accounts -- Then you come in -- All of a sudden -- Go finish --

LAB TECH

You have a responsi --

FLASH

Go finish your work.

LAB TECH

You have a responsibility --

FLASH

Go finish -- What are you saying?

LAB TECH

You own this business --

FLASH

Yes.

LAB TECH

It's your call.

FLASH

My call?

LAB TECH

I think we should call --

FLASH

Yeah?

LAB TECH

-- someone.

FLASH

Call someone? All of a sudden it's "call someone"?

LAB TECH

This isn't right.

FLASH

This is no big -- "Call someone"? I can't c -- This is no big deal.

LAB TECH

Why are you upset?

FLASH

I'm not -- it's you, with your stories. I'm sure nothing's going on here.

LAB TECH

And if something -- ?

FLASH

-- if what? --

LAB TECH

-- if something!

FLASH

Her? I find it hard to believe --

LAB TECH

Suppose tomorrow you found out -- today you found out --

FLASH

Please!

LAB TECH

But supp --

FLASH

But she's not --

LAB TECH

And you could've stopped it. And you could have stopped it. You could be held liable.

FLASH

That's not true!

LAB TECH

Legally --

FLASH

That can't be tr --

LAB TECH

Don't jeopardize --

FLASH

It's not my fault.

LAB TECH

Someone has to take a stand --

FLASH

A stand.

LAB TECH

-- I wish --

FLASH

What?

LAB TECH

Nothing.

FLASH

Wish what?

LAB TECH

Someone had taken -- Look, nothing. Stop this. You can --

FLASH

Not her!

LAB TECH

-- stop this. Do you know?

FLASH

I just know.

LAB TECH

Do you know? For sure? Lot of it around. Those trials --

FLASH

-- a lot of which turned out to be crap --

LAB TECH

-- kids dying every day --

FLASH

If it was true, she wouldn't bring the photos here!

LAB TECH

Maybe she doesn't, maybe she doesn't know, either She's not exempt. Protect the child -- We -- you -- should call someone.

FLASH

Who?

LAB TECH

I don't know.

FLASH

Do you really think -- What time is she supposed to come in?

LAB TECH

After two o'clock.

FLASH

I don't know --

LAB TECH

Call the police.

FLASH

I can't call the police!

LAB TECH

Why not?

FLASH

We build a trust -- Christ, the last thing anybody wants is the police. She trusts me.

LAB TECH

Don't think the choice can be yours.

FLASH

What time did you say --

LAB TECH

After two o'clock.

FLASH

Let me finish the sentence, at least. I should talk with her first.

LAB TECH

What would you say?

FLASH

I would -- You know, I'd ask --

LAB TECH

What? What would you ask?

FLASH

I don't wanna do this. I don't want to do this. I'll call the police -- just to find out what I should do, all right?

LAB TECH

It's a start.

Lights begin to fade.

FLASH

A start. I don't like this.

Lights fade quickly to black. As they do, five "strokes" pop in somewhat quick succession, as if a camera was taking pictures. Each "stroke" catches FLASH and LAB TECH in their distress. Photo machine sound out, and while the "strokes" are popping, one ring of a phone, then a voice:

VO

The following call will be monitored.

Lights out. FLASH and LAB TECH exit.

* * * * *

Scene 6

Light up down center.

MARGARET

I have wondered, wondered what they saw. Replayed the whole session with Alex. Pored over what I said, did, trying with their eyes -- the suspicions -- I have gone over and over this -- raked, wracked -- each time -- each time I can only see Alex's graceful spirit in my lens. Drenched with light. A mother, son, a simple afternoon, trust, simple. But they want to know only what they think they know, thinking that what they think they know is more the truth than the truth that happened because to them the truth is them, not the truth. All about them, not the truth. I wish -- I wish they'd -- Then they'd know. But they don't want -- So I must continue the knowing, the knowing, I must continue knowing the truth, living it -- or else, or else all their infection, all their infection will drown me. And Alex. And Matthew. Will drown us all, drown us completely.

Lights out. One stagehand brings out a hair brush, hair tie, sneakers, and a jacket and bag for MARGARET and puts them on the stage left table. For ALEX, a second stagehand brings out a child's red shirt, green corduroy pants, socks, and black sneakers with velcro tabs.

* * * * *

Scene 7

Lights up on MARGARET and ALEX. MARGARET is dressing ALEX, just after his bath. ALEX is in his underwear.

MARGARET

You smell so delicious! Do you know how delicious you really are. I could just eat you alive.

MATTHEW enters and stands in the doorway; he is not seen at first.

MARGARET

Okay, cinnamon bun, get me your socks.

ALEX goes to the table to get the socks and sees MATTHEW. MATTHEW motions him to be quiet while he sneaks up behind MARGARET. ALEX brings MARGARET the socks.

MARGARET

Give me your feet.

As MARGARET says the next line, MATTHEW signs it to ALEX.

MARGARET

This little piggy went to get ribs, this little piggy --

ALEX points to MATTHEW standing in the door.

MARGARET

Huh? Hey. What are you doing home?

MATTHEW

Ran into a problem -- had to pick up some tools. Hey, Mister Buffo, how ya doing?

MARGARET

I didn't expect you.

MATTHEW

How about letting me have some of the fun?

MATTHEW kneels down and continues helping ALEX put on his right sock.

MARGARET

Thanks. We've got to get moving here.

ALEX is dawdling with his socks.

MATTHEW

What's up?

MARGARET

Places to go.

(to ALEX)

Let's keep getting dressed, little man.

MATTHEW helps ALEX. MARGARET starts getting herself ready.

MATTHEW

(overlaps)

What's on the schedule?

MARGARET

Oh -- stuff. Pharmacy, supermarket, art supplies -- photo lab.

MATTHEW

Photo lab.

MARGARET

Photo lab. The pictures are done. Alex, the socks.

ALEX finishes putting them on.

MATTHEW

The pictures are done.

MARGARET

The pictures are done. Got the call this morning.

MATTHEW

What comes next?

MARGARET

The shirt.

MARGARET hands him ALEX's shirt.

MATTHEW

Arms up like Superman.

MATTHEW slides the shirt onto ALEX.

MARGARET

Pants next.

MATTHEW

You put them on, okay?

ALEX puts on his pants.

MATTHEW

The pictures are done.

MARGARET

Yeah.

MATTHEW helps ALEX dress. MARGARET continues to get herself ready.

MARGARET

How's the job?

MATTHEW

I found the subflooring rotted out.

MARGARET

The old couple, right?

MATTHEW

Wanted to replace it, but they just wanted the new counter
up -- the cost --

MATTHEW gets ALEX's sneakers.

MATTHEW

Sneakers next.

MARGARET

The cost --

MATTHEW

(to ALEX)

Try putting the right one on the right foot. Told 'em only going to cost 'em more later on.

(to ALEX)

Left foot.

MARGARET

Uh-huh.

MATTHEW

And I gave 'em a break on the price.

MARGARET

Softie.

ALEX is finished dressing.

MARGARET

Well --

MATTHEW

Definitely a style: red shirt, green corduroy pants, and black sneakers. Alex, go brush your teeth. Each one thirty-two times.

ALEX exits stage right.

MATTHEW

Remember, thirty-two. So --

MARGARET

So.

MATTHEW

So. The pictures are ready. What's next?

MARGARET

Another week until the exhibition.

MATTHEW

Yeah.

MARGARET

Don't you have to get back -- ?

MATTHEW

A week.

MARGARET

It'll take me the whole week. A very simple matting. Already budgeted for.

MATTHEW

I know.

MARGARET

Right. And then, well then, the class is -- over. Aren't they waiting?

MATTHEW goes to speak.

MARGARET

Don't. Don't.

MATTHEW

I'm glad --

MARGARET

-- the class is over -- not news.

MATTHEW

That's not what --

MARGARET

I'm sure you are -- I can understand wh --

MATTHEW

-- I want to say.

MARGARET

Aren't they waiting for you?

MATTHEW

I'm glad the pictures are ready.

MARGARET

Because it means --

MATTHEW

Because it means a lot to you --

MARGARET

But not to you.

MATTHEW

That's not entirely true.

MARGARET

Did you get your tools?

MATTHEW

Look --

MARGARET

I'm sure they're anxious --

MATTHEW

Maggie --

MARGARET

How can you, "not entirely true"?

MATTHEW

I just wanted it to fit --

MARGARET

You never understood how it couldn't just "fit in" --

MATTHEW

Time, yes, you needed time, space, I heard all that --

MARGARET

But did you underst --

MATTHEW

Didn't I give you --

MARGARET

Not without --

MATTHEW

Because I didn't always understand how much --

MARGARET

Well, it wasn't for a lack of explana[tion] --

MATTHEW

Expla -- ? It was always about why I couldn't, how I couldn't
--

MARGARET

You're right -- you know, you're right -- it was mine. It was
all mine. And I make no apolo[gies] --

MATTHEW

I'm not asking for that --

MARGARET

Right. Well, good -- don't worry, no more -- I'm sure they're
anxious to get their subflooring fixed -- just go --

MATTHEW

Maggie! Give me an inch. Damn, damn, you can be --

MARGARET

What? What?

MATTHEW

Maggie -- Maggie, I am glad it's over.

MARGARET

Old news.

MATTHEW

But I'm also --

MATTHEW holds his fingers apart an inch.

MATTHEW

The edgewise, the word edgewise I've been trying to get in
-- I'm also, I'm also proud of you.

MARGARET

You shit.

MATTHEW

I am n[ot] --

MARGARET

Don't you dare -- You shit. Don't you dare steal --

MATTHEW

I'm trying --

MARGARET

You shit.

MATTHEW

Make up for lost --

MARGARET

Why?

MATTHEW

Why.

MARGARET

Why now?

MATTHEW

Why. The rotted wood.

MARGARET

What?

MATTHEW

I was ripping out the rotted wood --

MARGARET

Fuck --

MATTHEW

And I knew the pictures would be done soon --

MARGARET

Checking that subflooring --

MATTHEW

Do the job right.

MARGARET

-- man, oh, man.

MATTHEW

So I told 'em what was right --

MARGARET

What Matthew always does.

MATTHEW

Master craftsman.

MARGARET

And if you have to replace it --

MATTHEW

-- you replace it.

MATTHEW holds up his fingers in a "V" peace sign. MARGARET closes them. ALEX comes back.

MATTHEW

Good job.

MARGARET

Got to wear sunglasses, they're so bright! You're not too late with the compliment.

MATTHEW

I know -- that it -- whatever "it" is -- it's not over -- I know that. We need --

MARGARET

Much more.

MATTHEW
(to ALEX)

What?

MARGARET

You're right.

MATTHEW
(to ALEX)

What? No, we weren't doing "loud talk." Just talking.

MARGARET

Go get your coat on. Yes, I'll be right there.

ALEX leaves stage right to get his coat.

MATTHEW
Little jugs -- Got a bid in on some cabinet work -- nice to
get it when this ends.

MARGARET
I'd better get --

MATTHEW
If I get it, we can get the health insurance started up again.

MARGARET
Got all my fingers crossed.

MATTHEW
I should know on the bid --

MARGARET
Alex --

MATTHEW
-- by the end of the week.

MARGARET
Alex, stop playing in the closet.

To MATTHEW, putting on her jacket, grabbing her bag.

MARGARET

That'll be good. Get your coat on and get in here. We have to get going.

ALEX jumps into MATTHEW's arms.

MATTHEW

Hey!

MARGARET
(to ALEX)

Picture time.

MATTHEW

Gonna be fun to see those pictures, huh?

MATTHEW kisses ALEX.

MATTHEW

Kiss your mom for me just like this.

MATTHEW kisses MARGARET.

MATTHEW

You watch out for her, okay, little Superman?

MATTHEW leaves.

MARGARET

Give me a Daddy kiss. Okay. It's just you and me, little man.

MARGARET moves with ALEX to downstage right. Light on them. Transition sound to photo lab.

* * * * *

Scene 8

MARGARET

All right -- this is what I remember. I came into the shop, Alex in tow. A customer was there -- she left.

FLASH and two POLICE OFFICERS enter. FLASH has a package in his hands, the contact sheets clipped to it. Lights up on full scene.

MARGARET

Two other people there. Indicated for them to go ahead.
They deferred. And then -- I stepped up.

The scene begins.

MARGARET

Well, Flash. I'm here for my pictures. Lot of work to do --

One of the two OFFICERS steps forward. The other OFFICER takes the photos. During this scene ALEX stays very close to MARGARET.

OFFICER 1

Are you Margaret Pasqualini?

MARGARET

Yes.

OFFICER 1

Are these your pictures?

MARGARET

Yes. Is there some problem?

OFFICER 1

Ma'am, could you tell us what these pictures are about?

MARGARET

They're about him.

OFFICER 1

Why did you take them?

MARGARET

Flash, who are they?

OFFICER 2

We're from the police department.

Both pull out identification, but before they put them back, MARGARET snatches OFFICER 1's ID and looks at it closely. She then hands it back.

MARGARET

I've got work to do.

OFFICER 1

You realize these pictures are of a naked child.

MARGARET

Of course -- they're of him! They're for a photography project, for a course. What's the problem? Alex, it's okay.

OFFICER 2

We've had a complaint about child pornography.

MARGARET

I don't get it.

OFFICER 2

These pictures are of a naked child.

MARGARET

My naked child. I took them.

OFFICER 1

Why?

MARGARET

I told you -- for a project. I'm his mother.

(to FLASH)

What's going on here? Who called in the Keystones?

OFFICER 1

No reason to be insulting --

MARGARET

Insulting? I came to pick up my pictures -- Alex, it's all right -- and suddenly I'm molesting my child.

(to FLASH)

Who called them?

FLASH

I did. I did.

MARGARET

You should have talked to me first. You know better. You know me --

FLASH

How was I to know -- I didn't have a choice -- The times -- It happens so often --

MARGARET

(to OFFICER 2)

My pictures -- This is absurd. Is this from some three-hour seminar --

OFFICER 1

Ma'am, there's no need for --

MARGARET

I haven't done anything wrong. Give me my pictures.

OFFICER 2

You'll have to come to the station.

MARGARET

(to OFFICER 2)

Just look at the pictures -- they're about his innocence. That's what they're about.

OFFICER 2

I don't know anything about photography --

MARGARET

Obviously. Or me. Or Alex.

OFFICER 2

We have to go.

MARGARET

I'm not going.

OFFICER 2

If you don't come voluntarily, we'll call DSS to take your child while we take you into custody.

MARGARET

You're threatening to take my child?

OFFICER 2

Doesn't have to go that far.

MARGARET

What is it, honey? Slow down, tell me.

OFFICER 1

He can't speak?

MARGARET

He's mute.

(to ALEX)

What is it, sugar?

MARGARET kneels down to "listen" to ALEX. Everyone waits.

MARGARET

He wants to know who is doing "loud talk."

OFFICER 1

Ma'am, it will be easier on everyone if --

Still kneeling, MARGARET pulls ALEX closer to her.

MARGARET

I am not going with you. I want my pictures. I've done nothing wrong. I have my rights. I want to call my husband.

(to ALEX)

What is it, honey?

OFFICER 1

What's he saying?

MARGARET

He says he's scared. Any reason for him to be scared?

(to ALEX)

Everything's okay. I want to call Matthew.

OFFICER 2

You can call him at the station.

MARGARET

I want to call him from here.

MARGARET moves to FLASH at the counter.

MARGARET

Where's your phone?

FLASH

What should I do?

OFFICER 1

(to FLASH)

Stay right where you are. Ms. Pasqualini, let's go --

MARGARET

Get your hands -- Flash, get me the phone.

OFFICER 1 makes another attempt to grab her, this time more firmly. MARGARET pulls away from him, violently, and lunges toward OFFICER 2 to get her pictures. The two OFFICERS wrestle her to the ground and handcuff her. FLASH comes out from behind the counter and gets ALEX out of the way.

OFFICER 1

Let's go!

OFFICER 1 escorts her out the door. FLASH stands there holding ALEX. OFFICER 2 comes over and takes ALEX's hand.

OFFICER 2

The Assistant D.A. will be in touch.

Lights bump out. All exit except for FLASH. Sound effect: same for end of NEWS ANCHOR.

* * * * *

Scene 9

FLASH and REPORTER 2 each grab a chair and bring it to center stage. This interview should be done rapidly. REPORTER 2 has a pad and takes notes. This is being videoed but is not a live interview. REPORTER 2 is pushy.

REPORTER 2
(to the cameraperson)

Three, two, one.

(to FLASH)
All right, Mr. Gunn, we're taping. What made you call the police?

FLASH
The police. The pictures --

REPORTER 2
-- of a child --

FLASH
-- of a child, yes --

REPORTER 2
Surely you've handled child pictures before --

FLASH
A naked child.

REPORTER 2
And you've never had any of those?

FLASH
Yes, but --

REPORTER 2
These were different.

FLASH
I guess.

REPORTER 2

You guess?

FLASH

They were -- different.

REPORTER 2

Different. Enough to make you call the police. There must have been something --

FLASH

I just wanted to make sure --

REPORTER 2

-- of what?

FLASH

You know --

REPORTER 2

No, I don't know.

FLASH

-- the abuse, all the abuse that goes on --

REPORTER 2

-- and the pictures showed that?

FLASH is silent.

REPORTER 2

There must have been something -- to trigger --

REPORTER 2 gives him an encouraging gesture, to continue speaking.
FLASH remains silent.

REPORTER 2

(another tack)

Ever called the police about any other customer?

FLASH

No.

REPORTER 2

Why now?

FLASH

(slightly exasperated)

Because it was a child.

REPORTER 2

But you've handled child pictures before, right? You said --

FLASH

Yes --

REPORTER 2

So why this child?

FLASH

I couldn't take a chance.

REPORTER 2

Something about the pictures, then --

FLASH

I really shouldn't --

REPORTER 2

"Take a chance," you said, "make sure," you said -- abuse --

FLASH

I really can't --

REPORTER 2

Shouldn't you tell --

FLASH

No.

REPORTER 2

Sure?

FLASH

Yes.

REPORTER 2

Sure?

FLASH

Yes!

REPORTER 2
(another tack)

Did you know Pasqualini?

FLASH

She's used my lab before.

REPORTER 2

Ever -- discuss things with her?

FLASH

We'd talk, you know, her projects --

REPORTER 2

Ever do anything that made you suspicious?

FLASH

What're you getting at --

REPORTER 2

How did she treat her son?

FLASH

Always holding him, keeps a hand on him. He's a mute --

REPORTER 2

Touching him a lot, then?

FLASH

He's her son, for Christ's sake!

REPORTER 2

Language, please --

FLASH

Well, don't ask me stupid qu --

REPORTER 2

Were the pictures any good?

FLASH

The pictures.

REPORTER 2

Yes, the pictures. Pay attention, Mr. Gunn. The pictures -- were they any good?

FLASH

Technically.

REPORTER 2

Yes?

FLASH

She knows her stuff.

REPORTER 2

Her stuff?

FLASH

Technically --

REPORTER 2

Do you think the pictures are pornography?

FLASH

Porno[graphy] -- ?

REPORTER 2

Would you judge, in your professional opinion, would you declare the pictures pornographic?

FLASH

Declare?

REPORTER 2

If I had a Bible here --

FLASH

A Bible!

REPORTER 2

Figure of speech --

FLASH

I couldn't swear -- is that what you want? -- wouldn't swear to it --

REPORTER 2

But sure enough to call the police?

FLASH

That's not why I called.

REPORTER 2

Why, then?

FLASH

I didn't have a choice.

REPORTER 2

Mr. Gunn, we all have choices.

FLASH

What are you --

REPORTER 2

You made your choice -- you called the police. So you must have been sure --

FLASH

To protect -- the childr[en] -- I'm not sure --

REPORTER 2

Mr. Gunn, help me out here --

FLASH

I'm not sure --

REPORTER 2

-- what was in the pictures?

FLASH

-- what I'm sure of.

REPORTER 2

What was that?

FLASH

Never mind.

REPORTER 2

I can just re-run the tape.

FLASH

I'm not sure what I'm sure of.

REPORTER 2 writes.

FLASH

Look, don't put --

REPORTER 2

Sorry, already chiseled. So maybe they weren't pornography?

FLASH

I never said --

REPORTER 2

In your professional opinion?

FLASH

I never said --

REPORTER 2

And the abuse -- you mentioned abuse --

FLASH is silent.

REPORTER 2

Should I maybe conclude here that, maybe, this whole thing is -- a mistake? Mr. Gunn?

FLASH

I never said -- any of --

REPORTER 2

What? What? Mr. Gunn?

FLASH

I think maybe I've said enough.

REPORTER 2

Enough. You've said more than enough. Thanks.

(to cameraperson)

Cut it.

Lights out. FLASH and REPORTER 2 exit, replacing chairs behind tables.
Transition music.

* * * * *

Scene 10

MATTHEW enters with a large square of muslin painted to look like plywood and lays it out. He also has the following: a tape measure clipped to his belt, pencil behind the ear, a small pad of paper in his shirt pocket. The lights come up. MARGARET enters and stands somewhere in the shadows. JOHN enters and stands at the stage right table with a briefcase.

MATTHEW

The subflooring.

He begins measuring the cloth and writing figures in the pad.

MATTHEW

They wanted to build something on top of nothing. And I gave 'em a price break so they wouldn't. I knew exactly what they were thinking: I don't think I can afford. I'm short this month. I don't like surprise. Cover it over. Maybe it'll go away.

MATTHEW finishes measuring the cloth. He then kneels in the center of it and begins folding it slowly, deliberately.

MATTHEW

They needed the break. I could have half-slopped it but -- I'm just not going to. I pried up the old floor -- in places came apart easily-- rotted out, some old devious drip. In

others, it stuck -- the eager contractor, what, forty, fifty years ago, nail-happy to keep the board unwarped, my pry bar each nail squealing as it gave up its grip. Everything hidden now exposed. I renewed the floor. I set the pipes. I raised the counter, squared it, argued it flush. Routed the doors. Settled the sink, caulked and zippered, everything tight. Everyone needs a break.

MATTHEW has finished folding the cloth.

MATTHEW

On every job I've ever done, I've tried to leave my signature somewhere: on a wall stud, back side of sheetrock, corner of the new cement stoop: Matthew Pasqualini. I just like the idea of it. I have this half-image of someone someday taking something I made apart and seeing my name, wondering -- well, maybe not -- wondering who the name was. I understand Maggie completely. About this course. Her nails. Her measuring. Her name. All of it. She just never saw my signature on any of it.

Lights cross fade to JOHN. MARGARET exits. MATTHEW crosses to JOHN, drops the cloth and tape measure on the table, and sits.

* * * * *

Scene 11

MATTHEW is clearly distraught.

JOHN

Matt? Matt?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

JOHN

You all right?

MATTHEW

How should I plead, counselor?

JOHN

I can come back --

MATTHEW

No, no --

JOHN

Why don't I can't --

MATTHEW

No. I feel guilty enough as it is, you're here late --

JOHN

Really, I can --

MATTHEW

-- giving you that shitty cup of coffee.

JOHN

It was fine, fine.

MATTHEW

At the moment, I don't feel too -- master craftsman --

JOHN

Understandable.

MATTHEW

Alex is scared -- I'm scared -- No, don't go, not yet. Another cup?

JOHN

I'll pass.

MATTHEW

Healthy choice. John -- John, what's going to, what, what, what can happen?

JOHN

Convicted, she'll probably be convicted.

MATTHEW

Convicted.

JOHN

The pornography -- not a problem, not likely -- no child abuse --

MATTHEW

DSS -- Christ!

JOHN

I have their report -- so the judge'll want to pin an easier tail on the donkey --

MATTHEW

-- on the donkey --

JOHN

-- something like disorderly conduct, destruction of property --

MATTHEW

C'mon --

JOHN

Have to tag her with something, Matt --

MATTHEW

They screwed up --

JOHN

They can't admit a screw-up --

MATTHEW

They screwed up, it's their fault --

JOHN

They can't admit.

MATTHEW

So --

JOHN

So could mean jail time, um, probation, fine, community service. Judge's call.

MATTHEW

But John, didn't, she didn't do anyth --

JOHN

She did and she didn't, Matt.

MATTHEW

What? Did what? She just wanted to pick up --

JOHN

She should have gone with them. No one ever wins a
pissing contest with a cop.

MATTHEW

Pissing contest.

JOHN

She challenged them, Matt. In their face.

MATTHEW

But, you know, you know Margaret --

JOHN

-- and I can admire her chutzpah, I suppose --

MATTHEW

-- bulldog with a bone --

JOHN

-- I can admire all that --

MATTHEW

What's not to admire?

JOHN

Matt --

MATTHEW

She never did learn --

JOHN

Matt --

MATTHEW

She always holds on too long --

JOHN

That's my point --

MATTHEW

Maggie's got a vice-grip --

JOHN

Pay attention, Matt. Matt, they see a woman -- Matt, they see a woman who lost control.

MATTHEW

Lost control?

JOHN

They don't see a strong wom[an] --

MATTHEW

Lost control?

JOHN

They see a hysterical woman --

MATTHEW

Margaret never loses contr[ol] --

JOHN

They see a neglectful parent. That's probably the worst. Once that impression's laid down, Matt -- Matt, listen to me: it's a hard picture to erase. Hard. I'll try, but -- She should have just gone with them.

MATTHEW

She always holds on too long, John.

JOHN

You know better than I --

MATTHEW

You know that, too. You've been on the receiving end. I just can see her now, in the store -- no one going to outtalk

her, defender of principle -- I threatened to get her a cape and a halo once --

JOHN

Matt? We need to go --

MATTHEW

Have you, have you seen the pictures?

JOHN

Yes. We need to get --

MATTHEW

And?

JOHN

And what?

MATTHEW

And?

JOHN

And. And they're not pornography, if that's what you're asking. Not legally -- Not legally.

MATTHEW

Is that what I'm asking?

JOHN

I don't know.

MATTHEW

What?

JOHN

Maybe photogra[phy] -- maybe photographers process differently than I do. To be honest, Matt -- they made me uncomfortable.

MATTHEW

C'mon.

JOHN

Alex is too young to, to realize --

MATTHEW

She never hurt him --

JOHN

I'm not saying she did --

MATTHEW

-- this never hurt Alex --

JOHN

I'm sure, Matt --

MATTHEW

People are saying --

JOHN

I know what they're saying, and I don't believe that she, but,
but -- you can't always --

MATTHEW

What?

JOHN

-- know that, Matt --

MATTHEW

I know. I was there --

JOHN

Still, from another point of --

MATTHEW

This course meant --

JOHN

-- view --

MATTHEW

-- so much to Maggie.

JOHN

From another point of view, I'm saying --

MATTHEW

It meant so much to her. We fought about it constantly:
about the money --

JOHN

Matt --

MATTHEW

-- about the time, the money --

JOHN

-- all I'm saying is --

MATTHEW

She would never hurt --

JOHN

-- all I'm saying, Matt, all I'm saying is, you can't always
know, know your intentions -- Maybe Margaret -- I don't
know.

MATTHEW

She loved it --

JOHN

Okay, she loved it. I want to drop it, Matt, because we have
to talk about tomor[ow] --

MATTHEW

I know why she loved it --

JOHN

Matt --

MATTHEW

She loved it because it got her out. It got her out. It took
her away.

JOHN

Look --

MATTHEW

The way Alex can take her --

JOHN

-- about tomor[ow] --

MATTHEW

The way I can't -- the way I can't --

JOHN

(gets up from the table)

Fix that later, Matt. But we have to get to "later," and that starts with tomorrow, with Margaret standing up in front of the judge and the gavel going tap, tap, tap to pound down the nails. I need you to be ready to help Margaret because more than likely it's not going to go her way, I need you to get your mind around that.

MATTHEW

She really loves Alex.

JOHN

I know that.

MATTHEW

No matter what you think -- You have to believe that.

JOHN

I believe that, of course I believe that.

MATTHEW

She would never hurt him.

JOHN

I believe you. But that's not my strongest defense.

MATTHEW

You have to be on her side.

JOHN

Matt -- I need you to be ready.

MATTHEW

Ready.

JOHN

I'll call.

JOHN starts to exit.

MATTHEW

John?

JOHN

Yes?

MATTHEW

Do your best.

JOHN

Only club I got in the bag, Matt.

JOHN leaves. MATTHEW sits at the table for a moment, alone, then the light fades down on him. He exits, taking the tape measure and cloth. Transition music.

* * * * *

Scene 12

Lights up. MARGARET enters. The JUDGE, ADA, and JOHN enter behind her.

MARGARET

It did not go my way.

MARGARET turns and faces the JUDGE.

JUDGE

I've made my decision. I'm sentencing you to 18 months of probation, 50 hours of community service, and \$300 in restitution to the lab.

ADA

A written apology?

JUDGE

Agreed.

JOHN

Your honor --

JUDGE

It's either that, Mr. Twyman, or 30 days in jail for your artiste.
I'd say your choices are fairly clear. You have three days to
make your decision.

The lights go strange. Sound can be used here to establish mood. All the actors speak as a CHORUS and arrange themselves around MARGARET. The speech should be said as venomously as possible without overacting, and there should be stylized movement accompanying the words.

JUDGE

You know as well I do you're guilty of something.

VOICE 1

You feel it, don't you?

MARGARET

I do not.

VOICE 2

If only you had just been able to walk in and get your pictures
-- By now you'd have your exhibit ready.

VOICE 3

And you would be complimented as an artist, your ego
satisfied.

VOICES 1,2,3

Life would be correct.

MARGARET

It's not about my ego.

JUDGE

But it didn't go like that, did it?

VOICE 4

Somebody else had the

VOICES 4,5

second thoughts

VOICE 5

you wouldn't admit to yourself.

MARGARET

Second thoughts --

JUDGE

And your response?

VOICE 1

Denial.

VOICE 2

Indignation.

VOICE 3

Resistance.

ALL VOICES

Everything except staring in the mirror.

MARGARET

I was protecting!

VOICES 1,5

Nothing is unconnected.

VOICE 3

Did you think Alex would never again remember standing
naked in your studio

MARGARET

No harm!

VOICE 2

The rough painted canvas against his skin

MARGARET

It freed him!

VOICE 1

The bright lights flashing in his eyes --

VOICE 4

That he would never, one day, recall it and perhaps wonder

ALL

What his mother was doing with him?

MARGARET

He was safe!

JUDGE

Or did you answer for Alex

VOICE 3

Like every good apologist

VOICE 1

Saying that he loves having his picture taken

VOICES 5

That this is play for him

VOICE 4

That I would never deliberately hurt him

VOICE 2

So therefore I can go ahead and use him?

MARGARET

Use him?

ALL VOICES

This is what confronted you

JUDGE

The day you breezed in to pick up your pictures.

ALL

You didn't think of it then.

JUDGE

But you have to think of it now. You have betrayed --

MARGARET

Nothing!

JUDGE

You have betrayed the people who loved you.

ALL

You love the people you have betrayed. Guilt --

JUDGE

Is your incense

ALL

Shame --

JUDGE

Is your journey.

MARGARET banishes the CHORUS.

MARGARET

Begone! Get the fuck out of my head!

Silence.

MARGARET

If someone tells you long enough that your skin is blue, you will believe it. If they kiss you when you say "Yes," if they beat you when you say "No!" -- if they Pavlov every inch of your life so that when you see not-blue, if when you assert not-blue, when you even whisper "Not-blue," if anxiety floods your veins and "not-blue" turns into "not true," you will believe your skin is blue. For a moment, my hands, my face, the whole sheath of me turned into -- sky -- and I dissolved. For a moment I betrayed myself. The voices made me forget what I know, made me remember what never happened. (But then, Alex. I remembered Alex, the

spectrum of Alex -- and all the colors righted themselves. Alex loves the camera -- it lets him speak through his body, and so he's freed from language. As am I. When he sat for me we were in pure art, purely in the moment. How blended I felt with him, how he cleansed my spirit. In the course I felt like an artist -- I was an artist. I pushed beyond lines, past edges -- no longer Matthew's Maggie, no longer even Mom of Alex, but somewhere in a sweet place completely my own, responsible to no one, owning my own face. An artist. I wish I were back in the studio with Alex, with nothing but the bright lights and his smile. No sturdy Matthew, Matthew keeping the house solid, no world chomping on garbage for entertainment. I want to be in that moment again, free, unchained. What have I done wrong? I have done nothing wrong. I've done nothing to hurt Alex -- and what hurt I've given Matthew, that comes from the wrench of two souls growing in different arcs -- no judgment needed. But now all this: nothing proved, everything "alleged," all smeared. The whole dirty ordinariness squeezing the beauty out of everything. So what has to be done? What has to be done is what must be done so that when Alex grows up, I want him to know I did the right thing. I want him, if he is ever faced with a test, to look back at me with a compass for the right choice. That's what must be done. So what has to be done? The voices are gone. I can hear myself.

MARGARET takes out her notebook and begins to write as the lights fade to scene change light. She continues to write until the lights come up, moving into the stage right chair once it is placed.

* * * * *

Scene 13

Scene change light. The three of them are sitting in an interrogation room. The two tables are pushed together to form one table. The GUARD stands nearby. The GUARD will respond as action escalates, prepared to restore order. All through this MARGARET appears calm, but she should, periodically, bounce her leg nervously. As the music sound fades, JOHN begins.

JOHN

I haven't heard her say, "Go ahead, accept the terms."

MATTHEW

Of course she will --

JOHN

No "of course" about it, Matt.

MATTHEW

Get the paperwork, or whatever, started.

JOHN

I can only do what my client tells me to do.

MATTHEW

So tell him, Maggie. Tell him. Kiss up and kiss it off and let's put this whole -- thing -- behind us.

MARGARET

This thing.

MATTHEW

All this -- shit --

(to JOHN)

Has she been talking to you like this?

JOHN

Not like this, not like anything.

MATTHEW takes out a sheet of paper and hands it to MARGARET.

MARGARET

A black face and red tears.

MATTHEW

My last guns, Maggie.

MARGARET

Matt --

MATTHEW

He's been throwing his favorite toys around. He's let me know I don't give him a bath like you do. He's not thrilled about day care. Come home. You didn't do anything wrong. You've got nothing to prove.

MARGARET does not respond to this.

MATTHEW

Don't believe what they're saying in the papers.

JOHN

She doesn't get the papers.

MATTHEW

Doesn't matter -- it's in the air.

JOHN

We don't have a lot of time left.

MATTHEW

(to MARGARET)

So enlighten me.

No response from MARGARET.

MATTHEW

Taking pictures of Alex wasn't -- wrong. The pictures never hurt Alex; what hurts him is that you're not there.

No response from MARGARET.

MATTHEW

I wouldn't be honest -- you know this -- there were times when I felt like a fifth wheel, watching you. But that's okay. We'll work on that. But we can't do that if you're here. Tell John to get back to the judge -- eat a little crow, I know that sticks in here, but it's really nothing. A, a, a bent nail -- chuck it.

No response from MARGARET.

MATTHEW

I'm going to tell John to crank it up for tomorrow. All right? A little crow, a little salt, a little salsa -- not so bad.

MARGARET

And everything okay.

MATTHEW

Broke no cosmic laws. No commandments. You were under stress. You got harassed -- lost your temper, very human thing to do. Fixable. Minor.

MARGARET

Minor.

MATTHEW

You've made your point -- you didn't do anything wrong. Duly noted with everyone who cares about you. Let's go home.

MARGARET

John? If I bow?

JOHN

You'll have a record either way.

MATTHEW
(to JOHN)

Might add some zip --

JOHN

Matt --

MARGARET

So everything would be all right.

MATTHEW

Yes, Maggie. All right. For all of us. This might not be so bad after all -- it's been seven years, probably time for a check under our hood -- I'm going to tell John. To go ahead. Maggie? Maggie?

MARGARET

No.

MATTHEW

No.

MARGARET

No.

MATTHEW

I knew it. I knew -- Knew you couldn't let it go. No one gets a tongue up on Margaret Pasqualini. Uh-uh. No one, ever.

JOHN

Margaret, going to jail --

MATTHEW

(to MARGARET)

What are you saying?

JOHN

Margaret, I can't protect you in jail --

MARGARET

There's a reason why I haven't said anything for the last three days -- I've been -- digging.

MATTHEW

Do it at home.

JOHN

I don't have any jurisdiction here.

MARGARET

No, you don't.

(picks up the picture)

Matt, don't be mad at me. Don't be anything at me.

MATTHEW

Don't be anything --

JOHN

Matt!

MARGARET

There's something I have to do here that's the right thing to do --

JOHN

Margaret --

MATTHEW

The right thing is us --

MARGARET

The right thing --

MATTHEW

-- no, not even that, not even that -- the right thing --

MARGARET

You're not listening --

MATTHEW

-- don't even count me in -- it's Alex. The right thing is home.
Home. Home. That's gotta clinch it, Maggie. Home.

MARGARET shakes her head no.

MARGARET

The right thing is also keeping my name clear --

MATTHEW

About you --

MARGARET

About Alex, too. He's going to have to do the hard thing
someday --

MATTHEW

You don't think it's hard for him now --

MARGARET

I want him to look back and know I did this -- I won't pretend
--

JOHN

(tapping his watch)

Time.

MARGARET

It's been a long three days, Matt -- longer, longer than you
know. Long. Don't think I don't agree -- you argue just like
you build a house --

MATTHEW

Maggie --

MARGARET

But --

MATTHEW

List --

MARGARET

I did some very stupid things, Matt. I put Alex in harm's way
-- in the store, maybe in the pictures --

MATTHEW

Not in the pic --

MARGARET

I kept you away, who deserves it least.

MATTHEW

You don't have to do penance --

MARGARET

That's not what -- I'm not -- I'm just saying I see things
now, now, now that I'm not -- not boiling over --

JOHN

We're running out of time.

MATTHEW

Come home.

MARGARET

I have to fight this, Matt.

MATTHEW

Have to fight --

MARGARET

Have to fight this. Nothing I did was wrong.

MATTHEW

This is like another -- project, right?

MARGARET

If I don't fight it, it's like admitting --

MATTHEW

Principle --

MARGARET

-- to a lie -- Yes, principle -- People shouldn't be arrested

-- Don't you think I know -- costs?

JOHN

Matt, sit down!

MATTHEW grabs the picture.

MATTHEW

How am I supposed to explain --

MARGARET

Alex will learn --

The police officer makes a signal.

MARGARET

Alex will know --

MATTHEW

Alex will hate --

JOHN

Time's up.

MATTHEW

More words. More time.

MARGARET

No. No. No.

MATTHEW

(overlaps)

Fine. Fine. If you can give up your son --

MATTHEW rumples the paper and tosses it at her. MARGARET smooths the paper.

MARGARET

It's the only thing would take me aw --

MATTHEW

Fine. We'll get along -- just fine --

MARGARET

Matt.

The GUARD moves forward.

MATTHEW

Got the cabinet job.

JOHN

Matt, we have to go.

The guard and MARGARET leave.

MATTHEW

Hope the First Amendment keeps you warm.

JOHN takes his arm.

MATTHEW

Damn, that was stupid, wasn't it?

JOHN

Matt --

JOHN and MATTHEW leave. Lights out. The sound of a closing cell door; set change light bumps up and transition music as cell is set. The set must be very easy to put into place and must be done quickly. Meanwhile, the talk show: RADIO HOST and CALLER seat themselves in the audience in such a way as to draw attention away from the set change, e.g., on either side of the audience. A light will be on each of them.

* * * * *

Scene 14

A bit of cue-in music for a RADIO TALK SHOW HOST, coming back into the program. Lights up. The HOST sits at the stage left table. The CALLER stands stage center, facing the audience, holding a cordless phone; she can walk as she talks. Where it feels right, the lines should overlap because the HOST is trying to move the show along.

RADIO HOST

Welcome back after all those ludicrous commercials -- but, hey, they're paying my salary, so okay by me. All right, our topic this morning: kid porn or "poorn" judgment? You make the call. You may have heard the story: young mother arrested at a photo lab for taking pictures of her naked son for a photography project. The police carted her off when she tried to go three rounds with 'em in the lobby. Bam, bam. And why were the police officers skulking around the lab? They'd been called there by the lab owner -- a Mr. "Flash" Gunn, great name! -- because Mr. Gunn felt "nervous" about the pictures. Apparently the woman's four-year old son witnessed the whole thing. Now she's off to the pokey for 30 days for "artistic principle." Now, questions to "porn-der," especially for you libertarian wankers: Should the lab owner have dropped a dime? what about artistic freedom when it comes to children? -- and no calls, please, from the Men Loving Boys perverts out there. Should they string Margaret Pasqualini up or celebrate her as a hero of the First Amendment? Give us your thoughts at 1-800-POPS-OFF. Chris, you're on.

CALLER

Pat, thanks for taking my call.

RADIO HOST

Just glad to do my job. What's up?

CALLER

I have really mixed feelings about this, really mixed.

RADIO HOST

Mix away.

CALLER

I mean, parents have been snapping pics of naked kids since the first cameras --

RADIO HOST

I got 'em --

CALLER

-- so what's the big deal?

RADIO HOST

-- you got 'em.

CALLER

Right. But kids today -- wow, they're really at the mercy, know what I mean?

RADIO HOST

Every day.

CALLER

They can get killed for peeing on some guy's lap!

RADIO HOST

I read about that.

CALLER

So better to be on the safe side and call in the police.

RADIO HOST

Even if, as I understand it, even if the pictures are really pretty good --

CALLER

But "good" means what? You can justify --

RADIO HOST

-- a project about her son's innocence --

CALLER

What?

RADIO HOST

A project about her son's innocence --

CALLER

Some project!

RADIO HOST

-- apparently don't show any abuse or mistreatment --

CALLER

It's not like she's gonna publicize pictures of that!

RADIO HOST

We're talking about a person's reputation here.

CALLER

Don't we all have to take up the slack to protect the children?

RADIO HOST

Maybe --

CALLER

You gotta believe the child.

RADIO HOST

But what gave Mr. Flash Gunn the right --

CALLER

Gotta draw a line somewhere.

RADIO HOST

Who draws?

CALLER

I guess -- gotta go with your gut.

RADIO HOST

But whose "gut" decides? Do you see the problem here?

CALLER

To be honest, I have to say that she shouldn't have taken the pictures.

RADIO HOST

Why?

CALLER

Even if they're art, whatever that is, she used her son to get something she wanted.

RADIO HOST

Used her son.

CALLER

I think that's wrong.

RADIO HOST

So she exploited her son?

CALLER

In a way, ya know --

RADIO HOST

Is that what you're saying?

CALLER

Ya know, no different than the farm workers. Really. So she's getting what she deserves.

RADIO HOST

Sharp thinking there, Patty-O. Thanks for the call. Sarah, you're on the air --

Lights out. Sound: music, as if the radio show were going on break.

* * * * *

Scene 15

Lights come up. Sound: background sounds of a prison -- these can include voices, occasional announcements over a P.A. (though the announcements should be garbled enough so as not to be recognizable), other doors opening and closing, distant music, walking, etc.

On the upstage bed CORTEZ is discovered asleep. The GUARD leads MARGARET to the cell; the sound of the door sliding open; she steps in;

the sound of the door closing. MARGARET stands there. The sound of the closing door wakes up CORTEZ. She sits up suddenly.

CORTEZ

Tamara?

(sees MARGARET)

Who are you? Who are you? Right, right, that's right -- I forgot. Today is the new beef. The virgin territory.

MARGARET does not respond. The GUARD leaves.

CORTEZ

Welcome. Sit down. I'm not known to bite. I hear you are deposited here for thirty days. I'm not. Any cigarettes? She lacks the local currency. Lacks -- a smile, some courtesy, peace of mind -- lacks a lot. That bed is yours. I didn't sleep much last night -- I'm tired. I do not want to be disturbed. Understand? Standard operating procedure, so that we get things right right off. You're only here for a month -- I live here, Borinquena prisoner of war. You, you're just a guest of the state, a radar blip, a --

MARGARET

I thought you wanted to sleep.

CORTEZ

Como?

MARGARET

You said -- You said you wanted to get some sleep.

CORTEZ gives MARGARET a straight look that MARGARET holds, nervously. The look lasts for a good five seconds, longer if wanted.

MARGARET

You said you wanted to get some sleep.

CORTEZ

Good thing you didn't pull your eyes away. I gave you the rules of the house. Now I will sleep.

MARGARET sits there, looking at her surroundings. Noises continue; lights fade briefly to black. Transition sound or music.

INTERMISSION

Scene 16

Pre-Show Music: Selections from Lou Reed's **New York**. Lights go to half, then out. CORTEZ and MARGARET are discovered on their beds in what will be known as "night light": bluish, dim.

In the background, dimly, occasional noises: a cough, something dropping to the floor, building settling, footsteps, etc. -- the prison at night.

Music comes up -- mysterious, ethereal, pleasant. This music will be known as "Tamara's voice." CORTEZ stirs and sits up.

CORTEZ

Tamara? Tamara?

She rises. The lights now change: multicolored, but still dim. Other sounds come in, mixed in with the music, eerie sounds, to create an eerie mood.

CORTEZ

Tamara? Tamara?

CORTEZ starts moving around the cell, waking MARGARET. MARGARET raises herself slightly to look.

CORTEZ

Goddamn it! Goddamn it! Leave me alone! Just leave me alone! Tamara. Tamara.

Then she stands there, just staring into the dark. MARGARET watches. CORTEZ becomes aware that MARGARET is watching; they lock eyes for a few beats, then CORTEZ makes a gesture for MARGARET to lay back down. MARGARET lays back down. CORTEZ sits for several beats. MARGARET again lifts herself up to watch CORTEZ. They remain this way as a bell or alarm goes off: a wake-up call. Lights up to full, with prison sounds.

* * * * *

Scene 17: The First Degree

The GUARD walks in to check on them, then exits. Background noises dim down and are gone by "Out at the end of the month."

CORTEZ

Some advice? Eat something.

MARGARET

If there was something to eat.

CORTEZ

You have to eat.

MARGARET

No appetite.

CORTEZ

You have to fake it, then. Even a rent check can't afford to look weak. Out at the end of the month?

This brings a small smile to MARGARET.

MARGARET

What do we do now?

CORTEZ

Nothing.

MARGARET

Nothing.

CORTEZ

Nothing. The jefes have us screwed down for a few days while they finger through the house for some contraband. Standard operating procedure.

CORTEZ takes out a thick book, an anthology of American literature. She reads.

MARGARET

So we just -- sit.

CORTEZ

Yes.

MARGARET

I'm not used to sitting still --

CORTEZ

There is no hurry to be in a hurry around here.

MARGARET

What are you reading?

CORTEZ closes the book and simply looks at MARGARET. MARGARET sits; CORTEZ goes back to reading. MARGARET's leg begins to bounce noticeably.

CORTEZ

Chill.

MARGARET

Sorry. Nervous.

MARGARET starts tapping her fingers on the table.

CORTEZ

Chill.

MARGARET gets up and paces. CORTEZ watches her.

CORTEZ

No. No. No. No parades.

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Sit down. Sit down. You've got the scorpions --

MARGARET

Just -- thinking.

CORTEZ

Just control it.

MARGARET

I can't just -- turn it off and on.

CORTEZ

Just have to. It gets very close in here.

MARGARET tries to keep still but can't -- leg jumps up and down.

MARGARET

I'm trying!

CORTEZ

Not very hard -- Maybe I should read to you.

(opens book)

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself / I loafe and invite my soul / I lean and loafe at my ease."

MARGARET

Maybe I'm not interested.

CORTEZ

He's one of your own.

MARGARET

I don't care.

CORTEZ

If I have to learn the gringo poets, you should know them, too!

MARGARET

What's the right size rebar --

CORTEZ

The right size what?

MARGARET

Rebar. What's the right f-stop if you're shooting on a cloudy day with 400 speed film that you want to push to 800?

CORTEZ

I don't know.

MARGARET

I do -- without a book.

CORTEZ

Brava, f-stop. All right, without a book. Me busco. Estoy
aún en el paisaje lejos de mi visión --

MARGARET

Sorry, one-lingual.

CORTEZ

-- Sigo siendo mensaje lejos de la palabra. "I seek myself.
I am still in the landscape far from my vision. / I go on being
a message far from the word." [Julia de Burgos, Song of
Simple Truth, "#2: Intimate," (pp. 6-7)]

MARGARET's leg starts bouncing again.

CORTEZ

You don't like our famed Julia de Burgos?

MARGARET

Got past me.

CORTEZ

Tell me another, without the book.

MARGARET

Dip a brick into water before you butter it with mortar.

CORTEZ

You know this.

MARGARET

For a fact.

CORTEZ

You like facts. Then, fact. I quote, sin libro: "i like and
dislike, like the good / dislike the bad in everything, bro" --

MARGARET

Look --

CORTEZ

Listen! You need to listen. "everything changes, bro, anything / that remains the same is doomed to / die, stubbornness must cover all my / angles, bro, y te lo digo sincerely --" [Tato Laviera, AmeRícan, "esquina dude" (58)]

MARGARET

Do house rules mean I have to listen --

CORTEZ

"Te lo digo sincerely" -- I say it to you sincerely.

MARGARET

And I tell you sincerely I don't want to listen.

CORTEZ

What's the matter, querida?

MARGARET

Not in the mood.

CORTEZ

I can understand. All those scorpions making you deaf to beauty, forcing you to accept the loss --

CORTEZ oes back to her book. MARGARET reacts dismissively.

CORTEZ

-- become humble --

MARGARET

Like you --

CORTEZ

-- go with God --

MARGARET

-- like you last night? Shit! Sorry. I'm sorry --

CORTEZ

You need some self-discipline.

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

You're slack, you take up too much space. Be still, Señora f-stop! Now unload, because I want to nip these "nerves" in the bud. I'll recite more poetry.

MARGARET

I wouldn't even call it thinking.

CORTEZ

All jumbled. Smoke in your head. Tick, tick, tick, tick --

MARGARET

My son -- I'm thinking about my son.

CORTEZ

His name?

MARGARET

Alex.

CORTEZ

Age?

MARGARET

Four.

CORTEZ

Married?

MARGARET

Not Alex. I am.

CORTEZ

He has a name?

MARGARET

Matthew.

CORTEZ

He treats you all right? Not Alex. Your husband.

MARGARET

Yes.

CORTEZ

Cheat on you?

MARGARET

Not that I know.

CORTEZ

Yell at you?

MARGARET

No.

CORTEZ

Hit you?

MARGARET

Never.

CORTEZ

Provide for you?

MARGARET

We own a small construction company together. I used to be a "woman in the building trades" until --

CORTEZ

So, let's count off: Nice son. A husband who treats you like a human being. Entrepreneurs. And you're walking free soon. So where's the sting, chica? What? You're here for what?

MARGARET

Disorderly conduct.

CORTEZ

They put you with me for that?

MARGARET

Who are you?

CORTEZ

Stay on the message.

CORTEZ motions for her to continue.

MARGARET

Disorderly conduct. Also malicious destruction of property.
I damaged a photo lab. I resisted arrest -- I fought a police
officer -- two --

CORTEZ

High crimes and misdemeanors --

MARGARET

I'm here basically because I wouldn't agree to a deal.
Eighteen months probation, 50 hours of community service,
\$300 in restitution, and a written apology.

CORTEZ looks askance at her.

MARGARET

That's it.

CORTEZ

And you said no.

MARGARET

Right.

CORTEZ

You don't look brain damaged.

MARGARET

I'm not.

CORTEZ

All you had to do was fake sorry, and you couldn't even do
that?

MARGARET is silent.

CORTEZ

Answer me.

MARGARET

Yes. No. I couldn't.

CORTEZ

You could be home right now --

MARGARET

I didn't do anything wrong.

CORTEZ

Then I missed your point. I thought you broke the law.

MARGARET

I didn't do anything wrong.

CORTEZ

So what did you do?

MARGARET

It's what they did.

CORTEZ

You're the one in here.

MARGARET

I didn't do anything wrong. They did.

MARGARET's leg starts again. CORTEZ grabs it.

CORTEZ

Focus. On the message. You wrestled a cop. You "damaged" property --

MARGARET

They tried to take something from me.

CORTEZ

What? What?

MARGARET

Pictures.

CORTEZ

Pictures.

MARGARET

Of Alex.

CORTEZ

Of your son.

MARGARET

I don't want to talk about this anymore.

CORTEZ

This is all about pictures of your son.

MARGARET

This is all wrong.

CORTEZ

The House of Correction anthem. "Oh, Señor, I been framed -- " Those pictures, amiga? What up with them? The pictures? Okay. Later. So, just because they're pictures, I'll bet you argued freedom of expression -- impress the judge.

MARGARET

Just leave me alone.

CORTEZ

You'd like to be known as --

MARGARET

Just leave me --

CORTEZ

-- a political prisoner --

MARGARET

-- alone --

CORTEZ

(holds up two fists)

Political prisoner zero zero. Judge, I know my First Amendment rights. Blah. Blah. Blah. I'm upholding a great tradition. Blah. Blah. Blah. Judge snoring on the bench. You done? Good. Thirty days if you're too stupid to hit my fat pitch. Hope the First Amendment keeps you warm. Bang. Next. So down the rabbit hole. One of us instead, for thirty days. That's okay, let the leg jump -- I give it permission. Welcome to the bottom rung. Welcome to zero, Zero. Principle, so who cares, principle?

MARGARET's leg pumps again. CORTEZ looks at it, then laughs.

CORTEZ

Boy, your kind scares me! Entirely too much time on your hands. You think doing time for that is real? Principle? I'm waiting for the snap-back, Zero Zero, for the retort. Maybe here is where you should be, retard, a mother who abandons her child --

MARGARET

I didn't abandon anybody.

CORTEZ

No? Then teach bruja here the ways of the world. C'mon, paint me the happy picture of how you choose a principle with your whole family looking at you, hungering for you to stay --

MARGARET

If I put it simple to you --

CORTEZ

Now you're exuding some spirit.

MARGARET

-- will you just stop digging at me for five minutes?

CORTEZ

I can spare five minutes out of 28 days.

MARGARET

You like this all the time?

CORTEZ

No -- sometimes I talk a lot.

MARGARET

Even in your sleep

CORTEZ

The pictures.

MARGARET

The pictures. They were just pictures of Alex, for a photography project. But people saw things in them that weren't there.

CORTEZ

They had some reason?

MARGARET

Nothing there! I knew what I knew, solid --

CORTEZ

So the cops won't let you have the pictures --

MARGARET

Never gave me a chance --

CORTEZ

Mama lion defending her cub --

MARGARET

Against all the filth --

CORTEZ

And then in front of a judge -- So the judge --

MARGARET

So the judge tells my lawyer it's either I admit I did something wrong by taking the easy way out or --

CORTEZ

Or you get a turn of the moon with me.

MARGARET

Turn of the moon.

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

Just the words -- turn -- of the moon --

CORTEZ

Puertorriqueñas are all gassed up with poetry --

MARGARET

No, it's not that --

CORTEZ

We're not gassy?

MARGARET

It just got -- quiet -- when you said that. It felt -- strange.

CORTEZ

It got quiet.

MARGARET

I felt Alex near me -- in me -- Strange --

CORTEZ

So. They're all waiting for you to make this choice.

MARGARET

Enough. No more.

CORTEZ

The pictures --

MARGARET

It's Alex. The principle is Alex. I bet even you can understand that.

CORTEZ

Can he?

MARGARET

He'll understand. Someday.

CORTEZ

How is that going to work?

MARGARET

Because I'll tell him, that's how. When he grows up.

CORTEZ

I'm sure the anticipation keeps the smile on his four-year old face right now.

MARGARET

Do you always go for the throat?

CORTEZ

It's all about you, isn't it?

MARGARET

About me for him.

CORTEZ

Courageous madre! So he'll look back on you from some far-away time, and there's his mami standing tall --

MARGARET

So he'll know --

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

That nothing ever happened.

CORTEZ

Except his mother disappeared on him for a month.

MARGARET

He'll find out that was a small price to pay.

CORTEZ

Such faith.

MARGARET

I'm tired.

CORTEZ

Selfishness will do that to you.

MARGARET

Do you only get one station on your dial?

CORTEZ

I'm only getting one broadcast.

MARGARET

Get a new radio, then, because you have me wrong. Do I need a parade permit?

CORTEZ makes a gracious gesture. MARGARET walks in silence for a few moments and is apparently ready to cry. CORTEZ stands in front of her. GUARD comes by on her rounds. They wait until she passes.

CORTEZ

A little advice: In for a dime, in for a dollar. You in?

MARGARET turns away.

CORTEZ

I read about you, you know. When they told me you were coming. I read, yes.

CORTEZ goes to the certificate on the wall.

CORTEZ

Associates degree in communications. I keep up with your world.

MARGARET

You knew?

CORTEZ

I needed to fill in blanks.

MARGARET

Blanks?

CORTEZ

Right now, for this reason: Lines, Margarita Pasqualini, lines, lines, lines. On a tiny island like ours, lines mean everything. Making them, keeping them. Clear straight lines.

MARGARET

So you knew --

CORTEZ

And now you know I know.

MARGARET

What do I know?

CORTEZ

Want to know my name? Chances are, you haven't read about me.

MARGARET

I've been lucky.

CORTEZ

Cortez. I have a first name: Vera. But don't use it. I go by Cortez, Pasqualini.

MARGARET

No.

CORTEZ

Pascua, the feast -- Pasqualini, the little feast.

MARGARET

No. I go by Margaret. Not Pasqualini, not a little feast. Not Margarita.

CORTEZ

Say that again.

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

"I go by -- "

MARGARET

I go by Margaret? I go by Margaret.

CORTEZ lays on her bed and opens up her book.

CORTEZ

Now we have some lines.

MARGARET

On our little island.

CORTEZ

For the turn of a moon.

MARGARET

Do you shut up now?

CORTEZ

Except for the voice in your head.

MARGARET

I'm changing stations.

CORTEZ

Then I'm off the air.

CORTEZ reads. MARGARET paces. Lights out. Transition sound or music.

* * * * *

Scene 18: The Second Degree

Lights up; music out. MARGARET is sitting at the table drawing in a sketch pad which she has gotten from her footlocker. CORTEZ gets cards and plays solitaire.

CORTEZ

You ate today.

MARGARET

I got it down.

CORTEZ

Only took you a week.

MARGARET

Incarceration as a diet plan. When do we do something other than sit around?

CORTEZ

Soon, from what I hear -- they found who and what they wanted to find. And I can get back to class.

MARGARET

Class?

CORTEZ

What is it like, being famous?

MARGARET

Back to class?

CORTEZ

Picture in the papers, news at six, maybe at eleven, reporters in your garbage --

MARGARET

You don't give anything away, do you?

CORTEZ continues to play.

CORTEZ

Well?

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Being famous.

MARGARET

It felt like being raped.

CORTEZ

Ever been raped?

MARGARET

No.

CORTEZ

Then it didn't feel like that. What did they do?

MARGARET

You read it all -- you tell me.

CORTEZ

I like details.

MARGARET

You like getting details.

CORTEZ

You have the right to remain silent.

MARGARET

Wild Kingdom. The lions eating the antelope not even dead yet. The TV news: "Picked up for porn." The radio blab shows. Saint. Demon mother. Saint. Child of Satan.

CORTEZ

The newspapers made you as a bitch -- anything can and will be used against you -- You a --

MARGARET

You tell me.

CORTEZ

I haven't seen it yet -- I don't know if that's good or bad.

MARGARET

I'll try to give you a storm warning.

CORTEZ

You make a living taking pictures?

MARGARET

Not yet.

CORTEZ

So Matthew pays --

MARGARET

Some of it.

CORTEZ

Red queen to black king --

MARGARET

He was helping me pay for the photography class.

CORTEZ

"Student" photographer.

MARGARET

Called "The Human Form."

CORTEZ

I have one of those.

MARGARET

The class -- I thought it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

CORTEZ

Except for Matthew and Alex --

MARGARET

Yes.

CORTEZ

Go on. If you want.

MARGARET

We had this assignment: photograph an emotional state of being using a person.

CORTEZ

Using a person.

MARGARET

See, I didn't start as a photographer. It's just that I started taking pictures of the work Matthew and I were doing, so we'd have a record, a portfolio. Then one day --

MARGARET mimes taking the photos.

MARGARET

-- it must have been the sunlight laying across a ratty old hammer and screwdriver leaning against each other on a bench: they struck me. Something -- solid. So, snap, snap -- purely useless pictures. Something so ordinary could look so strange at the same time -- I liked that. I liked that I could take it. Take it away. Taking a picture -- very interesting concept. Cortez, when you see the negatives on that first roll of film you develop yourself, and then you see your first print bloom in the developer, something you took -- whew! I was hooked! Closest thing to joy I'd felt since -- since --

CORTEZ

Since whatever.

MARGARET

Since whatever! No comparison. Of itself.

MARGARET "takes" pictures.

MARGARET

I started taking pictures of people on the site -- and I saw a dignity in them that they never believed they had. But I knew. My eye knew. The light knew. Me and the light -- we partnered.

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

I had my first show in a diner!

CORTEZ

Of the workers?

MARGARET

Yes. And when they saw themselves up there, and then saw other people seeing them up there and liking what they saw -- even buying the pictures -- that changed something in them. They got noticed. Became real to someone else, true to someone.

CORTEZ

You told their truth.

MARGARET

No, no -- I didn't say anything. I didn't want to say something. I just captured what they were saying. What my mates were saying -- especially the women. It's always been best when I just -- I don't know -- when all of me is just like a lens, letting the light through. Just like that first time, with the tools. No thoughts, just eye.

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

It just -- sucks you in. I got -- greedy.

CORTEZ

The bug bugged you.

MARGARET

I got ambitious. Studio equipment, more classes --

CORTEZ

The Human Form.

MARGARET

It was so expensive.

CORTEZ

And then the big bad scary pictures.

MARGARET

The pictures nobody knows.

CORTEZ

Using a person.

MARGARET

I looked at him and thought, Innocence.

CORTEZ

Innocence.

MARGARET

I wanted to capture --

CORTEZ

You wanted to take --

MARGARET

I wanted to capture what it felt like when I gave him a bath,
when he --

MARGARET makes the sign for "I love you."

CORTEZ

(signs "thank you")

The little mute boy.

MARGARET

Was that in the papers?

CORTEZ

All but your tit size. So, the pictures.

MARGARET

So I talked it over with Alex --

CORTEZ

Four.

MARGARET

Four.

CORTEZ

And you talked it over with him?

MARGARET

I asked him if he'd like to get his picture taken, which he loves anyway. And I had this idea -- this spark --

CORTEZ

Without his clothes on --

MARGARET

Without his clothes on, yes.

CORTEZ

That in the papers, too.

MARGARET

Child pornography charges.

CORTEZ

You saw Innocence, they saw naked. Naked and mute --

MARGARET

I don't know what they saw -- In one picture I even have wings on him, like a cherub --

CORTEZ

Wings!

MARGARET

How could anyone think --

CORTEZ

Actual wings?

MARGARET

Yes.

CORTEZ

Oh, man! So this ambition of yours turns him into naked for the world with wings on. Man! They saw what you were doing.

MARGARET

What are you saying?

CORTEZ

Think about it.

MARGARET

He liked it --

CORTEZ

You knew this?

MARGARET

Yes -- I'd taken pictures of him before, naked -- in the bathtub, his bed -- he got a kick out of it --

CORTEZ

Whose kick, blanca? Not your naked ass hanging out there --

MARGARET

Not his "naked ass," either. There was no "naked ass" -- not like -- Christ, what are you thinking --

CORTEZ

In here, fotógrafa tanta, anything is possible.

MARGARET

Forget it.

CORTEZ

(putting her cards down)

No, let's not. Let's not forget it. You're important, a figure of importance. I want to know how a figure of importance thinks. What really happened?

MARGARET does not reply.

CORTEZ

Answer me. What happened that day?

MARGARET

Nothing "happened."

CORTEZ

You got Alex thinking this was going to be fun -- Right?
C'mon, answer me.

MARGARET

We set up the pic --

CORTEZ

We?

MARGARET

Matthew and I.

CORTEZ

Bathtub?

MARGARET

In my studio.

CORTEZ

Your studio. Your place.

MARGARET

I took my son -- into the studio --

CORTEZ

Into your studio --

MARGARET

Alex and I had a great --

CORTEZ

Wait, took him into your studio, this kid who cannot talk --

MARGARET goes to speak, but CORTEZ stops her.

CORTEZ

Wait, the two people he loves the most -- and take his
clothes off --

MARGARET

This is foul --

CORTEZ

-- it's okay because he's just a kid -- he's my kid -- spread him out for all these stranger's eyes --

CORTEZ pretends she's doing the photo shoot with ALEX, mock-taking pictures, interspersed with the "ka-chick" of a photo being taken.

CORTEZ

It's another point of view, isn't it? "Lindo, smile for me" --

MARGARET

Poison --

CORTEZ

"Look adorable, honey pie." Alex as a little island. "Oh, my sweet cheeks." Invade the island with love. "My little angel" --

MARGARET

You shit!

CORTEZ

Do this. Raise that. Extract the riches. Lift. Spread. Take it all away.

MARGARET

Stop it --

MARGARET tries to knock the "camera" from CORTEZ's hands.

CORTEZ

What did that photo lab see, Margaret conquistadora?

MARGARET knocks the "camera" out of CORTEZ's hands.

MARGARET

Keep your filth away from him.

MARGARET bellies right up to CORTEZ; CORTEZ is oddly passive.

MARGARET

How could you know, how could you know --

CORTEZ

Would you kill me?

MARGARET

-- how could you know anything about what Alex and I had that day?

CORTEZ

Kill me --

MARGARET

How could you? If you were a mother, you'd know --

CORTEZ

Would you kill me right now --

MARGARET

-- bottom feeder --

CORTEZ

-- right now if you could?

MARGARET

You're just like them, just like them all --

CORTEZ

Would you kill me to protect Alex?

MARGARET

I did not let them take away anything, anything, and not you, not you, either, not any of you --

The GUARD comes around, and they part quickly. The GUARD lingers for a moment, the leaves.

CORTEZ

You'd do it, wouldn't you?

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Kill me --

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Kill me, kill me right now, if you could.

MARGARET

Kill you?

CORTEZ

To protect Alex.

MARGARET

Kill you?

CORTEZ

You're on fire.

MARGARET

You -- stay -- aw --

CORTEZ

You'd do it, wouldn't you?

MARGARET

You back off.

CORTEZ

The power you have --

MARGARET

Just back off.

CORTEZ makes a "shutter" with the thumbs and index fingers of each hand -- a square -- and puts it up against her own right eye.

CORTEZ

If you don't make really, really clear lines --

CORTEZ squeezes the fingers shut, then open, as if they were a shutter.

CORTEZ

-- you end up hurting the people you're supposed to protect.
We're all islands, Margaret, we all need lines. You have that
power.

Drops the "shutter."

MARGARET

There were always lines with Alex.

CORTEZ

Always?

MARGARET

Always. Clear. Clean. Lines.

CORTEZ picks up the cards and goes back to playing.

CORTEZ

Well, he got lucky then because he was being chased by
someone who had artistic ambition, on the edge of being a
mirón, a peeping Tomás -- who believed herself the center
of the universe. Lines don't matter much to people like that.
I'm just translating your testimony. He got a lucky cut of the
cards.

MARGARET

Cut of the cards --

Beat. MARGARET makes the "shutter" with her own fingers and looks at
CORTEZ.

MARGARET

Look at me.

CORTEZ continues to play cards.

MARGARET

Look at me.

CORTEZ looks up. MARGARET snaps the "shutter."

MARGARET

I just captured a "mate" I know nothing about.

MARGARET makes believe she's taking a print out of a tray and holding it up, letting it dry.

MARGARET

Is this you?

CORTEZ leans in.

CORTEZ

The lighting is dim.

MARGARET looks at the "print."

MARGARET

So -- want to do a little touch-up for me?

CORTEZ looks at MARGARET for a beat, as if deciding something, then gathers the cards together and neatens the pile.

CORTEZ

I can tell you something. Put it away. Imagine I'm 18 years old -- the age of majority. It is a very dangerous time.

Soft at first, the audience hears voices shouting "Puerto Rico libre! Puerto Rico libre!"

* * * * *

Scene 19

"Puerto Rico libre! Puerto Rico libre!" CORTEZ moves to center stage and takes up the cry. She is 18.

CORTEZ

Puerto Rico libre!

She repeats it several times; crowd sound die down.

CORTEZ

Borinqueños! It is time to wake up. Borinqueños! It is time to follow our father, Pedro Albizu Campos, and our mother, Lolita Lebrón, and unchain the beauty of our island from a clown called Uncle Sam. At this moment -- courtesy of the F.B.I., the Federal Bastards of Interrogation -- fifteen of our brothers and sisters -- Los Quince, compañeros, do not forget Los Quince -- lie rotting in American prisons for the crime of wanting the same freedom that Jefferson and Washington wanted, the freedom to be a nation and not a colony, not a slave, not an infected whore! Borinqueños have always fought. Eat that history. Do not be a piti-yanqui, do not accept the argument of the chains, if you want to be full, to be free!

Los quince, you gave them an eden

of truth and they strangled you

with the snake of power.

Wake up, borinqueños, commit the sin of memory!

Sounds of a door being broken down and general panic, shouts and commands, etc. The lights strobe, and CORTEZ moves down center. Lights change, and she argues with her family.

CORTEZ

I will not go, Mamá. I don't care -- let the fucking F.B.I. take me, I am not going to go live to New York. You live like a pampered slave, and you're worried about my language?!

CORTEZ reacts as if she's been slapped.

CORTEZ

Yes, Papá, I am sorry, I should not have spoken -- No, Papa, I can't tell you that. I can't tell you who I know! I won't tell you that! Yes, Pablo, dearest brother, you're perfectly correct, as usual -- it is not right to put my family in danger. I know that! But I'm fighting for -- Your investments? Is that what you said: your investments? I know about your investments -- in the companies that butcher -- Enough:

I don't want to waste the breath. You're just like Mama: a slave. What? What?

CORTEZ reacts physically as if someone tries to subdue her.

CORTEZ

Stop -- Leave -- Get your --

CORTEZ is forced to her knees.

CORTEZ

You're no better than the pigs -- You do not know what my own good is!

All lights fade except for a light on CORTEZ.

CORTEZ

Ahora, Nuyorican. On the island of the enemy. Mi familia perdida, I will turn into the lost soul you think I am.

"Tamara's voice" comes up and all other lights bump out except "Tamara's light." CORTEZ goes to it and caresses it as before. As she does so, there is a blinding flash of light and a bump to black. The flash should be strong enough to blind the audience for a few seconds. "Tamara's voice" continues, then out. Lights up to regular.

CORTEZ

And that's how I came to live in the dead country.

MARGARET

The dead country.

CORTEZ

Since then, so much blood has just -- evaporated.

MARGARET

What do you mean?

CORTEZ

Enough.

They look at each other while the lights go to black. Transition music.

* * * * *

Scene 20: The Third Degree

Lights full up; music out. MARGARET takes a book from CORTEZ's bookshelf and lays on the bed reading. The GUARD enters with CORTEZ, who is carrying a math book. The doors open and close. The GUARD leaves. As soon as she does, CORTEZ throws her math textbook onto the table. She is very agitated, coiled.

CORTEZ

X, x, x, x, x, x, x. Math -- sucks. The numbers just jump around --

MARGARET

Ah, algebra.

CORTEZ

Like a goddamn knife stuck in my eye --

MARGARET

Some women find math hard, Cortez --

CORTEZ

I can't. Not now. I am never going to use this --

MARGARET

That's not the point. Just get through it.

CORTEZ

(mimicking MARGARET)

Just get through it.

MARGARET

(laughing)

Don't make fun of me! Finish this, and you're done. Done. Major milestone. Vera Cortez, B.A. More than I've done.

CORTEZ

"B," bullshit, "A" artist.

MARGARET

What's bothering you?

CORTEZ

Don't, all right?

MARGARET

All right, all right. Granted.

CORTEZ flips through the book, exasperated. MARGARET continues to read, half an eye on CORTEZ. Finally, CORTEZ slams the book shut.

CORTEZ

I can't get it to stick!

MARGARET

Let it rest --

CORTEZ

You don't underst -- I have got to make it stick.

MARGARET

It'll stick, it'll stay -- if you relax, it'll come --

CORTEZ begins to pace.

CORTEZ

You --

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Forget it.

MARGARET

You're pacing. Chill.

CORTEZ

Are you any good at it?

MARGARET
(bad DeNiro)

You talkin' to me?

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

Are you talkin' to me? Sorry.

CORTEZ

What the fuck was that --

MARGARET

Sorry. Joke, small -- very small.

CORTEZ

Well?

MARGARET

I used to make my way through math.

CORTEZ

Yeah?

MARGARET

Yeah.

CORTEZ

Well?

MARGARET

Oh, I don't know, Vera -- they keep me pretty busy here.

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

I have to finish the sayings --

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

-- of Che Guevara here, and then --

CORTEZ

Fuck you.

CORTEZ grabs the book and throws it in the direction of the bookcase.

MARGARET

Wait --

CORTEZ

Fuck everyone like you.

MARGARET

-- I was just kidding --

CORTEZ

Fuck you all.

MARGARET

So says the all-powerful Cortez --

CORTEZ

Fuck you. Forget it.

MARGARET

Just kidding! Bad timing! Of course I'll help you. Give me the book.

MARGARET goes to get the book. CORTEZ grabs her by the throat and backs her across the cell. MARGARET grabs her wrist.

CORTEZ

I don't need some bullshit irony --

MARGARET

You're hurting m --

CORTEZ

-- from an Anglo kid-fucker bitch --

MARGARET

You're hurting me --

CORTEZ

Get away from me! You're useless!

CORTEZ lets her go.

MARGARET

But I get to leave.

CORTEZ grabs her throat again. MARGARET knocks away the hand and pushes CORTEZ, hard. It catches CORTEZ unaware.

MARGARET

I've eaten enough of your sanctimonious crap --

MARGARET doesn't finish the sentence because CORTEZ is right back in her face.

CORTEZ

You're a fucking pervert.

MARGARET

And you're an idiot.

The GUARD walks in and surveys the scene. They pause until she leaves.

CORTEZ

You don't who you're in with.

CORTEZ starts to walk away.

CORTEZ

So back off.

MARGARET pushes CORTEZ, not hard, just enough to make CORTEZ stumble.

MARGARET

I'm in for a dollar.

CORTEZ

In for a doll -- Ditz rolls the dice --

MARGARET

In for a dollar?

MARGARET stands there defiant. CORTEZ looks around to see if the GUARD will come back, then retreats with a dismissive gesture.

CORTEZ

You are not worth it.

MARGARET

So -- why?

CORTEZ

Go read.

MARGARET

I asked you why!

CORTEZ

Your neck?

MARGARET

So why?

CORTEZ

Your neck?

MARGARET

Fine. So why?

CORTEZ

The numbers, I told you -- they jump --

MARGARET

You crack my throat because --

CORTEZ

I can't nail them down.

MARGARET

So nail me instead?

CORTEZ

You don't know --

MARGARET

How do you know what I know?

CORTEZ

It makes me crazy.

MARGARET

It makes you mean.

CORTEZ

It makes me forget.

MARGARET

It makes you a human being.

CORTEZ

I don't need -- not this time of year -- I don't need -- not from you, not from anyone -- I don't need people, don't need anything telling me "no" --

MARGARET

I wasn't telling you no --

CORTEZ

Yes, you were --

MARGARET

Why this time of year --

CORTEZ

Look, I'm sor --

MARGARET

Why this time --

CORTEZ

I'm s --

MARGARET

Why --

CORTEZ

That -- all that -- from way back --

MARGARET

Back --

CORTEZ

From the dead country.

MARGARET

I want to help you --

CORTEZ

Put the book down.

MARGARET

No -- I'll hold it.

CORTEZ

I don't want the help. Give me the book -- what are you doing?

MARGARET

Nothing.

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

Way back.

CORTEZ

Give me the book.

MARGARET

Dead country.

CORTEZ

Don't want to go there.

MARGARET

Do you really want to show some sorry?

CORTEZ

I never said the word.

MARGARET

Tell me --

CORTEZ

I never say the word.

MARGARET

Tell me what keeps you waking me up at night. You owe me that.

CORTEZ circles around her. MARGARET does not move. CORTEZ grabs her head and moves it around.

CORTEZ

Owe you? Owe you? All right, americanita. Be still. Here is what you are owed. This is part of the dead country. And that's a barrio in the dead country. And that's the liquor store in the dead country that sells the poisons! That's the vacant lot where the jefes of the city knocked a building down and put nothing back. That's the elevated commuter train that slices the throat of the barrio. This is the shitty schools where they fuck away your chances.

(grabs the book)

Owe you? Owe you?

CORTEZ throws the book on the table. MARGARET gets it. CORTEZ sits on MARGARET's bed.

CORTEZ

This is mine.

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

This is mine.

MARGARET goes to sit on CORTEZ's bed.

MARGARET

Then I'll take --

CORTEZ moves to her own bed.

CORTEZ

No you don't. Mine, too.

CORTEZ hops back and forth between the beds.

CORTEZ

My space. All mine. You get none.

MARGARET

Don't get stupid --

CORTEZ

Don't feel privileged.

MARGARET

Privi --

CORTEZ

This is about a special kind of math. What adds up.

MARGARET

Fine, I'll just sit on --

MARGARET alks toward the table.

CORTEZ

(runs to the table)

Nuh-uh. Mine.

MARGARET

Then I'll just walk --

CORTEZ

Jamás. The real estate is mine. Everything. Footlockers, too.

CORTEZ goes to MARGARET's footlocker and starts piling things on the bed: Walkman with double headset, books, pictures, etc.

MARGARET

Hey --

CORTEZ

Eminent domain. Back off. You own nothing that ain't mine.
I want it, I take it -- call it Puerto Rico.

MARGARET

Don't give me that --

CORTEZ

I told you. It's about subtraction. Division. Oooh, a picture
of Alex --

MARGARET

Put that --

CORTEZ

Nope.

CORTEZ puts the picture in her pocket.

CORTEZ

He's mine. All mine. Now what are you going to do, little
island?

MARGARET

This is not about --

CORTEZ

You don't get to say what this is about. I have told you you
can't say anything, so you can't say anything.

MARGARET

I'm not entirely brainless about this.

CORTEZ

You are, though, for the moment, dispossessed. I like that.
You like that? Understand, you're the fucking enemy -- get
it? -- you're the dead country I don't want to go back to.

MARGARET

I know about these things.

CORTEZ

You do? From your long personal history of being oppressed?

MARGARET

Huh. Have you ever carried pipe with fat-assed thugs who hate your guts just because you ain't got a prick and who would just as soon chuck you off the scaffolding as drink their coffee? You're so goddam selfish!

CORTEZ begins to run her hands over MARGARET.

CORTEZ

Well, pana! The borders have now dropped between us! We can make the revolution happen! You have had the boot against your face!

MARGARET

Stop that!

CORTEZ grabs the waistband of MARGARET's pants and pulls her toward her.

CORTEZ

I feel so drawn to you now!

MARGARET

Stop --

CORTEZ turns her and grabs her from behind.

CORTEZ

Wanna begin the revolution with a taste of Latina?

MARGARET

Let me go! You fucking witch!

MARGARET tries to wrestle free, and as she does so she swings her elbows around, one of which catches CORTEZ hard in the temple/cheek/bridge of the nose. CORTEZ falls to her knees. For a moment MARGARET raises the book over her head to hit CORTEZ deliberately, then doesn't. CORTEZ sees the hesitation.

MARGARET

Cortez? Cortez? Cortez? Cortez?

CORTEZ

You taking roll call?

MARGARET

Cortez, I've never done that to anyone.

CORTEZ

It took two cops, didn't it?

MARGARET

Sorry.

CORTEZ

Should have remembered that.

MARGARET

Here --

CORTEZ

Hands to yourself. Man, that hurts! Don't! Don't! I'll survive. Get your dollar's worth?

Several beats.

MARGARET

Okay if I sit down, oh queen of the night? What just happened?

Beat.

MARGARET

I think this is one you do owe me.

CORTEZ

Irony.

MARGARET

Irony?

CORTEZ

You know that irony act you were doing -- "oh, I'm so busy"
--

MARGARET

Meant to be funny.

CORTEZ

Thumb down, squish -- that's what you were doing.

MARGARET

Meant to help you relax --

CORTEZ

No, you didn't! No, you didn't! You have the hardest time telling the truth. You were digging on Vera Cortez looking weak -- looking weak, I might add. You acted like you were joking, but you forgot the context. You took respect from me, and you didn't even know it. I asked you and you refused. And then tell me I owe you? You weren't listening.

MARGARET

And the context here is -- ?

CORTEZ

(feeling her head)

Never thought algebra'd be so hard on the body.

MARGARET

You didn't answer my question.

CORTEZ

How much you want from me? Do the work yourself.

MARGARET hands CORTEZ the book.

MARGARET

I will give you a hand.

CORTEZ

Maybe later.

MARGARET

Later, then.

CORTEZ

Why didn't you?

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

You had the book -- up -- ready -- Could see you were ready --

MARGARET

Lion and the antelope, huh?

CORTEZ

So?

MARGARET

I'm not a lion. I don't do lion.

Beat.

CORTEZ

That is a good thing to know.

Beat. CORTEZ hands MARGARET the book and lays on her bed.

CORTEZ

The word is bruja.

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Witch. Bruja. Use it next time.

MARGARET

Next time. Gotcha. Okay if I take up space here --

CORTEZ

Enough.

CORTEZ reaches behind her and gets the picture of ALEX. She hands the picture of ALEX back to MARGARET. MARGARET puts the book on the table and begins putting things back into her footlocker.

CORTEZ

Bruja is also a plant in Puerto Rico. Each leaf has its own seeds, so you can take a cutting and plant it anywhere and it will grow. It's a tough plant. Like us.

MARGARET

So do this, then, bruja: $x^2 + 5x + 6$. Factor it.

From her bed, CORTEZ raises her arms and, using sign language, says "x plus 2 times x plus 3."

MARGARET

X plus two times x plus three. Pass "Go." There is hope for you yet.

* * * * *

Scene 21

Lights go to black; MARGARET leaves. Good salsa music comes up in the darkness, then a lighted area center stage. CORTEZ gets up and gets a Walkman from her footlocker. She pops in a tape, clips the Walkman to her waistband and, moving into the lighted area, begins to dance to the salsa, for fifteen seconds or so. The music CORTEZ hears is what the audience hears. The GUARD escorts MARGARET back; the sound of the door opening and closing can't be heard by CORTEZ, who is dancing intently. There is a small exchange between MARGARET and the GUARD, then the GUARD leaves.

CORTEZ notices MARGARET but doesn't stop dancing. Instead, she moves to MARGARET and begins showing her the steps; MARGARET does her best to follow, eventually sort of getting it. MARGARET then indicates for CORTEZ to wait a second, and MARGARET goes to her footlocker. She takes out a double headset. She exchanges CORTEZ's headset for hers; now they can both hear the music. MARGARET listens for a moment and, following CORTEZ's steps again, begins to move to the beat. For a few moments they dance salsa together, awkwardly but with determination and amusement.

Then MARGARET stops the tape, takes off her headset, hands it to CORTEZ, goes to her footlocker, and gets a tape. She pops out CORTEZ's tape and puts in hers: 1930s/1940s swing music. She puts on the headset and then starts dancing a few steps of the Lindy. CORTEZ looks at her, puzzled. MARGARET encourages CORTEZ to do the steps. CORTEZ does, and then MARGARET partners her as well until they do the Lindy together. The music should be Glenn Miller-ish. MARGARET, on a whim, spins CORTEZ out and back.

Then CORTEZ stops the tape, takes off the Walkman and puts it in her footlocker, and without any apparatus between them, CORTEZ begins to dance a combination of salsa and Lindy, combining rhythms. MARGARET picks up on it, and for a moment they dance a hybrid dance, in silence until lights fade to black. Then transition music/sound to cover scene change. CORTEZ and MARGARET get into their beds.

* * * * *

Scene 22: The Final Border Crossing

"Tamara's voice" as the two women move to their beds, then "Tamara's light." CORTEZ moves to it, but just as she reaches out to it, it disappears, and CORTEZ falls to her knees, face buried in her hands. Lights come up to "night light." She doesn't know that MARGARET is awake and watching. MARGARET sits up on the edge of her bed.

CORTEZ

Tamara -- Tamara -- Tamara --

MARGARET

Hey --

No response.

MARGARET

Cortez? Vera?

CORTEZ

I'm fine.

MARGARET

Want to talk?

CORTEZ gets up and, obviously making a decision, puts her face right into MARGARET's, as if she were reading it. MARGARET does not pull back.

CORTEZ

What do you care?

MARGARET

You're on fire.

CORTEZ

What do you care? You are free tomorrow -- go back to sleep.

MARGARET

House rules are changed.

CORTEZ

Are you ready, then?

MARGARET nods.

CORTEZ

If you're ready, I give you permission -- to ask the final question.

MARGARET

Why are you here?

Beat.

CORTEZ

I am here -- you find me here -- because I helped kill my daughter. Spring is the cruelest time for me because Tamara -- my Tamara, my lost daughter -- would be fourteen this month. Time for a border-crossing.

The following **must** be delivered with little sentimentality and **to** MARGARET. CORTEZ is free to move as she needs to and use props as she wants to. It should **not** be staged in a separate light nor as if time were suspended.

CORTEZ

I had a family. In the dead country. I had three children -- now there are only two. I cannot say "I have" any more.

He beat them. My daughter and son -- Tamara and Michael -- Tamara three and Michael just a year old. They weren't his. I had had them with two other men -- my rebellion in exile on the island of strangers. Of course, my family rejected them completely -- not their blood -- so I went with him because he said he would take me in. My savior -- but really my conquistador. History repeating itself through this --

(indicating her body)

To show you how the fear had turned my mind to ice -- I even had a child with this man -- Jawanza -- calculating changes, hoping for softness, figuring he wouldn't beat one of his own. But I had just given him fresh meat. He had this "thing" about Tamara -- it seemed to inspire him for pain. One night, drugged, he started belting her. "Thirty nine lashes" he kept yelling. Locked in the bedroom with Jawanza and Michael, both of them trying to crawl inside my ribs, I -- couldn't -- move. Then it stopped. He dragged a chair. Tamara screamed -- screamed once, just once -- then quiet. Waited. Waited. Then opened the door -- and I wanted to tear my eyes out. He'd tied Tamara to his chin-up bar -- her arms slung over it so she hung from her armpits -- just like a little Christ rag-doll. I remember my eyes -- straight to her right hand -- I watched a drop of blood bead up and then fall. Then another. Then one more. By the fourth one I'd cut her down. El Señor Muerte had passed out on the table, hissing like a dragon. And what did I do? I took her into the bathroom and washed her off and put her to bed -- such a good mama! The dragon hissed. I waited. The next day, I went to wake them for day care -- I had a job. No breath. I held this hand just over her mouth, as I did sometimes at night, to feel their breath. Nothing. I screamed, just once, like Tamara. The dragon came. "You're gonna help me," it said -- and I obeyed. And here's what we did. We dropped Jawanza and Michael off at day care, like the good parents we were, then we dumped her body in the rough grass by the side of the highway. I watched everything from the side view mirror, numb as stone. Then we found a police officer and told her that Tamara had disappeared -- maybe even kidnapped! Two days later, they found her, and he started playing the kidnap for all his worthless self was worth. But I knew they'd find the truth. And even if they didn't, how could my heart hold any peace?

I had held my dead daughter in my arms, helped trash her body. Peace? What island could offer me that asylum? So while the dragon steamed in his sleep, I called the detective who'd given me her card, from the corner phone, one dime to my name. Dialed and hung up, dialed and hung up, and when I finally did connect, I was ready to cut it off in half a breath. She knew, she knew, because at one point, my mouth so thick with shame I couldn't speak, she said to me, "In for a dime, in for a dollar." I told her everything. I paid. She was kind. And when the police came, and the social workers took Michael and Jawanza for foster care, and they cauterized the dragon, and I could feel the cuffs embrace my wrists -- it was the first time in a long, long time I felt safe. I was finally back on an island: lines were drawn; the monster drowned; and I could begin my shame.

Silence.

CORTEZ

I took twenty-five on a plea bargain. He got sixty. Tamara would be fourteen this month.

CORTEZ lifts up her pillow and takes out a piece of colorful cloth.

CORTEZ

This is from her funeral dress.

She hands it to MARGARET.

CORTEZ

So -- in for the dollar. So. You have nothing to say? You always have something to say.

MARGARET

Um --

CORTEZ

What are you thinking?

MARGARET

I can't.

CORTEZ

What are you thinking?

MARGARET

I think we should go back to sleep.

CORTEZ

What are you thinking?

MARGARET

(in a hiss)

You helped kill your child! You helped kill your own child.
You killed your own child.

CORTEZ

Always the master of the obvious. The question now is,
what are you going to do?

MARGARET

(showing the cloth)

I am not going to give this up. All that swill about protecting
Alex -- that spew about oppression, about "lines" and
"keeping people safe" -- Never safe with you -- she's safe
with me.

CORTEZ

She's gone. She's the only safe one around here.

MARGARET

No.

MARGARET retreats to the other side of the cell. CORTEZ shrugs.

CORTEZ

You didn't think it was going to end this way, did you? Thought
that whatever I'd done, we'd be in solidarity, de mujer a
mujer, woman to woman. It's much more complicated than
that, much more -- rich -- than that.

MARGARET

I don't understand.

CORTEZ

This is how we will go about it. That cloth -- keep it close.
Listen.

"Tamara's voice" and "Tamara's light" appears.

CORTEZ

I'm called from my sleep, just when I may have slipped over
the border into peace, or at least emptiness. Then sounds
like lost voices draw me to this bright light -- which I guess is
Tamara but with no body, just this knife-white light. I reach,
but it slides -- here, then there -- but it never disappears.
And then, always, there's a moment --

The light "stops" over MARGARET, bathing her.

CORTEZ

-- when it allows me to arrive. I shape my hand --

She puts her hand up to MARGARET's face but does not touch it.

CORTEZ

-- I circle it, un abrazo de mi niña perdida --

She circles her arms around MARGARET but does not touch her.

CORTEZ

-- and for one breath -- one breath -- I feel pardoned. She
tells me I can now get rid of hope and shame: I don't need
hope and shame. She offers me a truce. Una tregua.

The bright light and sounds bump out abruptly with the same blinding flash
of light as earlier. The lights come back to "night light."

CORTEZ

And just when I think, finally!, she leaves -- and the truce
-- dissolves. I wake up on the rough edge of the road, here,
still breathing, still caring. And then the first bell rings. And
then the day breaks open.

MARGARET

Why did you tell me?

CORTEZ

You see, I have a vision of life -- I do. All that political about borders and lines and power -- that has been my life. But it's not just Puerto Rico, "libre, libre," Lebrón, Lebrón, Lebrón -- that's just one step, that's just one step toward the border that heals us.

MARGARET

You killed your daughter.

CORTEZ

All I need -- to cross that last border -- is Tamara. But she will not guide me, be my coyote. And the reason for that? She tells me that reason every night.

MARGARET

She denies you -- good.

CORTEZ

That cloth under my ear says, "Mami, how you can come to this new day, where power isn't a hungry wolf and borders don't strangle you, if you cannot trust some one person enough to tell them this story?"

MARGARET

You've never told?

CORTEZ

Never the truth.

MARGARET

I don't believe that.

CORTEZ

Bits, junk, lies -- never "nothing but the."

MARGARET

Why not?

CORTEZ

Because those I've shaken awake in that bed would either try to one-up me in pain or shut me out. And I have come too far over this ocean to let anyone or anything deny me.

MARGARET

I was different?

CORTEZ

Do you remember me doing this?

CORTEZ goes right up to MARGARET's face and peers into it.

CORTEZ

Don't bend -- stay with me. You've gone this far. Keep looking. Tell me what I saw in you that permitted all this. This is your final test.

MARGARET

Final test?

CORTEZ

Tell me.

All said while keeping eyes connected.

MARGARET

You saw I would take Tamara's side.

CORTEZ

Defend the oppressed.

MARGARET

I would give you no shadows for hiding.

CORTEZ

Like Tamara's light in my dreamwalk.

MARGARET

And you saw I would not feel sorry for you.

CORTEZ

You would bring me an eye bitter and acid. To see myself whole.

CORTEZ breaks off the eye contact.

CORTEZ

I knew I could count on you to be my coyote.

MARGARET

I'm not sure I could forgive you --

CORTEZ

Forgiveness not required of the sin-eater.

MARGARET

The sin-eater?

CORTEZ

You. You. What you've been tested for. Sin. Eater.

MARGARET

Sin. Eater.

CORTEZ

Yes.

MARGARET

Tested?

CORTEZ

Yes.

MARGARET

Tested? The humiliations --

CORTEZ

I had to see if you would do.

MARGARET

Fattened up.

CORTEZ

From the day I started reading about you, I wondered --
You were no common mother.

MARGARET

What do you feel right now?

CORTEZ

Like a lick of sugar after biting the chile. A soft peace.

MARGARET

I don't.

CORTEZ

You're not supposed to.

MARGARET

I get to carry these -- images -- this sin --

CORTEZ

You're doing what it is in your nature to do --

MARGARET

It's not enough.

CORTEZ

Qué?

MARGARET

Not enough for you to tell just me. She's not some discard.
She is your daughter.

CORTEZ

Was.

MARGARET

Is. Is! You think the slate's clean just because you confess
to me? a stranger? If you don't keep faith with your child
every day --

CORTEZ

Can you hurry this judgment along?

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

Chulita, this is all past judgment, past "paying my debt." I've
paid. In full. It's on to the next now: life with Tamara after

Tamara. Or, in another word -- oh, you ain't gonna like this!
-- redemption.

MARGARET

Redemption.

CORTEZ

Yes, that -- ache.

MARGARET

You?

CORTEZ

Not the dead Tamara, the sin you squeeze so preciously,
that cloth you grab. That's why I gave it to you. It's yours!
Dance with the dead all you want! The Tamara who
redeems me will come when we all change the lines that
turn us into our lowest devils. Women on every building
site, huh? you can understand that -- all colors, all shapes!
That's Tamara. Children born to parents who want them,
with shelter, food, dignity. That's Tamara. No more tribes
about language or pigment or power or violence. No more
Puerto Rico -- blinded by wanting a nation -- what's a nation
except another way to keep the outsiders outside? -- no, no
more of any of that, but citizen of a better world! All that in
the word "Tamara." I give you the old so I can raise my new
daughter.

MARGARET

You are a piece of work -- grace! Aaah! I feel like I have
knives in my eyes, this picture of you --

CORTEZ

It will take time.

MARGARET

All this new world mouth music makes me sick to my
stomach. You make me sick to my stomach.

MARGARET lays on her bed.

MARGARET

I'm tired. You have drained me for a month.

CORTEZ

It will take time.

CORTEZ stands, alone, then moves down center. "Tamara's light" comes up, and CORTEZ stands just outside of it, lit by its spill, not directly. Voices/music come up. The rest of the stage goes to black. CORTEZ touches or embraces the light, and it does not disappear or explode.

CORTEZ

What will turn the wasteland back?

Only redemption breathed in the syllables of "Tamara."

Only in that light of grace will my life cast

the full shadow of its truth.

The light fades as CORTEZ tightens her embrace, as if she were squeezing the light into herself. MARGARET exits.

* * * * *

Scene 23

Rise in the background sounds of a crowd: poetry slam night at the prison. CORTEZ puts on a bandana. She is talking to the crowd before she recites her poem.

CORTEZ

As the Slam-master here, I get the privilege of giving you guys the last word. And that last word is this: Tamara. Tamara -- a word that means "land of all of us." La guagua aérea of my soul brought me to Tamara, the place of peace, borders lifted. For you, compañeros del alma.

She recites, using whatever gestures, intonations, etc. work best..

Tamara

Link:

the transnation of the airplane, la guagua aérea, carries me from the montañas of the jíbaro

to the capital of the empire, Nueva York, city of Harlem
bantustans,
Gringolandia perforated by sub-dermal pop-rockero "rock-
ER-oh" frequencies,
where the world's oldest colony is a suburb of Brooklyn,
and San Manhattan Juan is a jazz riff of diaspora,
and our unwanted emperors hold their death grips.
Bam!

The plane touches down.

Bam!

We have jumped the pond.

Bam!

Immediate Nuyorican.

Bam!

Instant Ame-Rícan,

Bam!

The new mestizo of the hyphen-nation.

Bam!

Born in the desires that fall between acá and allá.
In the plane we Puerto Ricans inhabit this smeared-edged
borderland,
a frontera between the emptinesses of destin(y-n)ation,
we are the postmodern, we are Tamara,
the "land of all of us," pan-everything,
a transnational insurgency, a community in unity
without borders, not taking orders, we're the revolutionary
recorders
with our eyes we give the lies to those that mythologize
about the American superior -- we see it growing wearier --
this hiss-story, and its soon-to-be-worn-out glory, is about
to change:
Big Apple caribbeanized is the first to be amalgamized
into the new non-nation, our bodies the location
of this postmodern archipelago, each of us double-helix'd
by DNA of fax and phone and email and salsa picante
and the universal declaration of the human right to human
rights
and that we will be divided and conquered, fucked and
fucked-over,
extracted, redacted, burned, twisted, packaged, and
forgotten
no more, no more, no more, nunca más.
We float confused, contradictory, ambiguous, ambivalent,

torqued, tidal, multi-tongued, lunar-mad --
 But we are also large, we include multitudes,
 and Tamara is a new world between acá and allá --
 feel it in your nostrils, look for it under your feet,
 hear the stars beat out ritmos de plena y bomba
 in the very pulse of the universe,
 all of us universal, all of us at home in the in-between.
Tamara.

There is the sound of applause, background talk, etc. CORTEZ puts the bandana away. All the lights fade to black; CORTEZ exits.

* * * * *

Scene 24

Lights up. MARGARET and the GUARD enter carrying a photographer's portable frame for hanging a backdrop, which will be set up in front of the "cell." They exit, and the GUARD returns carrying a chair, making three, a plain canvas backdrop folded (which she drops on one of the chairs), and a cosmetic case, which she puts on the table, opens, and checks. MARGARET follows quickly, bringing in a camera case, a tripod, and a briefcase.

MARGARET
 (to the GUARD)

Thanks. I can take it from here.

The GUARD exits. MARGARET brings over two chairs and starts to hang the backdrop; as she does, CORTEZ enters with the GUARD. The GUARD leaves. As MARGARET speaks, she prepares for the shoot: puts lens on camera, sets up tripod, etc.

CORTEZ

Well.

MARGARET

Hello.

CORTEZ

Hola.

MARGARET

You got my letter.

CORTEZ

Obviously.

MARGARET

So what do you think?

CORTEZ

A photography project.

MARGARET

Yes.

CORTEZ

Isn't that what nailed you last time?

MARGARET

And look what that got me. As I said in the letter -- I received
--

CORTEZ

For photographing women in prison.

MARGARET

Yes. Abused women, women who have killed their children
--

CORTEZ

Why?

MARGARET

I say a lot of things when people ask me that. And I really do believe what I say. About making my photography useful, after trying to make Alex into something he wasn't. You pointed that out to me. But that's all second. You know why I'm here.

CORTEZ

I don't have to do this.

MARGARET

I didn't see you dragged in here. Leave. But you know why.

CORTEZ does not move. Beat.

CORTEZ

I'll hang -- for a moment.

MARGARET

I didn't put this into the letter because it was too late -- I've already arranged to have a gallery show the pictures. Part of a benefit for battered women. Auctioned off to raise money.

CORTEZ

Really.

MARGARET

Book and website to follow.

CORTEZ

Your cut?

MARGARET

Everything out of pocket.

CORTEZ

And the goodness of your heart.

MARGARET

Actually, Señora Cortez, dead wrong: I'm doing all this out of the coldness of your heart.

CORTEZ

You should be careful with your words.

MARGARET

As careful with you as you were with me.

CORTEZ

Revenge?

MARGARET

Don't flatter yourself.

CORTEZ

You're not making any money at it.

MARGARET

So it isn't greed. Or ambition. Or lust, sloth, gluttony, envy

--

(pointing to CORTEZ)

-- what's to envy? C'mon, Vera -- you know: only one left.

CORTEZ does not respond.

MARGARET

All right, then, Vera -- straight and simple anger. At you.
For being a coward.

Beat to wait for a reaction; CORTEZ gives none. By this time MARGARET has finished her set-up. She has set two chairs in front of the backdrop.

MARGARET

I was not going to let you get away with it.

MARGARET hands CORTEZ the piece of cloth.

CORTEZ

I think I will leave.

MARGARET

Sit. Please. Por favor.

CORTEZ

We're finished.

MARGARET

I called you a coward. I named you. Where's your dollar?

Beat.

MARGARET

(taps her breastbone)

Right here -- It sticks. I can't get it past. This whole little star called Tamara hangs right here and explodes, every day. I try to catch the pieces and smash them back together and I can't do it! I am filled with sadness and defeat.

CORTEZ

The human condition.

MARGARET

So. I'm not going to do it alone. This "it." You are going to help me.

CORTEZ

No, I'm not. I'm done. Use somebody else.

CORTEZ moves to get the GUARD.

MARGARET

"Poema al hijo que no llega." [Julia de Burgos, Songs of Simple Truth, pp. 490-491]

CORTEZ

What?

MARGARET

"Poema al hijo que no llega."

CORTEZ

Speaking Spanish now? Not well --

MARGARET

I learned something. For you.

CORTEZ

Because?

MARGARET

Ammunition.

CORTEZ

So you have come as the warrior.

MARGARET

"Poem to the Child Who Doesn't Arrive." Julia de Burgos.

CORTEZ

You remembered.

MARGARET

She came to me in a dream and fed it to me.

CORTEZ

In a dream.

MARGARET

Why not? Things came to you in dreams all the time. "No se cuándo ni dónde / pero se que vendrás."

CORTEZ

"I don't know where or when --

MARGARET

"-- but I know you will arrive. / Child of mine, bathed by sublime tenderness / I have dreamt you a thousand times, / but where can you be? / Why don't you rebel and burst into the world...?" Listen to me! "You will arrive at my arms on a solemn day / when everything at my side will dress in light. / There will be light in the shadows..." That's why I'm back here: It's up to me to bring the light in the shadows so that she is not abandoned. And not alone. You are going to help me finish eating this sin.

CORTEZ

How?

MARGARET

By being the first voice out of the shadows. By being Tamara's voice.

CORTEZ

Giving communion now.

MARGARET

Very simple equation, Vera: you killed your daughter with silence. Like I said, a coward. And a fool, too, expecting

some droopy-assed middle-aged white chick sin-eater to shift the universe for you. Sloppy, sloppy, sloppy. This is what I bring -- this "eye" -- but the shadows need your voice from underneath -- You don't do this, you kill off Tamara, old and new, for good. But if you speak out -- do now what you should have done then -- then maybe no more Tamaras get fed to the dragons. That's my new world. That's the real redemption. See, I remembered the word.

CORTEZ moves around the room, in thought.

CORTEZ

You want a truce.

MARGARET

I want coöperation.

CORTEZ

You want more than that.

MARGARET

I would love to make you pay -- but I did learn something from you, after all, about keeping our eyes bigger, our hearts large -- that's what brought me back -- to you.

CORTEZ

Back to me.

MARGARET

So we could work together.

CORTEZ

So, a truce, then --

MARGARET

A truce is for combat.

CORTEZ

You brought the ammunition.

MARGARET

True, but --

CORTEZ

If I agree, I come opposing everything you think and feel is right. So it will be a truce.

MARGARET

Are we that divided?

CORTEZ

Your -- sentimentality, your kind of righteousness -- so sweet, so weak --

MARGARET

If it doesn't come from the heart --

CORTEZ

Don't think Tamara's death doesn't puncture my heart every day.

MARGARET

I sometimes think your heart's a stone --

CORTEZ

My heart is atoned -- you don't understand that.

MARGARET

No, I don't.

CORTEZ

I didn't give you Tamara -- she will never leave me. You never had her. What's in this --

(showing the cloth)

-- is that endless loop of breast-beating you seem to find so inspiring. I'm done with the smell of burned skin. Time for me to prepare for my release.

MARGARET

So you're not big enough to face --

CORTEZ

Stop it! Stop it. I wish you could see your face right now -- not the good, strong, open, scared-into-life face that was here a year ago, that was my coyote, that helped me cross

the border. No, now it's a judge's face. Here's another Julia for you:

"But I was made of nows,"

"Nows!" Hear that, Margaret -- dragging no more corpses around!

"But I was made of nows, / and my feet level...would not accept walking backwards,"

Hear that -- not backwards!

"and I went forward, forward, / mocking the ashes to reach the kiss / of the new paths." [Julia de Burgos, Song Of The Simple Truth, "I Was My Own Route," #20 (pp. 56-57)]

CORTEZ, standing near MARGARET, kisses her.

CORTEZ

New paths, querida -- that's where Tamara and I are going. Do you want to come?

MARGARET, to her surprise, seems pacified by the kiss.

MARGARET

I don't want Tamara repeated -- new paths, too. And I'm going to tell the story.

CORTEZ

You go, girl! I just don't think the liberal guilt thing is the way to do it. All of us here own our own shame -- fully vested. No one here needs to be wept over. But if you're set on that, then you need some balance, some frame for your picture -- a bite of the chile with the sugar.

MARGARET

What?

CORTEZ

The gallery, the benefit -- too clean. Arrange to put these pictures in the dead country, too -- here at the prison, in a church, a bodega, a school, Christ, even just hang them on

a fence -- anywhere but just a gallery. And you have to get the do-gooders to go there.

MARGARET

I'm listening.

CORTEZ

You need a context. You need charts of ownership and income and health and education. If you want no more Tamaras in the morgue, they need to know how much of the dead country they own -- they have to own up. They need to cross the borders, not just feel oh so lagrimoso and sensitized. Those are my terms. And if you don't accept them, I'll make sure no one sits for you. That's my ammunition.

MARGARET

Deal.

CORTEZ

Bueno.

MARGARET

So do we have our truce?

CORTEZ

That's up to your anger.

MARGARET

My anger -- to one side. Partnership, then, for the moment.

CORTEZ

Peace along the fronteras.

MARGARET

We'll call the truce Alex and Tamara.

CORTEZ

Tamara and Alex.

MARGARET

Tamara and Alex, then. The name of the truce. Anything else?

CORTEZ

Ask me formally if I want to do this. You've asked everyone else -- now ask me.

MARGARET

Vera Cortez, would you like to participate in this project -- in the name of Tamara?

CORTEZ

In the name of Tamara, yes. Now what?

MARGARET

Sit down.

CORTEZ

You're going to take the pictures now?

MARGARET

Nothing formal. I'll come back out later for the set-up shots. Now it's just to get people used to the camera.

CORTEZ

I don't even know what I look like. According to you, I have devil's horns.

MARGARET

The only horns you have is because you haven't seen a man in a long time.

CORTEZ

For a white piece, you do have a mouth.

MARGARET

Here's a mirror.

CORTEZ

A mirror.

CORTEZ looks at herself tentatively.

CORTEZ

A brush?

MARGARET hands CORTEZ a brush. MARGARET brings over a small box with some simple cosmetic items in it.

CORTEZ
(brushing her hair)

It's been so long.
(hands back the brush and mirror)
No make-up. Just my game face. What now?

As she speaks, MARGARET goes to the camera, fusses with it, etc.

MARGARET
Get comfortable. Just look at the camera and pretend there's no one behind it.

CORTEZ
There isn't.

MARGARET
For a brown piece, you do have a mouth. We have lots of time. Now, try a smile out on me.

As MARGARET prepares to take a picture, CORTEZ moves toward her.

MARGARET
What are you doing?

CORTEZ
This have a timer on it?

MARGARET
You can even set the number of pictures you want.

CORTEZ
Three. Focus?

MARGARET
Press here to set it. When you're ready, press this button. Five seconds to get there, three seconds between pictures. And it beeps to warn you.

CORTEZ

All right. Sit down. They take pictures, don't they, after a truce gets signed, to burn it into memory? Here is our official record.

MARGARET

Heart and history.

CORTEZ

Tamara and Alex.

CORTEZ focuses the camera on MARGARET, then presses the button. CORTEZ sits beside MARGARET. They can fill the intervening seconds with whatever feels appropriate. But the camera beeps, and they face it in their first pose.

As the lights fade to complete black, there will be three successive pictures, and the lights should burst and then fade slowly, three to four seconds. The fade-out on the last picture should go five to six seconds.

BLACKOUT

Prisoner A-7

DESCRIPTION

The tale of Alexander Berkman, also known as Sasha and the life-long companion of Emma Goldman, and his fight for a better world through the principles of anarchism.

CHARACTERS

- ALEXANDER BERKMAN, 60s. Also Sach's Waiter/Frick/Prison Guard
- SASHA (Young Alexander Bervkman), mid-20s. Also Young Man/J. Edgar Hoover
- EMMA (Young Emma Goldman), mid-20s. Also Prison Guard/Hannah

SOUND DESIGN

- Gunshots at various times
- Sach's Café - babble of voices
- Labored breathing
- Sounds of anvils, sounds of chains, sounds of metal doors slamming
- Boat horn
- Door opening
- Boat whistle
- Music

* * * * *

Scene 1

ALEXANDER BERKMAN, 65, in great pain, breathing heavily, faces the audience, a pistol in his right hand.

SASHA appears, looking every inch the immigrant in a cheap suit.

BERKMAN

I don't need you to tell me anything.

SASHA

But Sasha, Sasha -- who else will tell you a useful truth?

BERKMAN

I know the truth I need to know.

SASHA

So tell me the truth as you know it.

BERKMAN

When one has neither health nor means --

SASHA speaks as an announcer.

SASHA

Alexander --

BERKMAN

-- and cannot work for his ideas --

SASHA

Berkman --

BERKMAN

-- it is time to clear out.

SASHA

Readied for his deportation from the mortal coil.

BERKMAN turns the gun on himself, pressing it against his right side.

Gunshot sound -- though BERKMAN doesn't fall as if shot.

SASHA

This is what all failed revolutionaries say.

BERKMAN

No they don't.

SASHA

Yes they do because they love feeling the dose of sadness
that failure gives them.

BERKMAN

No they [don't] --

SASHA

"I did my best, sigh, but the world just didn't -- " Berkman
comma Alexander. Historical. Footnote.

Gunshot sound -- but BERKMAN doesn't fall.

BERKMAN

"I believe that anarchism is the finest and biggest thing man has ever thought of -- "

SASHA

Stop.

BERKMAN

" -- the-only-thing-that-can-give-you-liberty-and-well-being-and-bring-peace-and-joy-to-the-world -- "

SASHA

Stop! You've reached your quota of fine words no one ever paid attention to. Agreed?

BERKMAN

I have more.

SASHA

No you don't.

SASHA kisses him on each cheek.

SASHA

Alexander Berkman, I now pronounce you a failed and unnecessary revolutionary -- a superb and superfluous man.

Gunshot sound. SASHA and BERKMAN stare at each as lights descend to darkness.

* * * * *

Scene 2

PROJECTION: Sach's Café, Suffolk Street, New York, August 15, 1889.
A noisy place thick with language.

SASHA sits at a table, meditating on a coffee cup. WAITER, apron wrapped around his gut, stands to one side, arms folded, meditating on SASHA meditating on his coffee cup.

EMMA enters: hat askew, holding a small satchel and a sewing machine.

SASHA notices her, then really notices her. EMMA notices him, then really notices him. WAITER notices them both noticing each other.

SASHA

Hello.

EMMA

Hello --

SASHA

Welcome to Sach's Café.

EMMA

I was told --

SASHA

Come sit.

EMMA

No thank you. I was told --

SASHA

Come sit. No commitments.

EMMA decides to sit.

SASHA

Now, I would say that you look like you were told to look for someone.

EMMA

Yes.

SASHA

I know everyone here -- except for you, at the moment -- so you should take advantage --

EMMA

Of?

SASHA

My expertise.

EMMA

I really need to find --

SASHA

Test it -- you have time.

EMMA

In what?

SASHA

In knowing many things -- knowing, for instance, that you are hungry and thirsty as well as looking for someone -- am I right?

EMMA

Yes.

SASHA

So two more things I know about you since you walked in here.

EMMA

A detective --

SASHA

Don't insult me --

EMMA

A Pinkerton --

SASHA

Please! An observer.

EMMA

A snooper.

SASHA

A philosopher. Of life.

EMMA

Like my nosy neighbors.

SASHA

I act from first principles.

EMMA

Do your first principles include a sandwich and a beer?

SASHA

And I bet I can get you that third thing you want.

EMMA

I'll go for your first two, thank you.

SASHA turns to WAITER.

SASHA

Sandwich and a beer.

Instead of getting them, WAITER comes to the table, takes a chair, sits.

WAITER

What did the Russian anarchist anti-Christer just say to me?

SASHA

What did the Austrian-Hungarian king-lover just hear me say?

WAITER

I don't know because anarchists never say anything I can understand.

SASHA

That's because monarchy is like ear wax. Can I get --

WAITER

She your anarchist?

SASHA

You my anarchist?

EMMA

I am my own hungry belly at the moment.

SASHA

A simple human being.

EMMA

I am the human condition.

SASHA

In want and privation, in hunger and thirst --

EMMA

Which means that I need the sandwich and the beer the anarchist wants to give to me.

WAITER

A king can give you more.

EMMA

But kings always want more in return.

WAITER

You follow anybody who feeds you?

EMMA

I thank anybody who feeds me.

WAITER

With the king, thanks will get you safety.

EMMA

But with this anarchist, I get freedom with my thanks --

SASHA

You're welcome --

EMMA

-- which is going to make that beer and sandwich taste like heaven on earth --

SASHA

If she ever gets them -- it's so hard for a monarchist to serve anyone.

EMMA

Eh, maybe -- but I will bet -- the noblesse oblige of the king -- that he will be honored to bring food to a fellow human being like me.

EMMA and WAITER take a moment to assess each other.

WAITER

I will take your bet --

EMMA

And be better for it.

WAITER

You've got that kind of clearness in your eyes --

EMMA

But you should know that the only thing I'm going to take from you is the beer and sandwich.

SASHA

If she ever gets them. From you.

WAITER gets up.

WAITER

Consider it done. The compliment is part of the noblesse --

EMMA

The king has taught you well.

WAITER

The anarchist pays attention.

WAITER goes for the food.

EMMA

That's what goes on around here?

SASHA

Political discussion spreads through everything -- it's like the dirt in the floorboards.

WAITER returns with a sandwich and a beer, places them with great gallantry, and retreats to his post.

EMMA makes short work of the food.

EMMA

I have only five dollars to my name.

SASHA

And what name would that be? Slow down --

EMMA

I'm saying that I can't pay for this sandwich.

SASHA

Slow -- down -- I know what you're saying -- so, "to my name"?

EMMA

What happens when the bill comes?

SASHA

The bill comes into my hand, like a bird -- sits right there, see? -- then it flies out from my hand with money. Another?

EMMA

Can your bird afford it?

SASHA

He just got paid.

EMMA

For doing what?

SASHA

I set type for a newspaper -- Die Freiheit?

EMMA

For Johann Most?

SASHA

You know him.

EMMA

Who doesn't know Johann Most?

SASHA

Mostly everybody in this country doesn't know Johann Most
-- but I observe that you know him.

EMMA toys with the empty plate.

EMMA

About him, I know about him.

SASHA

So you read Die Freiheit -- "the propaganda of the deed"
-- you know that?

EMMA

About that.

SASHA

Yes or no to the idea of "the propaganda of the deed"? To
the deed, to its propaganda value --

EMMA

I want to say "I agree! I agree!" but I find discussion so hard
when I'm hungry --

SASHA

I have known that situation myself.

EMMA

So could I propagandize you for the deed of that second
sandwich? And another beer?

SASHA signal WAITER for another sandwich and beer. WAITER bows,
goes to fetch the food. They wait without saying anything to each other until
WAITER returns and places the food, then resumes his post.

SASHA

The deed is done, with all its value to you.

EMMA makes short work of the sandwich and beer.

SASHA

She does. The deed. With great. Attack! Are you able to discuss better now?

EMMA

I can believe in first principles again.

SASHA

You're not like most --

EMMA

Most what?

SASHA

Never mind.

SASHA reaches into his inner coat pocket and pulls out three business cards and hands them to her.

SASHA

In Yiddish. German. And Russian. You choose.

EMMA reads from one of the cards.

EMMA

"Alexander Berkman. Composer." With an address.

SASHA

In Vilnius I was Ovsei Osipovich, but when I moved to St. Petersburg I took on Alexander.

EMMA

Got rid of the Lithuania.

SASHA

What was in the Lithuania to keep?

EMMA

"Alexander" -- did that mean you wanted to be a tsar?

SASHA

I didn't put this on those cards.

EMMA

What?

SASHA

That I would rather kill a tsar than be one. Just like they did with that other Alexander.

EMMA

Really?

SASHA

Propaganda. Of the. Deed. Of that kind of deed. Really.

EMMA pockets the cards.

EMMA

What do they call you when they don't call you Alexander Berkman Compositor?

SASHA

"Sasha" would sound nice coming from you.

EMMA

I can do Sasha.

SASHA

And now, your friend.

EMMA

I should.

SASHA

His name?

EMMA

Solotaroff.

SASHA

A regular of Sach's Café. I'll find him for you -- but when I've led him to you, all three wishes are filled, and then -- what?

EMMA

Do you think I only have three wishes?

WAITER

Hey anarchist -- she realize yet how little you have to offer?

SASHA

King-lover, as I've tried to teach you, my "little," no matter how little, will always be more than your "much" --

WAITER

He'll die a young and pure-bred revolutionary, leaving you open to making more sensible choices.

EMMA

"To each according to his needs" is the most sensible thing I have ever heard.

SASHA

Check please?

WAITER

"According to his needs" --

SASHA

Check please.

WAITER

Think you can meet his needs?

EMMA

He fed me -- you didn't. Game over, game on.

SASHA

Check please.

WAITER

Check it is.

WAITER exits.

SASHA

Sorry.

EMMA

It's the best conversation I've had in a while.

SASHA

You must be starved beyond bread and water.

EMMA

I'm also putting you on notice that I'm from Lithuania as well.

SASHA

Excellent -- more for us to talk about.

EMMA

Could include a fourth wish.

SASHA

But, you know, a name -- a name, a name -- I need a --

EMMA

Emma Goldman.

SASHA

I'll go find him, Emma Goldman -- I'll pay up the bill -- you should wait outside -- too much August in here, you need to get some air --

EMMA

Deal.

SASHA

Ah, the American slang!

Lights shift. SASHA grabs a canteen. They move the chairs downstage.

* * * * *

Scene 3

PROJECTION: By the East River -- August -- New York City -- Lower East Side -- hot hot hot hot hot.

SASHA

You're very lucky.

EMMA

It's so hot --

SASHA offers her the canteen.

SASHA

Solotaroff is going to put you up.

EMMA

My five dollars stretches.

EMMA sips from it, hands it back.

SASHA

Mr. A. Solotaroff -- why announce yourself like that, with that initial?

EMMA

I don't know --

SASHA

He seems generous -- and you met him --

EMMA

He did a lecture where I lived before coming here.

SASHA points in several directions. EMMA points up.

EMMA

North -- Rochester -- I have family there -- have family, had family -- not sure at this moment -- it's my own business.

SASHA

And so none of mine. He seems to like you enough, Mr. A. -- for just going to his lecture.

EMMA

So?

SASHA

You arrive unannounced, and yet --

EMMA

You're a pig.

SASHA

Men are men. Women are women.

EMMA

And a lecture's a lecture -- he told me if ever I was in --

SASHA

Uh-huh.

EMMA

I didn't go to him at first -- I had family in this city, and notice I don't say "have" -- aunt and uncle, on Canal Street -- but I wasn't going to stay where I wasn't approved -- still none of your business -- I had one other name --

EMMA gestures for the canteen. SASHA hands it to her.

EMMA

Right name but wrong address -- he'd moved to Montgomery Street --

EMMA sips, then pours some water onto a handkerchief she takes out of her pocket, dampens her face and the back of her neck. SASHA watches this with close attention.

EMMA

So I knocked on every door on Montgomery Street until I found someone who knew him, who told me he was at Sach's -- and there I met you, the two-sandwich man.

EMMA hands back the canteen. SASHA sips.

EMMA

I don't give up unless I have to.

SASHA

But also good you had a short street.

EMMA

I would've done longer.

SASHA

I believe you.

EMMA

"Men are men" -- include you? A lecture -- a sandwich -- a beer --

SASHA holds up two fingers.

EMMA

-- doesn't get anybody a bed with me.

SASHA

What does that take?

EMMA

Is it always hot like this?

SASHA

You didn't answer my question.

EMMA

If you're smart, you'll figure it out.

SASHA

I am, after all, a St. Petersburg boy -- you have to expect the fire from me --

EMMA hands back the canteen.

EMMA

You're speaking to a St. Petersburg girl. Woman.

SASHA

Then "man."

EMMA

Kovno-born --

SASHA

Li-thu-a-ni-a --

EMMA

-- but didn't stay in Kovno.

SASHA

Who would? Like Rochester!

EMMA

And Canal Street.

SASHA

So let me ask you this. Let me test you. Let me see if you have the fire. "What did you feel when they did it?"

EMMA gives him a half-glance.

EMMA

Did what?

SASHA

It -- it -- what other "it" was there when we were in St. Petersburg to feel the fire about?

They share a significant look.

EMMA

I admired the deed.

SASHA

To erase the tsar --

EMMA

To blow him up!

SASHA

Assassinate him to the ground!

EMMA

Rub him out!

SASHA

Completely! To see the propaganda of the deed in action!

EMMA

That's why working with Most must be --

SASHA

It is, it is!

EMMA

-- amazing --

SASHA

He is! Johann Most is amazing! I'll introduce you to him.

EMMA

You'd better.

SASHA

He's lecturing tonight, as a matter of fact -- I did the handbills and I'm putting them up -- how's your German?

EMMA

As good as yours.

SASHA

Mine is excellent.

EMMA

Then as good as you.

SASHA

So, are you -- free -- I mean, free to come tonight?

EMMA

With you?

SASHA

I'd like that better than if you went with Mr. A. Or if Mr. A. came with me.

EMMA

Remember -- I'm not in Rochester, I'm not on Canal Street --

SASHA

You are on your own.

EMMA

Make up my own mind. How much does it cost?

SASHA

You go as my guest.

EMMA

Guests are free.

SASHA

If you're free to go.

EMMA

I've never been freer to go.

SASHA

Fourth wish done.

They are both speechless for the moment

SASHA

Boy, it just got a lot hotter, didn't it?

EMMA laughs.

EMMA

Boy?!

SASHA

Slang.

EMMA

Man, it just got hotter!

Their laughter trails off into the discomfort of a new intimacy. SASHA hands her the canteen. She sips, hands it back. He sips.

EMMA

I'm going to have to get a job.

SASHA

I saw the sewing machine -- always jobs doing that -- it shouldn't be hard. I could spot you for a couple of sandwiches.

EMMA

If we have sandwiches again together -- on my dime.

SASHA

I look forward to that.

EMMA

Better sandwiches, too.

SASHA

Come on, I'll walk you back to Mr. A's, we can arrange where to meet tonight --

But SASHA stops, seeing how dismayed EMMA looks.

SASHA

You all right?

EMMA

This -- is -- not -- exactly what I want.

SASHA

But it's what you have -- Rochester to New York in one day.

EMMA

And then, on the other hand, it's exactly what I want.

SASHA

Then you're where you need to be.

EMMA

I'm not sure about any of this. Five dollars to my name.

SASHA

We are in America doing what is to be done.

SASHA stands, offers her his arm. EMMA stands.

EMMA

I am taking your arm, and I am going to walk these streets with you.

EMMA takes his arm. They look very much like a pair in an old photograph.

Strobe effect, as if that photograph had just been taken.

* * * * *

Scene 4

PROJECTION: A brief slideshow of four pictures, two of young EMMA and two of young SASHA. Perhaps accompanied by music.

After the lecture -- some change in clothing to suggest the passage of time. They are standing by the East River, under a gas lamp, the two chairs as a bench. SASHA holds a peeled orange.

EMMA paces. As she passes him, SASHA holds out a segment, but she doesn't take it -- until, on one pass, she does.

SASHA

It's cooler, Miss Goldman, but it's still too hot to do what [you're doing]--

EMMA

Don't tell me --

SASHA

I'm just saying --

EMMA

This is what I do when everything is --

EMMA grabs another segment.

SASHA

He's a good speaker.

EMMA

Mmmmm -- but you -- you didn't seem all that excited.

SASHA

Heard it before. He never changes it.

EMMA

So what, you should -- the ideas -- just -- just --

EMMA lets out a grunt or a hard exhalation -- something that substitutes for the words she can't grab.

EMMA

I just can't --

SASHA watches her with more than just curiosity. EMMA sees him.

EMMA

What?

SASHA

Just waiting for you to come up for air. Do you want some more?

EMMA

No. Yes.

EMMA takes a segment. EMMA touches the left side of her face.

EMMA

What happened to his --

SASHA

As a kid, a doctor cut away some cancer there -- doctor by name, but really a butcher --

EMMA

When you introduced me to him, it made me feel --

SASHA

Usually either drives people away or draws them [in] --

EMMA

Gives him power -- he's suffered --

SASHA

And I thought you just liked his ideas.

EMMA goes right up to him.

EMMA

Don't make fun of me!

SASHA

I'm not --

EMMA

I've had enough of men --

SASHA

And you won't get any of that from me. A little space -- between us -- good -- I don't want to be combusted. Most liked you, too -- I could tell -- he gets this look when --

EMMA turns away from him in exasperation, paces some more, then sits.

EMMA goes to speak but can't. She gets up, sits back down, paces, sits again, hoping to jump-start the words, but the gestures don't work. She is near to tears but will not let them come.

SASHA sits.

SASHA

What is it, Sailor Girl?

EMMA gives him a half-laugh.

EMMA

Sailor Girl --

SASHA

Who sailed into New York today -- today!

EMMA

-- today.

SASHA

A sailor of deep seas, the Ocean of Philosophy, like one of those beautiful figureheads on the prow --

EMMA turns to him with a half-smile.

EMMA

Shut up.

SASHA

Don't like my compliments?

EMMA

Men should learn the art of shutting up --

SASHA

All men?

EMMA

All.

SASHA

Johann Most? Ah --

EMMA

All right --

SASHA

And Mr. A.?

EMMA

He gets a pass.

SASHA

And so we come to me.

EMMA turns away from him.

SASHA

I know a couple of languages, but not that one.

EMMA

I didn't just sail in -- some tinhorn at Castle Garden. I --
traveled here -- no, no, I -- I made my way --

SASHA

With a sewing machine and five dollars --

EMMA

Do you know the Nikolayevsky Bridge?

SASHA

Of [course] --

EMMA

You must know the Nikolayevsky Bridge.

SASHA

Of course! -- don't I talk fast enough [for you] --

EMMA

I threatened to throw myself off that bridge. My father.

SASHA

For what?

EMMA

He stuck me in a corset factory and thought he could
arrange a marriage for me.

SASHA

Barbarian.

EMMA

I have had enough of men.

SASHA

Me, too -- no, not like that -- I mean the way men think -- I
was in trouble a lot in school -- what I read, what I wrote -- a
nihilist, an atheist -- trying it all on -- I had an uncle, shoveled
off to Siberia for not thinking the right tsarist thoughts -- my
mother died in my arms -- I came here because nothing for
me there --

EMMA

And you made yourself --

SASHA

And I am making myself --

SASHA poses.

SASHA

A fine figurehead?

EMMA poses as well.

EMMA

Not as fine as mine.

SASHA

Agreed. I do not mind being your second.

SASHA takes a pastry wrapped in paper from his pocket, opens it: a poppyseed hamantash. He holds it out on the palm of his hand.

SASHA

Interested?

EMMA breaks off a corner and eats -- and smiles as she eats. SASHA eats, too. They sit.

EMMA

I haven't had --

SASHA

It's not Purim, but a little sweetness never hurts --

EMMA

And that's what Sasha brings, eh?

SASHA shrugs his shoulders, but he's pleased with her words. They continue to eat.

SASHA

The way men think, act, driven by ghosts and lies -- I want to do something to wipe that away -- I'm a slob --

EMMA

I'm not much better --

They brush crumbs off each other's clothes.

SASHA

Not the best hamantash.

EMMA

It's been in a pocket -- it'll do.

SASHA

Especially since we're finishing it.

SASHA folds the paper and puts it back in his pocket.

SASHA

Never know --

EMMA

I do the same --

SASHA

Savers, that's what we are.

A moment of suspended silence.

EMMA

Something else I need to tell you.

SASHA

Say "want to" --

EMMA

Want to.

SASHA

Better.

EMMA

I left Rochester behind for a specific reason.

SASHA

Shoot.

EMMA

You must know about Chicago, about Haymarket.

SASHA

You testing me?

EMMA

I'm asking because if you don't --

SASHA

You're testing if I know Haymarket.

EMMA

If you don't --

SASHA

She's testing me about Haymarket!

EMMA

If you don't, then I have nothing more to say.

SASHA

You can say plenty more all you want because what person like me who loves justice wouldn't -- I am so insulted!

EMMA

No you're not! You're not, are you?

SASHA

You should kiss me I am so insulted!

SASHA laughs a big laugh. EMMA laughs with him.

SASHA

Let Sailor Girl test me all she wants about the Haymarket anarchists, about those poets for a better world! Come on, come on --

SASHA throws down the gauntlet.

SASHA

Albert Parsons!

EMMA takes up the gauntlet.

EMMA

August Spies [shpees]! Come on!

SASHA

Adolph Fischer!

EMMA

George Engel!

SASHA

Louis Lingg!

EMMA

Michael Schwab! Come on!

SASHA

Samuel Fielden!

EMMA

Oscar Neebe!

SASHA

Eight for eight!

EMMA

And what they said, so beautiful!

SASHA

Everything that flew into our hands we read --

EMMA

Couldn't get enough!

SASHA

Big demonstrations.

EMMA

Huge. Everywhere. The eight, speaking out --

SASHA

Better world, more justice, no slavery, freedom -- freedom
--

EMMA

So you know, you do know --

SASHA

Test me forever on this, Sailor Girl -- in my bones, in our
bones -- inside me still --

EMMA

I know -- two years and still --

SASHA

And it still ignites, doesn't it? --

EMMA

Their eight faces still haunt me --

SASHA

Two years!

EMMA

Ignites -- their thoughts, their words --

SASHA

The eight together -- their anarchism -- so --

EMMA

So right --

SASHA

So beautiful --

EMMA

So exactly right.

They catch each other's hands. They let them go. They have to catch their
breaths.

SASHA

I -- I still think it's the police who threw the bomb --

EMMA

I do too --

SASHA

Wouldn't put it past 'em.

EMMA

I heard Pinkertons --

SASHA

Them, too -- whoever, they'd throw the bomb to kill their own just to get at --

EMMA

To get at us --

SASHA

Ah --

The look they give each other has a shared sorrow in it.

SASHA

I know, I know --

EMMA

Hanged --

SASHA

So painful --

EMMA

The five --

SASHA

Their names on our bones -- the slaughtered --

They recite the names without the enthusiasm of the challenge.

EMMA

Parsons, Spies, Lingg --

SASHA

Engel, Fischer --

EMMA
Black Friday --

SASHA
Ah --

EMMA
I went numb -- my family -- all agreeing with the --

SASHA
The crucifixion of anarchists --

EMMA
Yes! Yes.

SASHA
Barbarians.

EMMA
I fainted that night, Black Friday.

SASHA
Ah, Sailor Girl -- Emma -- I can understand that, completely
--

EMMA
When I woke up -- when I came to -- came to my senses
-- well, it took me those two years to make it work out --

SASHA
And you leave Rochester --

EMMA
No more family --

SASHA
You sail away --

EMMA
Weight [gone] --

SASHA
And wait -- wait --

From his other pocket SASHA pulls out another hamantash -- apricot.

SASHA

You arrive to -- apricot.

EMMA breaks off a piece and feeds it to SASHA. SASHA feeds a piece to EMMA.

EMMA

Can you help me find work?

SASHA

That won't be hard, not around here. Finding good work -- that's harder.

EMMA

I don't mind work.

SASHA

I mind stupid work -- slave work --

EMMA falters -- the exhaustion has hit her. SASHA wraps up the hamantash, puts it in his pocket.

SASHA

Come on -- time for you to meet your bed.

They stand. EMMA takes his arm. They look at each other. A small kiss. SASHA tastes his own lips.

SASHA

Apricot.

Transition to darkness.

* * * * *

Scene 5

Labored breathing in the darkness.

BERKMAN appears, gun in hand. He watches the next scene unfold.

* * * * *

Scene 6

PROJECTION: June 1892. What Is To Be Done?

A tiny apartment -- barely room for a table and chairs.

Newspapers on the table.

EMMA and SASHA are seething, enraged.

SASHA

You can't just reject the idea like that --

SASHA points to the newspaper.

SASHA

Because we have to do something, Emma. We have to -- I
have to -- they killed -- slaughtered! -- why aren't you saying
something? Why aren't you --

EMMA

Sasha, please, just -- I have to think --

SASHA

What an excellent luxury --

EMMA shoots SASHA a look. SASHA, abashed, but not really, shuts up
-- for a moment.

SASHA

Homestead Steel --

EMMA

I know the [name] --

SASHA

This could be --

EMMA

I know --

SASHA

-- the moment --

EMMA

I know!

SASHA

What we've been looking for --

EMMA

I know!

BERKMAN

What Most has been calling [for] --

EMMA can't keep the sarcasm out of her voice.

EMMA

"The deed, the deed" -- a hundred times an hour --

But SASHA misses her sarcasm.

SASHA

Killing the tsar, we have the chance to kill the [tsar!] --

EMMA

Henry Clay Frick isn't the tsar --

SASHA

Really?

EMMA

-- and keep your voice down --

BERKMAN

Really?!

EMMA

And your tone --

SASHA

And yours -- you're not [being] --

EMMA

I'm being just as bloody-minded as you are!

SASHA

Then act it! Do it!

EMMA

We need to think it [out] --

SASHA

What's to think? Frick threw the Pinkertons in to break the strike just the way Caesar launched his praetorians -- Frick is doing, he's not just thinking -- doing like Caesar, he should die like Caesar -- and I -- what're you doing?

EMMA tries to clamp her hand over his mouth.

EMMA

Ssh. Ssh.

SASHA

Stop it!

EMMA

Remember where we live --

SASHA

Don't!

EMMA

Then remember how we live! Remember!

SASHA shuts up, but he can't stop himself from slamming the table.

SASHA

I wish we had been there! I wish we could've --

EMMA

I know -- stop it, Sasha --

SASHA lets out a groan of exasperation.

EMMA

They'll hear --

SASHA paces to cool down, speaks in a harsh whisper.

SASHA

They drove off three hundred Pinkertons -- three [hundred]
-- driven off -- the Workers -- the People -- fighting back!

EMMA

And you forget --

BERKMAN

What?

EMMA

Always --

SASHA

What?

EMMA

How the tsar gets to be the tsar -- how a tsar acts when you
stick it in the eye!

SASHA

You always have to stick [it] --

EMMA

Bombs on the Catherine Canal -- the tsar goes pfft! --
remember our first conversation? --

SASHA

You liked that!

EMMA

Hurrah! huzzah! -- but then what, huh?, what happened
when the next tsar put on the harness?

SASHA

It doesn't matter what happened because the right thing
was done --

EMMA

It has to [matter] --

SASHA

The deed was the right one to do --

EMMA

The Jews? You and I -- the Jews -- we're still --

SASHA

I've never been a Jew --

EMMA

Of course you're a Jew -- you just mean you were never Jewish --

SASHA

Don't say --

EMMA

Doesn't matter -- the Jews we knew -- we got away, but not all could, and they got it stuck back to them -- and a lot of others, too, who we knew, Jew or not -- the police dogs tore their daily meat from our friends and teachers!

SASHA is quiet.

EMMA

The deed has a "before," and it has an "after" -- you know -- we know -- all this -- it's one thing for Johann Most to talk so much --

SASHA

So nothing --

EMMA

But think of Haymarket -- think of the beauty we heard in their --

SASHA

So I should do nothing -- nothing is so beautiful --

EMMA

I --

SASHA

We should just --

EMMA

Sasha --

SASHA

Thousands of workers fighting! -- their deed! -- Carnegie
and Frick's mercenaries -- the Pinkertons -- Praetorians!!
-- and the People -- rise -- take over the factories --

SASHA makes explosion sounds.

SASHA

And I can't make myself part of [that], the thing that I [live
for] -- no, no -- no no no no no -- make myself the best part
of that? What else am I to do with this life I am carrying
around? Spend it in this -- coffin -- waiting waiting -- I will
suffocate! I am suff[ocating] --

EMMA looks right at him.

EMMA

How would you --

EMMA lowers her voice.

EMMA

How would you do it?

SASHA

I would just do it.

EMMA

Keep your voice down. How? Just march right in there and
shoot Frick?

SASHA

Why not?

EMMA

You don't have a gun, for one thing.

SASHA

I'll buy one.

EMMA

With what? Do you even know how much one costs? Oh, and bullets -- don't [forget] --

SASHA

Of course I'd remember the bullets --

EMMA

Like how you remember not to pull the covers off me when you roll out of bed in the morning?

SASHA

That's not the [same] --

EMMA

Every morning, no matter how often I've asked --

SASHA

It's not [the same] --

EMMA

Paying attention, so I think I have to say the bullets, knowing you, gun and bullets.

SASHA

I'll get them!

EMMA

With. What.

SASHA

You always land on the minor stuff --

EMMA

Shoot -- gun -- it's not --

SASHA

What burns -- the fuse is going, going -- "What is to be done?"

SASHA pokes her, not quite playfully.

EMMA

Stop it.

SASHA

The rot oozes out of Carnegie --

EMMA

Stop --

SASHA

-- but it's Frick that passes it along --

EMMA

Stop it!

SASHA

Frick's the one that's to go, and then --

EMMA

Then what? What's the "what" in your head?

SASHA

The fuse, the spark! The People will understand, the Workers will fight for the Justice they deserve. They hate their Slavery. I hate their Slavery.

EMMA

Your voice --

SASHA lowers it to a harsh whisper.

SASHA

We hate their Slavery! Everything we said we were ready to do, give our lives to do -- there! In Pittsburgh! At Homestead Steel! With the Workers! Among the Suffering. Sailor Girl? Sailor Girl? Is she [there] --

EMMA

Yes, Alexander -- she's here.

SASHA

Yes!

EMMA

The deed.

SASHA

The deed is ours to do. I will march in there. I will shoot Frick.

EMMA gestures. SASHA lowers his voice.

SASHA

I will suffer whatever I have to suffer -- suffer in glory. How much better than that? Everything Johann Most just spouts off about, we will do, actually do, you and I -- and History will love us!

BERKMAN watches EMMA and SASHA prepare for the assassination of Henry Clay Frick.

While SASHA dresses in a suit and hat, EMMA goes to BERKMAN and gestures for him to give her the gun. BERKMAN gives EMMA the gun, which she then puts in SASHA's pocket. SASHA also puts a knife in his pocket.

SASHA breaks free of EMMA, strides toward BERKMAN, pulls out the gun.

EMMA makes the gunshot sounds (e.g., a clap of the hands, a piece of wood slammed against the floor, etc.)

SASHA fires three times. With each shot, BERKMAN sticks a bloody red wound on himself -- nothing vital is hit. SASHA drops the gun, pulls out the knife, thrusts three times. BERKMAN puts three "wounds" on his leg. Nothing vital is hit.

SASHA drops the knife. SASHA places his hands behind his back as if he has been handcuffed and speaks without emotion.

SASHA

Stop -- stop -- I did this for you -- for the People -- rise up
-- you can fight -- stop -- stop what you're doing to me --

BERKMAN shuffles to him; they meet face to face. EMMA stands in the background.

BERKMAN (AS FRICK)

Let me see his face.

A good long hard look between them -- and for a moment shame and fear cross SASHA's face as BERKMAN takes off his "wounds" and puts them on SASHA. But not for long as SASHA hardens himself.

SASHA

No. No.

BERKMAN (AS FRICK)

Leave him to the law.

SASHA

The law means shit to me.

BERKMAN (AS HIMSELF)

Which is exactly what it will turn you into.

SASHA faces front in a burst of white-hot light and alarms. BERKMAN and EMMA don the jackets of policemen, grab their batons.

EMMA jams a cloth bag over SASHA's head. BERKMAN picks up the gun and knife.

EMMA speaks like a train conductor.

EMMA

All aboard! Welcome to Western State Penitentiary, Penn-
syl-va-ni-a.

Sounds of anvils, sounds of chains, sounds of metal doors slamming while BERKMAN and EMMA strip SASHA naked. They pummel him to the ground. They can do anything they want to humiliate, torture, and punish him -- nothing is out of bounds. All during this SASHA shouts.

SASHA

Human life is sacred, but killing an enemy of the People is not taking a human life. A true revolutionist sacrifices his life on the altar of the People. A true revolutionist has no personal desires above the Cause. The Cause! Above being merely human and excludes all doubt, all regret. Revolutionist first, human afterwards.

Sounds bump out. SASHA is curled into himself on his knees.

BERKMAN

You are a fucking loon, Prisoner A-7.

EMMA

What did you think would fucking happen?

They both sit beside him on milking stools. They can hit him as often as they want anywhere they want.

BERKMAN

Did you just hate Frick -- God knows he's a prick -- ha, a rhyme! Frick the prick -- was that it?

EMMA

Some kinda personal beef?

SASHA

No -- no -- I did it to --

BERKMAN

To do what?

EMMA

-- to do what?

BERKMAN & EMMA

To do what?

SASHA

The Revolution --

BERKMAN

You are a fucking loon --

EMMA

Loon.

BERKMAN

Isn't he?

EMMA

Loon.

BERKMAN

Rise up, rise up, you thought --

SASHA

The fuse --

BERKMAN

He thought they'd rise up!

EMMA

The workers?

BERKMAN

The workers!

EMMA

The workers don't give two fucks for a revolution -- they think you did it because Frick owed you some money --

BERKMAN

Or he screwed your wife --

EMMA

Or looked at you cross-eyed --

BERKMAN

Those steel workers, the ones you wanted to "fuse"? They asked the National Guard to come in to prove to Frick -- and Carnegie -- just how law-abiding and decent they were.

EMMA

A workman took you down in Frick's office! Only thing he raised was the hammer that cocked you out cold.

BERKMAN

Cause? Revolution?

EMMA

Just nothing but puke words.

BERKMAN & EMMA

Bllleeehhhhh!!!

SASHA is curled in close, his back flat between them. BERKMAN pulls out cards, deals EMMA a hand. They play gin rummy using SASHA's back as a table-top. They can ad-lib comments about the card-play.

BERKMAN

Think Americans have a taste for that? Just jabber in their ears -- just bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar -- slap it away like a mosquito.

EMMA

Prisoner A-7 comes to America thinking we got some real freedom here! That the poor buttheads are just under the thumb of the rich -- take away the thumb -- workers united! -- heaven on earth to follow. Little does he know.

BERKMAN

Little enough indeed.

SASHA

Please --

EMMA hits him.

EMMA

Shut up!

BERKMAN

And the little freedom the workers get let to have is magnificent compared to the fact that for the next twenty-two cock-in-ass years you are going to have just enough freedom to beat yourself off and do nothing more.

EMMA

And he's only lived 20 so far on God's green earth --

BERKMAN

He's just a babe --

EMMA

A veritable babe.

BERKMAN

Spark the rebellion! Kill the tyrant! You talked some crazy shit at your trial.

EMMA

And just to make sure no one, you know, gets infected by your bastard ideas -- not that they've got any, you know, weight --

SASHA

Please --

EMMA

Shut up! But just for the good order and discipline of things here in Western Pennsylvania -- it's in solitary for Prisoner A-7.

BERKMAN

Long long time.

EMMA

Long long loooonnnnggg time.

BERKMAN & EMMA

Lllllloooooonnnnnnggggg time.

BERKMAN

Plenty of it to perfect your philosophy, shithead.

EMMA

To live on and off the stuff of dreams. Gin.

BERKMAN gathers up the cards.

BERKMAN

lllllittttt'sssss time!

Together, they drag over a crate just big enough to cram the curled-up SASHA into. They cram him into it. EMMA hands BERKMAN her baton, exits.

BERKMAN uses the batons like drumsticks to play the crate, then abandons him.

Without great display, SASHA cries about his fate without taking off the hood.

EMMA, now dressed as EMMA, with the help of BERKMAN, steps up on to the crate, as if onto a stage.

As she speaks, SASHA crawls out of the crate and, with BERKMAN's help, dresses in simple clothes.

EMMA

You can't see it -- but I have blood on these hands.

My Sasha was sentenced to twenty-two years -- more years than he had been alive. If fate had given us \$15 more -- a train ticket -- I would have been there and we would have burned together! But it didn't. And we didn't.

Such despair -- I couldn't sleep: I would haunt cafés or trolleys to the Bronx and back -- just to kill time -- while they were killing him. I defended his name -- I even horsewhipped the great Johann Most in public for defaming him! Broke the whip against his puny bones!

But it was all performance. I did everything to convince myself I was with Sasha except what I should have done: be with him. I could have turned myself in to the police. I could have stood with Sasha at trial, proud, and sacrificed myself to what I said I believed with all my heart.

I could have -- but I didn't, because "all my heart" was not with Sasha. I chose to breathe free air -- with no intention of giving it up. I betrayed him. Fully. By choice. Without ever intending to let my guilt argue me into doing the right thing and stand by him full-voiced, in joint resistance.

And even though for the fourteen years Sasha was in prison I visited, I agitated on his behalf, I even helped friends try to dig an escape tunnel under the prison walls -- there was no denying the Judas kiss from the very start.

Sasha loved the ideal, the perfect, and so he believed he could give up ordinary life.

I loved the imperfect too much -- food, coffee, praise, sex, a smug pride in this loud and unpluggable mouth -- and this made me a coward.

I was too weak to let guilt purify me.

I was vain enough to want the world to want me.

SASHA is dressed. BERKMAN helps EMMA come down to the stage, then takes off the crate, sets a table and three chairs. She delivers her final lines to SASHA.

EMMA

In 1906, after fourteen years, they released Sasha; they cut eight years cut off his sentence after cutting fourteen years off his life.

For me, over those same fourteen years: lecture star, editor of Mother Earth, celebrated prisoner, free speech buckaroo, multiple lover, agitator nonpareil, "the most dangerous woman in America" -- anti-militarism this week, abortion the next, an essay praising Ibsen knocked off in between. If reputation was a whiskey, I turned into a drunkard.

Betrayal. Betrayal made Emma Goldman possible.

We have reached complicated terrain.

EMMA sits at the table. SASHA does not sit right away but instead paces. He is, and is not, in the world with her.

EMMA

I thought you would like to see the old place -- not much changed, is it?

SASHA continues to pace.

SASHA

Why should it?

EMMA

I guess -- if it works, it works.

SASHA

If it can limp along, it limps.

EMMA

Everyone is so glad to see you back.

SASHA

You've said that.

EMMA

I am so glad to see you.

SASHA

You've said that, too.

EMMA

It doesn't get any less true if I keep [saying] --

SASHA

Don't worry, Emma, I believe you -- so you can stop saying it.

EMMA lets that sink in.

EMMA

We were worried --

SASHA

I wasn't --

EMMA

-- when you disappeared for those few days --

SASHA

I wasn't -- I knew where I was --

EMMA

You can't blame [us] --

SASHA makes a gesture to indicate "craziness."

SASHA

Who knew what the loony ex-con was going to do, eh?

EMMA

It's been hard for you --

SASHA

In Buffalo -- of all the places for him to go. Didn't that give you a chuckle, at least?

EMMA

I can understand why you'd --

SASHA

No chuckle?

EMMA

I don't laugh about what I worry about --

SASHA

Assassination of McKinley! Pan-American Exposition! Didn't Buffalo put at least a half-smirk on your face? On anyone's face? That I'd head for that city of death? -- not an accident, not for me, you know that -- intentional, loony but focused. Did I tell you about the woman on the boat? I told you about --

EMMA

Yes.

SASHA

"Frenchy."

EMMA

Probably not French.

SASHA

Who can tell these days -- fine in her own way, gave me a comfort while she rifled my pockets, but her one bad point, she didn't understand the word "superfluous" -- su-per-flu-ous -- so what good could she be to me? What good, eh?

EMMA

I understand the word.

SASHA

"Understand" is one thing, smell the constant stink of it off your own skin is [another] --

EMMA

I know it doesn't apply to you --

SASHA

Don't lie to me.

EMMA

Sasha, don't --

SASHA

A thing is as a thing does or doesn't do -- existence drives essence -- or doesn't, as in my [case] --

BERKMAN, now as WAITER, comes on.

WAITER

Well -- well -- am I interrupting --

SASHA

Just bullshit and fog. Hello, lover of kings.

WAITER

I know your name, but I should address you as Lazarus.

SASHA

Call me anything you want -- I'm just a toy.

EMMA

Two sandwiches. Two beers. I told you our next sandwiches would be on my dime --

WAITER

It has to be Lazarus, your name, coming out of that prison.

EMMA

Could you bring --

SASHA

Let him talk to me, Emma.

SASHA sits.

SASHA

I'm not immediately hungry.

WAITER

You weren't forgotten -- she made sure of that --

SASHA

She enjoys lost causes.

WAITER

-- but fourteen years in an Allegheny hell-hole like the one you were in -- Lazarus had it easy -- so --

SASHA

So.

WAITER

So I have to ask you, have to ask -- you know I do -- given all that we --

SASHA

Ask. Go.

WAITER

You still the anarchist?

SASHA looks at them both, then away.

SASHA

You still the king-lover?

WAITER

May I sit?

WAITER sits.

WAITER

Twenty years -- more, now -- in this country, some of its substance rubs off, you know. These days I find myself pulling for Aurel Popovici's The United States of Greater Austria. And he's a Romanian! Talking up a federation of states with the Archduke! It's either that or the whole thing's going to go up in smoke.

SASHA

Do you care?

WAITER

Yes.

SASHA

Really?

WAITER

Yes, but to be honest --

SASHA

I expect you to be honest.

WAITER

You hear enough shit in this place day in and out about what people believe and how much they believe it -- how fierce -- fierce!! -- they are in their beliefs! --

EMMA

Please --

SASHA gestures to her that everything is all right.

SASHA

Fierce!

WAITER

Fierce! But when you look over what their fierce believing does -- to them, to their hearts -- and then to people, to ordinary people who may or may not give a rat's ass about the Principle or the Cause --

SASHA

The Cause or the Principle --

WAITER

How people can get ground down to minced meat by someone's idea of "what is to be done" and what is -- Right! -- Truth!! -- I sometimes get afraid about believing anything.

SASHA

Principles, beliefs, causes --

WAITER

Truth --

SASHA

-- make us monsters, eh?

WAITER

They can.

SASHA

Monstrous.

WAITER

They can. I'm feeling the uncertain that I'm feeling because I'm not sure I will always be able to tell when the belief changes from words spit out with beer and crumbs --

SASHA

Did that myself --

WAITER

I remember the two of you -- you, especially, with your dancing --

EMMA

I'm just doin' the ragtime dance these days --

WAITER

Seems like a good dance for you.

EMMA

More ragtime than dance, I'm afraid.

SASHA

You're posturing --

EMMA

Sorry.

SASHA

Point decided: it's good for her these days. Beer and crumbs --

WAITER

Yes yes -- beer and words and crumbs --

SASHA makes a gesture of beer and crumbs.

SASHA

Yes --

WAITER

-- which hurt nothing but maybe people's feelings --

SASHA

Or their clothes --

WAITER

-- and then Principle, Belief, Cause, Truth! shifts like on a dime into a knife or a pistol or a bomb or an army -- that scares me --

A moment of suspended silence.

SASHA

Lazarus scared a lot of people.

WAITER

I think Lazarus was the most scared of all probably -- a second chance as a blessing? Maybe, maybe not --

SASHA

Especially if you've had three days of peace and harmlessness.

WAITER

Do I care, you asked, to come back around. I care. I have family there, I send my money home. I want what's best. But carefully want it, carefully, because it's not worth it to be right and be a butcher about it. After all, man, we each put our pants on in the same one-leg-at-a-time way, right?!

SASHA

A maxim ranking up there with the sermon on the mount. Yes?

WAITER

It's simple.

EMMA

If simple gives you comfort.

WAITER

Simple these days gives me comfort.

SASHA

In the prison no one understood why I did what I did. They didn't -- I thought that put them beneath me. Pride -- young, stupid -- but it's now always "pants on in the same way" no matter how anarchist I think I am. The broken bits, the leftovers, the left-outs -- prison is a sewer -- brotherhood of man becomes the brotherhood of the spastic and mutilated and vicious and -- and --

SASHA falls silent for several moments.

WAITER

I'll get you your sandwiches and beer, Lazarus.

SASHA

I'm still the anarchist -- to come back around -- you asked --

WAITER

I asked.

SASHA

Still in love with it -- still angry -- careful about the anger --

WAITER

I hear you --

SASHA

-- raw around the edges of the heart -- heart still strong.

WAITER

Good. That's good to hear.

SASHA

Yowser yowser yowser may the blessings be upon us all.

WAITER

Okay. Okay. Beer and crumbs soon enough, eh?

WAITER gets up, exits. SASHA gets up.

SASHA

Sach's hasn't changed all that much. I lied to him. About the heart. I don't have one.

EMMA

Sasha --

SASHA

You don't happen to have that gun we bought, do you? I wonder what grave it's resting in? I wouldn't mind joining [it] --

EMMA

And where would that leave me?

SASHA

It wouldn't leave you anywhere you already aren't. You would go on as Emma Goldman always goes on.

EMMA

You must [hate] --

SASHA

I don't hate you for --

EMMA

You must, to say that.

SASHA

You lived your life as it needed living -- don't deny that, don't do a ragtime guilt dance about it. Just as well be angry at a flower busting open as for me to -- So did I, live my life as it needed to be lived -- lived? -- well, poor choice but --

EMMA

And now you don't want to live it.

SASHA

Right.

EMMA

Because.

SASHA

Emma, is that so hard?

EMMA

To see you like this? What do you think?

SASHA

I am out of date. I am soured and composted and rusted. "What is to be done" with such a broken machine, Emma? What can you do, friends do? Because it is unhinged into its parts, it is in junk heaps --

SASHA falls silent.

SASHA

I've said this to you, again and again, that when I don't have either health or means to make my ideas work -- time to clear out. It's time.

WAITER returns carrying a tray with the sandwiches and beers and cloth napkins. He has a newspaper tucked under his arm. He serves.

WAITER

Sorry for the delay.

SASHA

Napkins?

WAITER

There be changes made all around.

SASHA unfolds his napkin.

WAITER

Something wrong with it?

SASHA

No.

WAITER

It isn't clean?

SASHA

It's clean -- it's clean -- and white --

SASHA puts the napkin over his lap, smooths it down -- for some reason, doing this seems to please him. He smiles.

EMMA

Sasha?

SASHA

A courtesy. A -- gesture. An etiquette.

WAITER

Better than sleeves.

SASHA

What do you think they handed Lazarus when he rose above ground?

WAITER

You mean first?

SASHA

Yes, first.

WAITER

Could be any number of things --

SASHA

I think it was a cloth, a towel --

WAITER

Maybe -- wipe off the dirt, get the shmutz out of his eyes so he could see -- he'd been there three days -- makes sense.

SASHA

Makes sense. So let's believe it turned out that way, okay -- somebody gave him something, didn't just let him stumble into the sunlight alone --

SASHA holds up his napkin.

SASHA

Could've been this one.

WAITER

If you want it to be so, then it is so.

SASHA laughs.

SASHA

It is so.

WAITER hands SASHA the newspaper, points to an article.

WAITER

Thought you might find this of interest to you. I'll be back -- don't steal that napkin!

WAITER exits. EMMA begins to eat while SASHA reads. He shows EMMA what he's reading.

SASHA

Did you hear about this?

EMMA

I was there last night -- remember? We didn't want you to go because -- well -- you can see why.

SASHA

Clubbed, bullied, arrested --

EMMA

We weren't surprised, Sasha -- we were celebrating the anniversary of Czolgosz's [Choll-gosh's] execution, after all --

SASHA keeps reading, speaks as he reads.

SASHA

I never agreed with you about him, you know, about the assassination -- it was a waste to kill McKinley -- a waste to kill a president --

EMMA

I remember someone once saying that if a person acted like Caesar, he should die like Caesar.

SASHA puts the paper down.

SASHA

Comparing Leon Czolgosz to Brutus, the way you did in that speech -- about as stupid as that someone you just mentioned comparing a Frick to a Caesar.

As soon as the words are out of his mouth, SASHA laughs -- the laughter takes him by surprise.

SASHA

A Frick to a Caesar, a Caesar to a Frick -- ha! Ha! Now, how inane is that, once a person can see it clearly.

SASHA rubs his eyes with the napkin.

SASHA

Un-shmutz'd! There is a level at which Czolgosz and I are the same -- the deed had no propaganda in it because the framework for it wasn't there.

SASHA warms to what he's talking about.

SASHA

Americans, Emma, love their violence, but they don't know how to use it against their rulers -- they're afraid of their government instead of it being the other way around, it being afraid of them.

SASHA grabs his napkin and waves.

SASHA

White flag in the air when the Caesar of the day says, "National security" --

EMMA

Sasha --

SASHA

Americans don't kill their rulers, they just kill each other, kill off strangers, Indians, black people, anarchists, prisoners --

EMMA

Sasha --

SASHA

That's why Leon and I, what we did, had no spark, no ignition -- I need to think about this some more because maybe there is a way to calibrate --

EMMA

Sasha --

SASHA

-- resistance from the pacifist to the assassinator depending upon the readiness of --

EMMA lays a hand on SASHA, which brings him up short.

EMMA

Can you smell it?

SASHA

What?

EMMA inhales.

EMMA

C'mon, smell with me.

SASHA inhales.

SASHA

What?

EMMA

Hot metal -- gears grinding -- working again. Rusted not at all.

SASHA

Not well-oiled.

EMMA

A matter of time. A lot to argue about.

SASHA

Including whether it's worth it to argue at all about anything.

WAITER enters.

WAITER

Need anything else?

SASHA

Later, yes. Now, no. Caesar calls.

WAITER

Whatever that means. My newspaper?

SASHA hands it to him.

WAITER

Welcome back, I guess.

SASHA

Back, yes. Welcome, maybe.

WAITER

To putting on pants one leg at a time!

WAITER exits.

SASHA

The time for his sit-down. The cleansing daily shit with something to read. Ah, humanity. I could do worse than think on that.

SASHA tears into his sandwich and beer. EMMA puts her napkin over her head like a babushka and laughs. SASHA laughs.

Lights tight downstage. SASHA moves into them.

Descending on a spider's thread is a notebook or journal. SASHA grabs it.

SASHA

Hey! Hey!!

On a second line, a pencil. SASHA grabs it.

SASHA opens the journal. SASHA writes. Writes. Writes.

INTERMISSION

Scene 7

A soundscape/visionscape -- the run-up to the Great War: Wilson saying "the world must be made safe for democracy," mobilization, trench warfare, posters, etcetera, etcetera. And at an ear-blasting volume, the Sousa march, "The Army Goes Rolling Along," perhaps warped and distorted and over-sampled. Cacophony. Cacophony. Cacophony.

Into to this and out of this comes BERKMAN, no longer SASHA, dressed in sweat pants, sweat shirt, canvas shoes, on a stage that suggests a boxing ring or an arena of some sort.

A small stool, a water bottle, and a second pair of gloves are off to one side.

He shouts, he shouts, he shouts as if to shout the madness down. He puts on boxing gloves and moves, if stiffly, around the ring, shouting as he boxes.

BERKMAN

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

BERKMAN shouts as much as he feels he needs to shout until the madness begins to abate. He's got his sweat going.

The cacophony comes back momentarily, and he shouts it down again.

BERKMAN

No. No. No.

It goes away. SASHA enters, now just a YOUNG MAN. BERKMAN stops boxing.

BERKMAN

Stay where you are. Do I know you? Who are you?

SASHA

Nobody -- just a stiff.

BERKMAN

Should I be afraid of a stiff like you?

SASHA

Miss Goldman sent me.

BERKMAN

How do I know that? I said stay where you are.

SASHA

I got --

BERKMAN

How do I know that you're not one of Gregory's men --

SASHA

Like I [told you] --

BERKMAN

One of his undercover goons --

SASHA

I don't know any Gregory -- and I ain't a goon for anything.

BERKMAN

So you say.

SASHA

So I do say.

BERKMAN

Come closer. What is this thing you say you've got?

SASHA

A note. From Miss Goldman.

BERKMAN

Then you better show it to me.

SASHA takes it out of a pocket, unfolds it. BERKMAN reads.

SASHA

It's from her.

BERKMAN

I'll be the judge of that.

SASHA

I also got this. In the mail. She told me to show you.

SASHA unfolds a letter. BERKMAN scans it.

BERKMAN

The infamous draft notice -- the passing-over your body by the angel of death. Put them away -- I've seen what I need.

SASHA puts both pieces of paper away. They look at each other.

BERKMAN

You like Tim or Timothy?

SASHA

What?

BERKMAN

Your name -- Tim or --

SASHA

Tim -- Tim --

BERKMAN

Tim. Gregory is Thomas Gregory, Attorney General, by the way, Tim.

SASHA

What am I supposed to do?

BERKMAN gets the other pair of gloves.

BERKMAN

You box?

SASHA

You?

BERKMAN

That's not what I asked you.

SASHA

Some -- maybe not a lot --

BERKMAN

You got something against boxing with people like me?

SASHA

No. What'd'ya mean?

BERKMAN

Russian Jew anarchist -- porky around the equator? Enemy of the state, according to Gregory and his goons. And President Wilson, the man who's got your best interests at heart.

BERKMAN takes off his own gloves, indicates for SASHA to offer his hands, which he does. BERKMAN puts the gloves on SASHA.

SASHA

Look --

BERKMAN

Gregory wants people like me, like Emma Goldman, out of the way.

SASHA

Look -- I don't wanna fight with you --

BERKMAN

Maybe you're a goon at heart --

SASHA

One last time, I don't wanna fight with you --

BERKMAN

Not me -- Gregory's the one you need to [fight]-- undercover goons are the ones you [need to] --

SASHA

She said you could help me.

BERKMAN steps back, puts on his own gloves.

BERKMAN

Yep I can.

They check each other out.

SASHA

Well?

BERKMAN

You know what that letter means, Tim?

SASHA

It means I gotta go fight.

BERKMAN

No, it means the government can steal you off the street whenever it wants. Besides, fight whom?

SASHA

Germans.

BERKMAN

Who?

SASHA

Germans -- you deaf [or] --

BERKMAN

Got anything against Germans, Tim?

SASHA

No.

BERKMAN

You know any Germans face to face, Tim?

SASHA

No.

BERKMAN

So why would you go off to kill them, Tim?

SASHA

I don't want to go -- that's why I came [here] --

BERKMAN

So don't go.

SASHA

That's all your help?

Without warning, BERKMAN advances on SASHA and starts hitting him -- gets in a couple of good punches before SASHA puts up his hands to protect himself.

BERKMAN stops.

BERKMAN

The draft says President Wilson can take your body and do whatever he wants with it -- you want him feeling you up?

SASHA

Prefer not.

BERKMAN

Prefer?

BERKMAN advances again, but this time SASHA is ready and counters the punches. He doesn't punch BERKMAN back -- he's humoring BERKMAN.

BERKMAN

"Prefer" is a shit word --

BERKMAN backs away from SASHA, all the time indicating for SASHA to advance on him -- taunting him. SASHA follows on, but doesn't really press his advantage in youth and strength -- he throws a punch now and again but never seriously.

BERKMAN

Don't use shit words. They buried me in prison for fourteen of my favorite years because I terrorized a rich man -- to shut me up you gotta kill me because terrorizing doesn't shut me down --

SASHA throws a punch, BERKMAN blocks it.

BERKMAN

Whoa!

As they box, BERKMAN speaks.

BERKMAN

Tim, this is what I'm going to say tonight at the meeting: "Mr. Wilson has taken us to war -- which would be fine if the bankers and industrialists and arms merchants were the ones going off for slaughter. But the old men who declare the war force young men to fight it. No! No! And again, No! Tell Mr. Wilson and his capitalist trough-feeders that we will resist his call for universal conscription -- universal slavery! universal death! -- and support anyone who refuses to be conscripted. Let the old men fight -- let the young men live!"

It's clear that BERKMAN is outmatched by SASHA -- or would be if SASHA fought full out. BERKMAN holds up his hands to stop the action, and SASHA drops his guard. BERKMAN immediately sucker-punches SASHA, maybe even knocks him to the ground. It's not a hard shot, but it does what it needs to do.

BERKMAN

Sucker punched -- I name that one "Gregory." That was Wilson, too. What'd'ya think of that, Tim? Is that what you'd prefer, Tim?

SASHA shakes it off.

BERKMAN

What are you going to do, Tim?

SASHA

You're telling me to fight.

BERKMAN

I'm telling you to think about your other choices.

SASHA

I can't box 'em all.

BERKMAN

I didn't say brute force -- they've got more of that than you do --

SASHA

So how?

SASHA tries to sneak in a punch, but BERKMAN blocks him.

BERKMAN

Ah ah ah --

SASHA

Just checking.

BERKMAN pulls his own gloves off. SASHA holds out his hands. BERKMAN takes off SASHA's gloves.

BERKMAN

You -- well, maybe not you, you being who you are --

SASHA

What're you [talking about] --

BERKMAN

-- but a real stiff, let's say, for the theory of it -- you -- he -- comes to our meeting tonight, he comes to every meeting he can come to -- he looks to his right and to his left, front and back, to check out who's going to buck him up and who he can buck up, who swims in the same pool of shit -- and then decides how much pain he can put up with to keep himself from being sent away to kill Germans he doesn't know.

SASHA

So you don't really have a real answer for me.

BERKMAN

An answer, definitive, would be "go to Canada" -- an answer would be "kill all the Germans you want" -- an answer would be "go kill Germans in Canada" --

BERKMAN offers SASHA water.

BERKMAN

Which would all be illegal to say, so we don't recite definitives. We just tell people that they have minds and that they have to make up those minds about this and that we trust them to do what's right --

SASHA

Which makes you a fool.

BERKMAN

That's the only way anything good gets done, Tim. Tim. For you, Tim, though, I do have an answer. Let's look at that draft letter again. Go on.

SASHA pulls out the letter, opens it, looks at it.

BERKMAN

Look at the name over the address.

SASHA laughs.

BERKMAN

Not Tim. Or Timothy.

SASHA

Mark. It's Mark.

BERKMAN

You need to prep yourself better, code name zero. Might as well show me yours now.

SASHA pulls a badge out of his back pocket, shows it.

BERKMAN

If even that is your actual name.

SASHA

What's worse than a fool?

BERKMAN

I should just point at you. Nice forgery on the Goldman. But that gave it away, too.

SASHA

Yeah?

BERKMAN

Note to your bosses: She has never called me "Aleck" or written that name. It's Sasha. So -- arrested or not? All I told you was that you had to make up your own mind -- if that's a conspiracy against the draft, then it's between me and you, and you'll have to cuff yourself too --

SASHA

You box all right for a fat-ass anarchist.

BERKMAN

Stout anarchist.

SASHA

Go hold your meeting tonight with Goldman -- this was only a courtesy call. Just checking in.

BERKMAN

I meant what I said -- you should rethink the choices that have made you "you."

SASHA

I like my choices.

BERKMAN

So, under-the-covers work for the Justice Department feels good?

SASHA

Better than being a rabbit chased by the wolves.

BERKMAN

Wolf -- you really mean the bully. How red-blooded can you really be, Badge 1917, when all they let you play is the bully? Goldman and I can upgrade your manhood.

SASHA

My manhood is [fine] --

BERKMAN

So come to the meeting tonight and test it out -- see if you can bump up to Badge Number One. I promise not to tell Gregory. Or Wilson.

SASHA

I'll pass on the meeting.

BERKMAN

And so pass on your manhood.

SASHA

You should get started on leaving.

BERKMAN

You're right -- I can see it right there -- the bully rising up in your face. Hope they don't send you to Germany between now and then -- it's topsy-turvy out there --

SASHA

Prisons everywhere all the time for thin and stout alike.

BERKMAN backs away from SASHA, carrying the gloves and water. SASHA takes a notebook out of his jacket and writes.

SASHA
(laughing)

Mark. Mark. Mark Mark Mark Mark --

BERKMAN pauses, puts down his equipment, then moves back to SASHA.

BERKMAN

You know, I don't expect people who don't expect a lot of themselves to have much spine --

BERKMAN barrels into SASHA, continues shoving him until SASHA shoves back hard -- BERKMAN is outmatched by the younger man.

BERKMAN

-- but I just got sick and tired of this -- people die while jerks like you -- smug cock-sucking -- we are just trying to save [people] -- and you're playing games --

SASHA

I will arrest you -- keep your hands [off] --

BERKMAN

"Arrest" is another shit word.

SASHA

Like I said, I'm doing my job.

BERKMAN

"My job" -- shit words.

SASHA

Back off.

BERKMAN

"Checking up"? Shit words. And on what -- bombs? The only bombs we're making? Making sure no one gets slaughtered to make someone else richer. Why such a problem with that?

SASHA

Because we're at war.

BERKMAN

Your bosses are at war. The people who buy off your bosses are at war. "We" are not at war. You even said you don't know any goddamn Germans. Who can you really trust?

BERKMAN turns to go.

BERKMAN

Consider me checked up on -- put in your timesheet. Work to do.

SASHA

You always sound like you're going to win this thing.

BERKMAN

Or die trying.

SASHA

Really?

BERKMAN

If you can't go that far, why go at all?

SASHA

Because you can't win this thing.

BERKMAN

Just what a cowardly lion like me expects to hear from a wicked terrorist bully witch like you.

Cacophony begins to rise as BERKMAN leaves.

SASHA

I'm not wicked.

BERKMAN

Wicked is as wicked does, 1917. I have to go.

SASHA

I'm not the terrorist! You tried to kill a man for terror.

BERKMAN

Wrong man. Wrong time. Wrong kind of terror.

SASHA

And I'm smug?

BERKMAN

We're smug because we're in the right.

SASHA

And why am I not -- we're not -- right?

BERKMAN

You see the meat grinder working and don't do a thing to stop it. You're in love with the knives and the makers of knives. That's terrorist to us. I really have to go.

BERKMAN moves to the exit.

BERKMAN

You should fall in love with us instead, 1917 -- you'd be safer and happier. Getting people to feed their own minds and not eat patriotic sewage -- that is a great day's work!

SASHA

You are dangerous people.

BERKMAN

Right kind of terror.

SASHA

You're an enemy.

BERKMAN

Sticks and stones --

Louder and louder.

BERKMAN

Destroying the world by pushing it into a war is an ass-frontwards way to keep it safe, don't you think! It's really three-part simple Tim/Mark/Badge Number 1917: No fucking draft. No fucking conscription. No fucking war. Go!

Cacophony in full swing, now interspersed with the voice of BERKMAN speaking his speech at the meeting that night.

* * * * *

Scene 8

Continuation of the cacophony, now shifting into a court scene, banging gavels, martial music (e.g., Sousa's "Bullets and Bayonets"), a voice pronouncing "You are guilty of a conspiracy to encourage resistance to the draft" and "You are hereby sentenced to 2 years in federal penitentiary," pictures of GOLDMAN and BERKMAN prior to their deportation in 1919.

As cacophony subsides: a room, an overhead light, a table, a chair. BERKMAN, in overcoat, seated under the light, now handcuffed.

SASHA emerges from the shadows, dressed now as J. EDGAR HOOVER, clearly the young man who had boxed with BERKMAN but now 24, dressed in a cheap suit, cheap shoes, overcoat, maybe a fedora or straw boater.

[NOTE: HOOVER engineered the deportation of GOLDMAN and BERKMAN to the Soviet Union.]

The deep sound of a boat horn.

SASHA

Know what that is? That is the sweet sweet sound of your deportation.

BERKMAN

Why have you brought [me here] --

SASHA

My house --

BERKMAN

Why have I been separated [from] --

SASHA

My house -- my deportation -- my rules.

BERKMAN

Rules?

SASHA

Rules.

BERKMAN

For John Edgar Hoover? He flatters [himself] --

SASHA

John Edgar Hoover does.

BERKMAN

Does he still have "Tim" and Badge 1917?

SASHA

He is moving closer to Badge Number One.

BERKMAN

I want to be taken back to --

SASHA

My house.

BERKMAN

I want to be taken [back to] --

SASHA

Important event for today? By his late-morning cup of coffee Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman will be gone -- his paycheck earned.

BERKMAN looks at SASHA as if looking at a baby.

BERKMAN

If it's over, John, then why --

SASHA

Because it's not, Sasha.

Both are a bit surprised by the emphasis on the name. SASHA sighs, regains his cool.

SASHA

The trial for conspiracy, your two years in prison -- Goldman's two years -- this coming export -- this "pest control" -- vermin anarchist, communist, socialist -- all cleansed from the body politic -- by the thousands, Sasha, all these lice now gone

-- and today, two hundred and forty-nine more disappeared
-- Emma Goldman, check -- Alexander Berkman, check --

BERKMAN

From God's ass right to your mouth --

SASHA

And from my mouth to "goodbye, goodbye" -- you should just listen now because, as you know, it's treason these days to get people thinking for themselves, and I've got to be very careful.

BERKMAN gives SASHA a very quizzical look. SASHA moves in closer.

SASHA

You and Goldman -- you got the jury to deliberate for thirty-nine minutes --

BERKMAN

Thirty-eight longer than --

SASHA

Ssssh. Ssssh. Sasha, here's the thing. Here's the thing. That thirty-nine minutes -- surprised me. Which leads to another. In spite of all -- you -- the two of you -- don't -- give -- up. The pests really believe.

BERKMAN turns to face SASHA.

BERKMAN

Why do you think we're calling each other by first names?

SASHA

I didn't ask you a question.

BERKMAN

But I have an answer for the question you didn't ask. You're twenty-four years old, John -- badge one on the way -- but you will be bored without us.

SASHA

Remember -- vermin --

BERKMAN

Spout that party line for your paycheck -- but you do love us
dearly. Ever since the day we boxed it all out.

SASHA does not reply, but he does respond. BERKMAN holds out his
hands. SASHA uncuffs him.

BERKMAN

And the "you" I mean is "you" personally. The time you
spent -- personally -- the intensity of the sniffing-out you did
-- personally -- to put this deportation order together -- you
say you hate us, but it certainly looks a lot like [love] --

The boat horn sounds again.

BERKMAN

In my anarchist utopia, John, we would put your love to
much better uses.

A moment of silence.

SASHA

Such as.

The boat horn sounds again.

SASHA

Not a lot of time or much of an open window.

BERKMAN

Straight, no chaser.

SASHA

Window is closing.

BERKMAN

Then, John, this, which I know you've read because of your
big fat loving dossiers on us --

SASHA

Closing --

BERKMAN

"Anarchism means that you should be free; that no one should enslave you, boss you, rob you, or impose upon you." From my book, *John. The one you've read.*

BERKMAN looks at SASHA, who does not tell him to stop.

BERKMAN

"It means that you should be free to do the things you want to do; and that you should not be compelled to do what you don't want to do.

"It means that you should have a chance to choose the kind of a life you want to live, and live it without anybody interfering.

"It means that the next fellow should have the same freedom as you, that every one should have the same rights and liberties.

"It means that all men are brothers, and that they should live like brothers, in peace and harmony."

BERKMAN pauses. SASHA says nothing. BERKMAN continues.

BERKMAN

"That is to say, that there should be no war, no violence used by one set of men against another, no monopoly and no poverty, no oppression, no taking advantage of your fellow-man.

"In short, Anarchism means a condition or society where all men and women are free, and where all enjoy equally the benefits of an ordered and sensible life.

"'Can that be?' you ask; 'and how? Not before we all become angels.'"

"Well, let us talk it over. Maybe I can show you that we can be decent and live as decent folks even without growing wings."

BERKMAN lets the words echo a little longer.

BERKMAN

The kingdom of heaven upon the earth -- but under our own powers.

SASHA paces, as if caged.

BERKMAN

I see I've stunned you, John, with my eloquence.

With an abrupt move, SASHA grabs BERKMAN by the back of the neck and would, if moved to do so, smash his face into the table.

SASHA

You can't.

BERKMAN

Can't what?

SASHA

Believe this.

BERKMAN

But I do, John --

SASHA

How?

BERKMAN

I just rise up in the morning --

SASHA pushes harder against BERKMAN's neck; BERKMAN resists.

SASHA

How?

BERKMAN

Because I have had glimpses -- because I have seen it --

SASHA

Seen it --

BERKMAN

Yes --

SASHA pushes harder.

BERKMAN

Not always, not often, not often enough -- but enough --

SASHA lets BERKMAN go.

BERKMAN

I also hate being told what to do -- you already knew that --

SASHA

Why haven't I seen it? Because it's what --

BERKMAN

You can't see it the way you are built now.

A moment of silence.

BERKMAN

If you want to, then you have to change how --

SASHA

If there weren't so many enemies --

BERKMAN laughs.

BERKMAN

Enemies? Really? Emma Goldman? Me?

BERKMAN rubs his bald head, displays his heavy-rimmed glasses.

BERKMAN

America's most fearsome enemy? They're running scared! "Enemies" -- another shit word, John -- the beam stuck in your eye -- enemies -- 249 poor bastards shivering in the cold -- my, my --

A moment of silence.

SASHA

You've seen it --

BERKMAN

Oh, John, yes I have --

SASHA

And it feels like --

BERKMAN

It feels like what you'd expect something beautiful and honest to feel like -- whatever that would be like for you -- this tough-guy stuff, this enemy stuff -- Mr. A. Mitchell Palmer -- the Red Scare -- any of that feel anything like honest and beautiful to you?

A moment of silence.

BERKMAN

Are you -- John, don't toy with me -- are you thinking of coming over to the dark side? Remember, that jury took thirty-nine minutes --

SASHA goes face to face with BERKMAN. They stare hard at each other.

SASHA

"No opinion a crime, no opinion a law."

BERKMAN

I wrote that --

SASHA

The rest can be figured out by ourselves.

BERKMAN

Pretty much the best rule in my rule-book.

SASHA

Why doesn't what I feel about what I do feel the same as --

The boat horn sounds.

BERKMAN

If you want to, you will -- if you don't, then you won't -- that's all I can give you --

SASHA

The rules are exhausting.

BERKMAN

Then change them.

SASHA paces.

BERKMAN

The jury deliberates. Thirty-nine, thirty-eight --

BERKMAN waits. SASHA stops, decides, pulls BERKMAN roughly out of the chair.

BERKMAN

Change them.

SASHA

Window's closed.

BERKMAN

If you don't do it now, you'll never do it. Once the hook is in --

SASHA

Shut up.

BERKMAN

-- it only digs in deeper.

SASHA

Shut up.

SASHA kisses BERKMAN, both rough and tender, as if this decides something for him.

BERKMAN

You read my prison memoir.

SASHA

That sets the hook.

BERKMAN

Then I hope you don't reach twenty-five.

SASHA re-cuffs BERKMAN.

SASHA

The interview is over.

BERKMAN

Because the misery will embalm you, John, the heart
harden up --

SASHA

Shut up. Shut up.

SASHA marches BERKMAN to the edge of the stage. Sound of a door
opening. Light pours in as they stand there arm-in-arm.

SASHA

I will have the kind of long and productive career that you
will not have.

BERKMAN

That will be your misfortune.

SASHA

Nothing compared to yours.

Boat horn sounds.

Lights out. Transition: slide show of images of BERKMAN, ending with the
cartoon of the Buford leaving and this quote: "With Prohibition coming in and
Emma Goldman going out, t'will be a dull country." Then a blur of images
covering European history until 1936 -- Lenin, Trotsky, Weimar German,
Hitler, etc., pushed along by driving music/sound: a montage of exile and
madness.

* * * * *

Scene 9

June, 1936. A bench at the wharf from which the "Isle-de-beauté," an
excursion boat, will take BERKMAN to Emma Goldman's house in St.

Tropez for her birthday party. Some lights may be strung across the front of it, as if trying to be a little festive. A torn poster announces that it is 1936.

BERKMAN, dressed shabbily but well-enough, sits on the bench in pain, though he is trying hard not to show it. He is in pain throughout the scene.

The bench itself is rickety, not of the best quality.

EMMA, now HANNAH, stands at the other end of the bench. They exchange looks, smiles -- they are both waiting. EMMA speaks with a false brightness.

EMMA

Excuse me -- excuse me -- may I?

BERKMAN

Of course. It would give this bench some much-needed balance.

EMMA sits.

EMMA

Do you know when the ferry leaves?

BERKMAN

I believe it's soon -- you'll hear the whistle when it's coming --

EMMA

Good, good.

BERKMAN

-- in to the dock.

A moment of silence.

EMMA

Good. Then that would give us time.

BERKMAN gives her a knowing half-amused look.

BERKMAN

Time.

EMMA
Time.

BERKMAN
Us.

EMMA
Time enough.

BERKMAN
You're joking. She's joking.

EMMA's façade begins to slip.

EMMA
Please, don't --

BERKMAN
I'm not making fun of you --

EMMA
I'm not joking --

BERKMAN
-- and I don't mean to insult you, mademoiselle --

EMMA
So say [yes] --

BERKMAN
-- your offer --

EMMA
Well?

BERKMAN
-- is much appreciated --

EMMA
So say yes -- time is --

BERKMAN

But alas, appreciation outruns money -- which means I have no money -- you're barking up a losing tree -- and besides --

EMMA

You have a ticket, you're taking the ferry down to St. Tropez --

BERKMAN

And St. Tropez pretty much takes up all my money.

EMMA

Damn! Damn!

EMMA is now distraught.

BERKMAN

May I make an observation?

EMMA

It doesn't matter.

BERKMAN

It does to me. It might even to you.

EMMA gestures as if to say "Whatever."

BERKMAN

This is not a profession you're cut out for.

With some bravado.

EMMA

What makes you say that?

BERKMAN

I'm not saying that this is not your profession, mademoiselle, only that -- you must be hungry often if you're depending on it for your income.

With even more bravado.

EMMA

And why is that, if you think you're so smart?

A spasm of pain kicks in, which EMMA notices. BERKMAN signals that everything is all right, even though it's clear it isn't.

EMMA

I'm sorry --

BERKMAN

Make me think of something else.

EMMA

I --

BERKMAN

A story -- tell me -- anything to [take] -- ah --

But EMMA is at a loss at how to deal with the situation and stares at BERKMAN instead, silent. Perhaps she half-reaches out to him.

BERKMAN

I'm sorry you're wasting your --

EMMA

I don't know what to do --

BERKMAN

Life is difficult --

EMMA

No, not that -- when a person is in such [pain] -- like you are --

BERKMAN

To do?

EMMA

Yes -- I don't know --

BERKMAN

I don't either, to be frank about it --

EMMA

I wanted to --

BERKMAN

It's all right -- it's all right, it's all right -- you are not obligated to --

EMMA

Pain -- it just --

BERKMAN

Pain is a fart let loose at a funeral -- the leveler --

The pain passes.

BERKMAN

Ah. Ah. Fine. Fine.

A momentary silence.

BERKMAN

Pain run in your family?

EMMA

Yes.

BERKMAN

Is that why you're [out here]--

EMMA shakes her head no.

BERKMAN

I've never been very good either at -- taking care --

EMMA

I can take care, I can do that, I do take care -- at home -- my mother --

BERKMAN

III?

EMMA

Always -- but at a point --

BERKMAN

To care can be too much, right?

EMMA

Caring can fill everything up -- right up to the eyebrows --

BERKMAN

And the person cared for -- your mother -- it's not always -- uplifting to be dependent on someone else's patience -- tolerating your weaknesses -- your bedpans! --

EMMA

I think about how she must feel feeling so weak -- it's not a good feeling --

BERKMAN

For either of you.

EMMA

No. Undignified on both sides.

BERKMAN

My -- companion -- has stomach problems -- but if I had money, she wouldn't, because then we would hire the only doctor in Nice who knows the procedure -- and -- and how dignity comes back to money -- the frailty of humans --

EMMA

And don't forget time.

BERKMAN laughs.

BERKMAN

World enough and time. And money.

EMMA

"Time" and "money" means I have to go.

BERKMAN

A shame -- good feeling flattered -- but before you go --

EMMA

What?

BERKMAN

Tell me what I've been noticing in your face.

EMMA

You're the one who's been looking at it --

BERKMAN

You're troubled by your troubles.

EMMA

I'm used to those, to that --

BERKMAN

So?

EMMA points to her face.

EMMA

This?

BERKMAN

That.

EMMA

It's troubled by my thinking about how I'd like to think I'm a better person.

BERKMAN

I'm sure you're excellent person.

EMMA

You wouldn't know. How would you know?

BERKMAN

Purely on what I see before me -- not just -- the form -- which is lovely -- see, even in pain I can appreciate beauty, yours -- not just the form but what this form does -- just a sense, of course, my sensing -- but the sense is positive.

EMMA

Even after I've asked you --

BERKMAN

You had your reasons -- why don't you tell me them? We have some time left before --

EMMA

No.

BERKMAN

I vote for yes --

EMMA shrugs.

BERKMAN

Better than silence. Or pain. Or you leaving.

EMMA shrugs again, this time as if to agree.

BERKMAN

About your family, then?

EMMA

Definitely no.

BERKMAN

Then how about this "better person"? Humor me -- it helps --

EMMA

Only if you tell me about -- that --

BERKMAN

Your story is far better --

EMMA

"Fair" means a fair exchange.

BERKMAN

And where did you hear that?

EMMA

I'll tell you if you tell me about --

BERKMAN

Done.

EMMA

Good. So go.

BERKMAN

An old man symptom -- something called a prostate -- lucky are you ungraced by such a thing -- now you --

EMMA

Not enough.

BERKMAN

You like bargains.

EMMA

I like full value.

BERKMAN

I've had operations -- two -- to set the damn thing straight and -- and it refuses to go straight. I'm trying to ignore it back to health.

EMMA

Money and doctors again.

BERKMAN

Can't trust either.

EMMA

And your trip to St. Tropez.

BERKMAN

To see a dear friend -- her birthday today, sixty-seven years.

EMMA

The one with the stomach?

BERKMAN

Different friend. Different life. The birthday of Sailor Girl, who has a strong stomach for everything.

EMMA

That's what you call her?

BERKMAN

Sailor Girl.

EMMA

You are an odd man.

BERKMAN

And a subject easily exhausted. Fair is a fair exchange -- so now you -- the "why" of it I'm most interested in.

EMMA

I have a companion, too. Strong stomach, too.

BERKMAN

So why can't he get his own money?

EMMA

I don't work for him! Really. This isn't for him. He gets his own money -- this money is for me.

BERKMAN

Why isn't he getting money for you if he's --

EMMA

Why should he?

BERKMAN

Why shouldn't he if he's --

EMMA

That's not how we've agreed on things.

BERKMAN

You've talked this out.

EMMA

We are very strong about our independence. Independences.

BERKMAN

And so he will let you put yourself in such danger.

EMMA

Of course not -- if he knew, well --

EMMA makes a gesture of explosion.

EMMA

But he doesn't [know] --

BERKMAN

So you don't talk everything out.

EMMA

It's all about the timing of the talking -- sometimes before is better, sometimes after --

BERKMAN

I cannot argue with that.

EMMA

But eventually, everything, yes, talked out -- at least that's been the way it's been between us so far. Besides, there are not that many ways a woman can get money for herself --

BERKMAN

But not everyone will be as --

Pain strikes BERKMAN again. He suffers through it.

EMMA

Is there [anything] --

BERKMAN waves her off. The pain passes.

BERKMAN

As I was trying to say --

EMMA

"Not everyone will be" --

BERKMAN

Not everyone will be as gallant as I am --

EMMA

Or as nosy.

BERKMAN

You could do worse.

EMMA

That's my sensing as well -- looking at the form as it is --

BERKMAN

So go on -- please, go on -- it's all right, I'm all right --

EMMA

You're not all right --

BERKMAN

Let's pretend I am --

EMMA

I can get you a lemonade --

BERKMAN

You spend money on me --

They chuckle together.

EMMA

I see the irony --

BERKMAN

The better twist is that you've got me curious -- that's more soothing balm than I get most days --

EMMA

You're sure?

BERKMAN

A young headstrong woman who seems fearless -- and offers me lemonade from her own pocket -- what is not to like?

EMMA

I'd have to agree. So.

BERKMAN

Go on.

EMMA

Do you know about Spain?

BERKMAN

I've never been there, but Sailor Girl and I have many friends there.

EMMA

So you know.

BERKMAN

Give me more clues.

EMMA

I don't know if I should say the word to you, a stranger -- you are a stranger --

BERKMAN

By this point do you really think I'm with some sort of police?

EMMA

These days, who knows -- sorry --

BERKMAN

They must be desperate if they're hiring gutted-out old exiled anarchists as spies.

EMMA gasps, hard.

Sounding as if coming from a hall some distance away, someone begins playing "Claire de Lune" on a mostly tuned piano.

BERKMAN

What? What? Do you need some --

EMMA

You said the word.

BERKMAN

What word?

EMMA

A - N - A - [R] --

BERKMAN

That word.

EMMA

That word.

BERKMAN

What makes that word your word?

EMMA

His word, too.

BERKMAN

Then companion's word, too.

EMMA

My companion wants to go to Spain to join the --

EMMA hesitates.

BERKMAN

The word is understood between us. Let's call them the foxes.

EMMA laughs.

EMMA

To join the foxes because there may be a chance in Spain to make what companion believes up here --

EMMA touches her temple.

EMMA

-- turn into something real. Things are changing so very fast in Spain.

BERKMAN

Let me guess -- he's telling you it's too dangerous for you to go.

EMMA

And I tell him back that I am just as strong -- and as brave
-- as [he is] --

BERKMAN

And that you can get your own money.

EMMA

Well, obviously not like [this] --

BERKMAN

No.

EMMA

But, yes, that, too --

BERKMAN

Plus the fact -- the biggest fact -- the biggest push --
whoosh! -- you love him. I didn't mean to make you blush.

EMMA laughs.

BERKMAN

To the eyebrows.

EMMA

Yes, plus the fact I love him. Whoosh!

BERKMAN

Do you love the foxes?

EMMA

I --

The music drifts through the air. A small spasm of pain, quickly gone.

BERKMAN

It's all right -- you don't have to --

EMMA

Here's something that confuses me. I sometimes can't tell
the difference between the two -- the foxes, with their fox-
ish thoughts, and him --

BERKMAN

With his fox-ish thoughts --

EMMA

And the world seems -- brighter -- for all the fox-ish thinking.

BERKMAN

But you would be willing to -- collision -- with a withered old man --

EMMA

Not withered!

BERKMAN

Beyond kind.

EMMA

Besides, you were my first try -- I don't really know if --

BERKMAN

None of us really knows --

EMMA

I just don't want to be left behind. I don't want him to leave me behind.

They sit and listen. Music shifts: Gershwin, Prelude #2.

BERKMAN

And your family --

EMMA

Family --

BERKMAN

It would mean giving them up.

EMMA

They would probably do that to me first. No great loss --

BERKMAN

Don't minimize the exile -- without a home is a cost, and not a light one.

EMMA

But the word -- you know the word, you know about --
brighter --

BERKMAN

Oh, the word, the foxes, got under our skin a long time ago,
Sailor Girl and I -- if we had world enough and time, I'd run
down the whole story for you -- you would recognize the
echo --

EMMA

The mule part of me --

BERKMAN

I like that --

EMMA gives a little bray.

BERKMAN

Stubborn. Decided.

EMMA

It keeps saying I'll go, everything be damned --

EMMA holds up one hand.

EMMA

On the other --

BERKMAN waves a hand.

BERKMAN

Always an other --

EMMA

-- the daughter part, with the mother in pain -- father --
around -- says to stop the foolishness --

BERKMAN

The lover --

EMMA

Ooohh, the lover -- that hand -- that voice --

BERKMAN

And the blush returns.

EMMA touches her eyebrow.

EMMA

Right up to here. But then -- there's this other voice -- this little voice -- it listens to all the other voices, but -- it goes off on its own, and it says what the foxes say, and that voice makes me listen in a way nothing else can make me listen -- it gives me hope.

BERKMAN

And beauty?

EMMA

Wherever it can be found.

BERKMAN

Who have you read?

EMMA

The books my lover hides.

BERKMAN

Kropotkin?

EMMA

Of course the prince.

BERKMAN

Goldman?

EMMA

I'm sorry, I don't [know] --

BERKMAN

Berkman?

EMMA

No, sorry --

BERKMAN

Ah, well, they're good, too -- you should check them out.

EMMA

I will. Bakunin, Proudhon --

BERKMAN

You've set your pedigree high --

EMMA

The reading just thrills --

BERKMAN

And so the hope for hope and beauty in Spain.

EMMA

Because it's certainly not here in Nice --

BERKMAN

Sailor Girl keeps a small circle of it in St. Tropez --

EMMA

But it's not enough to make a dent in France, is it --

BERKMAN

No.

EMMA

To the density of France.

BERKMAN

And Europe. And the world.

They mock-toast.

BERKMAN

You'd go without the companion?

EMMA

The voice, the little -- makes me think that -- brave it out
-- but, you know, I'd really prefer to go [with] --

BERKMAN

The right lover mixed in with the foxes -- a heady brew --

They mock-toast again, but a sharp jabbing pain hits BERKMAN just as the boat whistle of the approaching ferry sounds and the piano music cuts off. This time the pain does not relent. EMMA rests a hand on him.

BERKMAN

I can't -- make --

The boat whistle sounds again.

EMMA

Do you want me to give you a [hand] --

BERKMAN fights to fend off the pain, which will not let him go. He cannot sit on the bench. EMMA watches, helpless to help. BERKMAN walks and talks and laughs through the pain.

BERKMAN

Sailor Girl and I have had quite the life -- we knew Lenin, Trotsky -- I've written books -- she's written books -- we've both played the lottery with the grocery money -- we hate any kind of tsar or king or president -- I have no head for business -- failures brilliant and pathetic --

Finally, the pain lets him go. BERKMAN is spent, sits. The boat whistle sounds three sets of two short blasts each. EMMA watches him, but BERKMAN can't stir to make the walk to the loading dock.

The ferry blows one long last blast, which fades as the ferry moves away.

EMMA

You've missed --

BERKMAN

The Isle-de-beauté --

EMMA

There won't be another today.

BERKMAN

The boat of Charon -- will carry one -- less passenger today
--

Silence for a moment. Then, the Gershwin prelude again.

EMMA

She will miss you.

BERKMAN

I will let her know.

EMMA

You will miss her.

BERKMAN

Dirt and roots.

Silence again. BERKMAN reaches into his coat pocket, pulls out his ticket.

BERKMAN

It will not redeem for much, but it can be redeemed -- it's an
open ticket, going and returning --

EMMA

I can't --

BERKMAN

I think you can see that I won't be using it, at least not today
--

EMMA

But you need [the] --

BERKMAN

Go on -- go on --

EMMA takes the ticket.

BERKMAN

Now you can count your afternoon a success, plus virtue
saved -- lover balanced -- on to the foxes in Spain!

EMMA holds up the ticket.

EMMA

Thank you.

BERKMAN

You've told me an excellent story.

EMMA

It really is a beautiful way of believing --

BERKMAN

If only the mad world would hear it, eh? This Hitler buffoon, that Mussolini fool, the Stalin psychotic -- so much counter-noise in people's ears -- may you have better luck, Sailor Girl --

BERKMAN laughs.

BERKMAN

Maybe we'll next meet when the world has come to its senses and taken the foxes to its heart!

They make their anarchist salutes.

EMMA

It won't be long now!

BERKMAN

Long live the resistance!

EMMA

Thank you. Again.

BERKMAN

It won't be long now. You're welcome. Again. Go -- lover awaits.

But EMMA doesn't exit.

BERKMAN

You have a question.

EMMA goes to ask something but then holds herself back.

EMMA

No. It's better to see the new world coming.

EMMA holds up the ticket.

EMMA

I will think about you in Spain.

BERKMAN

Consider it a down-payment.

EMMA exits. The pain comes again. Scene shifts.

* * * * *

Scene 10

Labored breathing fills the air.

A table, a lamp, two chairs, a glass of water. The small bedside lamp comes on. BERKMAN moves toward a chair, stripping off his clothes as he does so, until almost naked -- perhaps even down to naked. BERKMAN sits, in pain. BERKMAN drinks the water, but the pain does not stop.

SASHA appears, dressed in a cheap suit, looking every inch the immigrant. Their eyes meet.

BERKMAN

You. Again.

SASHA

Still here.

BERKMAN

Why now?

SASHA

Because it's the time. You've chosen.

BERKMAN

Aahhh --

SASHA watches the pain -- not indifferent but not sympathetic.

BERKMAN

It is not the time.

SASHA shrugs.

SASHA

What have we accomplished?

BERKMAN

You would bring that up.

SASHA

The question is fair.

BERKMAN

The question is -- painful.

SASHA

It is still fair. Do you have an answer?

BERKMAN

What would be your answer?

SASHA

You're just trying to buy time.

BERKMAN

With the millions I've stashed away!

SASHA

Do you have an answer?

BERKMAN

What would be your answer?

SASHA just looks at BERKMAN.

BERKMAN

All right!

SASHA

Because you always favored the analytical, the probing and the probative -- so face it --

BERKMAN

You have me at a disadvantage, sir.

SASHA

That is very true. Your answer.

BERKMAN

I have nothing to say.

SASHA

I know.

SASHA pulls up the chair, takes up BERKMAN's right foot and starts to massage it.

BERKMAN

No -- over a bit -- that eases it a little -- I sent her a note, about not being at her birthday celebration today -- I really wanted to be there -- just couldn't --

SASHA

There won't be a third operation.

BERKMAN

Emma's sixty-seventh --

SASHA

Is it really --

BERKMAN

And young men still want to screw her.

SASHA

Warm themselves at Sailor Girl's fire. The girl at the ferry port was nice.

BERKMAN

She got paid for her services.

SASHA

She gave you a reprieve.

BERKMAN

Sailor Girls have a way of doing that to me.

SASHA

Give me your other foot. Any answer coming to you yet?

No answer. SASHA massages the foot. There is nothing to talk about, so they don't talk. Until SASHA hits some point, and BERKMAN bursts out laughing.

BERKMAN

No, no, keep --

The laughter refreshes BERKMAN.

BERKMAN

You've hit the ancient pathway. I have an answer. In the form of a joke, because it's all a joke anyway, right?, so apropos that the revelation comes as a --

SASHA

A joke.

BERKMAN

What's left, anarchist? Left -- hah! To the left! Everything Sailor Girl and I did, said, tried has changed none of the essential rules. I could take heart in the purity of my purpose, but when I die -- I will be pure meat and nothing else -- nothing more -- "these last moments in the House of the Dead" -- so why not a joke for the pennies on my eyes?

SASHA

You don't have any pennies.

BERKMAN

All the better.

SASHA

Do you want me to --

BERKMAN

No, you can stop.

SASHA

So, the joke.

BERKMAN

A little boy goes to his dad and asks, "What is politics?" Dad says, "Well, son, let me explain it this way: I'm the breadwinner of the family, so let's call me Capitalism. Your Mom, she's the administrator of the money, so we'll call her the Government. We're here to take care of your needs, so we'll call you the People. The nanny, we'll consider her the Working Class. And your baby brother, we'll call him the Future. Now, think about that and see if that makes sense." So the little boy goes off to bed thinking about what Dad has said. Later that night, he hears his baby brother crying, so he gets up to check on him. He finds that the baby has soiled his diaper. So the little boy goes to his parents' room and finds his mother sound asleep. Not wanting to wake her, he goes to the nanny's room. Finding the door locked, he peeks in the keyhole and sees his father in bed with the nanny. He gives up and goes back to bed. The next morning, the little boy says to his father, "Dad, I think I understand the concept of politics now." The father says, "Good, son, tell me in your own words what you think politics is all about" The little boy replies, "Well, while Capitalism is screwing the Working Class, the Government is sound asleep, the People are being ignored, and the Future is in deep shit." The end.

SASHA

You know that things are never going to change.

BERKMAN

Oh, they'll change -- they always do -- and charlatans on the make will always flog us with "change change change" to baffle us -- what won't happen, probably, is transformation -- I mean on the big level -- the renovation can happen in the single body, and the single bodies can gather themselves, but most people will be content with "change" -- old wine in new bottles --

SASHA

You're rambling.

BERKMAN

Because I'm reluctant.

SASHA

But decided.

BERKMAN

One way or another, yes.

SASHA

Now?

BERKMAN

Yes.

SASHA takes out the gun and hands it to BERKMAN. The pain comes back to BERKMAN's body.

BERKMAN

Go.

SASHA

Gone.

SASHA exits.

BERKMAN faces the audience, the pistol in his right hand.

BERKMAN

When one has neither health nor means and cannot work for his ideas, it is time to clear out.

BERKMAN turns the gun on himself, pressing it against his side.

EMMA enters, now as EMMA, holding a hamantash. She feeds it to BERKMAN as she speaks. BERKMAN eats, almost daintily.

EMMA

These moments in the House of the Dead will spur me to continue the work Sasha and I had begun on August 15,

1889. The many cables, wires and letters are proof of your devotion and your love. I know you will not deny our dead the respect for the method he employed to end his suffering. Our sorrow is all-embracing, our loss beyond words. Let us struggle for a new and beautiful world, for the triumph of Anarchism -- the ideal Sasha loved so passionately.

BERKMAN

Yes. Yes.

EMMA touches his cheek, wipes away the crumbs.

BERKMAN smacks his lips.

Darkness.

Dancing At The Revolution

DESCRIPTION

Dancing at the Revolution is based on the two years Emma Goldman spent in the federal prison at Jefferson City, MO, after her conviction, along with her life-long companion Alexander Berkman, for conspiracy to advise people to resist the draft during the First World War (then known as the Great War). Soon after her release in 1919, she and Berkman, along with 247 people, were deported to Russia. They stayed there for two years until, disenchanted, they decided to leave.

The play begins with Goldman in the midst of writing her autobiography, Living My Life, which Berkman helped edit (often with pointed ruthlessness). Goldman is being assisted by Hannah Chartier, a 20-year old woman from St. Tropez, where Goldman is living while composing. (the character of Hannah is fictional, though Goldman did have a series of young women acting as her secretary)

CHARACTERS (9 women, 1 man -- not including STAGEHANDS)

- Emma Goldman, sixty years old at the start of the play but must be able to play 10 years younger
- Hannah Chartier, her secretary, 20 years of age (she needs to only speak with a slight French accent). She will also play Mollie Steimer, prison mate with GOLDMAN
- Kate Richards O'Hare, prison mate with GOLDMAN
- Indian Alice, Minnie Eddy, Evelyn L'Ariat, Aggie Myers, Addie, Dope Fiend, prison mates with GOLDMAN -- ADDIE and DOPE FIEND must be African American
- Alexander Berkman, Emma's friend of 40 years
- Stagehands 1, 2, 3, and 4, dressed completely in uniform black shirts and pants. They will also play various characters. At least one of the STAGEHANDS should be a woman to play the MATRON in Act II.

SETTINGS

- St. Tropez, France
- Various locations in New York City
- The federal prison, Jefferson City, MO

TIME

- St. Tropez: circa 1930
- Jefferson City: some time between 1918 and 1919

MISCELLANEOUS

- Direction: The director is free to choreograph the scenes (such as the trial) in any appropriate way other than what is laid out in the script.
- Music for various underscorings. The music should be mood appropriate and atmospheric and not necessarily based on any recognizable songs or tunes, unless called for.
- Sounds: indicated in the script. The director is free to add any soundscapes that enhance the workings of the script.

* * * * *

Scene 1

Pre-show music: various revolutionary songs, such as the Internationale. If possible, slides of EMMA GOLDMAN shown as the audience comes in. The stage is set for GOLDMAN's office: a large table serves as GOLDMAN's desk. The table should be large but easily movable. Off to stage right is a similar table with piles of paper on it as well, about three-quarters of which are in manila folders. The rest are in neat piles. Three other chairs are nearby as well. Under the tables are two or three wastepaper baskets. On GOLDMAN's table are piles of paper, writing implements, books, a clock, etc.

Lights will **not** go to black and then come up. Music fades out as GOLDMAN enters with a folder in her hand, reading the contents.

GOLDMAN

Damn! Damn!

(puts the folder down, looks at another one)

I thought the friggin' paper was in here.

(in exasperation)

This damn book is going to kill me.

GOLDMAN picks up a paper-clipped bunch of papers off her desk.

GOLDMAN

All right, Hannah, let's test your index. May it bring me peace.

She traces down the page, finds what she wants, goes to a folder, pulls out the document, and expresses satisfaction -- all done very quickly.

GOLDMAN

Well, my faithful Sancho Panza Hannah, it works. Your index works. One windmill down.

(looks at the profusion of papers around her)

A thousand to go.

Looks at the paper she found with the index. At this moment HANNAH enters, a small leather satchel in her hands. She sees GOLDMAN but doesn't say anything. GOLDMAN does not see her and reads out loud. HANNAH watches for a moment, shakes her head, puts the satchel down, and leaves: she's seen this performance already.

GOLDMAN

Living My Life by Emma Goldman.

(in a carney barker's voice)

Yowser, yowser, yowser, the auto-biographee of the centuree, come one, come all, come see this over-60 fat Jew-in-exile try to finish the book before it finishes her! Yowser, yowser, yowser.

HANNAH re-enters with a precarious bundle of papers in her arms. GOLDMAN notices her this time.

GOLDMAN

Hannah, Hannah -- that time already?

HANNAH

Where would you --

GOLDMAN

(indicating the papers)

What --

HANNAH

-- like these?

GOLDMAN

-- are those?

HANNAH

More letters.

GOLDMAN
(gestures vaguely)

Anywhere.

HANNAH tries to place them, but the table is so full that GOLDMAN has to come over to help her put them down. HANNAH busies herself re-arranging things.

HANNAH
A lot of letters, Miss Goldman.

GOLDMAN
Piles of nonsense.

(starts looking through them)
Any editorial droppings from Mr. Berkman?

HANNAH
Nothing today.

GOLDMAN
(annoyed)
Nothing.

HANNAH
Yet.

GOLDMAN
(exasperated)
Great. Now he's given up on me.

HANNAH
Sometimes the post from Nice is late.

GOLDMAN waves off the statement. HANNAH straightens the new papers, sorts through them, etc. GOLDMAN goes back to her desk and tries to write.

HANNAH
May I ask you a question?

GOLDMAN
Shoot.

HANNAH

About Mr. Berkman.

GOLDMAN

Shoot him.

HANNAH

Do you like Mr. Berkman?

GOLDMAN

Do I like Mr. Berkman? Sasha and I have been dirt and roots for 40 years, Hannah -- dirt and roots --

(makes a linking gesture with her hands)
-- though he's more in the dirt category at the moment.

HANNAH

So you like him?

GOLDMAN

On average. Do you? Young women have fallen in love with Sasha -- Is that a blush?

HANNAH

(ignoring the tease)

If you like him so much, then why do you two always argue when he's here?

GOLDMAN

We don't argue -- we expostulate.

HANNAH

You sound like two geese with stomach pains.

GOLDMAN

Two geese with gas --

HANNAH

And why do you get like that when the mail comes?

GOLDMAN

Like what?

HANNAH

(makes like a cat pouncing)

Like a cat and its mouse.

GOLDMAN

(mimicking her)

Like that?

HANNAH

Yes.

GOLDMAN

Snarly, you're saying.

HANNAH

Snarly.

GOLDMAN

Because he's always sending me things I don't want to read.

HANNAH

Because he cuts whole pages away from what you send him.

GOLDMAN

He's making this book harder for me to write.

HANNAH

He says he's trying to make it better.

GOLDMAN

(kiddingly)

Who ya gonna listen to -- him or the one who pays you?

HANNAH

And so you both get so snarly.

GOLDMAN

Which is why we shout like two people trying to give birth to one child at the same time --

GOLDMAN leans back in her chair and breathes heavily and comically as if she were in labor. HANNAH laughs.

GOLDMAN

So, you're sure -- no "mice" from Mr. Sasha Slash-and-Burn?

HANNAH

No "mice." But there is another post this afternoon.

HANNAH rearranges papers. GOLDMAN tries to write, then gives it up. She joins HANNAH.

GOLDMAN

I've been so busy using up all the oxygen that I didn't ask how you were.

HANNAH

I am fine.

GOLDMAN

Your standard answer.

HANNAH

It's true.

GOLDMAN

Always fine.

HANNAH

Is there something wrong with that?

GOLDMAN

Hannah, how can two people orbit together -- like us -- like ballroom waltzers --

GOLDMAN takes HANNAH and dances a few steps with her.

GOLDMAN

-- for how many months, now? -- and still be strangers? You've indexed my life, and I hardly know ya. You're always fine.

They finish with a mild flourish. GOLDMAN grabs two pads of paper off the desk and two pencils. GOLDMAN hands one pad and pencil to HANNAH.

GOLDMAN

Grab a chair.

HANNAH

Why?

GOLDMAN

Do as your slave boss tells you.

HANNAH grabs a chair; GOLDMAN indicates where she should put it down; she does, and sits. In the meantime, GOLDMAN grabs her own chair and sits opposite HANNAH.

GOLDMAN

I'm going to interview you. You're going to interview me.

HANNAH

I don't know how --

GOLDMAN

I've been interviewed a thousand times. It's easy. Follow me.

GOLDMAN takes up a position to write.

HANNAH

I really don't want --

GOLDMAN

How old are you?

HANNAH

Twenty.

GOLDMAN writes it down.

GOLDMAN

Now ask me.

HANNAH

This isn't going to turn into a lec[ture] --

GOLDMAN

No more lectures on birth control using a banana. I swear.
Now your turn.

HANNAH

I don't want --

GOLDMAN

Go ahead.

HANNAH

How old are you?

GOLDMAN

Sixty. What do you do for a living?

HANNAH

Do? I live.

GOLDMAN

Go on.

HANNAH

On my father's farm.

(exasperated)

I really don't want --

GOLDMAN

Your turn.

HANNAH

I really don't want to do [this] --

GOLDMAN

Go ahead.

HANNAH rises and puts the pad and pencil on the desk.

HANNAH

This isn't how people get to know each other.

GOLDMAN

You're angry.

HANNAH takes no notice of GOLDMAN's interjections; she just speaks.

HANNAH

I'm not like a bunch of letters.

GOLDMAN

You're not fine.

HANNAH

It's like the priest --

GOLDMAN

The priest?

HANNAH

-- poking -- wanting to know your dirty clothes --

GOLDMAN

I didn't mean to --

HANNAH

-- or the old men in the café -- their eyes licking you --

GOLDMAN

I'm sorry --

HANNAH

Or the nuns. Or the postmaster. Everyone wants to look under my bed -- It makes me feel like I'm nothing -- to anyone --

GOLDMAN

I was just thinking we might have some fun.

HANNAH

For a living, you asked. All right. I am not fine today, and you might as well get that straight from my teeth. My father, this morning, crumbs falling on his shirt as he ate and spoke at the same time -- I hate that! Sorry. He told me he spoke to Monsieur Levesque --

HANNAH tries to go on but can't.

GOLDMAN

As in Monsieur Raymond Levesque, the butcher, with a son, the assistant butcher?

HANNAH nods.

GOLDMAN

Marriage.

HANNAH nods.

GOLDMAN

And this is not good news to you.

HANNAH hesitates, shakes her head no.

GOLDMAN

The young man --

HANNAH holds up her hand, indicating for GOLDMAN to stop. She is near tears.

GOLDMAN

The interview is over.

GOLDMAN gets up, puts the pad and pencil on the desk, and gently steers HANNAH back to her chair.

GOLDMAN

At your age, Hannah, I arrived in New York to start my real life. And I had to divorce a husband to do it.

HANNAH

You -- married?

GOLDMAN

Even younger than you -- at eighteen. And, no, the earth didn't crack! To a Mr. Jacob "Dull, Jealous, Hair in His Ears, Crumbs on His Vest, a Shine on His Pants" Kersner. Mr. Kersner wanted me to "serve" him after we were married -- I don't do "serve" very well. So --

GOLDMAN makes a flicking motion with her fingers.

GOLDMAN

-- and on to New York. And my real life. That's when I met Sasha -- I don't like marriage. I'd rather eat snails alive with the shells. Do you want to get married?

HANNAH

My father is pushing me.

GOLDMAN

Do you?

HANNAH does not answer, but her silence is her answer.

GOLDMAN

Then don't.

HANNAH

But he's pushing so hard!

GOLDMAN

Then push back. Push on.

(cups her hands under her own breasts)

Push up.

HANNAH laughs briefly.

GOLDMAN

But don't let them push down.

There is a moment of awkward silence between them.

GOLDMAN

But maybe you're thinking you shouldn't be taking advice from some fat old lonely Jewish lady buried in a French bungalow.

HANNAH

He's a stubborn man.

GOLDMAN

I'll bet it runs in the family.

HANNAH looks worried.

GOLDMAN

All right, let's get some work done. Shall we? Where did we stop yesterday?

HANNAH, looking relieved, rifles through her bag, takes out a sheaf of notes.

HANNAH

You wanted to start with your years in prison.

GOLDMAN

Yes.

HANNAH looks at her notes.

HANNAH

(unsure of the word)

Fay-der-al --

GOLDMAN

Fe-der-al.

HANNAH

Fe-der-al prison, two years. In a place called --

(mispronounces it)

-- Missouri.

GOLDMAN

(correcting her)

Missouri.

HANNAH

Missouri.

GOLDMAN

All right.

HANNAH

Shall I start? Miss Goldman?

GOLDMAN

Not yet.

GOLDMAN gets one of the chairs.

GOLDMAN

Sit here.

(HANNAH hesitates)

No more interviews, I promise. Sit here, please.

HANNAH sits. GOLDMAN takes a second chair and sits facing her.

GOLDMAN

Hannah, at this moment, both of us are pinned wriggling to the wall. Me by this book and Mr. Berkman; you, by your father and, potentially, by the offspring of Mr. Levesque's bourgeois loins. We need a kick in the ass.

HANNAH

Kick in the -- ?

GOLDMAN

I don't want you to keep making nice, neat indexes -- not yet. Hannah, I want you to listen to the story.

(stops herself)

No, Emma: wait.

(to HANNAH)

I can be such a demanding bitch, eh?

(HANNAH smiles)

Don't agree so quickly!

GOLDMAN prepares herself, as if making a formal request.

GOLDMAN

Let me try this again. Hannah, would you do me the favor, the kindness, the good turn to listen to me? I need you to listen hard --

HANNAH

-- hard --

GOLDMAN

-- and bounce things back, hard.

HANNAH

You need me.

GOLDMAN

I need you.

HANNAH

Like a tennis racket. Why?

GOLDMAN

I need you to help me understand what I'm doing here.

HANNAH

And you don't know that yet.

GOLDMAN

I know, but I don't -- don't you see? The road through the woods is dark.

HANNAH

And you think I can do this?

GOLDMAN

I don't know if you can --

HANNAH

-- I can --

GOLDMAN

-- but I need to try it out on you. And I think the story will make you see things with different eyes. Something in it for you.

HANNAH

I don't know if I'll understand you. I can barely follow you sometimes, the way you jump around and try to make everyone feel sorry for you.

(touches her ears)

But you have both of my ears.

(cups her own breasts)

Push on, is it?

GOLDMAN laughs.

GOLDMAN
(cups her own breasts)

Push on!

Lights change but do not go to black.

Music: low, ominous, with added sounds of artillery, gunfire, screams of pain, etc.: the sounds of war.

Two chairs are placed center, under a harsh downlight; they should be lit so that the St. Tropez office goes into shadow. GOLDMAN sits and is joined by BERKMAN, who walks with a cane.

* * * * *

Scene 2

The STAGEHANDS enter and go to set positions; if the space permits, they should also be placed in the audience. The rest of the cast, including HANNAH, also enters -- HANNAH should wear something different for this scene.

STAGEHANDS

A time not long ago, and not that far away.

As each STAGEHAND speaks, the rest of the cast will make stage pictures of "soldiers at war" -- in essence, tableau. The director is free to choreograph these as desired.

NUMBER 1

(wearing pince-nez as Woodrow Wilson)

The world must be made safe for democracy....The day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and might. -- Woodrow Wilson, April 2, 1917, seeking a declaration of war against Germany.

NUMBER 2

God should have mercy on the opponents of this war for they need expect none from an outraged people and an avenging government. -- Attorney-General Thomas Gregory.

NUMBER 3

One allegiance, one flag, one language. I urge vigorous police action against...veiled treason on street corners and elsewhere. -- Theodore Roosevelt.

War sounds change to crowd sounds, a crowd in protest, a crowd being attacked by police. Music continues underneath.

NUMBER 4

All Bolsheviks should be deported in ships of stone with sails of lead, with the wrath of God for a breeze, and with hell for their first port. -- General Leonard Wood.

The rest of the cast now become the audience that will hear GOLDMAN and BERKMAN speak. Crowd sounds louder, almost drowning out the STAGEHANDS, who shout to get above it.

NUMBER 1

Congress shall make no law --

NUMBER 3

-- abridging the freedom of speech --

NUMBER 4

-- or of the press --

NUMBER 2

-- or of the right peaceably to assemble --

ALL THE CAST

-- and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

By this time the four STAGEHANDS stand in a semicircle behind GOLDMAN and BERKMAN, just outside their light. The crowd sounds and music continue for two or three beats after the word "grievances," then abruptly stop. The rest of the cast simply stands. Two or three beats of silence. GOLDMAN speaks.

GOLDMAN

The prisons filled.

BERKMAN

Twenty years for a lecture.

NUMBER 3

Forty-five years for handing out a pamphlet.

GOLDMAN

Union leaders were lynched.

NUMBER 1

Lawful assemblies attacked.

BERKMAN

"Undesirables" deported.

NUMBER 4

Congress shall make no law --

NUMBER 3

-- abridging the freedom of speech --

GOLDMAN

Hannah, our turn --

BERKMAN

Our test --

GOLDMAN

-- came soon enough.

* * * * *

Scene 3

The time becomes May 18, 1917, at the Harlem River Casino, an enormous mass meeting to protest the proposed conscription bill. SOUND: In the background are the sounds of a great mass of people, muffled as if behind doors or a wall.

GOLDMAN and BERKMAN stand. The STAGEHANDS and the rest of the cast move upstage and face the theatre audience; they are now the "audience" to whom GOLDMAN and BERKMAN will speak. It is suggested that the director choreograph this "audience" to make tableau, move and speak, etc. in response to BERKMAN and GOLDMAN. One STAGEHAND wears a military cap. Another STAGEHAND speaks to the theatre audience.

STAGEHAND

May 18, 1917: the Harlem River Casino

GOLDMAN

Well, Sasha --

BERKMAN

Yes --

GOLDMAN

Here we are again in the wolf's mouth.

BERKMAN

It has been a long time --

(indicates the crowd)

Supposedly eight thousand out there waiting for us.

GOLDMAN

A third probably police.

BERKMAN

A third drunken soldiers.

GOLDMAN

And the third third?

BERKMAN

Everyone who hates this bloody, stupid war.

GOLDMAN

Adjectives unnecessary.

BERKMAN

(laughs)

That's only fair. I've cut your writing down often enough --

GOLDMAN

Shall we save this democracy from itself?

BERKMAN

If not us, then no one. Lead on, Mrs. Alving.

GOLDMAN

Only if you follow, Dr. Stockmann.

BERKMAN

Behind, yet equal.

A bright light comes up on the "podium," and as they step forward, all the cast now comes in to "real time" and hoots and hollers and cheers and sings the Internationale, etc. BERKMAN and GOLDMAN will face the theatre audience, the convention being that the cast, even though behind them on the stage, is actually in front of them as the audience. BERKMAN steps up to the "podium." GOLDMAN sits. The crowd sounds dim to underscoring, audible but not intrusive. Neither BERKMAN nor GOLDMAN have to be anchored to the "podium"; they are free to move about the stage.

BERKMAN

Friends, compatriots -- you know why we have to be here today. Even the police and the rowdy soldiers -- great protectors of democracy -- know why we have to be here today. Mr. Wilson has taken us to war -- which would be fine if the greedy bankers and industrialists and arms merchants were the ones going off for slaughter. But no! Old men declare the war, but young men will be forced to declare their deaths. No! No! No! People who want to destroy injustice must tell Mr. Wilson and all his capitalist trough-feeders that we will resist his call for universal conscription -- universal slavery! universal death! -- and support anyone who refuses to be conscripted. Let the old men fight -- let the young men live!

Crescendo of applause and some boos as BERKMAN pauses.

BERKMAN

I now give you over to the capable hands of my friend and comrade Emma Goldman -- my tongue is brass, hers is silver.

There is a small affectionate exchange as BERKMAN and GOLDMAN change places. Chorus of cheers and some boos.

GOLDMAN

Imagine for a moment --

The STAGEHAND wearing the military cap stands up and shouts.

STAGEHAND

You're nothing' but a bunch of stinkin' Bolshies!

GOLDMAN

(undaunted)

See this war --

STAGEHAND

Bunch of Jews! Garlic eaters! You're not even American!

A chorus of boos from the audience.

GOLDMAN

(trying to ignore him)

This rank and overgrown garden of Mr. Wilson's mind --

STAGEHAND

They should send you off to die! Get rid of you! Let me have the floor! Let an American talk!

The boos grow louder, with voices shouting "Shut him up!" and "Throw him out!" GOLDMAN quiets down the audience.

GOLDMAN

If he wants to speak, let's let him speak. He obviously believes in the justice of his cause, just as we do. And he's probably going to die for it. Give him the silence and respect he deserves.

The crowd sounds die out, just a shuffling in the audience. The STAGEHAND, suddenly confronted with this enormous silence, is frightened.

STAGEHAND

You're all trai -- traitors, paid for by Ger-- German money. You love the Kai-- Kaiser.

GOLDMAN

Go on.

STAGEHAND

Ah, hell, let's get outta here!

STAGEHAND sits, to a chorus of boos and derisive cheers. Crowd sounds continue.

GOLDMAN

One of our country's finest. The fate of democracy lies in his hands -- someone save us all! But let's not make too much fun of him.

The tone of the following speech should be intimate rather than declamatory until GOLDMAN gets to the end.

GOLDMAN

Because I want you all to answer a question, I want all of you out there who are mothers and fathers of sons -- and even he is someone's son, don't forget that -- I want you all to answer one question. Your son has just been snatched by the government to fight a war. Your flesh, your blood, your hopes -- soon to be ground up like bone and thrown away. And the question: For what? The question echoes in your mind: For what? You struggle to find an answer. Not that plenty aren't given to you: patriotism, the flag, making the world safe for democracy. But these are bloodless, abstract -- not like the fresh face of your boy, his smile and his laughter. For what, for what? And as much as you agonize, no answer comes that justifies destroying his young and fruitful spirit. And for good reason: there is none. Your boy's blood allows old men to wallow like hogs in their profits -- but for you his death will just be death, bitter and dirty. It will not bring about equality, or justice, or democracy, to you or anyone else -- it will only bring pain and despair and confusion. This is what conscription ultimately means -- the government sacrificing your boy so that the world is made safe for wealth and profit. If you love your boy, if you value true freedom and not the pap fed to you by Mr. Wilson, then you will join with us to slay this savage beast called conscription.

* * * * *

Scene 4

Cheers and thunderous applause; cast exits. The lights come up on the St. Tropez office, which is now the office of the No-Conscription League.

Lights change as BERKMAN and GOLDMAN move into the office area. The phone rings loudly. BERKMAN answers.

BERKMAN

Yes, yes, this is the No-Conscription League. No, we can't tell you to not register -- but we have materials if you want to read -- What was that again? A little subtlety and skill, at least, officer, please -- you offend my aesthetics.

BERKMAN slams the phone down, sits.

GOLDMAN

Police -- again?

BERKMAN

That I'd actually advise someone over the phone to dynamite a registration office? In person, now --

GOLDMAN

Sasha!

BERKMAN

I haven't lost a certain -- affection for it.

GOLDMAN

That's because your own fuse is so short.

The phone rings again, but before BERKMAN can pick it up, the four STAGEHANDS burst into the office, wearing suit jackets and hats of the period. One of them, STAGEHAND 1, wears a badge. He goes over to the phone, picks it up and puts it down immediately. The other three fan out into the room.

STAGEHAND 1

Emma Goldman?

GOLDMAN

Fatty Arbuckle.

STAGEHAND 1

Don't get smart.

GOLDMAN

"Smart" would be if I knew who you were.

STAGEHAND 1

Emma Goldman, you are under arrest. And so is Berkman.
Where is he?

BERKMAN

(waving from his seat)

Who said justice wasn't blind?

GOLDMAN

(to BERKMAN)

I knew I was smart -- I recognize you --

BERKMAN

A moon cow?

STAGEHAND 1

(moves toward BERKMAN)

Now look here --

BERKMAN

At what?

STAGEHAND 1 grabs BERKMAN by the throat.

STAGEHAND 1

(Quietly)

Shut up.

GOLDMAN moves toward STAGEHAND 1 to distract his attention and protect BERKMAN.

GOLDMAN

Sasha, this is United States Marshal Thomas D. McCarthy,
quoted for saying the government should move more
quickly to arrest us.

BERKMAN

(holding up his cane)

It's not like I'm a sprinter. What were you waiting for?

GOLDMAN

Sasha!

(to STAGEHAND 1)

You wouldn't happen to have an arrest warrant?

STAGEHAND 1

Don't need one for traitors.

GOLDMAN

Does "Fourth Amendment" sound familiar?

BERKMAN

(pointing to the other STAGEHANDS)

He can't count past three.

STAGEHAND 1

I can count you two out.

(signals to the other STAGE-HANDS)

Look for it.

GOLDMAN

What are you looking for?

The STAGEHANDS rifle through the papers and paraphernalia.

STAGEHAND 1

Move your haunches out of the way.

BERKMAN

Not a moon cow any more -- a cattle drover.

GOLDMAN

Gelded bull.

BERKMAN

Gilded calf.

STAGEHAND 1

Enough!

(to the STAGEHANDS)

Did you find it?

GOLDMAN

What?

STAGEHAND 1

I want the membership list of the No-Conscription League.

GOLDMAN

We never mind the hospitality of the police.

BERKMAN

But not everyone we know can afford the honor of an arrest.

GOLDMAN

We don't keep the list here.

BERKMAN

And you can't find out where it is.

STAGEHAND 1

(angered)

Move!

BERKMAN

(sound of a cow)

Mooooooooove.

GOLDMAN

Sasha --

BERKMAN

You're right, liebchen -- beware a sharp tongue --

TOGETHER

-- does not cut itself off.

BERKMAN

(to STAGEHAND 1)

Take us to your leader.

Lights down on the office, up down center. STAGEHAND 1 carries two chairs; BERKMAN and GOLDMAN carry the other two. The chairs are placed in two rows, two chairs each. One STAGEHAND stays with STAGEHAND 1. BERKMAN and GOLDMAN sit in the back row, STAGEHAND 1 as a passenger, the other STAGEHAND as the driver.

STAGEHAND 1

I want you to get in the car.

(mockingly)

I want you to shut up -- no little coded hand gestures, no passing notes, no wise-ass remarks, none of your Bolshie tricks.

Car sounds.

STAGEHAND 1

Let's go.

Everyone pitches as the car starts with a jerk and squeal.

BERKMAN

He knows how to drive this?

GOLDMAN

Watch out!

The car swerves, and everyone pitches with it -- all very vaudeville.

GOLDMAN

Do the police in New York City always aim for the pedestrians?

BERKMAN and GOLDMAN wince as the driver narrowly misses something.

GOLDMAN

You're breaking the rules --

STAGEHAND 1

I represent the United States government.

BERKMAN

The government can overrule physics?

STAGEHAND 1

(looking at them both)

We can do anything we want.

The car comes to a screeching halt. BERKMAN makes as if to look out the window.

BERKMAN

Ah, my dear, the Tombs.

GOLDMAN

And after 6 o'clock.

BERKMAN

No arraignments today.

(to STAGEHAND 1)

Do we get our choice of cages?

STAGEHAND 1

Out.

BERKMAN and GOLDMAN "get out" of the car; sound of doors slamming. The STAGEHANDS take two chairs and put them behind the two desks. They escort BERKMAN off, somewhat roughly. STAGEHAND 1 takes the two remaining chairs and places them as in Act 1, Scene 1, with HANNAH and GOLDMAN. He forces GOLDMAN to sit. HANNAH enters and sits as before. Lights change: it is St. Tropez.

* * * * *

Scene 5

HANNAH

So you had to stay in prison all night?

GOLDMAN gets up, goes to the desk, and picks up a small tin of sweets.

GOLDMAN

It wasn't hard. A rest, really.

She takes a sweet, offers one to HANNAH.

GOLDMAN

Pastille?

HANNAH refuses. GOLDMAN puts the tin in her dress pocket but does not sit.

HANNAH

I'm not sure I could do that.

GOLDMAN

Well, I was pissed off -- ils sont chiants? is that right? -- so that made it a little easier. I always feel right at home when I'm pissed off.

HANNAH

What happened next?

GOLDMAN

What happened next? We went to trial, on June 27, 1917 --
(sarcastically)
-- my forty-eighth birthday, wouldn't you know?

Pause, as if waiting for a certain response to this fact and not getting it.

GOLDMAN

Doesn't that strike you as funny?

HANNAH

(vaguely)

Yes.

GOLDMAN

Weren't you inspired by what we were doing?

HANNAH

It was brave, I guess.

GOLDMAN

It was dangerous, yes.
(sensing something)

What?

HANNAH

Nothing. Go on.

GOLDMAN

Not yet. Something's plucking your knickers. Out with it.

HANNAH gets up and paces for a moment, straightens papers, etc.: nervous.

HANNAH

I -- I don't want to be rude.

GOLDMAN

(lightly)

Be rude.

HANNAH

Well --

GOLDMAN

Take your swing.

HANNAH

I know you don't think so -- brave, you said -- but -- it sounds
to me like you might have done something wrong --

GOLDMAN

We didn't.

HANNAH

But they arrested you.

GOLDMAN

Maybe they were wrong?

Overlap the lines.

HANNAH

Why would they make trouble for themselves --

GOLDMAN

They were the enem --

HANNAH

-- if they didn't have a good reason?

GOLDMAN

They were blind --

HANNAH

Not your reason, but they thought --

GOLDMAN

They had a reason, all right.

HANNAH

-- you were --

GOLDMAN

Small-minded bast --

HANNAH

-- the enemy, too.

GOLDMAN cuts herself off.

HANNAH

You were the enemy, too. You had your reasons. They had theirs. You both thought you were right. Why did you think you were more right?

GOLDMAN snaps her head around, as is something speeds by.

GOLDMAN

Peeeyowww!

HANNAH bridles at this but says nothing. GOLDMAN picks up a loop of string off the desk.

GOLDMAN

You are a cool one.

She strings the first set of a cat's cradle. Throughout the next lines, she coaxes HANNAH to participate.

GOLDMAN

Talk some more, please.

HANNAH

There is a lot of hatred in your voice as you tell the story.

GOLDMAN

They would have broken my bones as soon as breathe.

HANNAH

It would be hard for me to feel that kind of hatred.

GOLDMAN

Every soul being equal --

HANNAH

-- equal in the sight of God, yes.

GOLDMAN

You've told me about your catechism.

HANNAH

It's what you believe, too. What you say you believe.

GOLDMAN

But no godhead for me.

HANNAH

(shrugs)

It comes out to the same thing -- respect for people.

GOLDMAN

So there can be no bad people, everyone being equal?

HANNAH

Of course not! Don't try to make me sound like a fool.

The cat's cradle should be on HANNAH's hands by this line. She gives the string back to GOLDMAN.

HANNAH

What you tried to do -- good. Fighting wars is stupid -- like most things men do. But also true: You hated the men who

hated you -- hate for hate. And what did it change? They just hated you back. They just wanted to shut you up -- which you liked because you like being the enemy. You like it! Its sont chiants? Right! Just big boys acting like little boys to see who can shoot their water the farthest.

GOLDMAN

Love your enemy, then?

HANNAH

At least don't hate them so much. It turns us into knives. It makes us blind.

GOLDMAN

And the more you think you're absolutely right -- absolutely right -- the more blind you are?

HANNAH

I've never known enough of anything to think I was completely right, so I don't know. But you have thought --

GOLDMAN

What?

HANNAH

Being absolutely right --

GOLDMAN looks at HANNAH quizzically. During GOLDMAN's lines, HANNAH gets up, agitated, and walks toward one of the desks. She grabs a small pile of paper and throws it into one of the wastepaper baskets just as GOLDMAN finishes.

GOLDMAN

Did you just call me blind? Was I just scolded by someone a third my age?

(laughs, takes out the tin of sweets)

Nice forehand -- again. Your whole argument -- it's merde, of course, cow shit, les tourtes de fumier de vache -- but nice shot, there --

HANNAH

As if everything out of your mouth --

GOLDMAN turns to her, intrigued. She snaps the tin shut with a loud snap without taking a sweet.

GOLDMAN

Is what?

(indicates the wastebasket)

Is that a clue for me?

HANNAH says nothing but starts to kneel to get the papers out of the basket. GOLDMAN raises a hand to stop her.

GOLDMAN

Stop that. I said stop! You had better follow through on the smash.

HANNAH

I can't.

GOLDMAN

Not allowed!

(moves close to her)

Follow through!

HANNAH hesitates, then launches.

HANNAH

Days, months -- so much talk talk talk I don't understand --

GOLDMAN

So I talk too much.

HANNAH

Let me finish! Don't chop me off. You pile up stones -- like one of those walls in my father's fields that wanders nowhere -- and sometimes I just want you to stop before I get crushed.

GOLDMAN

So I blab.

HANNAH

Let me finish! And that! You use words -- to me, nonsense!
American -- nonsense!

GOLDMAN goes to say something, but HANNAH simply continues through.

HANNAH

(gives it two syllables: Bah-lab)

Bah-lab. What is bah-lab? Why don't you just say what you
mean and not act so much? You expect me to --

During the next lines HANNAH takes out what she threw in the basket,
replaces it on the table, straightens things. GOLDMAN doesn't try to stop
her this time.

GOLDMAN

What?

HANNAH

I think you expect me to clap my hands just because you're
Emma Goldman.

GOLDMAN

Go on. Go on.

HANNAH

When I was fourteen I worked for a lady who talked to her
plants -- sing, tell her dreams, do little dances -- all for her
plants. I would stand in the same room with her, and -- right
to the plants -- and never to me.

GOLDMAN

I see --

HANNAH

I don't really know you, so I have to watch you. What to
trust, what to move out of the way of. I think you like me -- at
least you act like you do. But --

GOLDMAN

You feel -- not seen. Like a plant.

HANNAH

Yes --

GOLDMAN

And not paid attention to.

HANNAH

Yes. I don't know what to trust. And I hate it.

GOLDMAN

Just like your father --

HANNAH

And Mr. Levesque --

GOLDMAN

The priest --

HANNAH

All of them!

GOLDMAN

And me, too.

HANNAH

Though not like them. They really don't see me. You just always have your eyes somewhere else --

GOLDMAN

On other plants.

HANNAH

Piling up stones!

GOLDMAN

(making a theatrical flourish)

Ah-ha!

HANNAH laughs.

GOLDMAN

What?

HANNAH

I shouldn't.

GOLDMAN

You stop now, I'll fire you!

HANNAH

When I was sixteen, actors came here, set up a stage --
(points at GOLDMAN)

Pantelone!

GOLDMAN

Gesundheit.

HANNAH

Il Capitano. Il Dottore.

GOLDMAN

You're saying I'm like those --
(overlapping)
-- old men -- ?

HANNAH

(overlapping)

Those old men -- they all wore masks, and they talked so much! But I noticed this: they never talked to each other -- the masks -- like horse blinders.

GOLDMAN

So now I'm some old fart swoonmeister on an Italian stage
"bah-labbing" my life away --

(in a high, sing-song)

-- in affected, empty language.

HANNAH

No, no!

GOLDMAN

(lightly)

Yes, yes, liebchen! Yes, yes. You are not that far off. Game to Hannah.

HANNAH

That's not the p --

GOLDMAN

I know, I know -- but it is the point. Hannah's point.

HANNAH

Sometimes -- not all the time -- I want you to just look at me.
No mask. No blab. And sometimes -- sometimes I think
Mr. Berkman feels the same way.

HANNAH feels she has crossed a line.

GOLDMAN

Has he talked to you about this?

HANNAH

No. It's just in his face. If you look. We should get back to
your story.

GOLDMAN

You do?

HANNAH

Yes.

GOLDMAN

We haven't finished --

HANNAH

You were in prison.

GOLDMAN

Hannah --

HANNAH

You were in prison.

GOLDMAN, seeing that HANNAH's reserve won't be broken, offers a sweet
to HANNAH.

GOLDMAN

Sweets for the sweet.

HANNAH hesitates, then takes one. GOLDMAN puts the tin away.

GOLDMAN

So you want to still hear the story.

HANNAH

It's a good story.

GOLDMAN

Not too many stones?

HANNAH

So far.

GOLDMAN

Not too much "bah-lab"?

HANNAH

Chapter two should be interesting.

GOLDMAN

Okay. Wait.

GOLDMAN takes up a foolish actor's pose.

GOLDMAN

Is this how they did it?

HANNAH

Pantelone!

GOLDMAN

They did whatever black magic they had to do, and the day came when Sasha and I had to go to trial.

* * * * *

Scene 6

Lights change. HANNAH helps with the set change. To the sound of carousel or march music, the set changes with a stylized choreography. Two chairs are set stage right; GOLDMAN and BERKMAN sit there. A chair stage left for STAGEHAND 1/United States Attorney HAROLD CONTENT.

STAGEHAND 2 enters wearing judge's robes and brings out a white box, about 2' square and tall, on which is written "JUDGE" in bold red letters. STAGEHAND 2/JUDGE stands on the box. Two revolving bar-stool type chairs are set stage left of the JUDGE: these will be the witness chairs. Papers, books, and other items will be mimed. The convention here will be to speak to the audience as if to the JUDGE. Witnesses and CONTENT should have small prop and/or costume things to distinguish themselves.

STAGEHANDS 3 and 4 enter bearing placards or wearing sandwich boards.

STAGEHAND 3 (side one): "Eine Kleine Geschichte Musik, or How History Bit Us In The Ass."

STAGEHAND 4: "The Grand And Gritty Tragical-Comical-Historical Pageant Of Emma And Sasha"

STAGEHAND 3 (side two, in a list): "Dramatis Personae: Judge Julius Mayer, Attorney Harold Content, Emma and Sasha"

STAGEHAND 4: (side two, in a list): "The Jury, Various Witnesses, The World."

STAGEHANDS exit. Music out. Sound comes up: the murmur and buzz of a crowded courtroom.

NOTE: The style here is always "mock court" and mock courtly. During the dance sequences, BERKMAN dances as if he is not injured. He only uses the cane when the action comes back to "reality." People, when speaking to the JUDGE, actually speak to the theatre audience.

JUDGE

Bring this courtroom to order. Now, I will not put up with any enthusiasms.

BERKMAN

We object --

JUDGE

Too enthusiastic. What did I just say?

BERKMAN

We want a dismissal.

JUDGE

Suggestion dismissed.

BERKMAN

We've had no time to prepare our cases. We haven't been allowed to read the charges or even wash our faces!

JUDGE

(to CONTENT)

Sir, enlarge us. The charges?

CONTENT

Very simple.

JUDGE

See.

CONTENT

On May 18, 1917, at the Harlem River Casino, they told people to commit violence and resist the draft. Emma Goldman said, "We believe in violence and we will use violence."

GOLDMAN

I did not say "violence."

JUDGE

Silence!

CONTENT

She and Alexander Berkman conspired to do this.

BERKMAN

Inspired, I'd say.

CONTENT

They know their crime -- they don't need any time.

JUDGE

Approve.

(to BERKMAN)

Next move.

BERKMAN, GOLDMAN, and CONTENT place their palms together and dance. Music: a simple dance tune. ALL speak in rhythm.

BERKMAN

So then -- we won't -- participate.

JUDGE

You're not allowed to abdicate.

CONTENT

You have to play the game we play.

GOLDMAN

We don't have to listen to a thing you say.

BERKMAN

(gesturing to GOLDMAN to sit)

To illustrate: we sit and quit.

GOLDMAN

Our rumps play trumps.

Music out.

JUDGE

You can't just perch and leave us in the lurch -- I'll appoint a lawyer for you.

CONTENT

(to JUDGE)

A Mr. Weinberger is their attorney of record.

BERKMAN

Until today. We want a dismissal.

JUDGE

Denied.

CONTENT

You will be tried.

JUDGE

And you will have a lawyer by your side.

The next lines are choreographed.

GOLDMAN

Your honor. We've only had two days --

BERKMAN

-- to gather our defenses.

CONTENT

You brought yourself here --

JUDGE

-- to be punished for your offenses.

BERKMAN

Then we won't be part of this charade.

JUDGE

I won't allow this tirade!

CONTENT

Lie in it -- your bed is made.

GOLDMAN

Sasha, wait --

(BERKMAN looks at GOLDMAN)

Grand Guignol.

BERKMAN

Commedia dell'arte.

GOLDMAN

(indicating the courtroom)

We've got the theatre.

BERKMAN

We know our parts.

GOLDMAN

The world will hear --

BERKMAN

-- our ideals reported.

GOLDMAN

They won't let us win.

BERKMAN

Probably deported.

GOLDMAN

But at least we might plant a seed. Agreed?

BERKMAN

Agreed.

TOGETHER

Let's do the deed.

End of choreography.

BERKMAN

(to JUDGE and CONTENT)

We'll defend ourselves.

CONTENT

A fool for a client.

(to JUDGE)

Dismissal should not be granted.

JUDGE

Approve.

(to BERKMAN)

Next move. Let's bring in the jury.

BERKMAN

They're in a hurry.

The JURY consists of the six WOMEN (excluding KATE) plus six objects to make up a total of 12 people. The JURY should wear some kind of mask -- blank white mask, happy face, etc. -- or have a set of expressions that are choreographed all the way through. In any case, the JURY's faces should have an artificial quality to them.

The six objects can be done in a number of ways -- e.g., faces on a stick, sock puppets, ventriloquist dummies -- it is up to the director. The JURY sits

in front of the JUDGE and can be arranged in any way the director wants. The sense to get across is that the JURY is a puppet of the court.

JUDGE

You may examine the jury.

BERKMAN

What do you mean?

CONTENT

You can ask them what you want, and if you don't like what they say, you can dismiss them.

JUDGE

Not all of them, of course. We need twelve. We are civilized around here.

GOLDMAN

Matter of opinion.

Everyone talks to the JURY but directs comments to the theatre audience. The questions have choreography to them, and the theatre audience can be considered the "jury pool." The JURY's responses to the arguments should be choreographed and coördinated.

GOLDMAN

Do you believe in freedom of speech?

BERKMAN

Has the government here exceeded its reach?

CONTENT

The state must protect the majority's rule.

BERKMAN

That's when an ass is led by the fool.

GOLDMAN

Are laws always sacred? Can you question the laws?

BERKMAN

Can you think for yourself and pick out the flaws?

CONTENT

As a citizen you're bound to uphold what is right.

GOLDMAN

Even if they steal people in the middle of the night?

GOLDMAN

Is the United States the land of the free?

BERKMAN

Then why is there so much inequality?

CONTENT

Economics has nothing to do with this case.

JUDGE

You reds always dish out that "class warfare" ace.

BERKMAN

Do you think anarchists are Satan's lieutenants?

GOLDMAN

That they only love bombs and smelly old peasants?

BERKMAN

Do you believe in God? Is Christianity supreme?

GOLDMAN

Can the Muslims and Buddhists fit into this scheme?

CONTENT

Don't be misled by their misleading questions --

JUDGE

They're just the result of bad indigestion.

CONTENT

Don't be confused by their "commie" appeal.

GOLDMAN

We're trying to show you a higher ideal.

BERKMAN

You can think for yourselves --

GOLDMAN

To your own self be true.

JUDGE

Have you made your selections?

CONTENT

Twelve red, white, and blue.

BERKMAN

Twelve not our peers --

GOLDMAN

-- that's the best we could do.

End of choreography.

CONTENT

Are you quite finished?

BERKMAN

Revived.

GOLDMAN

Replenished.

CONTENT

Will these twelve do?

GOLDMAN

They'll do what you want.

BERKMAN

We just hope that one of them will show some spine.

CONTENT

For dodgers like you? See how they sit quiet, in a line, like light bulbs in their sockets.

GOLDMAN

They fit nicely in your pockets.

JUDGE

Continue the case.

EMMA / BERKMAN
(saluting each other)

About face.

They sit. STAGEHANDS 3 & 4 will be witnesses. As the identities of the witnesses change, they simply turn on their stools either to face in or face away. The STAGEHANDS should also use props to distinguish the witnesses -- cigar, lady's hat, bow tie, etc. At this point, the JURY should not take focus from the action.

SOUND: Each time the witness changes, there will a single loud clap, either some person clapping or the sound of the "clapper" used on movie sets.

CONTENT

I would like to call to the stand Mary Eleanor Fitzgerald.

During the interrogations, EMMA, BERKMAN, and CONTENT speak directly to the witness but into the theatre audience when speaking to the JUDGE. Any references to documents, etc. should be mimed.

CONTENT

State who you are.

FITZGERALD

Mary Eleanor Fitzgerald.

CONTENT

Your relation to the defendants?

FITZGERALD

I was financial secretary for the No-Conscription League.

CONTENT

By the time of this trial, how much money did they have in their accounts?

FITZGERALD

\$746.96.

CONTENT

That was all?

BERKMAN
(to GOLDMAN)

Not a bad return on thirty years work, hey?

JUDGE

Silence!

CONTENT

Then what about this deposit of \$3067 three days before the trial? Did it, by chance, come from the Kaiser --

(to the JURY)

-- who is killing our boys as we speak!

GOLDMAN

Objectionable! What has Mr. Content eaten that he would make such an undigested accusation? That money came from James Hallbeck.

Witnesses change -- HALLBECK is in his 80s.

GOLDMAN

Mr. Hallbeck, explain why you gave us \$3000.

HALLBECK

I have been an anarchist ever since they hung the innocent men at Haymarket. I own vineyards in California; I gave money to the one person I knew who would use it well.

CONTENT

Miss Fitzgerald, is this true?

Witnesses change.

FITZGERALD

Yes.

CONTENT

And the other \$67?

FITZGERALD

Small donations from friends -- none from the Kaiser.

BERKMAN

I guess it's proved we were not wealthy.

JUDGE

Proved.

BERKMAN

(loud whisper)

I hope they don't find the gold bars we removed.

JUDGE

Move on.

CONTENT

But we have more serious charges

GOLDMAN

More serious than our poverty?

CONTENT

Resisting the government! The incitement of violence!
Conspiracy! Yes, yes, yes! I call William Randolph to the
stand. State who you are and what you do.

RANDOLPH

(if possible, in an Irish accent)

I'm a shorthand reporter for the New York City Police
Department.

CONTENT

Did you attend the meeting at the Harlem River Casino on
May 18?

RANDOLPH

I did.

CONTENT

And you took stenographic notes?

RANDOLPH

I did.

CONTENT

What's your rate?

RANDOLPH

About 125 words a minute.

CONTENT

And what did you hear Miss Goldman say?

RANDOLPH

She said, "We believe in violence and we will use violence."

CONTENT

Absolutely sure?

RANDOLPH

Yes.

CONTENT and GOLDMAN exchange places.

GOLDMAN

Mr. Randolph, did you take down even the Russian names that night?

RANDOLPH

It was noisy.

GOLDMAN

That means "no." Could you list the words of mine you missed?

CONTENT

Objection.

JUDGE

Sustained.

GOLDMAN

Because I certainly don't remember the words you said I said.

(to JUDGE)

I'd like to "sustain" a little experiment to test Mr. Randolph's speed, and I'll make it easy. I'll read from Mr. Randolph's transcript, and I won't use any Russian names. Instead of debating about angels on pinheads, let's count them.

JUDGE

Mr. Content?

CONTENT

(hesitating)

No objection -- provided she reads fairly.

RANDOLPH mimes handling a pad of paper.

RANDOLPH

Ready.

GOLDMAN

"We don't believe in conscription, this meeting to-night being a living proof. This meeting was arranged with limited means. So, friends, we who have arranged the meeting are well satisfied if we can only urge the people of entire New York City and America" -- am I really that graceless? -- "there would be no war in the United States, there would be no conscription in the United States, if the people are not given an opportunity to have their say." There, that should do it. Mr. Randolph -- please.

CONTENT

That was too fast!

GOLDMAN

(coyly)

Have you been to some of my lectures?

RANDOLPH

I have not gotten it all down, Miss Goldman.

CONTENT

See, it was not a fair test.

GOLDMAN

Because he didn't get his own words down?

BERKMAN

A touch, a touch, I do confess.

GOLDMAN

Mr. Randolph -- we wait with bated breath.

CONTENT

Objection!

GOLDMAN

I apologize. Mr. Randolph -- our breath is no longer bated.

RANDOLPH

(clearly nervous)

"We don't believe in conscription. This meeting tonight being a living proof. This meeting was arranged with limited means, so friends, we can only urge the people that there will be no conscription in the United States" -- that is as far as I got.

GOLDMAN cups her ear and waits.

GOLDMAN

Well, Mr. Randolph --

RANDOLPH

What?

GOLDMAN

I am waiting for the words "urge the people of entire New York City and America -- " Mr. Content, aren't you waiting for those words?

CONTENT

We get the point. We get the point!

GOLDMAN

I am also waiting for the words "We believe in violence and we will use violence." Should I wait very much longer?

BERKMAN

I think the experiment is done -- well-done!

CONTENT

Not quite. Your honor, we want to call another witness.

JUDGE

Who?

CONTENT

Charles Pickler.

BERKMAN

(smiling)

Pickler! For people in a pickle!

STAGEHANDS switch: CHARLES PICKLER is on the stand.

CONTENT

Mr. Pickler, were you at the Harlem Casino on May 18?

PICKLER

I was.

CONTENT

Why?

PICKLER

I was taking notes for the Stenographic Service Company -- they've done Miss Goldman in the past.

CONTENT

How fast does she talk?

PICKLER

At a full boil, up to 200 words a minute. She "simmers" at 125, I would guess -- but she doesn't simmer often. And from what I just saw -- well --

CONTENT

Your honor, instruct the witness to stop offering opinions.

BERKMAN

You asked for a professional opinion.

JUDGE

You will have a chance to cross-examine.

CONTENT

I no longer wish to question this witness.

BERKMAN

He's ours? Yes!

(BERKMAN comes forward with relish)

Mr. Pickler, do you know Miss Goldman or myself?

PICKLER

Not personally.

BERKMAN

Do you believe in anarchism? The No-Conscription League?

PICKLER

Makes no sense to me.

BERKMAN

So no feelings one way or the other at the lecture?

PICKLER

I was working -- I wasn't at the vaudeville.

BERKMAN

What's your rate?

PICKLER

Around 225 if the subject is easy.

BERKMAN

Is Miss Goldman easy?

PICKLER

Not at full steam.

BERKMAN

As she was that night.

PICKLER

Yes.

CONTENT

Conjecture.

PICKLER

Fact. By the end I was racing -- she easily perked along at 200.

BERKMAN

So if Mr. Randolph was only "perking along" at --

CONTENT

Objection.

BERKMAN

-- was transcribing at 100 to 125, he'd be "perked out," so to speak?

PICKLER

My professional opinion -- Absurd.

BERKMAN

Let the court note that this testimony comes from a government witness Mr. Content quickly abandoned when his testimony became inconvenient.

(to PICKLER)

I hope your feelings weren't hurt.

PICKLER

Naw.

BERKMAN

Thank you.

JUDGE

You may step down.

BERKMAN

(sotto voce, to CONTENT)

And you stepped in it.

GOLDMAN

Your honor, since the government's transcript is only good for the outhouse and accuses me of saying what I wouldn't say, it's time to slay this insult about my violence.

The next set of witnesses come in rapid alternate succession; at each witness change, the sound of a clap. The STAGEHANDS can choose whatever characterizations and props they want.

STEFFENS

Lincoln Steffens here. I have known Emma Goldman for 24 years. You have always opposed any violence.

Clap.

REED

John Reed, newspaperman. Emma Goldman a bomb thrower? The average cop on the beat has stirred up more violence than Emma Goldman.

Clap.

SLOAN

Anna Sloan, wife of the painter John Sloan. I was there on May 18. If Emma had promoted violence, it would have chilled my spine because she has never, ever urged anyone to harm another human being.

Clap.

ABBOTT

Leonard Abbott here. Emma and I have been friends for a quarter century, and I was there that night. Violence -- it don't hitch up to her argument.

Clap.

HALL

Bolton Hall, lawyer, if you please. Miss Goldman and I have talked many nights away -- she has always believed in educating people. Dynamite's a rotten textbook for getting people their liberty.

Clap.

GOLDMAN

I have more.

CONTENT

We've danced this dance enough. We get the point.

BERKMAN

A touch, a touch --

The JUDGE claps three times rapidly.

JUDGE

Summations to the jury.

As a choral arrangement, in the order given. The STAGEHANDS exit. The JUDGE does not have to stay on his box for this.

JUDGE

This is a country based on the rule of law.

GOLDMAN

This three-act comedy has come to an end.

CONTENT

What is on trial here is not their beliefs --

JUDGE

Free speech means orderly expression --

CONTENT

But they can't ask people to disobey the law.

BERKMAN

We've been saying these things openly for 30 years.

GOLDMAN

Violence from the top begets violence at the bottom.

BERKMAN

Can such an open book be a conspiracy?!

JUDGE

There is no place here for disobedience.

BERKMAN

Definition -- Un-American mean independent opinion.

GOLDMAN

Militarism: Young men turned to slaves who kill on command.

CONTENT

Obedience to the law -- or anarchy.

GOLDMAN

How can the world be made safe for democracy --

BERKMAN

-- if democracy is not safe here?

JUDGE

Progress must be accomplished by lawful means.

GOLDMAN

Progress is never within the law.

JUDGE

(to the JURY)

On your mark. Get set. Go.

Immediately, STAGEHAND enters rings a bell, as if a timer has gone off, or says "Ding!" The JURY should strike some kind of tableau.

CONTENT

Thirty-nine minutes. Longer than I thought. You must have impressed them.

JUDGE

Your verdict?

JURY

Guilty -- as if you had to ask.

CONTENT

Sentence?

GOLDMAN

Wait!

JUDGE

No. Two years each in federal penitentiary. \$10,000 fine.

GOLDMAN

We want to appeal.

JUDGE

No.

GOLDMAN

We need to consult.

JUDGE

No. And once that's over, you're both booted back to your Bolshevik comrades. Dismissed.

BERKMAN

Give us two days.

CONTENT

It's up to the federal marshals to decide that. Perhaps you two should learn telepathy.

BERKMAN

Come on, Emma. Time to shift the battle field.

GOLDMAN

I wish to thank the court for this marvelously fair trial. Thank you so very much.

JUDGE

You both fought well here -- too bad you couldn't use your skills in more patriotic ways.

GOLDMAN

What do you think we've been doing? Hannah, what did they think we were doing?

* * * * *

Scene 7

Music for scene change: carousel music. Lights change: St. Tropez. The chairs are set as in Act 1, Scene 5. BERKMAN, JUDGE, and JURY exit. HANNAH re-enters.

GOLDMAN

So, after that, off to prison -- like beef to the wolves. Me in Missouri --

(mispronouncing it like HANNAH)

-- Sasha to Atlanta, Georgia -- each buried for two years.

Then -- pfft! Deported. And now buried here --

(slangy voice)

-- and I'm usin' ya like a shovel.

GOLDMAN

Has any more sunk in?

HANNAH

Of what?

GOLDMAN

Of -- me --

HANNAH

I'm -- yes -- a little more.

GOLDMAN

But does anything --

(searches for the word)

-- anything bubble up --

GOLDMAN strikes her breast bone with the tips of her fingers.

GOLDMAN

-- in here? Pop? Fizz? Fly off?

GOLDMAN sees HANNAH's face.

GOLDMAN

Don't even try to answer -- it's not fair. If I don't feel it, why should you?

(laughs to herself)

Did you know I was considered the most dangerous woman in America? I used to be able to crack a crowd open with just the right word.

GOLDMAN covers her teeth with her lips, as if toothless.

GOLDMAN

Not dangerous now. Toothless old hag.

Staggers, as if aged, still "toothless," trying to be funny.

GOLDMAN

Old anarchist crone, can't gnaw on a bone, hasn't got a Kropotkin to piss in.

Sees that HANNAH doesn't react, gives up the attempt at the humor.

GOLDMAN

It's all -- gone. I should go join the old men in the café -- "Move over, mon-sewer, let me tell you about my dozens of lovers." See if I can rattle their loins if not their minds.

GOLDMAN makes a dismissive gesture. HANNAH makes a forehand motion with her hand.

HANNAH

I can hit harder.

GOLDMAN smiles. HANNAH strokes a backhand.

HANNAH

I can hit faster.

GOLDMAN makes a half-hearted attempt to return the "volley," mimes watching the ball bounce past her.

GOLDMAN

Oops. Damn. Match over.

HANNAH

Not over. You're not in prison yet -- so to say. The story keeps moving. Aren't you going to tell me about it? You said that's what you wanted to do.

GOLDMAN

Not at the moment. No more talk. For the moment.

HANNAH makes the forehand gesture again; GOLDMAN half-heartedly returns it, then looks away and sits and stares, unsure what to do. HANNAH moves to the tables and starts reading and filing papers.

A tall, forceful woman enters: KATE RICHARDS O'HARE. She walks to face GOLDMAN. GOLDMAN starts, looks at HANNAH, who does not see the woman.

GOLDMAN

Hannah?

HANNAH

(looks at GOLDMAN, does not see O'HARE)

Yes ma'am?

GOLDMAN

(looks from HANNAH to O'HARE and back)

Just focus on the prison documents. Put everything else to one side.

HANNAH

(using an American accent)

Will do.

HANNAH does not hear any of the following dialogue. She continues doing her work.

GOLDMAN

Kate Richards O'Hare.

O'HARE

Emma Goldman.

GOLDMAN

What are you doing here?

O'HARE

Playing Hamlet's father.

GOLDMAN

Reminding me of my blunted purpose?

O'HARE

Giving you that kick in the ass.

GOLDMAN jumps, as if kicked.

GOLDMAN

Nope -- didn't work.

O'HARE

Emma --

GOLDMAN

What purpose, Kate?

O'HARE

To tell the truth.

GOLDMAN

More of a dying than a living in that.

O'HARE

Stir things up.

GOLDMAN

I'm not a cook.

O'HARE

Write.

GOLDMAN

You do the writing -- you write well. I read your prison book -- nice cheekiness titling it "Sometime Federal prisoner number 21669." I don't even remember what my number was -- thank you for saying what you said about me --

O'HARE

(indicating HANNAH)

You're having a hard time with her.

GOLDMAN

She's easy to work with.

O'HARE

She doesn't understand, does she?

GOLDMAN

It's my tongue -- all knotted. Not her fault.

These lines overlap, as if GOLDMAN is not listening to O'HARE at all.

O'HARE

You tongue-tied?!

GOLDMAN

She's young --

O'HARE

It would be easier to hog-tie a speeding train --

GOLDMAN

-- she lacks context.

O'HARE

-- than to peg your tongue down.

GOLDMAN

No common ground.

O'HARE

It ain't a lack of words on your part, my dear. You always liked the young.

GOLDMAN

"Like" -- I'm not past tense yet.

O'HARE

I smell it on you.

GOLDMAN

It used to be I could thrill a mind with my ideas. Now --
Now I'm borrowing courtesies --

O'HARE

Emma Goldman, shut your goddamned mouth.

GOLDMAN looks both startled and, oddly, pleased.

GOLDMAN

Could you say that again?

O'HARE

(slowly)

Shut your goddamned mouth. Is it working?

GOLDMAN reacts as if shivered by something pleasant.

O'HARE

You don't do self-pity well at all.

(indicating HANNAH)

Here is a good mind, and you're telling me you can't move
it. Emma, when we were prisoned together, we bent minds
a lot less supple than this one.

No response.

O'HARE

(trying to coax a response)

And we did that by -- ?

No response.

O'HARE

(slightly sarcastic)

We did that by -- c'mon, recite after me -- by putting
everything into play -- I know you know this. Every day
became a classroom, hands-on, down-and-dirty.

(GOLDMAN smiles slightly)

Ah, I see you remember! Nothing abstract -- everything
noun/verb.

O'HARE uses the same gesture that GOLDMAN used earlier talking about her and BERKMAN: fingers linked.

GOLDMAN
(links her fingers)

Noun/verb.

O'HARE
Do the same. Take her through our prison time, make her guts know, the way we had to learn, and teach. You believe in the beauty of Anarchism -- show her how it's supposed to work, in real time, against real cruelty. She'll rise.

(moving to HANNAH)
Look at how diligently she works.

HANNAH looks for a paper; O'HARE hands it to her and HANNAH takes it without missing a beat, as if she had picked it up herself.

GOLDMAN moves to where O'HARE and HANNAH are, and she, too, begins to help HANNAH, handing papers, moving things, etc. The "help" becomes choreographed over the next set of lines, all three of them moving, where appropriate, in mesh.

O'HARE
Look at the attention she gives you.

GOLDMAN
Like Sasha -- concentrated.

O'HARE
Organizing, sifting, turning things into her words so she can understand.

GOLDMAN
That's what --
(overlaps with "you did")
-- I did.

O'HARE
(overlaps with "I did.")
-- you did at her age. Sasha cuts your words because they are self-indulgent --

GOLDMAN

I spill all over the place --

O'HARE

-- cheap melodrama --

GOLDMAN

-- but that's how I make up who I am --

O'HARE

-- you'd never tolerate it from your beloved Ibsen.

GOLDMAN

Last act, Kate.

O'HARE

Emma, you know this drill: we all chalk up more wasted life than accomplished living. The trick is to make what we little we actually do is the best we can do.

Choreography ends.

O'HARE

Talk to her.

GOLDMAN

Kate --

O'HARE

Nothing is over for you, Emma. You can't believe that. Talk to her.

GOLDMAN

I feel -- passed by. This book feels like a millstone against me.

O'HARE

Milestone.

GOLDMAN smiles.

O'HARE

Talk to her. You've already set some stones down; use them.

As O'HARE and GOLDMAN recite the following names, the women enter and stand in a semi-circle upstage.

O'HARE

Remember Indian Alice, Minnie Eddy, Evelyn L'Ariat --

GOLDMAN

Aggie Myers -- Mollie Steimer --

O'HARE

Addie and Dope Fiend. You didn't change the world with them. But you did change them, some of them, at least moved them -- stunted people who still found hope to hope after tasting your words. How much stronger your words will be with this free soul poised on some hard choices. Look at her work. On your book. The one the three of you are going to finish.

GOLDMAN

If Sasha lets me!

O'HARE

He's a sculptor, not a butcher. And he believes.

O'HARE turns to leave.

O'HARE

Grace to you, Emma.

O'HARE joins the women upstage. GOLDMAN finds herself near HANNAH, holding a paper.

HANNAH

Do you want me to do something with that letter?

GOLDMAN

Oh, ah --

(puts the letter down)

Probably. Eventually. Hannah, what was I doing while you
--

HANNAH

Sitting there. Just staring.

GOLDMAN

Do you have any questions?

HANNAH

Not yet. Well, yes. In this letter you mentioned two names:
Indian Alice and Minnie Eddy. Who were they? Ma'am, are
you all right?

GOLDMAN

Right as rain. Can you say the names again?

HANNAH

Indian Alice and Minnie Eddy.

At the mention of the names, all the WOMEN move forward to HANNAH
and GOLDMAN.

GOLDMAN

Sad story, those two. They died, one from venereal disease
-- you know about that?

HANNAH

Yes.

GOLDMAN

The other from -- well, she was murdered. By the prison.
Starved her to death.

HANNAH

That's true?

GOLDMAN

Right in the land of the free and the home of the grave --
Kate, you're right -- this is the way --

HANNAH

Kate?

GOLDMAN

You'll meet her soon enough. Sit down. I haven't finished the story yet.

HANNAH

We have all this work.

GOLDMAN

Yes, we do. We have Indian Alice and Minnie Eddy and Evelyn L'Ariat -- All right. The judge has sent Sasha and I to prison --

(claps her hands)

zoom! We appeal to judges called the Supreme Court to change the decision, but nope, nope, nope. So it's off -- me to Missouri, Sasha to Atlanta, Georgia. I said that already. They opened the doors of the prison -- banged them open -- Hannah, stay with me now -- go with me --

HANNAH

I am here.

GOLDMAN

(linking her arm with HANNAH's)

And then I stepped -- then we will step -- into hell.

Lights bump out. Music.

INTERMISSION

During the intermission, all set pieces are removed. If the director desires, he or she can set the stage in the following manner for Act II. However, if this is not possible or desired, it can be dispensed with. (NOTE: The script has been written without using this floor pattern)

Using white gaffe tape, a grid is laid down on the floor. (Masking tape or chalk can be used in a pinch, but it is not preferred.) The grid contains nine "cells." The actual measurements of the cells in Jefferson City were 8' x 7' x 8' high, but it is not necessary to make the cells actual size; smaller is better, to show the cramped lives of the prisoners. Each cell will have its own light focused on it.

Where each women is:

Back Row: Dope Fiend (colored woman) / Addie (colored woman) / Indian Alice

Middle Row: Minnie Eddy / Evelyn L'Ariat / Aggie Myers

Front Row: Mollie Steimer / Emma Goldman / Kate O'Hare

Other props will be brought on as needed during Act II.

Another suggestion: In one production, the director lowered wires with clips on the end that clipped into holders on the floor that formed a large square, the "bars" (or wires) being about 2.5' apart. It was an effective way to define the prison space.

* * * * *

Scene 8

The WOMEN enter in a line upstage and face upstage to a low, ominous music. Lights up to ghost. SOUND: the clang of eight closing steel doors in quick succession. At each "clang," each woman will turn and face the audience. Music, sound, and lights bump out. The WOMEN remain on stage.

NOTE: The first four WOMEN will be numbers 1 through 4. GOLDMAN will always be WOMAN 5. The second four WOMEN will be numbers 6 through 9.

Lights up. GOLDMAN is escorted onstage by the MATRON. The MATRON is carrying a folded dress, made of coarse brown muslin, and a pair of shoes. GOLDMAN carries nothing and wears no shoes. This should be played down center.

FOUR WOMEN

"Emma Goldman Arrives At Jefferson City, Missouri."

FOUR WOMEN

"A Guest Of The Federal Government."

MATRON

Stop right there.

GOLDMAN

Here? Or here?

MATRON

No lip, or I'll skin 'em both right off you. Right there. Any diseases?

GOLDMAN

Nothing to complain of -- thank you for asking. I'd like a bath and a cold drink.

MATRON

Don't fake me. Most women here delivered have it. Pigs.

GOLDMAN

And you a pearl before them.

MATRON

No lip, I'm warning you.

GOLDMAN

I don't have the clap, the critters, the pox, if that's what you mean. Heard, though, that respectable people -- even prison matrons -- can pick it up.

MATRON

Hand me your insults, but I go to my home at night.

(indicating GOLDMAN's dress)

Off with it! Now!

GOLDMAN takes off her dress and hands it to the MATRON, who throws it on the floor. The MATRON begins frisking her, doing it in the most degrading way possible: reaching into GOLDMAN's drawers, pawing her, etc.

MATRON

Stand still.

GOLDMAN

What are you looking for?

MATRON

Dope. Cigarettes. Anything.

GOLDMAN

I have an entire set of files up my cunt --

The MATRON grabs her hair.

GOLDMAN

You should see what I have up my asshole.

The MATRON jerks her around by the hair.

MATRON

Shut -- your -- gob.

The MATRON finishes her inspection.

MATRON

All right, into the tub.

GOLDMAN

That?

MATRON

Required.

GOLDMAN

But you haven't cleaned the tub.

MATRON

Don't waste water here.

GOLDMAN

How many people before me?

MATRON

Ten, maybe.

GOLDMAN

I want to clean the tub.

MATRON

La-di-da.

GOLDMAN

With disinfectants.

MATRON

This ain't a hotel.

GOLDMAN

I refuse, then. I'm a nurse -- I know the "disease." I am not going to use that tub.

The MATRON is right into her face.

MATRON

Take your goddam bath!

GOLDMAN

I won't.

MATRON

I'll break you.

The next four lines overlap.

GOLDMAN

"Abandon hope --

MATRON

I'll send you to the black hole.

GOLDMAN

-- all ye who you talk with her."

MATRON

I'll send you to the black hole. You know I can --

GOLDMAN

There's a black hole --

MATRON

You know I will.

GOLDMAN

-- in your eyes.

MATRON

Do it.

GOLDMAN takes a step away from the MATRON and mimes turning on the taps. She mimes scooping one handful of water and letting it run over one of her feet. She scoops a second one and lets it run over her other foot. Turns off the water.

GOLDMAN

Clean enough.

MATRON

(throws the prison dress at her)

Put this on.

GOLDMAN

A circus tent!

MATRON

For the clown.

GOLDMAN

(puts the dress on)

My -- not nearly coarse and scratchy enough!

MATRON

This ain't --

TOGETHER

-- a hotel.

GOLDMAN

The shoes.

MATRON

Feet clean enough, I guess.

GOLDMAN puts the shoes on.

MATRON

You'll get your work dress tomorrow, when you show up to the shop. Welcome to Jefferson City.

The MATRON takes away GOLDMAN's dress as she exits. GOLDMAN faces the women. There is the sound of a very loud clanging door. The same ominous music as at the beginning of the scene. Lights to black except for a light on GOLDMAN.

GOLDMAN

Hannah -- my introduction to the dog guarding the gate to all the hells I had always said I wanted to destroy: cruelty, the waste of beauty, the acid of power, the fuck of injustice. I was dragged into my element -- and "my element" frightened me to my roots. Pissed off? There we were all -- guards and guarded alike -- pissed on. Everything that I believed I believed in was on the killing floor in that slaughterhouse. I stepped past the dog -- and I plunged into the abyss of the workshop.

* * * * *

Scene 9

SOUND: The loud clang of machinery.

FOUR WOMEN

"The Workshop and The Foreman."

FOUR WOMEN & GOLDMAN

"Hell and Its Lieutenant."

The nine WOMEN kneel, equally spaced, GOLDMAN in the middle, WOMAN 1 stage right. The FOREMAN enters. The clang mutes underneath his speech, audible but not disturbing. The FOREMAN carries a riding crop. He walks down the line as he talks; as he passes each woman, he touches her with the crop: a hit, a caress, a mock "knight dubbing," and so on. That woman begins a rhythmic motion of some sort to indicate sewing on a machine: it can either refer to the actual articles being sewn or mimic the motion of the machine itself. Each motion should tie in to the motion before it so that by the time the FOREMAN reaches the end of the line, the women look like one large machine. As he talks the machine runs faster and faster, but always in synch. Their faces are impassive.

FOREMAN

Work is a great liberator. It turns the brute earth into wealth. It gives us purpose and direction. It ennobles the soul. All of which does not apply to scum like you.

(hits WOMAN 1, begins his walk)

Your purpose is to make the "task" -- your sole purpose is "to make the task."

(hits WOMAN 2)

Sewing the collars on eighty-eight unionall jackets today, and tomorrow, and the day after that.

(hits WOMAN 3)

Doing the hems of fifty-five blue denim jumpers today, and tomorrow, and the day after that.

(hits WOMAN 4)

Eighteen dozen suspenders today, and tomorrow, and the day after that.

(hits WOMAN 5)

It's very simple: make the task or suffer. And I will make you suffer.

(hits WOMAN 6)

You know I will. I have the power. I count the jackets and decide if they're done right.

(hits WOMAN 7)

I keep the books that tell the only truth. Do you want to write that extra letter a week?

(hits WOMAN 8)

Be perfect in all regards. Do you want to make a dollar a month?

(hits WOMAN 9)

Have no imperfections in my eyes. One slip, and I will throw you down the hill like the rock of Sisyphus.

He has reached the end of the nine women, who are now moving quite quickly in their motions.

FOREMAN

You -- will -- not -- fail!

(softer)

We understand each other.

FOREMAN exits. Sound up to full. The women continue to work faster and faster, their faces still impassive. After 10 or 15 seconds, GOLDMAN

screams in pain and collapses. All the others collapse as well but without screaming. Sound cuts out; lights to black.

* * * * *

Scene 10

Light up immediately only on GOLDMAN. As GOLDMAN speaks, the WOMEN rise and begin circulating behind her: they are taking recreation in the prison yard. During GOLDMAN's lines, they should "wander" in a very patterned way that still appears aimless.

NOTE: Each "prisoner" can fashion the character in any way that seems logical: speech patterns, gestures, movements, etc. The text is merely the starting point for the creation of the character. The characters will also talk about various physical conditions, none of which will be made actual through make-up or costume.

GOLDMAN

I crumpled like paper, Hannah, all sick and knotted -- a kind doctor made me healthy enough to suffer the workshop again. And "the change" -- "the change" was ripping through me, too! Pinched and buried with hot flashes in hell! Now, there's a résumé for you!

ALL WOMEN (EXCEPT GOLDMAN)

"The Prisoners in the Yard."

GOLDMAN

But I was hardly at my worst -- at least my friends remembered me. Almost everyone else there -- for all anyone cared -- and they didn't -- these women were dead and forgotten. They just hadn't been shoveled into their coffins yet.

The lights come up full, harsh. GOLDMAN joins them. MINNIE EDDY, AGGIE MYERS, and INDIAN ALICE all stay on the margins. During the scene, the WOMEN are all separated, in their own worlds. By the end of the scene, they have started to come together as a group.

ADDIE

(going up to GOLDMAN)

Who you be?

GOLDMAN

No one at the moment.

O'HARE
(Kiddingly)

I know what she is.

GOLDMAN

Kate!

ADDIE

Yeah?

O'HARE

She's a red!

GOLDMAN

Kate Richards O'Hare -- I had heard about this --

They greet.

DOPE FIEND

She's like you, then.

O'HARE

Only the best!

DOPE FIEND
(she pronounces "ci" as "see")

A so-ci-a-list!

O'HARE
(pronouncing it correctly)

Socialist.

DOPE FIEND

I like being social -- but myself, I am for the blues. I don't understand this "reds" bidness at all.

GOLDMAN

A lot of people don't.

STEIMER

I know you, too.

GOLDMAN

I know you, too -- Mollie Steimer.

STEIMER

Yes.

GOLDMAN

You worked on Mother --

STEIMER

On your magazine.

GOLDMAN

The grand and glorious Mother Earth! Fierce, you were,
yes --

(to O'HARE)

-- she copy-edited like a surgeon. Like a dragon! Like a
fencer! Writers trembled when she grabbed the blue pencil!

ADDIE

So you all knew each other out in the world?

O'HARE

Of each other. By reputation.

DOPE FIEND

Oooh, sounds like a cat fight to me! Come gather 'round!

GOLDMAN

(to STEIMER)

But you're here?

NOTE: STEIMER always speaks with strong physical gestures.

STEIMER

Mollie Steimer, political prisoner --
(holds up two fists)

Zero, zero.

DOPE FIEND

(imitating)

Zero, zero! What's that supposed to mean?

STEIMER

It means this, my friend: I didn't get here by way of dope or baby-killing or husband-slashing or selling off my vertical smile --

L'ARIAT

That's my game.

STEIMER

None of that!

L'ARIAT

Trying some "smile" might cool you down.

STEIMER

The dishonorable Henry D. Clayton gutted me with 15 years and deportation --

STEIMER sees that DOPE FIEND does not understand the term.

STEIMER

Deportation: kicking my filthy ass back across the ocean.

DOPE FIEND

Then that's what happened to me -- my mama "deportationed" me when I was eighteen -- except it was across the river out of town.

ADDIE

We all got that boot in the butt. But you --
(mimics STEIMER's gesture)
-- for what?

STEIMER

You ready?

ADDIE

You're ready.

STEIMER

For handing out a leaflet --

ADDIE

That man hated you 15 years into here for a leaf?

STEIMER

For a leaflet, for paper, a piece of paper that carried ideas.

ADDIE

C'mon -- paper?

STEIMER

No dynamite, no gunpowder, only ideas -- ideas he didn't like. An idea like a bullet through his brain. Your brain. So he took me in and zeroed me out.

(makes like she's boxing)

Zero, zero.

DOPE FIEND

Didn't know they could do that for things like that.

GOLDMAN

I am sorry about Jacob [pronounced "Jah-cub"]

DOPE FIEND

What's a "jah-cub"?

O'HARE

As am I.

STEIMER

Jacob Schwarz -- my friend.

L'ARIAT

I got friends.

STEIMER

The police shortened his sentence by beating him to death
--

DOPE FIEND

Man --

STEIMER

Saved themselves some money.

ADDIE

That's harsh -- thought only black men got lynched like that.

STEIMER

We were so fucking dangerous, Emma, we were, so fucking dangerous.

GOLDMAN

It's all right, it's all right -- stay close to me, Mollie -- stay close. Kate --

ADDIE

Didn't know they could do that for something in your mind.

GOLDMAN

Oh, yes.

DOPE FIEND

I wouldn't been able to read it anyway, so my mind would've been safe.

ADDIE

I wonder if I got anything that dangerous in me?

O'HARE

We all do.

L'ARIAT

Maybe -- but the men do whatever damn well pleases them.

DOPE FIEND

Even if it don't please them, they do it.

ADDIE

And then do it again.

L'ARIAT

And again.

O'HARE

Mollie --

STEIMER

I'm fine -- I've decided to do this like a cobra. You need to spend pity, spend it on these alley cats -- something useless for the useless.

GOLDMAN

Don't let your anger --

L'ARIAT
(to GOLDMAN)

She should give that lip a rest.

GOLDMAN

Stay by me.

L'ARIAT
(indicating STEIMER)

We got her sad-ass story.

(to O'HARE)

So what made you one of us useless?

O'HARE
(pointing to STEIMER)

Same thing -- words. Five years for a speech I gave.

L'ARIAT
Zero, zero, too -- come up snake-eyes and welcome to the useless!

(to STEIMER)

Cobra --

(dismissive)

-- yeah.

(to GOLDMAN)

And you?

GOLDMAN

Make it three -- too much talk, too big a mouth.

L'ARIAT
Big mouth, big words --
(to the others)
-- so what good has all their talking done?

GOLDMAN

I have been wondering that myself.

ADDIE

(to GOLDMAN)

Out there, can't think -- out there, can't talk -- kinda like in here.

DOPE FIEND

You fixing to join the "politicals"?

GOLDMAN

Politicals?

ADDIE

Quit cher bitching.

STEIMER

Even prison ranks the rank.

ADDIE

They smarter than us -- they should hang together.

GOLDMAN

Kate?

O'HARE

They think because we know long words we're better.

ADDIE

You are.

GOLDMAN

Do you know me?

DOPE FIEND

Not five minutes ago, and not now.

GOLDMAN

Emma Goldman.

Holds out her hand. DOPE FIEND shakes it, looking dubious.

ADDIE

You that kind of man woman?

GOLDMAN

Because I shake her hand?

DOPE FIEND

Ain't our custom.

GOLDMAN

Don't worry -- it won't hurt.

(holds up her hands)

My hands are empty, I come in peace.

(shakes ADDIE's hand)

Emma Goldman -- people called me the most dangerous woman in America.

L'ARIAT

You?

DOPE FIEND

Out there, maybe --

(indicating the three of them)

-- all your "talk" -- but now you about as dangerous as a pair of cut-off bull balls because you are with the biggest collection of trash I ever seen -- and you ain't even talked to them three yet, the loonies -- and I set myself right in the middle.

ADDIE

Me along with you.

DOPE FIEND

We thought we couldn't get any lower than what we had for our lives.

ADDIE

But we was wrong. Addie.

DOPE FIEND

Dope Fiend.

TOGETHER

Colored women on the wrong side of Jesus and the law.

ADDIE

My man played me false. I falsified his life.

DOPE FIEND

I ate the black power of dope, and now it eats me.

ADDIE

He went to one hell. I came here.

DOPE FIEND

And when I got here, they took the dope away.

ADDIE

Her body screamed.

DOPE FIEND

Not sex, not food -- only "I want dope" kept ringing in my ears. Still.

ADDIE

And another sin -- I killed my unborn baby.

DOPE FIEND

Me, too.

ADDIE

Unwanted.

DOPE FIEND

Wanted, but not to a crazy mother.

ADDIE

Ended the life before --

DOPE FIEND

-- my life ended it.

ADDIE

They found out --

DOPE FIEND

-- and added the sin to my sentence.

ADDIE

Ten years.

DOPE FIEND

A dozen.

TOGETHER

Two colored women on the wrong side of Jesus and the law.

ADDIE

Jesus supposedly loved such as us out there.

DOPE FIEND

But in here he just ain't got the time.

TOGETHER

Amen.

ADDIE

We're all payin' for men in here, one way or another.

DOPE FIEND

Amen to that, and give me some slide.

They exchange "skin."

GOLDMAN

I want to talk with you more later. I know so little about your people.

ADDIE

Do you mean "people," like my folks, people, or a race thing?

DOPE FIEND

Give Ethiopia a rest! She big on Marcus Garvey.

GOLDMAN

Everything. I know so little -- I don't even know who Garvey is.

DOPE FIEND

Don't get her started!

ADDIE

Yeah?

GOLDMAN

Yes.

ADDIE

I'd be honored to talk.

DOPE FIEND

Well. Count me in, too.

(to EMMA)

You the first white person I seen her speak civil to without threat of a lynch behind it. Can you bottle what you got?

GOLDMAN

I didn't know I was white.

DOPE FIEND

Course you are.

ADDIE

I think maybe she ain't.

DOPE FIEND

And I think maybe you cracked.

GOLDMAN

It's all right -- we're all a little cracked.

DOPE FIEND

Some more than others.

ADDIE and DOPE FIEND move away, arguing -- they don't hear GOLDMAN speak to them. L'ARIAT hovers on the edge.

GOLDMAN

That's why we have to "stick" together -- They missed my glue pun. Mollie, Mollie, where are you -- oh, good. Mollie -- it's all here, isn't it? No different here than out there. We "politicals" have work to do.

O'HARE

Emma --

GOLDMAN

It's the only way we'll all stay intact.

O'HARE

Yes, yes -- but pay attention and listen to me. They don't care a lick about "speeches" --

L'ARIAT

Personally, I hate being speeched to.

O'HARE

Unless we have some new way to pick the mealy bugs out of the breakfast porridge.

L'ARIAT

That would be helpful.

O'HARE

Noun/verb, Emma -- that's the only grammar. No "falutin'," high or otherwise.

GOLDMAN

Are you trying to tell me something?

STEIMER

Personally --

GOLDMAN

What? Out with it.

STEIMER

Out there -- I thought you were getting too much gas under your skirts.

GOLDMAN

You thought I was passing wind, eh?

STEIMER

Belching.

GOLDMAN

Mind-farts.

STEIMER

All those no-testicle radicals out there you hung around with --

GOLDMAN

Even Berkman?

STEIMER

He's all wool and a yard wide -- but the rest of those nannies! They should spend some time in here flicking the cockroaches off the lunch table --

L'ARIAT

(makes a flicking motion)

Ping!

STEIMER

It would purge a lot of their thought-crap and straighten their spines.

GOLDMAN

My next book gets dedicated to the mealy-bugs.

O'HARE

There have been worse teachers.

STEIMER

Emma -- a lot of shit here to get to the gold.

GOLDMAN

The shit is the gold, Mollie. Let's dig.

O'HARE

Lead on, McDuff.

L'ARIAT

Come here.

L'ARIAT takes GOLDMAN to MINNIE EDDY. The others trail behind.

L'ARIAT

Try to dig through this shit.

GOLDMAN

I'm Emma Goldman.

EDDY cowers at first from the outstretched hand, then, in a very tentative but decided manner, she reaches out and touches GOLDMAN on the arm. She lets her hand linger, and GOLDMAN takes her hand in both her hands and simply holds it.

EDDY

Feels good.

GOLDMAN

What's your name?

EDDY

Minnie Eddy.

GOLDMAN

Emma Goldman.

EDDY

Short for Miniver. Ugly.

GOLDMAN

It's a very nice name. Better than "Em-ma" -- like two letters of the alphabet and a grunt.

O'HARE

Or "Kate" -- like a sneeze.

STEIMER

Or --

(overemphasizing the "ee" sound)

-- "Mollie" --

GOLDMAN
(to STEIMER)

Good!

STEIMER

I always wanted --

(in a Slavic accent)

-- a big Russian name -- like, Sophia Perovskaya.

GOLDMAN

Ah -- good choice.

STEIMER

Miniver is nice -- easy on the tongue.

STEIMER puts her hand on the coupled hands of GOLDMAN and EDDY; so does O'HARE. Momentary sharing, then GOLDMAN tries to let go of EDDY's hand.

EDDY

Don't.

EDDY looks embarrassed at her insistence and pulls her hand away. ADDIE and DOPE FIEND join the group, their argument finished. AGGIE also joins but hangs, like a frightened little dog, on the fringe; she mimes carrying a dog in her arms, petting it, but pays close attention. INDIAN ALICE stays by herself.

EDDY

Sorry. Got no right to impose. Go back to your friends.

L'ARIAT

She's cracked from floor to ceiling.

DOPE FIEND
(to L'ARIAT)

Just the size of your own crack.

L'ARIAT

Jealous!

DOPE FIEND

Of a dry well? Ha!

GOLDMAN
(looking at everyone)
We're all friends here, Miss Miniver.
(takes her hand back)
Tell me more.

EDDY
(touched)
Miss Miniver.

EDDY Brings GOLDMAN slightly away from the group.

EDDY
I can never make the task.

L'ARIAT
(loudly)
She can't make the task.

EDDY
Never.

L'ARIAT
She can't.

EDDY
My fingers get nervous, my mind rattles, my eyes wing off
somewhere --

L'ARIAT
No focus!

EDDY
I already got sent to the hole once.

L'ARIAT
She makes it hard for all of us. She almost got us all sent
to the hole.

ADDIE
That's true.

L'ARIAT

Think you can dig through her shit a little to make it easier
for all of us? Now, that would be helpful.

DOPE FIEND

Why you fussing with this loser?

GOLDMAN

I fussed with you.

ADDIE

(snaps her fingers)

Quick!

(to DOPE FIEND)

Gotcha!

GOLDMAN

(to EDDY)

Go on.

EDDY

If I rush -- blam! all over the place. If I go slow -- behind
from jump. Then the numbers start nibbling at me again.
The foreman hates me --

L'ARIAT

He hates everyone.

DOPE FIEND

(deep voice)

"Be perfect in all regards."

ADDIE

(deep voice)

"Have no imperfections in my eyes."

DOPE FIEND

"One slip, and I will throw you down the hill like the rock of
Sisyphus" -- whoever that be.

EDDY

Stop it!

L'ARIAT

Look who's piping up!
(to GOLDMAN)
That's new for her.

EDDY

(looks embarrassed at her outburst)
He wants me to lick up shame, so he erases my numbers
from the book.
(to the others)
Just like he does to all of you!
(again, embarrassed)
The book says everything, Miss Emma. The book has my
number in it.

GOLDMAN

Is this true?

O'HARE

He does it to all of us.

STEIMER

He's all the gods boiled down to a whip.

GOLDMAN

(to ALL)

Is it? True?
(no one assents or dissents)
We've got to stop that.

DOPE FIEND

Well --

GOLDMAN

I do have lungs and a tongue -- they used to be worth
shooting off.

DOPE FIEND

It don't do to push.

ADDIE

And you calling her a loser?

(to GOLDMAN)

I don't know how, but I agree with the trying.

DOPE FIEND

(muttering)

Political.

GOLDMAN

(to EDDY)

We'll do something.

EDDY

You can't. But thanks. I'll let go now.

GOLDMAN

But don't go far.

GOLDMAN sees AGGIE MYERS.

GOLDMAN

Is that a dog?

MYERS

Yes. Can't have.

GOLDMAN

I'm just surprised to see something other than bugs and rats.

MYERS

Riggles is my baby doll. Won't beg anything for myself, but I will for him. He needs the best. The dog is good.

GOLDMAN

I'm sure it is. And who are you?

MYERS

The dog is good. Aggie Myers. It was over a card game.

GOLDMAN

(to STEIMER)

Card game?

MYERS

Where's Riggles? Oh, good, good.

GOLDMAN

She's not here for a card game?

STEIMER

Murder.

GOLDMAN indicates MYERS, as if to say, "Her?"

DOPE FIEND

She started petting that -- thing the day she got here.

ADDIE

Like some hug their money.

DOPE FIEND

Like some have to breathe.

MYERS

The boarder. Yes, yes!

L'ARIAT

Now you got her ticking!

MYERS

My husband and I ran the boarding house.

L'ARIAT

"It was a card game."

MYERS

It was a card game. The boarder shouted at my husband,
"You had that ace shoved up your arse!"

L'ARIAT

(echoing)

"--shoved up your arse" -- yeah, yeah --

MYERS

I was eighteen -- what did I know about arse?

L'ARIAT

I knew all about "arse" at --

GOLDMAN gestures for her to stop.

MYERS

They fought -- cards went everywhere. They said I did it. Not me, Riggles, not me. The poker. He said I used the poker -- on my husband. Playing poker! They believed him. I was eighteen. Rope -- that's what they wanted. But I was eighteen, so they changed it to life. Life and rope. Riggles? Ah, good.

MYERS starts to wander away.

GOLDMAN

Wait!

GOLDMAN "pets" the dog.

GOLDMAN

You take good care of him.

MYERS

(indicating the dog)

Life -- not rope. Yes.

MYERS goes back to the fringe.

GOLDMAN

Life or rope.

DOPE FIEND

Got no hope.

ADDIE

Tell it to the Pope!

They give each other some "slide."

STEIMER

(to GOLDMAN, indicating MYERS)

How do you fix that without some dynamite?

L'ARIAT

My turn.

O'HARE
(to STEIMER)

And how would dynamite mend her?

L'ARIAT

My turn.

STEIMER

The Apocalypse would do us all some good -- blow away
all the slime!

L'ARIAT

My turn, Red Emma.

GOLDMAN

Mollie -- "Red Emma" -- how'd you get that name?

L'ARIAT

I have heard about you. My mother went to one of your
birth control lectures once.

(indicating herself)

Obviously, it didn't work.

GOLDMAN

Maybe she wanted you.

DOPE FIEND

Who'd want her?

L'ARIAT

Hard to tell who wanted what in my family. Dad kept slinging
it in, and Mom just kept slinging 'em out. I acquired a taste
for the "slinging in." Hey, do you like my name?

GOLDMAN

What is your name?

L'ARIAT

Evelyn L'Ariat. L-A-R-I-A-T. The streetwalker "lariat" -- wrap that noose around 'em and pull 'em in! I just Frenchified it a little with that --

(makes an "apostrophe" with her finger)

-- to make it stand out. But not much trade in here, at least in what I like.

DOPE FIEND

A streetwalker with no street.

L'ARIAT

But I should be out soon -- I ain't worried.

ADDIE

You know they're worried when they say they ain't worried.

L'ARIAT

All right, then -- maybe a little.

DOPE FIEND

Maybe a lot.

L'ARIAT

See, my "sin" -- my "crime" -- was that I decided I could keep a little more of the money if I slipped around on my own.

DOPE FIEND

Uh-huh.

L'ARIAT

But the big hairy power boys said no, no, no. You have to split it with protector, police, and plug-ugly politicians (all of 'em got limp firehoses). So they faked me up on a charge of rolling a customer to teach me a lesson.

(snaps her fingers)

Small lesson, small potatoes -- I'm as taught as I'm going to get. A week more, tops.

EDDY

She's been saying that for a month now.

L'ARIAT

The ghost speaks!

(to GOLDMAN)

You gave her a tongue back. Yeah, so it's been a month
-- time moves different in here.

GOLDMAN

I was a streetwalker once.

STEIMER

You?

GOLDMAN

For a night.

L'ARIAT

Pick up my jaw!

O'HARE

Really?

GOLDMAN

For Sasha --

(to the others)

-- for my companion Sasha. Alexander Berkman.

O'HARE

The Frick assassination!

GOLDMAN

Attempted.

L'ARIAT

You're hooked up with an assassinator?

GOLDMAN

He needed money for a -- project.

O'HARE

(to L'ARIAT)

Mr. Berkman tried to kill a very rich and powerful man.

L'ARIAT

That's a good project.

STEIMER

Very good.

GOLDMAN

He needed money. So I was going to earn it on my back -- just for a night. To get money for a gun and a train ticket.

STEIMER

So what happened?

GOLDMAN

The first man -- the only man -- I picked up --

L'ARIAT

Too much talking with the wrong lips!

GOLDMAN

He took me to a saloon, bought me a beer, gave me \$10, and told me to give it up because I obviously didn't have the stomach -- or the skill. (I thought I had a little!) I never learned his name. I got \$10 more from my sister, and Sasha was on his way.

L'ARIAT

So you never actually did it?

GOLDMAN

Not in trade. But plenty of other times.

L'ARIAT

No wonder you were big on birth control.

GOLDMAN

I hope you do get out soon.

L'ARIAT

Matter of minutes. Days at the most. A week, tops.

MYERS

Riggles thinks it's going to be longer.

GOLDMAN

I don't doubt it for a moment.

L'ARIAT

What does a dog know?

Beat. Everyone looks at ALICE COX.

GOLDMAN

What?

O'HARE

(indicating ALICE COX)

Be careful of her. Syphilitic.

L'ARIAT

She's got a lock on the pox.

GOLDMAN

I thought so -- The modern leprosy. She doesn't have much time left, does she?

STEIMER

Dying seems to be the only thing she's good at.

GOLDMAN

We'd all live better if we were better at dying.

(to COX)

You. Yes, you. Hello. Hello.

COX

(tries to avoid her)

Unclean.

GOLDMAN

No, no -- just sick. Don't go away --

COX

Stay away. The worm is in me.

GOLDMAN

I am a nurse -- I trained in Europe. You know what it is you have?

COX

Punishment.

GOLDMAN

No, you're just sick, not evil.

COX

Evil is as evil's been done to me.

GOLDMAN

Do you have a name?

L'ARIAT

Go on, tell her -- we've all told her ours.

COX

Alice Cox. Stay away.

EDDY

Indian Alice.

GOLDMAN

What -- The word, Miss Miniver? Her people?

EDDY

Tribe.

GOLDMAN

What tribe?

COX

Forgotten. I am only this.

GOLDMAN

No.

COX

That is all I am.

GOLDMAN

No.

COX

But not always.

GOLDMAN

No.

COX

Not until they found the gold. It turned their blood black, their eyes black, their hearts -- He wanted me to take him to his claim, up the river, in the canoe. I did. But he hit me, hard, hit me again and again --

L'ARIAT
(quietly)

I know about that.

COX

And he dug into me like digging into the ground. So I killed him. I remember that. But his gold fever got all up inside me. They chained me and let it eat me inside.

STEIMER

It's been eleven years, Emma.

ADDIE

Sometimes her clothes get so stiff from the open sores --

DOPE FIEND

They rattle when she walks.

EDDY

I can hear her coming down the hall.

MYERS

Riggles cries for her.

COX
(with sudden clarity)

There was a time when life was not like this.

GOLDMAN

It can come again.

COX

When I die, life will not be like this. I will remember all the shining faces.

(she loses the clarity)

I am what greed does.

GOLDMAN

No. No. I'll try to help. I'm a nurse --

(to the others)

I cannot believe that they --

O'HARE

There's nothing you can do.

COX

(again, with clarity)

Nothing's left, Emma.

The WOMEN should be in close proximity to each other, a tableau of less separation than at the beginning of the scene if not yet real connection. GOLDMAN looks at each of them as the sound of the workshop machines comes up. As the sound gets **very** loud, they all break from the group and go to their workshop positions, doing their machine motions.

* * * * *

Scene 11

The FOREMAN enters with a STAGEHAND dressed in vest, suit, watch chain, etc.: the garb of a businessman. As they walk down the line, they argue.

WOMEN

(shouting over the noise)

"The Workshop."

The machine sounds dim to underscoring.

FOREMAN

I've got them working as fast as they can work.

MAN

Production is not enough.

FOREMAN

Things aren't entirely in my hands.

MAN

Your balls are in my hand. I don't want excuses.

FOREMAN

I don't work for you -- I work for the state of Missouri.

MAN

You don't work for me? All you slaves work for me.

During the next lines, the women bark out the name of the company for whom they're making the garment. As they do so, they mime holding up an article of clothing. MAN pushes WOMAN 9 over so she is on all fours, and he sits on her as if on a chair. The machine continues. MAN takes out a cigar and lights it -- it should actually be lit.

WOMAN 1

Defiance brand, Omaha, Nebraska.

FOREMAN pushes WOMAN 8 over and sits as well.

MAN

Boy, you're just a gear in the machine of profit.

WOMAN 2

Great Western, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

FOREMAN

I ain't a boy.

MAN

Let me sketch out the machine to you.

MAN rises. WOMAN 9 pops back to upright, continuing her machine motion.

WOMAN 9

S.J. Kacere, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

MAN

Twenty-six hundred inmates --

WOMEN 7, 6, 5, and 4 bend over at the waist. He walks on their backs as he talks. As he passes over each one, she pops back up and continues the machine. If the spacing is such that he can't walk from one to the next easily, the FOREMAN will scuttle between each woman to provide the bridge. In any case, the FOREMAN rises and walks along with him. WOMAN 8 pops back up and continues with the motion.

NOTE: If there is a concern about this action, then substitute any stage picture which gets across the notion of "making a profit off their backs."

WOMAN 8

Lincoln Jobbing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

MAN

And what do they do all day?

WOMAN 7

The Iron Brand, Des Moines, Iowa.

MAN

Nothing! Because they're discarded and useless and we can't hang everyone.

WOMAN 6

Sampson Brand, San Francisco, CA.

MAN

A mighty burden on the sovereign taxpayer. So in steps me -- the businessman savior!

FOREMAN

The bloodsucker.

MAN hits FOREMAN. MAN should be on WOMAN 4 by now.

MAN

Know your betters, asshole.

WOMAN 5

Magnet Brand, Los Angeles, CA.

MAN

If it weren't for me, you'd be on some shithole farm cracking corn and eating locusts.

He steps off her.

WOMAN 4

Smith, Follett, and Crowl, Fargo, North Dakota.

MAN pushes WOMEN 1 and 2 over; MAN and FOREMAN sit.

MAN

The state, in its infinite wisdom, sells these degenerates to me. The profit is all "velvet" because I don't have to wipe their asses -- you all do that work for me. But we have a problem.

FOREMAN

Not enough production.

MAN

You are learning quickly.

FOREMAN

Not enough "velvet."

MAN

Kerrect!

They rise. WOMEN 1 and 2 pop up and continue the machine. The two men in a weaving pattern among the women. The two strands of dialogue overlap.

WOMEN	FOREMAN / MAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WOMAN 9: These men make money• WOMAN 1: off our hands• WOMAN 8: or off our backs.• WOMAN 2: Fucked either way.• WOMAN 7: We're nothing but a sponge• WOMAN 3: for them to squeeze dry.• WOMAN 6: Same old story.• WOMAN 4: Slavery never ended.• WOMAN 5: This must end now.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FOREMAN: But the machines are old --• MAN: So fix 'em quicker.• FOREMAN: They're lazy.• MAN: Punish 'em more.• FOREMAN: It'll kill 'em.• MAN: We'll get fresh meat.• FOREMAN: There's a limit.

FOREMAN

There's a limit!

MAN

(grinding cigar in FOREMAN's palm)

That's where you're wrong. The only limit is in your imagination. Be imaginative. I have faith in you.

The FOREMAN grips his hand in agony as the MAN exits. There is a beat as the women work with the machine sound underscoring and the FOREMAN watches them in his pain. The sound of the machine rapidly gets louder as the FOREMAN becomes more and more enraged looking at the women until his rage and the sound peaks. He screams at them, a loud inarticulate howl, and the sound bumps out abruptly. The FOREMAN exits. The machine continues "working" in silence.

* * * * *

Scene 12

GOLDMAN

"On The Nature of Proportionate Punishment"

ALL

"A Treatise."

MINNIE EDDY collapses from exhaustion. The machine stops. The FOREMAN enters, hand bandaged. GOLDMAN goes to EDDY.

GOLDMAN

She needs help.

FOREMAN

She's a sneak.

GOLDMAN

She's sick. Any idiot can see that.

FOREMAN

I'm not an idiot, so I don't see it. She's already cost me plenty. She's gonna pay back.

EDDY stirs.

FOREMAN

Back to your machine!

EDDY sees GOLDMAN.

EDDY

Like a knife behind my ears.

FOREMAN

Get up, you bitch!

GOLDMAN

Watch your tongue!

FOREMAN

Do you want the hole, too?

GOLDMAN

I want you to act like a decent human being!

FOREMAN

In this place?

GOLDMAN

Anywhere.

FOREMAN

A luxury. This worthless scrap has never made the task.
Guard!

STAGEHAND enters, a prison GUARD.

FOREMAN

Chuck her in the hole. Might as well finish it off.

GOLDMAN

You can't do that!

FOREMAN

Can -- and will. With pleasure.

ADDIE stands.

ADDIE

We need her to help us all make the task.

DOPE FIEND stands.

DOPE FIEND

We'll give her a hand. Two hands.

MYERS

Don't take her to the hole.

FOREMAN

(to GOLDMAN)

What've you been doing?

STEIMER

I will help her make the task.

L'ARIAT

Well, hell -- I got two hands that can work with all of yours.

O'HARE

We know how important it is to you for us all to make the task.

COX stands, remaining silent, but fixes her look on the FOREMAN.

O'HARE

(with gentle emphasis)

The task -- the task is what's important.

FOREMAN

(to GOLDMAN)

You've been making them think too hard -- all of you thinking too hard! -- and you've bitched it for them making them think they got hope. Them? Stopping me? That'll be the day.

The GUARD takes EDDY roughly from GOLDMAN and starts to walk. The WOMEN all take one step closer to each other, as if to block the GUARD's way.

FOREMAN

The hole has a never-ending appetite, my sweeties. Dope Fiend, Addie -- all of you. I know your privileges. I know your hungers. Red Emma here -- she's just piss on a hot stove. Ssssst! I'm here for a long, long time.

(to the GUARD)

Go.

Once again the GUARD moves to go. The WOMEN don't break immediately, but they have heard the FOREMAN, and after a moment's hesitation, they step back.

EDDY

(as she's led off, to them all)

Thank you. Bless you.

The GUARD brings EDDY center stage. The WOMEN except GOLDMAN become the "hole," kneeling on the floor on three sides with their backs to EDDY. The GUARD roughly puts EDDY in the cell; GUARD and FOREMAN exit.

GOLDMAN

The hole, Hannah. The last circle of the last circle of hell.
A coffin without last rites. The poor frightened broken child.
A thin mattress, damp floor, moldy bread, rancid water -- all
for her crime of not making enough "velvet."

GOLDMAN joins them. The following lines should be underscored by discordant music or sound.

EDDY

So cold. My bones -- melt. Can't eat the bread. The rats
get it. The numbers. Like the rats -- nibble, nibble, nibble.
Ahhhh! I am a good girl, I am. No harm to anyone. Always
quiet. Quiet, quiet. Shhh! I can hear their claws. Let me
out of here! I'll work hard, I will. I promise. I'll make the
numbers. Quiet, quiet. Shhh! They're singing -- I can hear
their squeals. Little pips, little squeaks. So tiny. Let me
go! Let me -- ahhh! I am a good girl! I'll work hard! I'll do
the task!

EDDY stops.

EDDY

Become one of them, I will -- hard little paws, brown fur.
They can move anywhere they want. Up. Down. Out. Out.
Out. I have always been a good girl. I have always been
a good girl.

Music/sound out. There is a moment of complete rest and silence as EDDY slumps inside the cell. The WOMEN pivot to face her, still kneeling on the floor. As they speak, EDDY comes to consciousness and stands with an air of calm, and for the first time she looks like a full human being. Then, in a coöordinated move, the WOMEN rise at the same time and speak.

COX

Two to 15 days was usually the limit.

ADDIE
(echoing)

The limit.

L'ARIAT

They kept her twenty-one.

MYERS

Not always bread every day.

ALL

The rats were angry then.

O'HARE

I wrote to the warden, but he wouldn't interfere.

ADDIE

One of the earth's wasted.

DOPE FIEND

(echoing)

Wasted.

STEIMER

The man always disposes.

GOLDMAN

They let her out for Thanksgiving.

ALL

Giving thanks.

DOPE FIEND

They shoulda just cut her throat.

COX & L'ARIAT

She hadn't eaten for so long --

ADDIE & STEIMER

-- she filled her gut with that questionable food --

O'HARE & DOPE FIEND

-- it was like she'd taken the hole inside her --

GOLDMAN & MYERS

-- and it cut through her like glass.

GOLDMAN

That night.

DOPE FIEND

(echo)

That night.

O'HARE

In her cell.

ADDIE

(echo)

Her cell.

L'ARIAT

Her insides --

L'ARIAT & COX

Rotted with --

COX

The food that couldn't nourish --

MYERS

Her stomach burst --

STEIMER

And her heart gave up --

ALL

Her heart gave out.

As GOLDMAN steps forward to speak, EDDY suddenly crumples and falls into their arms. They bear her offstage repeating the following chant.

Minnie -- Eddy -- will work -- no more
Minnie -- Eddy -- stands on -- the shore
Death -- takes -- her by -- the arm
And Death -- will shield -- her from -- all harm.

GOLDMAN

The matron threw cold water on her, slapped her several times, and told her to get off the floor. She never summoned the doctor. She died the next day, rotted from the inside out, poisoned without remorse.

GOLDMAN finishes; the chant finishes. Lights go to a single downlight on GOLDMAN, who curls into a fetal position in the "hole." Lights out.

* * * * *

Scene 13

The sound of the workshop machine. The women come in and take their places and start the machine motion. The MATRON stands at attention, watching everyone. EDDY will join the work line, but she is clearly a spirit -- this should be indicated by some simple change, such as a wearing a white dress. She moves at her own pace in the machine -- she is no longer part of that rhythm. EDDY will float through the remaining prison scenes, reacting as she chooses to the events. Lights up.

WOMEN (ODD NUMBERS)

"A Bit of Defiance"

WOMEN (EVEN NUMBERS)

"In the Alliance."

MATRON

Si-lence! You know the rules. No talking while you work.

The women speak in loud whispers.

O'HARE

(to GOLDMAN)

I got the chewing gum.

GOLDMAN

So did I.

L'ARIAT

(to everyone)

Did you hear that? Gum!

MATRON

I said si-lence! I mean si-lence!

ADDIE

She's such a cow.

STEIMER

At least a real cow gives milk.

DOPE FIEND

Her titties is pretty useless.

MATRON

I see you moving your lips. If you're moving your lips, you're talking, and I don't want anyone talking!

MYERS

I'm not talking! They'll take Riggles!

COX

I can't feel my teeth.

The MATRON walks among them, and as she walks she does a little something to each one, except EDDY, just to annoy the person and assert her power: a flick of the ear, etc.

MATRON

I told you I didn't want to see any talking. You know the rules: complete silence.

L'ARIAT

Lick me.

MATRON

What? Who said that?

L'ARIAT smiles, shrugs. The next comments are done so that they are said when the MATRON has her back turned. The MATRON can never catch the culprit, but she increases her petty punishments, hitting people at random. She can intersperse such lines as "I'm warning you" or "You'll get yours."

ADDIE

Dried-up left tit.

DOPE FIEND

Dried-up right tit.

MYERS

Dog -- shit.

COX

Pus.

STEIMER

Thug.

ADDIE

(pronounced "hor-nee" with a pig squeal)

Horn-y!

COX

Seal fat.

DOPE FIEND

Queer.

MYERS

Woof!

L'ARIAT

Lick me.

MATRON

Enough! One more, and you're all in the hole. I will bury you, just like that sniveling little bitch Minnie Eddy!

They fall silent, knowing she can and will make good on her threat. They continue working.

MATRON

Better. Much better. Break!

The women stand wearily. The machine sounds stop. GOLDMAN and O'HARE consult.

O'HARE

Should we?

GOLDMAN

We should.

They walk down the line handing out chewing gum (mimed). At first they give a piece or two to each person, but something happens: they all look

at each other chewing and enjoying it, and they start to smile. O'HARE indicates, "Would you like some more?", and they all nod yes. So, with a wink at each other, GOLDMAN and O'HARE start handing out more until people are chewing gum like cud and laughing -- all silently. The MATRON bellows.

MATRON

Break over!

The women go back to work, chewing madly, with a smile. Machine sounds begin.

MATRON

I can see your lips moving. What did I tell you?

She gets off her box and walks down to the line and leans over each of them as if to catch them saying something. But they don't say a word, just chew, exaggeratedly, and smile. The MATRON is exasperated.

* * * * *

Scene 14

FOREMAN enters. He is still wearing his bandage. Machine sound stops; the women stop. He reads a letter, evidently with some distaste. He finishes, looks at the MATRON, then crumples it and puts it in his pocket.

ALL WOMEN

"The Taming of the Shrew."

The FOREMAN goes to L'ARIAT and pulls her from the line. The other women stand. MATRON motions: machine sounds out.

FOREMAN

Pretty lady.

He traces the outline of her body with his crop as he talks and circles her.

FOREMAN

Do you believe in the Lord?

L'ARIAT

(nervous laugh)

Depends on what he's willing to pay.

FOREMAN

Do you believe in the Lord?

L'ARIAT

It's not necessary in my line of work.

GOLDMAN

The young prostitutes, Hannah, were sent there by their masters.

FOREMAN

Do you believe in sin?

GOLDMAN

If they became too independent.

L'ARIAT

I believe in sin if people'll pay for it.

FOREMAN

Do you believe in an immortal soul?

GOLDMAN

A whore can't be allowed to think for herself.

L'ARIAT

I only have a soul in the dark late at night.

FOREMAN

Do you believe in forgiveness?

L'ARIAT

Live and let live.

FOREMAN

Such innocence.

GOLDMAN

So they break them.

FOREMAN

Unfortunately, your protector can't afford to be so generous.
Or patient.

L'ARIAT

So I guess not my "protector" anymore.

FOREMAN

Never was to begin with.

GOLDMAN rushes into the scene.

GOLDMAN

(to FOREMAN)

Sorry. Sorry. Evelyn, we need you in the shop. The break's over.

FOREMAN

Get out of here again.

GOLDMAN

I will, sir, yes, in a moment, as soon as I get Evelyn back to work.

(looks at the MATRON)

The matron is getting angry. C'mon, Evelyn.

GOLDMAN takes her by the arm. The FOREMAN shoves GOLDMAN away.

FOREMAN

(to the MATRON)

Take your break. Go on!

GOLDMAN looks at the MATRON, who hesitates, then exits.

FOREMAN

(to GOLDMAN)

I told you to get away.

The other WOMEN move in.

FOREMAN

Oh, Christ, not again!

L'ARIAT

Emma's right -- I should go back to work.

FOREMAN

You are not going anywhere anymore. You, you sow --
(pushes GOLDMAN again)

You have business of your own to mind.
(to the others)

So do all of you.

DOPE FIEND

We know what you're gonna to do her.

ADDIE

(to L'ARIAT)

You know, don't you?

L'ARIAT

Occupational hazard.

GOLDMAN

What?

FOREMAN

All of you shut up.

DOPE FIEND

They brand her.

GOLDMAN

Brand her?

ADDIE

Hot coals.

MYERS

Everywhere.

GOLDMAN

Is that true?

FOREMAN

A useless whore needs to be made useless.

GOLDMAN

You'd do that?

FOREMAN

I don't have a choice.

GOLDMAN

Who told you to do that?

STEIMER

There's always a choice about being a bastard.

GOLDMAN

Who told you to do that?

ADDIE

Maybe he was just born a bastard.

MYERS

Born a bastard.

FOREMAN

Shut up.

MYERS

Sorry.

DOPE FIEND

Under a dark star.

ADDIE

From a black hole.

FOREMAN
(to GOLDMAN)

I don't answer to you.

(to L'ARIAT)

And no more shit from your "comrades." Let's go.

GOLDMAN

You can't do this.

FOREMAN

You have no idea what you're talking about.

GOLDMAN

I know exactly what I'm talking about.

L'ARIAT

(to GOLDMAN)

It's going to be all right.

FOREMAN

Not unless you got the second coming of Christ coming
right now.

GOLDMAN

I know exactly what I'm talking about, and I'm not moving.
Goons like you are like farts at a bean dinner: no big deal.

STEIMER

Damn ripe.

ADDIE

Damn straight.

MYERS

Damn him to hell -- oh --

GOLDMAN

I don't care who told you to do what you're going to do. No
real man -- no real man -- bends over like that for anyone
anytime. No real man shifts his pants and calls it gold.

The FOREMAN, with L'ARIAT in tow, goes to move out. GOLDMAN stands in his way. He goes to move around her, and again is blocked when STEIMER links her arm through GOLDMAN's. Each time the FOREMAN moves, two WOMEN link arms (this includes EDDY). Even COX is part of this action, though she stands apart, afraid of infecting someone. Their "resistance" is completely without confrontation or violence, even when he threatens to strike them. It extends what they did when he came for EDDY. Finally he comes back to GOLDMAN.

FOREMAN

You. Will. Not.

The FOREMAN forces GOLDMAN to the ground and takes L'ARIAT. STEIMER kneels to help GOLDMAN.

L'ARIAT

Emma, it's all right. Looks like I'm going to be here longer than a week, tops.

As they exit, the WOMEN follow until they cannot go any farther.

DOPE FIEND

(to GOLDMAN)

They have a special room.

ADDIE

Handcuffs hanging from the ceiling.

STEIMER

No!

ADDIE

Hang 'em high!

MYERS

Burn them.

STEIMER

No!

COX

Blister them to death -- I know --

STEIMER

Get this out of my head!

O'HARE

It will never leave.

STEIMER

Get it out! Get it out!

GOLDMAN goes to comfort STEIMER. Suddenly, MYERS grabs the palm of her right hand, holding it up as if it has been burned. DOPE FIEND grabs her left breast in pain. ADDIE grabs her left palm in pain. COX grabs

her right breast in pain. STEIMER puts her hands over her face in pain. O'HARE grabs her stomach in pain. All of them, including GOLDMAN, then put their hands over their crotches in pain and collapse to the floor. They look at one another in astonishment; EDDY watches in great sorrow. The branding is done. The MATRON enters and sees them. Lights to black.

NOTE: Do not use screams to show the pain but other vocalizations: grunts, a word, etc.

* * * * *

Scene 15

In the darkness, a hymn or some kind of religious music is played. The WOMEN stand, including EDDY and L'ARIAT. While L'ARIAT shows no physical injury, she should now act as if she is injured and disfigured. The GUARD, now dressed as the PREACHER, stands on the "cell" and preaches. The FOREMAN stands next to him with a variety of accouterments that the PREACHER will use. Comments from the WOMEN will intersperse the sermons. Music dims to underscoring.

WOMEN 1-4

"The Snows Of Mercy"

WOMEN 5-9

"Fall On All Mankind."

Lights up.

PREACHER 9

In this season of Our Lord's birth, we should give thanks for the lives his love has given us.

GOLDMAN

The preachers, Hannah. What a rack of rancid Lamb of God. They wafted through like skunk cabbage.

PREACHER 9

You are fallen women, deep in sin, but God loves you still.

ADDIE

Back-handed way of showing it.

PREACHER 9

(now wearing the miter of a bishop)

Through confession and honest sorrow for your sins, Jesus,
who died on the cross for you, will bring you eternal life.

STEIMER

J.P. Morgan dumped them into the gutter, you crack-faced
eunuch.

PREACHER 9

(now wearing the hat of the Salvation Army)

Join the army of God and fight as a soldier for Christ.

L'ARIAT

(holds up the palms of her hands)

Where was the Celestial General when they branded me?

PREACHER 9

(wearing the hat of a country preacher)

Scarlet whores of Babylon! He will burn your flesh in his
righteousness!

COX

(L'ARIAT holds up her hands again)

My flesh already burns. Why does he blame me?

PREACHER 9

(wearing a heavy gold cross)

The Light of God is Love. We must rise to the apotheosis of
his expectations for our goodness.

ALL

What?

PREACHER 9

I mean, God guides us through the hurly-burly of the warp
and woof of our tangled lives.

EDDY

He needs to be shot in the head twice a day to before he
can know anything.

PREACHER 9

(now wearing a flowered hat)

And we at the Ethical Society --

O'HARE

She's never slept with vermin.

PREACHER 9

-- want you to know --

ADDIE

Never had to make task.

PREACHER 9

-- that the uplift of your souls --

MYERS

I only love Riggles!

PREACHER 9

-- is what prompts us to dispel your ignorance.

DOPE FIEND

She clearly ain't got nothing goin' on underneath her hat or her skirts.

The FOREMAN helps the PREACHER down and they exit.

WOMEN 1-3

The prison punishes the sinner --

WOMEN 4-6

The Church punishes the sin --

WOMEN 7-9

They both do it forever.

GOLDMAN

What a --

On GOLDMAN's next line, the four pairs of WOMEN do a choreographed dance step together, like a minuet.

GOLDMAN

Perfect pas de deux.

Lights change. They are in the yard.

ADDIE

Man, I hate those frog-faced mumblers. Father Dill-Pickle.

O'HARE

Reverend Apple Dumpling.

MYERS

Preacher Blinky Milk.

STEIMER

Elder Cream Puff.

COX

Deacon Pie-Face.

DOPE FIEND

Lady Bite-Me.

GOLDMAN

All your names have to do with eating!

L'ARIAT

I bet you even Jesus wouldn't come here.

GOLDMAN

He's already here.

O'HARE

Why, Emma -- I never heard you say a good thing about religion!

ADDIE

You made a buck talkin' down religious? Sign me up! I always hated the feelin' of rope around my neck.

GOLDMAN

(to O'HARE)

Don't get your hopes up. Christ was a bootlicker.

(to ADDIE)

"Talkin' down religious" is easy -- the Bibble --

DOPE FIEND

The Bibble!

GOLDMAN

-- is the stupidest book ever written.

O'HARE

A bootlicker.

GOLDMAN

Without a doubt.

O'HARE

I have felt Christ more here in this cesspit than I have anywhere.

ADDIE

Hissy fight on the rise.

GOLDMAN

I'm not surprised -- he likes the low places.

MYERS

God exists -- look at Riggles!

COX

He walks around at night and heals us. Some of us. I don't deserve it.

GOLDMAN

Stop that!

(to O'HARE)

What have you been feeding them?

O'HARE

(shrugs her shoulders good-naturedly)

Comes right out of their own needs.

GOLDMAN
(indicating COX)

Do any more of you believe what she said?

L'ARIAT
I've been crucified -- why not?

STEIMER
Emma, this might not be a good idea.

ADDIE
I don't believe the crud-ups that come and talk to us, but
I always been taught that Jesus loved the trash. That's
surely, surely us, ain't it?

MYERS
Jesus the bringer of light!

O'HARE
I couldn't agree more. Jesus the Man, that is. He'd never
like Deacon Pie-Face. All his friends came from the "trash"
--

(to ADDIE)
-- you're right -- and he grabbed his Apostles from the low
places.

GOLDMAN
Kate, stop, stop it, please!

ADDIE
The politicals got a contention goin'!

GOLDMAN
Jesus was a slavemaster! All right there in his own words!

STEIMER
Emma --

L'ARIAT
Let 'em go. It passes the time.

O'HARE
He spoke truth to power.

GOLDMAN

He spoke --

(hesitating)

-- shit.

ADDIE

Yee-haw!

GOLDMAN

I can see it now. Everybody, just look at it with me. This scraggly bearded tumbleweed blown in from the desert tells anybody he can round up they have to wait until the kingdom is at hand -- but in the meantime they're going to have to suffer -- and old Pilate giving him the thumbs-up -- go Jesus! -- because that's exactly the plan the Romans have in mind: make 'em wait and make 'em suffer.

COX & MYERS

What?

ADDIE

I get it!

GOLDMAN

Simple, simple point. Follow me on this, Kate. The Sermon on the Mount?

ADDIE

All them "Blesseds."

GOLDMAN

Remember any?

L'ARIAT

Blessed are the meek --

GOLDMAN

-- for they shall inherit the earth.

(indicates all of them)

Well, my fellow meek, any of you have a deed in your hands?

DOPE FIEND

I got cockroaches and rat bites.

O'HARE
(to GOLDMAN)

You know that wasn't the spirit of --

GOLDMAN
Why tell people they'll get a cut of the action --
(to DOPE FIEND)

-- see, I got your lingo! -- a cut if they turn both cheeks? The last thing the meek need is to be more meek! It's all been stolen from them because they've been busy --
(turning her head back and forth)
-- turning their cheeks.

MYERS
Blessed are they that hunger -- that hunger --

GOLDMAN
Kate?

O'HARE
(with a slight exasperation)
And thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

GOLDMAN
(overlapping)
-- for they shall be filled, thank you. Okay, how?

COX
How what?

GOLDMAN
How? How are all these righteously hungry people going to get filled while the meek are busy turning their cheeks --
(turns her head back and forth again)
-- and the Romans sitting there with all the guns, so to speak? Our Christ-boy was long on advice, short on follow-through.

MYERS
What do you think, Riggles?

GOLDMAN

And you don't get to enjoy anything here! "For great is your reward in heaven." Couldn't he advance you a loan, just a little --

DOPE FIEND

A loan!

GOLDMAN

-- so that none of you would have to break your back for a wage or a trick?

ADDIE

Go down, Moses!

STEIMER

Emma -- your audience.

GOLDMAN pauses for a moment, caught up in her own rhythm, and slowly looks at all of them.

GOLDMAN

You're right.

(to O'HARE)

She's right. Well, enough. You get my point: I don't like what he teaches. Just look at us -- we've done what we've done -- do you see evil sinners, eternal damnation? I don't. The only good thing he ever said -- love each other. We could all do more of that.

O'HARE

I'll agree there.

COX comes up to GOLDMAN and holds out a hand.

COX

Love me?

Without a hesitation, GOLDMAN places her left palm against COX's right palm.

GOLDMAN

Especially you, Indian Alice

L'ARIAT puts her right palm against COX's left palm.

L'ARIAT

We're both branded.

MYERS puts one hand against L'ARIAT's hand, one hand clutching the dog.

MYERS

I got no one left.

O'HARE puts a hand on MYERS' shoulder, and holds out her other hand.

O'HARE

Links have all sorts of metal in them.

ADDIE joins.

ADDIE

I have to believe somethin'. Might as well be you.

STEIMER joins.

STEIMER

I believe in circles -- and enough goddam ammunition for everyone.

DOPE FIEND joins.

DOPE FIEND

First time in a long while I ain't got the hungers.

As DOPE FIEND's hand goes to join GOLDMAN's, EDDY steps in between them so their hands join across her back. There are several beats of silence, then the heavy sound of bells signaling the end of recreation. The women file off.

O'HARE
(to EMMA)

Just be sure to disinfect that hand. And Evelyn's.

GOLDMAN

I believe in science as well as solidarity! Come help me.

They link arms and leave. Lights out.

* * * * *

Scene 16

Music: something Celtic/Christmas. GOLDMAN enters; lights up on GOLDMAN as she moves around the stage. She should move into and out of nine pools of light, her gestures implying that she is leaving and paying a kind of last tribute in the individual cells of her cellmates. The cell lights cross fade as she leaves one and enters another.

GOLDMAN

We had a rollicking Christmas, Hannah. I had my friends send me bracelets, ear-rings, necklaces, brooches -- we doubled the value of Woolworth's stock! While they were at the movies on Christmas eve, Mollie, Kate, and I divvied up and with the help of a floor matron we played Santa, slipping into the cells, aprons stuffed with goods. And when they returned -- the place echoed like a nursery. On a day celebrating a birth in a place of death, they received a momentary pardon. The true solstice had arrived.

Music out.

GOLDMAN

Troubling news about Sasha: solitary confinement, stripped of all privileges, starved. I was afraid they would disassemble him. He had already suffered fourteen years of the prison grind for Frick; even Christ only had to last three days.

The WOMEN enter; lights come up to full. STEIMER and O'HARE carry on the clothes that GOLDMAN had worn at the top of the act, with the addition of an overcoat. The rest of the WOMEN set up GOLDMAN's office at St. Tropez while GOLDMAN changes her clothes and puts on the overcoat. The director should find a simple, stylized way for the WOMEN to have a final tableau of farewell and a graceful exit where indicated.

GOLDMAN

Odd to leave -- friendships and more forged there. People had died, dissolved -- and we had defied it as best we could -- all of them now my comrades -- hopefully each

other's comrades -- some "noun/verbs" left behind for possible bloom. Reds, blues -- it was all colors. The one commandment from the bearded man seemed to work -- for a little while, at least.

(dressing should be finished)

And as much as I could I even spared some grief -- not much, mind you -- for the bullies and brown-noses. Love thy enemy, Hannah, as you said. We said goodbye --

(tableau finished)

-- and the river of the world broke us apart and took us all away.

(WOMEN exit)

I have missed them always. But nothing could make me breathe that air a breath longer than demanded. Besides, the government had plans. They had buried us; now, they dug us up and got ready to throw us away.

Lights change.

GOLDMAN

A small, bare room on Ellis Island. After the deportation hearing.

A STAGEHAND enters as HARRY WEINBERGER, their attorney; coat and bowler and carrying a leather satchel, from which he takes papers and pencils. BERKMAN enters in an overcoat. GOLDMAN joins him. They each pull knit caps out of the pockets and put them on. WEINBERGER and BERKMAN stand. GOLDMAN sits and reads one of the papers. WEINBERGER has just finished saying something.

GOLDMAN

Harry, don't.

WEINBERGER

We could always --

GOLDMAN

Mr. Weinberger, Mr. Weinberger, as our "attorney of record," we know exactly your arguments.

(indicating the three of them)

Our hips have been glued too long for a surprise.

(turns to BERKMAN)

Sasha, you've read this?

BERKMAN

English is one of several languages I can read.

GOLDMAN

You know what it means?

BERKMAN

(in a low hiss)

Of course I know what it means!

WEINBERGER

The Supreme Court was unusually blunt.

(to BERKMAN)

You. You never applied for citizenship.

BERKMAN

I'm citizen of the world.

GOLDMAN

Sasha -- don't.

WEINBERGER

I'm used to it -- a porcupine is softer.

BERKMAN

So I'm not a citizen.

WEINBERGER

Which means I can't shield you. You're an anarchist pest --

BERKMAN

I've been called worse --

WEINBERGER

-- and like a pest --

WEINBERGER squishes his thumb and index finger together, rubs them, and flicks away the crushed "pest."

BERKMAN

No more than a bed bug. Well, that says a lot.

WEINBERGER

You've got nothing left to stand on.

BERKMAN

Nobody does. It'll be good to go.

WEINBERGER

Sasha, it's not like a holiday -- I can't guarantee the booking.

BERKMAN

Russia.

WEINBERGER

It's nothing but dice for you now.

BERKMAN

But the dice for Emma.

WEINBERGER

Not quite as loaded, yes.

GOLDMAN

(not looking at either of them)

What is with the gambling?

WEINBERGER

Emma, you know what this says?

GOLDMAN

English is one of several languages I can read.

WEINBERGER

They gave you another chance to fight for your citizenship. Justice Brandeis issued the writ of error -- the prosecutor made a big mistake -- we can --

GOLDMAN

I know what it means.

WEINBERGER

Do you? It's a real chance.

BERKMAN

(indicates for WEINBERGER to step away, sits)

Listen to me.

GOLDMAN

(in a light tone)

Why start now?

WEINBERGER

We have about a minute.

BERKMAN

You should fight this. If you win, think of what you can continue to do. Fight it!

GOLDMAN

Always thinking "the fight." For thirty years we have always made "the fight."

BERKMAN

What else?

GOLDMAN

You. You. For 30 years, thick and thin, shit and glory. You -- the only country I care to be a citizen of.

OFFICIAL

Time's up. Bell tolls.

GOLDMAN takes up a piece of blank paper and a pencil. As she draws, she places BERKMAN's hand on her wrist so that he, in effect, draws what she is drawing. He watches steadily.

GOLDMAN

Harry, the tide is out. I know I could fight this -- but a good fighter also knows when to get out of the clinch. It is time to let go of America. It is also time not to let go of Sasha. I am more sure of his borders than any other. If they fling him, I'm flung, too.

She holds up to WEINBERGER what she has been drawing: it is the word "NO" in large block letters lightly shaded in. WEINBERGER takes the paper and displays it.

WEINBERGER

Final word?

GOLDMAN

Final word.

WEINBERGER puts on his hat and tucks the paper under the rim so that it covers his face.

WEINBERGER

Final word.

They all laugh lightly. WEINBERGER gathers up the papers and waits.

GOLDMAN
(to BERKMAN)

You will have to try harder to get rid of me.

BERKMAN holds her hand, says nothing.

* * * * *

Scene 17

GOLDMAN hands BERKMAN her coat; BERKMAN and WEINBERGER exit. HANNAH enters and sits, and we are St. Tropez again.

GOLDMAN

They reported us, exhorted us, aborted us -- and then deported us. To Russia. Cattle were treated better than we were -- you couldn't eat us, and we had no milk to give, no matter how much you squeezed our body parts. We got lice and endured Lenin. Enough?

HANNAH

It's a lot.

GOLDMAN

Perhaps too much?

HANNAH

It's a lot. But not too much for me. Oh no.

GOLDMAN

It wasn't boring?

HANNAH

Oh no.

GOLDMAN

It was all so long ago.

HANNAH

I could -- smell it, the way you told it. What touched me hardest --

GOLDMAN

Was what?

HANNAH

The death of Minnie Eddy --

GOLDMAN

In the prison people said Minnie Eddy was "marked" --

HANNAH

Marked?

GOLDMAN

Like in the middle ages, when people believed others were born with their deaths engraved on them --

HANNAH

That's ridiculous --

GOLDMAN

-- a birthmark shaped like a noose, for instance --

HANNAH

She wasn't "marked"!

GOLDMAN

Not with a birthmark, no --

HANNAH

Not "marked" with anything! The foreman "marked" her! I do not believe you don't say that right out. It was the men who marked her. Just like my father wants to "mark" me --

GOLDMAN

Something just slip out?

HANNAH

Jules!

GOLDMAN

The intended's name sounds like a branding iron.

HANNAH

It is! Just like Evelyn L'Ariat!
(with a long hiss in the "s.")
Julessss.

GOLDMAN

So -- what to do, now that you let it out? Like I said, I was divorced and in New York --

HANNAH

I cannot have that life!

GOLDMAN

What is my life that it cannot mark you? Think for a moment.

HANNAH

Having a "think for a moment" is not the problem! I can't stop thinking. I haven't stopped thinking since you started that story -- those women -- Sometimes I do not want to think!

GOLDMAN sits HANNAH down facing the audience.

GOLDMAN

Just breathe for a moment.

GOLDMAN begins massaging HANNAH's shoulders. She will also move to HANNAH's hands, sitting to do it.

HANNAH

I'm not sure I like you doing this.

GOLDMAN

I'm not trying to feel you up, so relax! It's medicine. I'm a nurse -- remember? Viennese trained. Even met Freud -- who is now an adjective. Relax, Hannah -- you're carrying so much of your life right here and here. Let it go for a moment -- it's in good hands.

Several beats as GOLDMAN massages.

GOLDMAN

Now tell me.

HANNAH

What?

GOLDMAN

Why -- why you don't want to think.

HANNAH

I didn't say that. I said sometimes I don't want to think.

GOLDMAN

The why still stands.

HANNAH

Because it hurts me.

GOLDMAN

Not called a "sharp mind" for nothing. Your arms -- loose. So why?

HANNAH

Nothing I think -- matches anything. Like Jules --

GOLDMAN

Tell me about him.

HANNAH

No -- that would give him a -- thickness. A heat. No.

GOLDMAN

Lean your head.

HANNAH

I feel like a stranger, in my own house. I feel like a prisoner, yes! I want books, and I can't have them! I have to sneak them in. And my father -- God bless his heart, he works hard, he really does -- but -- the foreman!

GOLDMAN

Loose.

HANNAH

And all his work has made him like field stones. God, forgive me my mouth! But my mind is not a field stone!

GOLDMAN

No, it's not.

HANNAH

I don't want to be the wife of the butcher! That's why it hurts -- these stones all around me. And sometimes --

GOLDMAN

Yes?

HANNAH is silent. GOLDMAN kneels or sits on the floor in front of her and unlaces one of her shoes.

GOLDMAN

Yes?

HANNAH

At night, staring out the window, parts of me feel already -- owned. Marked. I almost think I should throw out a yes!

GOLDMAN

That's not thinking -- that's just fearing.

HANNAH

So easy for you to say!

GOLDMAN begins massaging HANNAH's foot. HANNAH doesn't know what to make of this but does not resist.

GOLDMAN

Hannah, this about fear: once it's out of your mouth, you can't put it back -- that's why your brain hurts, because you can't hide anymore.

HANNAH watches GOLDMAN's hands.

GOLDMAN

In my training I read where Asians believe the foot maps the body. Yes. If you find the connections, you can get deep inside. I don't remember the map exactly --
(squeezes her little toe)
-- that make your brain feel better? just kidding --

HANNAH

You are very strange, Miss Goldman.

GOLDMAN

But not boring.

HANNAH

Not boring, no.

GOLDMAN

Hitting anything in there? Any changes?

HANNAH

I can't live how you did --

GOLDMAN

No one is --

HANNAH

-- how you do.

GOLDMAN

-- asking you to.

HANNAH

I can't.

GOLDMAN

You could -- but won't.

HANNAH

I can't! It costs too much!

GOLDMAN

That's what the prisoner mind always says. You should value your mind more.

HANNAH

I can't do it!

GOLDMAN

Can't, can't. "Can't" is a stone-making word.

(gives the foot a hard rub)

How about can? What can you do?

HANNAH

(a visible, physical shock)

Ow!

GOLDMAN stops.

GOLDMAN

Did I just hurt you?

GOLDMAN gently massages the foot.

HANNAH

No, no -- right there. No, over.

(GOLDMAN presses)

Ow!

GOLDMAN

What?

HANNAH

Something --

GOLDMAN

Where? Where?

HANNAH taps on her breastbone with the tips of her fingers.

HANNAH

Right here.

GOLDMAN presses again.

HANNAH

Yes!

GOLDMAN

What does it feel like? Tell me.

HANNAH

Like something -- clicked open.

GOLDMAN

Unpleasant?

HANNAH

Press again.

GOLDMAN

Well?

HANNAH

More air.

GOLDMAN

More air?

HANNAH

As if my ribs got loose.

GOLDMAN

We should mark that spot.

HANNAH

Don't make fun of me!

GOLDMAN

If you only knew --

HANNAH

More air. More air. Stop it, please! Just -- stop.

GOLDMAN

Of course.

GOLDMAN releases her foot and begins to put HANNAH's shoe back on.

HANNAH

No, don't -- I will do that.

GOLDMAN gets up. HANNAH goes to put her shoe, but before she does, she presses the same spot for a second or two. She puts on her shoe and then just sits still: she is very alert. GOLDMAN watches her. Then, as if suddenly possessed, she makes a boxing gesture, just as STEIMER did.

HANNAH

Zero, zero.

HANNAH looks at her hands in astonishment, then at GOLDMAN.

HANNAH

What is happening?

GOLDMAN

It's been around for 5000 years -- bound to get something right.

HANNAH

What is happening?

GOLDMAN
(sitting)

You tell me.

HANNAH

You touched me --

GOLDMAN

-- and something opened.

HANNAH

I took a deep breath --

GOLDMAN

And "zero, zero"!

HANNAH

Something opened. I can't --

GOLDMAN

If you could see your own face --

HANNAH

At this moment I can't -- I can't see Jules' face. Julessss.
Ha! Julesssssss! Ha! You know whose face? You know
whose face?

GOLDMAN

Whose?

HANNAH

Minnie Eddy's. And I don't even know her face!

GOLDMAN

It was a beautiful face.

HANNAH

And all of them, all of them -- like pictures glued into the
front pages of the Bible under the sideboard.

(closes her eyes)

I turn the pages -- there they are, I turn them back -- there
they are, as close to me as my blood is to daylight!

GOLDMAN

Good image.

HANNAH

Nope -- is it "nope"? -- nope, can't see his face. Someone
I've known almost every minute of my life. Should that
scare me?

GOLDMAN

You don't sound it.

HANNAH

But should I be?

GOLDMAN

Should, should. Never been big on the word. "Thou shalt not 'should' on thyself."

HANNAH

Should on?

GOLDMAN

Should on -- don't let the cow "should on" your foot -- fumier de vache --

HANNAH

Should on?

GOLDMAN

Don't step in the should!

HANNAH

Sh -- Oh, oh -- I get it! I get it!

GOLDMAN

You don't sound scared.

HANNAH

I'm not!

GOLDMAN

If you're not scared -- are you scared? just checking -- well, then, if you're not scared, don't "should on" yourself to feel something you don't.

HANNAH

Don't "should" on myself.

GOLDMAN

Maybe Jules never had a real face to you.

HANNAH

And if you think about it -- if I think about it -- I'm really just a face to him. He doesn't know a thing else about me

but my face. And all those years -- my years -- promised to Jules No-Face based on this
(indicating her own face)
-- which is going to get sour anyway -- What about this face?

GOLDMAN pulls a compact out of her pocket, opens it, and shows HANNAH her face in the mirror.

GOLDMAN

It is a perfectly lovely face.

HANNAH

Can you see it?

GOLDMAN

Can you see it? Look.

HANNAH

Do you see Jules in it?

GOLDMAN

Do you?

HANNAH
(laughing)

Nope!

GOLDMAN puts away the compact.

HANNAH

My picture -- right there, the first one glued in the Bible, right in front of Addie with an "A"!

GOLDMAN

Uh-oh -- the rogues' gallery!

HANNAH

And you can see my face?

GOLDMAN

A face meant to be seen.

HANNAH

Marked?

GOLDMAN

But not marred. Opened.

HANNAH

And not out of stone.

GOLDMAN

Out of light.

HANNAH

Did you ever want a daughter?

HANNAH

Did you?

GOLDMAN

Yes.

HANNAH

Why didn't you?

GOLDMAN

I couldn't. The equipment didn't work.

HANNAH

Is it too late?

GOLDMAN

Everything is still possible.

HANNAH

My mother died after the fifth child -- the sister after me. I never knew her.

GOLDMAN

My mother -- My mother used to meet with some fellow busybodies for a weekly coffee, and once they wanted to cut her off when she went on a little too long about some topic, and she said, "The whole of the United States couldn't shut my daughter up, and you think you're going to get me

to keep quiet?!" I never would have expected that -- honor
-- from her. It would be nice to honor someone.

HANNAH touches her breastbone with her fingertips.

HANNAH

I am breathing much better now.

Takes HANNAH's fingertips and touches them to her own breastbone.

GOLDMAN

So am I. Which is good, because we have acres of this
book left to plow.

HANNAH

Including --

GOLDMAN

Oh, he who must be obeyed is never out of the picture.

HANNAH

He's clearing out the stones!

GOLDMAN

Cutting out the hedges!

HANNAH

Two people giving birth to one child!

GOLDMAN

Three.

HANNAH

Oh, no -- no, no. Let me just midwife, please. I can't yell
like the two of you do. You two yell so much better than I
do!

GOLDMAN

Done! Thank you.

HANNAH

I'm going to work on the letters.

GOLDMAN

You've had a long day put into you already.

HANNAH

I like it here.

GOLDMAN

Then you should stay where you like.

HANNAH rises, pauses for a moment to look at GOLDMAN.

HANNAH

You're welcome. It's an honor. I'll go check the post, see if we have any "mice."

HANNAH exits.

GOLDMAN

Kate, Kate, what do you think? Did it go all right? This book is finished. I just need to write it down.

(puts the palms of her hands together)

Like an apple between Sasha and Hannah -- They'll squeeze the truth out of me.

GOLDMAN rises. She goes to exit, then turns back into the light.

GOLDMAN

Kate, Mollie -- for a time there, even if it was hell, we showed them all their better angels. That's what all this has been about, hasn't it? This whole mess we've called our lives? Just trying to massage that foot, trigger some breathing, coax the angels into the light. So, a small step -- with her, a small step. For me -- a fat step!

In her carney barker's voice.

GOLDMAN

"And now, ladies and gennelmen, come one, come all, and see a most amazing thing: this book -- this earth time -- can now be finished."

GOLDMAN picks up HANNAH's index, flips through it.

GOLDMAN

Hah, I knew it -- no "death of Emma Goldman" listed here yet! It's good to be reminded of that every now and then.

GOLDMAN takes a deep breath and makes a stabbing motion.

GOLDMAN

On to the windmills!

Lights out. Music.

BLACKOUT

About Block & Tackle Productions

After more than a decade of projects together, Michael Bettencourt and Elfin Frederick Vogel joined forces to form Block & Tackle Productions. In addition to producing Michael's plays with Elfin directing, B&T Productions also looks to collaborate with other playwrights and directors and explore different media for dramatic narrative, such as live-streaming theatrical productions, recording radio-play podcasts, and creating short films.

Whichever project B&T Productions pursues, it will create theatre narratives focused on our present times and where every part of the production - design (set, lighting, sound, media), performance, script, the brand of beer sold in the lobby, and the pre-show music - relates to and nourishes every other part. As often as possible, B&T Productions will do this in collaboration or conjunction with like-minded theatre-makers.

Elfin Frederick Vogel (Producer/Director) -- Elfin has directed over thirty productions in New York City and regional theatres, from classical plays (among others, *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*) to 20th-century plays (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *The Real Thing*, *Exit the King*) and new plays, among them *Only the Dead Know Brooklyn*, *Excerpts from the Lost Letters of Hester Prynne*, *No Great Loss*, *Four Plays*, *The Sin Eater* (all by Michael Bettencourt), and *Moral and Political Lessons on "Wyoming"* and *Reckless Abandon* (by Vincent Sessa).

Michael Bettencourt (Producer/Writer) -- Michael is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter. As always, special thanks to María Beatriz. All his work can be seen at www.m-bettencourt.com

**Block
& Tackle**
PRODUCTIONS

www.blockandtackleproductions.com

