

Martin Čičvák

FRANKIE IS OK,
PEGGY IS FINE
AND THE HOUSE IS COOL!

Translation: Martin Čičvák

C. B. Paton

CHARACTERS:

Frankie

Peggy

Write

Black

Lisa

Ed

Joss (acting under the name Lulu)

Brenda

Waiter (from Michael's Place)

Frankie: My name is Frankie. First I worked for a grocery chain: the Trout Company – but two months later it just didn't attract me. My Ma's name is Emma. She works in Jim Ostan's legal aid and advice centre. (*Slight pause.*) This is my friend Ed.

(*Ed enters and crosses the stage, brooding.*)

Frankie: I like the park... 5th Avenue and Park Avenue... delicatessens... plastic cups... cheeseburgers, with a piece of English bacon... green cars... and new banks. I like Peggy, Peggy is fine. Some people say that drugs suck – but we in here; we don't think like that. Ed says that everybody can do whatever he wants. I like Ed. Ed knows a lot. I like people who know a lot. I dislike people who *think* that they know a lot – but don't know a lot. Ed and I, we're good friends. He always knows how to arrange things in case of need. Sometimes, we gotta run. Ed always knows where to hide – and we always fooled them, Ed and I. We deal in drugs. We get a shipment and we sell it to our clients. It's a business. It goes well. Ed always knows what to do. Step by step, I learn which people are good and which people are bad. Some people are bad and some people are good. Some people rat on their friends. That kind of people I don't like. This guy called Jack; he used to be a friend of mine. He borrowed money from Ed – then he took a shipment from under our nose...! It was a sting, like in the film: *The Sting?* – yeah, it was a sting. Ed said: "Let him be;" and I guess Ed was right. But I told Jack: "It is a sting, like in the film: *The Sting?* – yeah, it is a sting!" I don't see Jack around no more. I like things clear. Everybody should be straight and everybody should talk straight and say what he thinks – and if everybody is straight then he can do whatever he wants. I don't see Jack around no more.

(*Enter Peggy, she comes from up-stage. She often says:*

“Mumhum...?” Some- times this is a question with a rising inflection; but sometimes it is not a question, and then it has a falling inflection. Sometimes she says it just because she can’t think of anything else to say – so then the inflection is neutral.)

Peggy: Hey, Frankie...!

Frankie: This is Peggy, Peggy is fine.

Peggy: I been out, mumhum...? I just got in. Yeah, just now, mumhum...? I’m OK. You been sitting here a long time Frankie? You shouldn’t sit here so long time, mum- hum...? You will get a pain in your back if you sit here so long.

Frankie: Peggy...! She always knows what I need. I like her because she knows a lot.

(He turns to speak to Peggy.)

Frankie: Yeah – I had a great day. I went out with Ed, shopping. We went to the carpet shop to buy a carpet. You know the Mall, they have that carpet shop... where they sell the carpets? Yeah, well, we went into the shop – and you cannot imagine how many carpets they have in that shop. You cannot imagine how many different colours those carpets come in. You can choose carpets that are in one colour, or you can choose carpets that are in another colour – or you can choose carpets that are in a mixture of colours. And you cannot imagine how many different colours you can choose from. They have every colour and every shade of colour that you can imagine. And you cannot imagine how many different shades of colour there are. But that is not all, they have carpets with patterns on them... and the carpets with patterns on them are not just coloured carpets, they are carpets with *patterns* on them – and you cannot imagine how many different patterns they have on the carpets in that shop. And the better the carpet, the more the colours – and the shades of colours – that it has on it. And there are plenty of different colours and plenty of different patterns. *(Slight pause.)* Ed and I, we chose a carpet with every colour, and every shade of colour, and every possible pattern on it!

Peggy: I saw it, mumhum...? I like it very much.

Frankie: That's great – I'm glad, Peggy.

(Frankie turns to the audience.)

Frankie: Peggy has excellent taste. She knows what is nice and what is not. Peggy always says if she likes something and she says if she does not like something.

Peggy: I have a couple of minutes free; we can talk if you like.

Frankie: Right Peggy...

Peggy: If you want?

Frankie: Sure...

Peggy: You know, people often go out of the city *by car* at weekends...?

Frankie: Right Peggy, people often go out of the city *by car* at weekends – to have a rest from the noise and the smog, and work, and to get out of the city – *by car* – at weekends. They have cottages or they have small houses in the woods or by the sea – mostly in the woods or by the sea. Yeah, I think it is a good thing.

Peggy: And we could too, mumhum...?

(Frankie turns to the audience.)

Frankie: *(To the audience.)* Peggy means: "If we get married; we could also go out of the city *by car* at weekends." But I haven't decided yet. Peggy is fine – but Ed says that if you hang a woman round your neck she sucks your blood!

Peggy: I'm going, mumhum...? I might come back later – so – Hi Frankie...!

Frankie: Hey, Peggy.

(Peggy leaves.)

Frankie: Some other friends of mine are Black and White. They are hard boys. I guess that you could say Black and White are hard. I like them 'cause they have cold minds. They are cool and they are cold. They solve everything with a cold mind. I'll show you an episode from the life of Black.

(He goes to the wings and pushes on a trolley – on the trolley sits a woman with a cash register. On the front of her desk, in very large letters, the word POST is printed.)

(Enter Black with a gun.)

(Frankie stands back and lets Black get on with the job.)

(Black shoots the woman dead, and takes the money from the cash register.)

(Then Black leaves.)

Frankie: Black did it well. He is straight. He has real class, I think.
(Slight pause.) I'll show you an episode from the life of Write.

(He goes to the wings and pushes on a trolley – on the trolley sits another woman with a cash register. On the front of this desk, in very large letters, the word MODERN is printed. When the two trolleys are placed next to each other they read: "POST MODERN".)

(Enter Write with a gun.)

(Frankie stands back and lets Write get on with the job.)

(Write shoots the second woman dead, and takes the money from the cash register.)

Frankie: So – hey, Write...!

Write: Hey Frankie...!

Frankie: You do it well, Write.

Write: Thanks Frankie.

Frankie: Write, you have real class, I think.

Write: Hey Frankie...!

(Enter Black.)

Black: Hi Write... Hi Frankie!

Frankie: Black and Write: they do it well. I like them, they have class.

(Write has several fat wads of money.)

- Black: It went well today.
Write: Don't say it went well today.
Black: So, what are you saying?
Write: Nothing – just don't say it went well today. It went well today; it doesn't have to go well tomorrow. So don't say it went well today! Say: It went well *today*; it doesn't have to go well tomorrow.
- Black: How do you know it won't go well tomorrow?
Write: I didn't say it won't go well tomorrow.
Black: It always goes well.
Write: It always goes well; but it may not go well tomorrow.
Black: So what are you saying?
Write: Leave it.
Black: Leave it...?
Write: Yeah, leave it.
Black: OK. (*Slight pause.*) Lisa has lice.
Write: How do you know Lisa has lice?
Black: I know for a fact that Lisa has lice.
Write: If Lisa had lice, I would also know it for a fact.
Black: How would you know?
Write: How would I know what?
Black: How would you know if Lisa had lice?
Write: Because I would also have lice, if Lisa had lice.
Black: How do you know you don't have lice?
Write: Because I would *know* if I had lice.
Black: And you don't?
Write: Don't what – Black?
Black: Don't have lice?
Write: Why should I have lice?
Black: 'Cause you're a louse.
Write: Leave it.

Black: Leave it...?
Write: Yeah, leave it.
Black: OK.
Write: Lisa *cannot* have lice – I cannot imagine that Lisa has lice!
Black: Lice don't give a damn.
Write: Don't say that lice don't give a damn.
Black: So, what are you saying?
Write: Don't say that Lisa has lice.
Black: If you don't want to get lice, Write, you should forget about Lisa.
Write: What do you mean?
Black: If you don't want to get lice, Write, you should *forget* about Lisa.
Write: What do you mean?
Black: Leave it.
Write: No – what do you mean?
Black: Leave it.
Write: Leave it...?
Black: Yeah, leave it.
Write: OK.
Black: I'm glad we made a pact.

(Pause.)

Write: There is a rat.
Black: What do you mean – Write?
Write: There is a rat.
Black: There is a rat?
Write: Yeah, there is a rat.
Black: What do you mean – Write?
Write: I mean: "There is a rat."
Black: Who?
Write: I don't know who.
Black: Don't be soft, Write – who would rat on us?
Write: Take care, Black – 'cause if there's nobody to kick your ass, then I'll do it.
Black: Let's divide the money.

(Write gives some of the money to Black.)

25

Write: This is half.
Black: How can you know this is half?
Write: This is half.
Black: How can you *know* this is half?
Write: I counted it.
Black: You counted it?
Write: Yeah.
Black: When?
Write: What do you mean: "When?"
Black: When did you count it?
Write: If you're not satisfied with half, Black – don't take it.
Black: I'm satisfied with half; but when did you count it? I been here all the time and I didn't see you count it.
Write: If you're not satisfied with half, Black – don't take it.
Black: I'm satisfied with half; but when did you count it?
Write: You think that I don't know to count – is that what you think?
Black: I think you know to count...
Write: (*Aggressive.*) You think that I don't know math – is that what you think?
Black: I think you know math...
Write: So; if you're not satisfied with half – don't take it.
Black: But when did you count it, Write?
Write: (*Loud.*) You think they're not even – is that what you think?
Black: I think they're even...
Write: (*Angry.*) OK – so, you think they're *not* even – so, *that's* what you think!
Black: I think they're even...
Write: So, take the money!
Black: But when did you count the money? When did you count it? I been here all the time. When did you count it? I didn't see you count.

(Pause.)

Black: And I been here all the time.

(Pause.)

Write: They're not even.

Black: You're a louse, Write.

Write: You wanna know why they're not even?

Black: Go fuck yourself, Write.

Write: It went well today and I thought we could celebrate – I wanted to pay, so I counted it like that...

Black: It went well today; it doesn't have to go well tomorrow. Don't say it went well today! Say: It went well *today*; it doesn't have to go well tomorrow.

(Write gives the other wad of money to Black.)

Write: You take this half, Black. It went well today – so we can celebrate. You can pay.

Black: It always goes well – we cannot celebrate, every day, on account of it went well.

Write: So which half of the money do you want, Black? Do you want the bigger half or do you want the lesser half?

Black: I go to sleep now.

Write: If you're not satisfied with half – don't take it.

Black: I go to sleep now.

Write: I thought we could celebrate.

Black: I go to sleep now.

Write: Why sleep?

Black: I like it.

Write: *(Slight pause.)* I don't sleep.

Black: So what?

Write: What: "So what"?

Black: Listen, Write – it went well today. So, you ask me: "Why sleep." So, I say: "I like it." So, at the end of the day I sleep – It's normal. So, you say: "I don't sleep." So, I say: "So what?" So, you say: "What: 'So what?'" Listen, Write – it went well today; so at the end of the day I sleep – It's normal!

Write: So what?

Black: Listen to me, Write: so, it went well today – that means nothing, but that it went well *today!* So, it goes well every day – that means nothing, but that it goes well every day and that we do

it well! So, we do it well – that means nothing, but that we; you and me, Write; we do it well!

Write: What do you mean, Black?

Black: *(Loud.)* Write, listen to me one time, will you? So, we do it well... *(then suddenly quite calm)*, that does not mean, Write, that you are still not a louse...!

Write: So, that's what you mean, is it?

Black: Yeah, that's what I mean.

Write: Let's go and see Frankie.

Black: OK.

Write: Frankie got a shipment.

Black: OK... I like Frankie... he does good business.

Write: Black; you think the last time it was good business? It was good business only because we do it well – we do it well, Black!

Black: Yeah – we do it well, Write.

Scene 3

PEGGY AND HER SCHOOL, LISA

Frankie: I'm glad Peggy decided to pass on what she knows to others who need it. Peggy established a private school – I'm glad she finally found some satisfaction; because the job she's doing satisfies her, but it doesn't satisfy her. I'm sure she needs to pass things on – and that is why I like her. Peggy is noble. Peggy is fine.

(Peggy, Lulu, Lisa and Brenda enter.)

(Frankie remains on the stage – and from time to time he talks to the audience; but he is not in the scene and for that reason, Peggy is not nervous and does not say: "Mumbum...?")

(Lisa is taking notes.)

Peggy: Yeah – so what I got to say to you – so you're turning a trick,

you know, so what you gotta remember is to turn him quick. That's the basic rule. 'Cause the quicker you turn the trick, the quicker you can turn the next trick. That's the basic rule. 'Cause when a man comes, he's gone. That's the basic rule.

Frankie: Peggy does it well, Peggy does it real well. Peggy is fine.

Peggy: That's the basic rule. The other rule is this: never fall in love with some of the disgusting jerks who come to fuck with you! 'Cause if you fall in love with one of your jocks, he don't gotta pay you no more – he gets it for free. That's the basic rule. *(Slight pause.)* But *if* you fall in love with a jock, don't let it show when he's fucking you – just act the way you always act, you know, pant and moan and tell him how big he is and how good he is, then scratch at his ass and scream nine or ten times. Nine or ten times usually does it – so's he thinks you've come. That's the basic rule if you're in love with a jock, just act normal. *(Serious.)* 'Cause if you do anything different, like ask him to slow down, or kiss you on the mouth, then he's gonna know something is up. And when he knows something is up, he don't gotta pay up. That's the basic rule.

Frankie: Peggy does it well, Peggy does it real well. Peggy is fine.

Peggy: That's the basic rule. But I gotta tell you girls that if the jock you fell in love with knows something is up, then you gotta change your strategy. That's the basic rule. If it slips out that you are in love with the jerk, then what you gotta do is the following: get him a little drunk and compare him to Brando in "Last Tango in Paris", or to Bogart in "Casablanca". Do not steal money from him while he sleeps. Wash yourself good, so that you do not smell of all the tricks you turned that day. And do not swallow too many pills 'cause they are bad for your complexion. That *is* the basic rule.

Lulu: Once I bit a trick's cock and he broke my nose.

Peggy: Yeah – that is wrong! That is not the right thing to do. That was a mistake, Lulu, that was a definite mistake. Don't act like whores – remember this: every working girl is a specialist in tenderness...

Brenda: Once I swallowed five or six pills with Bourbon, and I let him get me drunk...

Peggy: Yeah, so what happened next?

(Lisa takes out her handkerchief.)

Brenda: I don't remember, I passed out.

Peggy: Now, that is also a mistake, Brenda. So – how do you know what to charge the jerk if you passed out and don't know what he did to you?

Brenda: Peggy, how much do you charge for a whole evening?

Lulu: Don't ask that – it's personal.

Peggy: Yeah – you shouldn't ask me that 'cause, if I told you, then you'd realise just what kind of cheap whores you are...

(Lisa starts crying into her handkerchief.)

Peggy: Lisa what are you crying for?

Lisa: I'm sad because I'll never do it as well as you – I'll never be as good as you, Peggy.

Peggy: So – what are you crying for Lisa?

(Lisa continues to cry into her handkerchief.)

Peggy: Relax, Lisa, that is the basic rule. Just try and learn from me as much as you can...

Lulu: I gotta strip now, I gotta go.

Brenda: Yeah, I got a trick, and I gotta go too.

Lisa: OK – I go with you...

Peggy: Hi, girls – and remember the basic rule.

Lisa: Which one is that Peggy?

Peggy: *Relax*, Lisa – relax...!

Lisa: Oh, sure... *(She writes it down.)* Re-lax – Li-sa... thanks Peggy. *(Slight pause.)* So er... hi Peggy... *chow...* yeah – bye, Peggy!

(Brenda, Lulu and Lisa exit.)

(When they have gone, Frankie enters the scene and says to Peggy:)

Frankie: I like the way you do it Peggy, I think you do it well.

Peggy: Thank you Frankie, mumhum...?

Frankie: You know Peggy, I been thinking. Yeah – I was thinking about things and one thing and another, and this and that... and well, things go well... and one thing and another and this and that.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: You understand me...?

Peggy: Humm...?

Frankie: Do you understand what I'm saying?

Peggy: I think so, Frankie...

Frankie: Well, to tell the truth the idea came from Ed – but I wanted to talk to you about that – and other things – and this: you see, I can run a business, I like it – it goes well...

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: And I agree with Ed, now, that we should...

(Black enters.)

Black: Hey Frankie, did the shipment come already?

Frankie: Hi Black, I'm glad you came round. Where's Write?

Black: He met Brenda, Lulu and Lisa by the exit – and so he started to have a conversation with them.

Frankie: I understand.

Peggy: Mumhum...? I go. Hi Frankie...!

Frankie: Hi, Peggy...

(Peggy turns to leave.)

Frankie: Hey Peggy...? *(Peggy turns to him.)* I just wanted to say...
Peggy...

Peggy: Mumhum...?

(Pause.)

Frankie: Peggy, you're fine.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

(Peggy exits.)

(Frankie and Black watch her go.)

Black: She looks fine.

Frankie: Yeah – she *is* fine. *(Pause.)* And she does it well.

Black: Yeah...?

Frankie: Yeah. *(Pause.)* She knows a lot. *(Slight pause.)* The shipment didn't arrive yet. Ed will come with it.

(Write enters with Lisa.)

Write: Hey Frankie, did the shipment come already?

Frankie: Hi Write, I'm glad you came round. *(Slight pause.)* The shipment didn't arrive yet. Ed will come with it.

Write: Frankie, this is Lisa. You didn't already meet Lisa, did you?

Frankie: Yeah – I didn't already meet Lisa.

Write: *(Introducing her.)* So – this is Lisa.

Frankie: Hi Lisa.

Lisa: Hi Frankie. *(Awkward pause)* Er... my name is Lisa – and I know Peggy already...

Frankie: So – why don't we sit down?

Black: Yeah – why don't we sit down?

Write: Yeah – why don't we sit down?

Lisa: Yeah.

(Pause.)

Write: Lisa is a common acquaintance of Black and I.

Frankie: A *common* acquaintance...?

Write: Yeah, a common acquaintance.

Black: And Lisa knows Peggy.

Frankie: Yeah...

Write: But I hear from Black, Lisa – if you do not mind that I ask a personal question...?

Lisa: No, Write...

Write: I heard today from Black, Lisa, that you have...

Black: *(Loud.)* Lisa has a good sense of humour. I like Lisa because you can always rely on Lisa – she is cool and you will not find one similar to Lisa standing on every street corner.

Write: No...?

Black: No.

(Pause.)

Frankie: The shipment didn't arrive yet. Ed will come with it.

Write: Lisa also plays scenes.

Black: Play for Frankie the scene, Lisa, where you play the woman who cuts her wrists.

Write: That's good, yeah, that's a good one. Play that one for Frankie – the woman who cuts her wrists.

Lisa: I don't know.

Black: Yeah, play that one for Frankie.

Write: That's a good one.

Lisa: Well, OK.

(Lisa stands up to play the scene – she takes out her handkerchief.)

Lisa: It's about a woman who wants to cut her wrists.

Frankie: Why?

Black: What do you mean: "Why?"

Frankie: I mean – why does she want to cut her wrists?

Lisa: She wants to cut her wrists because... because she is unlucky.

Frankie: Why is she unlucky?

Black: Come on Frankie, don't ask the questions – watch!

Lisa: Why is she unlucky...? Well, I guess it's just because... because...

Write: So, let her just be unlucky. *(To Frankie.)* Don't ask the questions – just watch!

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple of times as a build up to crying – but before she can start to cry Frankie asks.)

Frankie: Wait – how is she unlucky?

Black: What?

Frankie: In what way is she unlucky?

Black: Why can't she simply be unlucky? She *is* unlucky – period! People are either unlucky or they are lucky. I think it is absolutely normal. She is unlucky and that's all there is to it!

Write: I think the same – I think that if a woman is unlucky it is just because she is unlucky. That means she is unlucky because she is *unlucky* – accordingly she has no luck!

Black: Write is right.

Write: Play the scene, Lisa.

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple of times and brings the handkerchief to her nose – but before she can cry, Frankie says:)

Frankie: But what is she having no luck in?

Black: Fuck you Frankie, don't ask the questions – watch the scene! What's wrong with you?

(Lisa stops playing the scene.)

Frankie: Nothing, I just want to know if this woman is unlucky from having no luck – what is she having no luck in?

Black: What do you mean: "What is she having no luck in?" She has no luck! If there is a woman who has no luck, she just has no luck! *(Slight pause.)* She has no luck in everything! Because if she had some luck, then she would not be unlucky; but she *is* unlucky – so she has no luck in everything!

Write: Black is saying it well – and I agree with him: this woman has no luck...

Black: Yeah – she is simply an unlucky type!

Frankie: OK; you are right: women's problems are women's problems.

Write: So, play the scene Lisa...

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple of times, then she starts to cry and scream a little.)

Frankie: Wait – why is she crying, nobody hit her?

Lisa: *(No longer playing the scene.)* No, no – she is not crying because somebody hit her; but because...

Frankie: If nobody hit her, why is she crying?

Write: I think that Frankie has a point there: if nobody hit her, why is she crying?

Lisa: She is not crying because somebody hit her; but because...

Black: She would cry if she was in pain...?

Write: But she is not in pain, so she cannot cry.

Frankie: Clear.

Write: Lisa... play the scene without crying, can you?

Black: Yeah, great idea – good.

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple more times and then suddenly falls to the floor.)

Frankie: Wait – why did she fall down? – nobody pushed her...

Lisa: *(Getting up.)* No, no – she did not fall down because somebody pushed her; but because...

Frankie: If nobody pushed her, she would not fall down.

Write: Er... I think that Frankie has a point there too: if nobody pushed her, why did she fall down?

Lisa: She did not fall down because somebody pushed her; but because...

Black: She would only fall down if somebody pushed her.

Write: But nobody pushed her, so she cannot fall down.

Frankie: Clear.

Write: Lisa... play the scene without falling down, can you?

Black: Yeah, good idea – great.

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple more times and then she takes out a razor and mimes cutting her wrists.)

Frankie: Good, that was very good – but, Lisa, why did you scratch at your wrists with the razor? I did not understand that part.

Lisa: Well, you see, the woman cut her wrists – I was miming the woman cutting her wrists.

Frankie: Why does the woman cut her wrists?

(Pause.)

Frankie: I mean, just like that – from nothing? She cannot take out a razor and, from nothing, cut her wrists.

Black: Frankie is right. She cannot cut her wrists.

Lisa: But the woman does not cut her wrists for no reason, she cuts her wrists because...

Write: Frankie is right. She cannot cut her wrists.

Lisa: *(Shouting.)* It's because she is unlucky!

(Pause.)

Black: Yeah – Lisa, I know that, but couldn't you play her as an unlucky woman who doesn't cut her wrists. She is unlucky and she

goes on being unlucky, like – she wants to be all on her own with her bad luck.

Write: Black is right – she's all alone, with no luck – so she goes...
Lisa, play the scene like that, can you?

(Pause.)

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple more times and then leaves the stage.)

(They are now happy with the performance and shout:)

Black: Ba-ba-bomb!

Frankie: Bingo!

Write: Bang!

(But when Write says "Bang!" they duck down for a second as if there had been a gun shot.)

Black: Great.

Write: Good.

Frankie: Lisa does it well.

(Peggy enters behind the gangsters.)

Peggy: Hello, mumhum...?

(At the sound, Write draws his gun, turns suddenly and shoots Peggy dead.)

(Pause.)

Black: Write, you shot Peggy!

Write: Who is Peggy?

Frankie: *That* was Peggy!

Black: Peggy was fine.

(Pause – silence.)

(Enter Lisa.)

Lisa: It don't seem so easy to act unlucky; maybe I should just act lucky?

Black: You may be right at that, Lisa.

Write: You may be right at that.

(Lisa sees Peggy.)

Lisa: What's the matter with Peggy?

Write: Peggy was shot.

Lisa: What?

Write: Peggy was shot.

Lisa: Shot?

Write: Yeah – shot.

Black: He took his pistol out and shot her...

(Lisa takes out her handkerchief, breathes deeply a couple of times and starts to cry.)

Frankie: Why is she crying, nobody hit her?

Black: No – she is not crying because somebody hit her; but because...

Frankie: *(Angry.)* If nobody hit her, why is she crying?

Write: I think Frankie has got a point there: if nobody hit her, why is she crying?

Black: She is not crying because somebody hit her; but because...

(Lisa starts to scream and falls to the floor in grief.)

Frankie: Why did she fall down, nobody pushed her.

Black: No – she did not fall down because somebody pushed her; but because...

Frankie: *(Angry.)* If nobody pushed her, she should not fall.

Write: I think Frankie has a point there too: if nobody pushed her, why did she fall down?

Black: She did not fall because somebody pushed her; but because...

Frankie: She should only fall if somebody pushed her.

(Pause – Lisa cries.)

Frankie: Lisa, play the scene without falling down.

(Lisa stands – but continues to cry into her handkerchief.)

Frankie: Lisa, play the scene without crying.

(Lisa stops crying.)

Frankie: Play the scene!

(Lisa breathes deeply a couple of times, trying to stop herself from crying – then, embarrassed, she leaves.)

37

(Pause.)

Write: That was really great!
Black: Yeah – really great...
Frankie: So – why don't we sit down?
Write: Yeah – let's sit down?
Black: Yeah...
Write: OK...

(But Frankie and Black do not sit.)

(Perhaps they drag Peggy's body off into the wings – or, perhaps, Peggy's body is left on stage for the next scene.)

Write: *(As Peggy is dragged off.)* Bye...

(Black and Frankie re-enter having completed the job.)

Black: *(To Frankie.)* Bye...

(Frankie nods his head sadly and then exits.)

Black: Let's go see Lisa – if she finished her scene she will be waiting for us: Lisa likes to be criticised.

Write: Yeah – Lisa likes to be criticised...

Scene 4

THE SECOND DIALOGUE OF BLACK AND WRITE

(Black is eating from a box of candy.)

Write: Do you not think, Black, that things are not somehow connected to each other?
Black: How do you mean, Write?
Write: This is what I mean: every time when something happens – either it had already happened before, or there had happened

before something similar to that thing that happened. Or if not similar, then something happened that made it possible for that thing to happen.

(Pause.)

Black: I see what you mean, Write. It is true that everything that happens, happens because of something that has happened before, or had happened before, and that's what makes what happens, happen.

Write: But, you know Black, sometimes I get the feeling that things happen in a certain way because they were *meant* to happen that way, or that *we* needed them to happen that way. They didn't just happen, they happened because we knew that they could happen – and they happened, maybe, because they made a pattern.

Black: Like on the carpet?

(He points to the room above where the carpet is.)

Write: Yeah, like on the carpet.

Black: You could be right, Write; but also you gotta consider that, maybe, things happen independently of us. Sure, things happen – and we know that they happen – and from what happens we can know what happened before – and, maybe, what's gonna happen. But *before* any particular thing happens, Write, you gotta ask yourself the question: “Do I know what's gonna happen?”

Write: And what is the answer to that question?

Black: Before a thing happens...?

Write: Yeah, before a thing happens – “Do I know what's gonna happen?”

Black: That depends, Write. It depends on who is gonna make the thing that happens, happen.

Write: You mean that if *I'm* gonna make the thing that happens, happen – if I am the one who is behind what happens – then when it happens, or before it happens, I'm gonna know what's gonna happen.

Black: Yeah – that is one case.

Write: What is the other case?

Black: The other case, Write, is if you know the person personally who is gonna make the thing that happens, happen – and you have discussed, privately, with that person *before* the person acts...

Write: You have discussed before the person acts – or “before”?

Black: What is the difference?

Write: The difference is that in the one case you discuss with the person and then that person goes away from you and independently does what you have discussed; but you do not know if the person does the thing exactly as you discussed it. But in the second case you are *with* the person, and you can see that it happens in the way that you discussed it.

Black: Or not.

Write: Or not, what – Black?

Black: You are with the person – and, yeah – he may do it in the way that you discussed it; or he may not. Just because you discussed a thing does not mean that it has to turn out that way. And just because you are there, or you are not there, does not mean that it will turn out one way or the other way.

Write: I see what you mean. But can I ask you one question, Black?

Black: Sure.

Write: What do you mean when you say: “If I am there or I am not there?” If I am not there, where am I?

Black: I don’t know where you are.

Write: I’m sitting right in front of you, Black.

Black: I’m not talking about where you are now. I’m talking about where you are when the thing that happens, happens.

Write: And where am I when the thing that happens, happens?

Black: It don’t matter where you are – that’s what I’m explaining to you.

Write: It only don’t matter if the thing that happens, happens for no reason. But do you not think, Black, that things are not somehow connected to each other?

Black: Give me an example.

Write: Why are you stuffing your mouth with that candy?

Black: Because I like candy – but I don't see how that signifies...
Write: You will get bad teeth if you eat all the candy yourself.
Black: That's my problem – and I don't see how it signifies.
Write: It don't signify – I just wanna know.
Black: I told you already.
Write: You told me what, Black?
Black: I told you that I like candy.
Write: Is that a fact?
Black: I guess it's a fact.
Write: So – you like candy...?
Black: I guess that I like candy.
Write: You don't know?
Black: Sure I know...!
Write: How do you know?
Black: 'Cause I like it. Like, I know I like it!
Write: From past experience, right?
Black: Yeah, from past experience. Jesus Christ, every time I put a candy in my mouth, I like it!
Write: So, that's how you know?
Black: How else would I know?
Write: So, if you know that you like candy, why do you keep stuffing your mouth? Why do you have to stuff the next candy into your fat mouth – you know already?!
Black: Are you saying to me, Write, that if I know that I like something then I should stop doing it?
Write: No, that's not what I'm saying.
Black: Then what are you saying?
Write: I'm saying that, in my opinion, everything that happens has happened before; or, if it hasn't happened before – something like it has happened before, and sometimes things happen not because *we* want them to happen but because they *need* to happen.
Black: Are you saying, Write, that that candy *needs* to be eaten?

(Slight pause.)

Write: Yeah.

(Pause.)

Black: So, I won't eat it.

Write: OK – you won't eat it.

(Pause.)

(Black looks at the candy.)

(Pause.)

(Black looks at the candy again.)

(Pause.)

(In the end, Black takes a candy and eats it.)

Black: *(Eating.)* So what does that prove?

Write: I'll tell you what it proves, Black; it proves that you are a pig.

(Pause.)

(Black takes another candy from the box – but he doesn't eat it.)

Write: The world does not know of us.

Black: Should I eat it, or shouldn't I eat it?

Write: The world should know of us.

Black: Come on, Write, wake up! There are so many people in the world that if everybody knew everybody else, the world would just be a crazy place.

Write: Maybe you're right, Black; but I think that the world should know about us. Not everybody in the world – that would be crazy – but we should be better known than we are.

Black: Why?

Write: Like the world knew about Bonny and Clyde – the world should know about us: Black and Write.

Black: Who are Bonny and Clyde, Write?

Write: That don't matter.

Black: Yeah – I see what you're saying. We should be better known; but you look at Ed, for example: every rat in town knows Ed – and he does well – but we are only known by the rats in this

part of town; and we too, we do quite well; not as well as Ed, but we do OK. And, you know Write, maybe we will survive where Ed will be knocked off – do you know what I mean?

Write: I know what you mean.

Black: *(Black eats the candy – with his mouth full.)* Because things happen sometimes that you cannot predict.

Write: You are right, Black; but the basic thing is to do it well.

Black: Yeah – and we do it well.

Write: Yeah – we do it well.

Scene 5

FRANKIE, PEGGY, AND: “COFFEE AND CIGARETTES”

(A delicatessen, or coffee bar.)

(Peggy sits at one of the tables – her sweater is red, her skirt is red, her hat is red, and her boots are red; but her belt and her tights are black.)

(Frankie talks to the audience.)

Frankie: Peggy's death: I was cut up by it. I miss her. I would never have thought that I would miss her so much. Peggy was fine. The two of us, we got acquainted in Michael's place. It was a year and a half ago, and it was raining a year and a half ago. It was raining like cats and dogs – so I ran into Michael's place, because I hate to get wet... when it rains, it seems to me like someone is pissing on me, or I am standing in a fur coat under a fountain – so, I always need to sit somewhere where it's dry and wait till the rain stops. And when I'm sitting there I'm nervous because I cannot do what I wanna do. I *might* wanna sit there, but I might *not* wanna sit there. But when it's raining outside, I gotta sit inside. *(Slight pause.)* So – I came to Michael's place nervous and edgy. I was on edge. Peggy: she was sitting

there alone – she was dressed all in red and she was sitting behind a round table with a check tablecloth... and there was a pot of black coffee. I took a seat by her and, from that time on, we were friends. She introduced me to Ed, and Ed and I, from that time on were also friends.

(Frankie goes over to Peggy's table.)

(As soon as he enters the scene he was describing, he becomes shy and nervous.)

Frankie: Hi, like, hello; my name is Frankie – can I sit, like, here?

Peggy: I'm Peggy, mumhum...? Hello – take a seat.

Frankie: Thanks. *(Frankie sits.)* It 's raining cats and dogs and I hate to get wet; because, when it rains, it seems to me like someone is pissing on me – or I am standing in a fur coat under a fountain. I always need to sit somewhere where it's dry and wait till the rain stops. And I'm nervous because I cannot do what I wanna do. I'm edgy – I'm on edge. Can I pour a cup of coffee? I mean, like, sure, yeah, I *might* wanna sit, or I might *not* wanna sit. But when it's raining outside, I gotta sit inside.

Peggy: Mumhum...? I know what you mean. Ask for a cup.

(Frankie turns, catches the waiter's eye, clicks his fingers and points to the table.)

Frankie: I, like, work in a grocery chain: the Trout Company.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

(The waiter enters with a fresh cup for Frankie.)

Frankie: Almost two months now – yeah, well. Thanks.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

(Frankie pours himself a cup of coffee – the waiter leaves.)

Frankie: Can I have a cigarette?

Peggy: Mumhum...? Take one.

Frankie: I don't smoke too much – I do not have time for it.

(Frankie takes a cigarette.)

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: But I like it. So, anyway, what is your name?

Peggy: Peggy.

Frankie: Yeah – you said already.

(Frankie takes a sip of coffee.)

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: What do you do, Peggy?

Peggy: I'm freelance.

Frankie: Freelance?

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: Like, freelance...?

Peggy: Yeah, freelance.

Frankie: Oh, freelance...! Like some kind of an artist?

Peggy: Something like that.

Frankie: I always admired artists – to me they seem, like, fine. I know an actor: Teddy. Do you know him?

Peggy: *(Loud and short – she thinks Frankie is, perhaps, a Police informer...)* Mumm...?

Frankie: Do you know Teddy the actor?

Peggy: Who?

Frankie: He told me that we should not read novels; because to read a novel is a waste of time – and I believe him. Yeah, for sure – reading a novel is a waste of time. I think Teddy is...

Peggy: *(Relaxed again.)* Yeah...!

Frankie: Yeah – he told me about his work and it sounded interesting.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: It was, kind of, like a story about young guy who – well, you're never gonna believe this: his uncle killed his father and married his mother.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: But the young guy was, kind of – well, he was, kind of, like, unsure what to do about the situation.

Peggy: Yeah – mumhum...?

(Frankie puts out his cigarette.)

Frankie: Which I don't think is realistic; because, like, I mean, kind of –

like hey... he would know what to do about the situation, wouldn't he? *(Slight pause.)* Can I take another cigarette?

Peggy: Yeah; I have a spare pack – sure.

(Frankie takes another cigarette.)

Frankie: The coffee is good.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: Do you mind me talking about Teddy?

Peggy: No.

Frankie: Oh, fine...

Peggy: I'll light your cigarette.

Frankie: *(She lights his cigarette.)* Well Teddy, he told me the story of another play – about some sisters who... they wanted to go to Moscow.

Peggy: Yeah?

(Peggy puts the cigarette lighter down on the table.)

Frankie: Which I don't think is realistic, either – because: why would anybody wanna go to Moscow?

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: The coffee is good.

Peggy: They always have good coffee here.

Frankie: I'll order a fresh pot.

(Frankie turns, catches the waiter's eye, clicks his fingers and points to the table.)

Peggy: Did they go to Moscow?

Frankie: Who?

Peggy: The sisters?

Frankie: Yeah, sure – they went.

Peggy: Mumhum...? *(Slight pause.)* I don't live far from here.

(The waiter enters, picks up the empty pot of coffee and puts a fresh pot on the table.)

Peggy: I don't live far from here. So, I come here almost every day.

(The waiter leaves.)

Peggy: I don't live far from here. So, I come here almost every day.
We can go to my place – after the rain stops.

Frankie: Mumhum...?

(Frankie puts out his cigarette.)

Peggy: Lots of people go to my place. I like it. There is always somebody at my place.

Frankie: So, you like the colour red?

Peggy: No, not specially. *(Slight pause.)* Have another cigarette.

(Peggy reaches for the cigarette lighter while Frankie reaches for the pack of cigarettes and knocks Peggy's bag off the table.)

Frankie: Thanks – sorry, Peggy.

Peggy: That's alright.

Frankie: Here, I'll help you.

Peggy: Thanks.

Frankie: Sorry.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: Here.

Peggy: Make up – I always carry it around with me. It's expensive and I do not want to leave it at home to get stolen.

Frankie: Do not be afraid of thieves. When a thief steals something from you, it is not a personal matter. He does not want to hurt you; he just likes the object that you have. *(Slight pause – Frankie puts out his cigarette.)* If a thief steals something from you, then that is a proof that you have good taste and it is a compliment.

Peggy: Have another cigarette.

Frankie: Thanks.

(Frankie takes another cigarette.)

Peggy: *(Peggy looks straight into his eyes.)* I know thieves.

Frankie: I like you.

(Frankie lights his cigarette.)

Peggy: Have some more coffee.

Frankie: Thanks.

(Frankie pours another cup of coffee.)

Peggy: *(Peggy looks straight into his eyes.)* I like you too, Frankie.

Frankie: Do you dance, Peggy?

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: Do you dance sometimes?

Peggy: Sometimes.

Frankie: *(Frankie looks straight into her eyes.)* These cigarettes are good – I like them.

Peggy: *(Relaxed – now that he has fallen in love with her.)* They are lights. You can smoke a number of them and nothing happens to you. I gotta take care of my throat because I get sore throats easy. And if I smoke, I gotta wash my hair three times a day – because smoke gets into your hair and it stinks.

Frankie: Yeah.

Peggy: And smoking is bad for the skin, so I gotta be careful and use cream.

Frankie: Sure...

Peggy: Also, I get asthma...

Frankie: Oh.

Peggy: And if the pollen count is high, or the smog is bad, I suffer with hay-fever... so that is why I only smoke lights.

Frankie: Yeah – they are better for you.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: I think the rain stopped.

Peggy: I know.

Frankie: So – we go?

Peggy: Yeah – mumhum...?

(Frankie turns to the audience.)

Frankie: *(Speaking to the audience.)* She said we should go – and she brought me to this house. It was a big house and there were plenty of rooms for the other people that lived there – and there were plenty of other people that lived there. There were a couple of shop-lifters, John and Pat, and there were some girl friends of Peggy's. That's where I met Ed. Ed has a room

but he turned it into a workshop, or I guess you could call it “*the*” workshop – because in the workshop we produce everything that we need to produce and we do all the work that needs to be done. I live in the room across from the *John*, because on the left side of the corridor there is the door to the *John*, and on the right side of the corridor there is the door to my room – and at the end of the corridor are the stairs, and the stairs go upstairs to the rooms that are upstairs: the upstairs rooms. The room next to mine is free now because John and Pat, the shop-lifters, they was arrested for shop-lifting. (*Slight pause.*) Peggy lived in the room that was directly above mine, on the first floor. But Peggy doesn’t live there anymore... (*Pause.*) I miss her. Peggy was fine. On the first floor some other people lived – like Ted, but he only lived there for two months; and on the second floor there were some friends of Peggy’s: Joss – who everybody calls Lulu – and Deborah who died. So we decided to make a lounge out of the spare room, a place to entertain guests. We bought a carpet, a couch, and a big round table. Peggy had good taste and Ed and I, we were going to leave the choice of the wallpaper to her – but now that Peggy is dead, Ed will leave the choice of the wallpaper to me. The best wallpaper would be wallpaper that goes with the carpet. It’s a responsible job and I gotta get it right because the lounge is the room we use for entertaining guests – and I need to show that I know what is nice and what is not nice. The most frequent guests who come are Black and Write... and Black and Write, they definitely know what is nice and what is not nice.

(The waiter comes in – he clears the coffee and cups and the ashtray from the table, then he clears all the chairs, and then he carries the table off-stage, into the wings.)

(Peggy stands, nervously, a little behind Frankie.)

Frankie: OK – I have some time; I decided to resign my job at the grocery store – it just don’t attract me no more.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Frankie: So, we go to your place.

Peggy: Mumhum...?

Scene 6

ED, THE SHIPMENT, AND DIVIDING THE SHIPMENT

Frankie: I really think you do it well, Lisa.

Black: Frankie is right, Lisa; you are a great actress.

Lisa: Yeah – but I don't study enough. Like: "How do you get to Carnaegie Hall?"

Frankie: How do you get to Carnaegie Hall...?

Lisa: Yeah – "How do you get to Carnaegie Hall?"

Black: Carnaegie Hall? Ain't it down town, near to Times Square?

Lisa: No – you gotta practise.

Frankie: I gotta practise?

Lisa: If you wanna get to Carnaegie Hall – you gotta practise. It's the same with acting: if you wanna get to Broadway...

Black: You gotta practise.

Lisa: Every day, at least four hours – because every scene needs it's own scenery... and I'm not talking about the scenery you can see – but the scenery of the mind; do you see what I'm saying to you? And once I have made that mental scenery then, and only then, can I start to build the character. It's a very responsible job and it's not as easy as it looks.

Black: I see.

Lisa: And then I gotta rehearse it, like – more than once.

Frankie: You do it well, Lisa. I had a friend called Teddy who was an actor and he told me the story of a guy who went to Moscow because he killed his uncle and married his mother.

Lisa: Yeah, you see, if there are more people in the scene then it's harder for me – because I am alone. If, for example, I play a scene and there are two characters in the scene, I must play them both.

Black: It is hard.

Lisa: Yeah – but I look at it this way, I look at it as a challenge. If I solve the simple problem, then I can move on and solve harder and harder problems. I think one day I might reach a point where I can play eight or nine characters in the same scene, you know?

Black: That would be great.

Frankie: But Lisa, why don't you find a theatre where there would be other actors who could play some of the other characters in the scene.

(Ed comes in with a handful of small packages which – no doubt – contain drugs.)

Frankie: Hi Ed!

Ed: Hi.

Black: Hi Ed!

Ed: Hi.

Lisa: Hi Ed.

(Ed looks at Lisa but does not respond to her “Hi”.)

Frankie: Ed, this is Lisa – she is really gifted... and also she is a talented actress who plays scenes.

(Pause – Ed looks at Lisa.)

Ed: What film was she in?

Black: “Blonde in Love”.

(Note: It does not matter if the actress playing Lisa has blonde hair, black hair, or if she is a red-head.)

Ed: *(After a dangerous pause.)* Oh, yeah – I liked it. *(Slight pause.)* Where is Write, Black?

Black: He didn't come – he had some business with somebody.

Ed: With somebody?

Black: Sure.

Ed: You gonna take his shipment?

Black: Yeah.

Ed: You got the money for it?

Black: Yeah.

Ed: OK.

(Frankie and Black put money on the table— Ed takes the money and throws the packages on the table. Frankie and Black pick up the packages and put them in their pockets.)

Ed: That's the shipment. There'll be another soon. I see you around.

Black: Yeah.

Frankie: Yeah.

(Ed walks across the stage.)

Frankie: Bye, Ed.

Ed: Bye.

Black: Bye, Ed.

Ed: Bye.

Lisa: Bye, Ed.

(Ed looks at Lisa but does not respond to her "Bye". Then he exits.)

(Pause.)

Black: He does it well.

Frankie: Yeah, he does it well.

Lisa: Yeah – he does it well.

(Pause.)

Lisa: I gotta go to the *John*.

(Lisa stands and crosses the stage.)

Lisa: I just gotta go...

(But then she stops.)

Lisa: *(She turns.)* I was never in any film, Black.

Black: I know that; but Ed don't know that.

Lisa: Oh... you do it well.

THE THIRD DIALOGUE OF BLACK AND WRITE

(The stage has been cleared of chairs and Black and Write stand for this, their final dialogue – enter Black and Write.)

Write: Black, please be so kind as to stand over there, in that corner, and point with your pistol and aim it at me.

Black: Why should I aim my pistol at you, Write?

Write: Just do as I ask you Black, will you? – Stand over there in that corner and point with your pistol and aim it at me.

(He does it.)

Black: So – OK. Like this.

Write: Wait, hold it there a minute – strange, there's no terror...

Black: What do you mean?

Write: I mean there's no terror, you don't terrify me, and you are not terrifying – when you aim your pistol at me, you just look like Black; Black and not at all a gangster.

Black: Why do you think that?

Write: Why? – Because... you see... in fact, Black, you do not look terrifying at all – you just look like Black and not at all a gangster.

Black: Is that bad?

Write: Yeah, it's bad.

Black: So, what can I do?

Write: I don't know... maybe... try some other way – stand there in the corner, yeah, and try to look, kind of... more terrifying!

(Black points his pistol at Write again.)

Black: Well?

Write: No Black, it's no good, you look like Black – Black and not at all gangster. *(Slight pause.)* Try something else...

(Black takes up several positions, worse each time.)

Write: No Black... No. That's worse... that's... Oh, no... Black it's bad. – You look like Black – yeah; but a gangster? – no. Still bad, still bad – you do it “bad” Black!

Black: How did you find it out?

Write: Well, the idea just came to me – in a flash – when I asked you to stand over there in that corner and point with your pistol and aim it at me.

Black: So, what can I do?

Write: I don't know.

Black: How can you not know? – You have to help me, Write! (*Slight pause.*) OK, so you stand in the corner and point with your pistol and aim it at me!

Write: Why should I aim my pistol at you?

Black: So, use my pistol.

Write: Why should I use your pistol when I have my pistol?

Black: Write – stand in the corner and aim the pistol; so I can see how to do it.

Write: Sure, OK – so, this is how you do it – you stand in the corner like this, you take out your pistol, then er... you aim it at... at me – and now you should look terrifying.

(Pause.)

Black: But Write, you do not look so very bad...

Write: So – just how good do I look?

Black: You look like Write; Write and not at all a gangster.

Write: What are you saying Black?

Black: When you stand in the corner and point with your pistol and aim it at me, you don't look terrifying. You look like Write... ha, ha... and not at all a gangster.

(Write is not happy about this.)

Write: OK – so, we try it together...

(Write hands his pistol to Black.)

Write: Give me your pistol, Black – and take mine.

Black: What difference does the pistol make?

Write: If you are packing my pistol, Black, you're gonna look more terrifying!

Black: Anything you say Write.

(They exchange pistols.)

Write: So – you stand in that corner and I'll stand in that corner and, together, we point with the pistols and aim – OK?

Black: Anything you say Write.

(Pause, they take up positions.)

Black: So, what do you think Write?

Write: Nothing.

Black: Nothing?

Write: Absolutely nothing.

Black: No terror?

Write: None... you do not look in the slightest degree terrifying – you just look like Black and not at all a gangster. *(Slight pause.)* And what about me?

Black: Nothing Write... you look like Write and not at all a gangster.

(Slight pause.)

Black: *(Loud.)* We do it badly Write!

Write: Even packing my pistol you look soft, Black.

Black: *(Worried.)* What can we do, Write?

Write: I don't know.

Black: *(Screaming at him.)* But you gotta know!

(Black falls to the floor, crying.)

Write: Black why did you fall down, why are you crying?

Black: *(Crying.)* I don't know Write... nobody pushed me... nobody hit me...

Write: Is it because you are unlucky?

Black: Yeah... that's it... I'm just an unlucky type. I mean, *we* are unlucky! We are both unlucky types! You and me both, Write...

Write: Even packing my pistol you do it bad...

Black: *(Still crying.)* That's because we do not do it well...!

Write: I'm telling you, Black, you do not look like terror!

Black: I know, Write, but you do not look like terror either!

Write: We gotta do something about this!

Black: Yeah, but what can we do about it?! *(Sbouting.)* We do not do

it well, so anything we try do about it we will also do badly – we are in Catch 32!

Write: We gotta start to do something different.

Black: What do you mean?

Write: I mean, we gotta start to do something different.

Black: But what...?

Write: Black, you decide for us both?

Black: *(Standing – calm now.)* Let's shoot ourselves, Write!

Write: Do you mean, like, I shoot you and you shoot me – or we each shoot the person that we are – like I shoot Write and you shoot Black?

Black: I shoot back?

Write: No: you shoot Black!

Black: I don't know exactly what I mean... *(Slight pause.)* Yeah, that is what I mean...

(Slight pause.)

Black: So, take your pistol back, Write.

(Black hands Write his pistol.)

Black: And give me mine... I prefer to do it with my own weapon.

Write: Yeah, I prefer to do it with my own weapon, too – because I'm not certain your pistol was loaded, Black.

(Write hands Black his pistol.)

Write: Er... shouldn't we talk to somebody about this first, you know, like get some advice about if it's the best solution...?

Black: *(Angry.)* Look, Write, we're indecisive, right? So, if we decide to do something, then let's do it – don't let's first ask someone if they think it's a good idea or not; let's just do it!

Write: I suppose you're right.

Black: *(Screaming at him.)* No, I'm Black!!! *(Quieter.)* Everything we decide to do we should do *immediately*, before someone takes the idea from us. We must perform. We must act; and we must perform the act as quickly as possible...!

Write: Then the world will know of us.

Black: Or not...

Write: Or not, what? (*Slight pause.*) Oh yeah; or not...

Black: So, we go?

Write: Yeah, we go.

(They move across the stage.)

Write: I gotta just check my pistol is loaded.

Black: If your pistol's not loaded, Write, you can use mine.

Write: No; I prefer to do it with my own weapon.

Black: I understand.

(Write starts to check his weapon.)

Write: The world's a big place – ain't it, Black?

Black: Yeah – it's a big place.

Write: Yeah... (*Slight pause.*) Or not...!

(Write is checking that his pistol is loaded.)

Black: You got something on your mind?

Write: We don't got time for it.

Black: We got a little more time; you can tell me.

Write: I was trying to think if there was something in the world that really attracts me.

Black: And was there?

Write: My pistol's loaded – I checked it.

Black: That's what attracts you most in the world, a loaded pistol?

Write: No, that's not it.

Black: Yeah?

Write: No.

(Pause.)

Black: So, are you gonna tell me what it is that you like?

Write: I'll tell you what I like...

Black: So, tell me...?

Write: I told you that I'd tell you!

Black: Then what is it?

Write: I like to watch the woman I care for soap herself in the tub.

Black: Like, naked?

Write: Yeah – like, naked.

Black: That's the thing you like most in the world?

Write: That's the *only* thing I like in the world.

Black: Your pistol's loaded?

Write: It's loaded.

Black: Write; can I ask you one thing? – You don't gotta answer if you don't want to.

Write: Sure.

Black: When was the last time you *watched* the woman you care for soap herself in the tub; like naked?

Write: When?

Black: Yeah, when?

(Slight pause.)

Write: I don't remember the last time I watched the woman that I care for soap herself in the tub...

Black: Then how is it that is the *only* thing that you like in the world – when you don't remember the last time you watched the woman that you care for?

(Pause.)

Write: You got an answer to that one – Black?

Black: Do I got an answer?

Write: Yeah.

(Slight pause.)

Black: It's like this – when you was a baby and you fell down, or something, and it hurt: do you remember that pain?

Write: No, I don't remember: I was a baby.

Black: So – did the pain exist?

Write: Did pain exist when I was a baby?

Black: Did you feel pain when you was a baby? Because, you know, pain is only really important to the person who feels it – and if that person; in this case you, Write; don't remember the pain, can that pain really be said to have existed?

Write: I see what you mean. But I think when a baby cries; even

though the baby don't remember the pain, the baby's mother, and maybe even the baby's father, remember that their baby cried... and maybe they did something about it.

Black: So, it existed – right?

Write: So what you're saying is even though I don't remember the last time I watched the woman I care for soap herself in the tub – that, in no way, invalidates my belief, that to watch the woman I care for in the tub is – not only the thing that I like most in the world – but the *only* thing I like in the world...?!

Black: Yeah.

Write: *(He thinks for a moment.)* But my parents are dead, Black!

(Pause.)

Black: Is that a problem?

Write: I think it could be.

Black: Do you mean, Write, that because your mother and father are dead – that perhaps, for that reason, you never cared for a woman? *(Pause.)* Is that what you mean?

Write: Look, Black, don't ask me these deep questions!

Black: You only gotta say "yes" or "no".

Write: Do you want the truth?

Black: Yeah, I want the truth!

(Pause.)

Write: I don't think we got time for this conversation, Black; we gotta start to do something different – that's the truth.

Black: So, we go?

Write: Yeah, we go – and we do it well.

Black: Yeah – we do it well.

(They exit.)

(Pause.)

(After they have gone, an overhead light shines down on to a white, enamel tin bowl.)

(Pause.)

(Enter Lisa – she is naked: that is to say, she is wearing a cream, all in one, body-stocking that has nipples and pubic hair “drawn” on to it. Under the light, it should look as if she is naked; but she should not, in fact, be naked – it is an illusion.)

(Music starts and Lisa steps into the white, enamel bowl.)

(The overhead light gets stronger.)

(Lisa picks up a sponge, or a face flannel, and mimes soaping herself in the tub.)

(She bends down and pretends to scoop water out of the basin – then she mimes splashing the water over her neck and letting it run down her body.)

(She repeats this as the music continues.)

(At the end of this process, Lulu and Brenda enter carrying a robe and a hand towel for Lisa – Lisa steps out of the tub and puts on the robe.)

Scene 8

LISA, LULU AND BRENDA

Lulu: We don't know how to do it without Peggy.

Lisa: Yeah – we're lost, now, and we will never be able do it well.

Brenda: One of my tricks told me to go to Hell. He said – first I ought to of have learned how to be a human being, before I learned how to be a hooker.

Lulu: That's a terrible thing to say.

Lisa: Yeah – you know I had two regulars, Black and Write?! Well, first they both came; but then only *one* of them came – the other – I didn't see him for three days now – he looked at me as if I had lice, or something – and now, well, neither of them come.

- Brenda: Yeah, it's terrible if they don't come – you gotta spend hours with them.
- Lisa: No, I don't mean that – I mean they *don't* come – I don't see them around anymore.
- Lulu: That's terrible.
- Brenda: I didn't even earn enough for dinner.
- Lulu: What are we gonna do?
- Lisa: I'm gonna start to do something different. I'm gonna join a theatre company. They said I was talented. They said – they said... that, "I did it well".
- Lulu: Yeah – but all the *theatres* are closing down. I tried to get a job in a strip-joint only last week, but they're gonna tear it down and build a hospital...!
- Brenda: That's terrible.
- Lulu: I think that I will go to the South.
- Brenda: Yeah, it sucks here. I will go to the South with you.
- Lulu: (*Looking out over the heads of the audience.*) Down South, down there, I hear, you can live OK.
- Brenda: (*Looking straight at the audience.*) Yeah... these people... these people here just don't appreciate our great work.
- Lisa: The problem is that the world does not know of me.
- Brenda: The world sucks.
- Lulu: But Lisa, everybody in the world cannot know of everybody else. There are so many people in the world that if everybody knew of everybody else, then the world would just be a crazy place.
- Lisa: No, you are wrong. I am an actress and the world must know of me.
- Brenda: I think you are wrong too, Lulu: I'm a hooker and the world must know of me.
- Lulu: Yeah, I *am* wrong: I am a stripper and the world must know of me too!
- Brenda: But, here, the world don't know of nobody...
- Lulu: You are right!
- Brenda: Yeah, I *am* right – and like Lisa says: we need someone to

watch over us; without somebody watching, without an audience, how can we ever know if we do it well, or not? – it's impossible, it's just impossible...

Lulu: We're lost without Peggy.

Brenda: So – no sense to stay here.

Lulu: No – no sense to stay here.

Brenda: Maybe in the South everything will be better.

Lulu: Yeah – maybe everything will be better in the South.

(Brenda and Lulu leave.)

(Lisa is alone.)

(She starts to act her scene – the woman who is unlucky – but she does not cry or fall down.)

(She takes several deep breaths – she acts well.)

(Pause.)

(Then, quite suddenly, she exits.)

Scene 9

FRANKIE, NOSTALGIA, AND “THE END”

Frankie: Black and Write disappeared. Lulu too. They say they went South. Ed is locked up. The narcs' lifted him from off of the street; but he didn't do nothing. In my opinion someone ratted on him. I gotta do everything for myself now. I get the shipments and I divide them. Lisa moved in here and she lives in Peggy's room. I like her. She doesn't tell me what she's doing in there but she says people are gonna know of her soon. I bought the wallpaper for the lounge. Yeah, well I went into the shop – and you cannot imagine how many wallpapers they have in that wallpaper shop. You cannot imagine how many different colours those wallpapers come in. You can choose wallpapers

that are in one colour, or you can choose wallpapers that are in another colour – or you can choose wallpapers that are in a mixture of colours. And you cannot imagine how many different colours that you can choose. But that is not all – they have wallpapers with patterns. And you cannot imagine how many patterns they have on the wallpapers that are in the wallpaper shop. And the better the wallpaper, the more the colours, and the patterns that it has on it. So, I took one sample from every kind of wallpaper with every kind of pattern and every kind of colour, and I gotta tell you people that it goes with the carpet! The room is not finished yet so I cannot show you; but it will be finished soon. But let's get down to business. Well, to tell the truth, the idea of selling some part of the house to you came from Ed; but I agree with Ed. And I gotta do it, now, 'cause Ed is in prison – 'cause somebody ratted on him. So, the deal is for the second floor and half of the first... which is ideal! Think about it – it will be a condominium – and let me know as soon as possible. You can see the deeds and everything. But you gotta tell me quick because there will be some other people coming after you, tomorrow night, at about 7:00 p.m. And I will sell to the highest bidder. And you gotta be straight with me, 'cause I don't want no crooks. 'Cause I couldn't share the house with no crooks. We understand each other, don't we? Yeah – we got an understanding. It's a fine house, and – you know – this is a place where you can do it well...!

EPILOGUE

Write: Hi, Black!

Black: Hi, Write!

Write: Long time no see.

Black: Yeah, long time no see.

Write: I been thinking about what you said, last time we met.

Black: What did I say, Write?

Write: You asked me – did I ever really care for a woman.
Black: And did you?
Write: But I wanna put the question the other way round.
Black: The other way round?
Write: Yeah – did a woman ever really care for me?
Black: And did she?
Write: How would I know, Black?
Black: Oh well, if you don't know...?
Write: No, I don't mean that. (*Slight pause.*) How would I know? By what criteria could I be certain that a woman really loved me?
Black: By what criteria?
Write: Yeah.
Black: I think there are two criteria, Write.
Write: Yeah?
Black: The first criteria is that she cooks for you, she cleans for you, she also irons your clothes and she cries for you when you are shot.
Write: That is the first criteria?
Black: Yeah – that is the first criteria.
Write: What is the second criteria, Black?
Black: The second criteria is that she does all these things for nothing.
Write: For nothing?
Black: Yeah, for nothing.
Write: (*After a pause.*) So – can I put the question again: Did a woman ever really love you? (*Pause.*) Did Lisa ever love you – I mean, *really* love you?
Black: No, I had to pay her.
Write: And did you ever really love her?
Black: It's like Ed says: If you hang a woman round your neck, she sucks your blood.
Write: What happened to Ed?
Black: Someone ratted on him.
Write: So, there was a rat!
Black: There was a dirty rat.
Write: Who said that?

Black: I said that.
Write: No, who said: "You dirty rat..." – in that film: "Public Enemy"?
Black: "You dirty rat"?!
Write: Yeah: "You dirty rat"?!
Black: Cagney.
Write: Ah – yeah: Jimmy Cagney.
Black: You dirty rat...!
Write: Me?
Black: No, Write – you ain't no rat.
Write: So, what happened to Lisa?
Black: She became an actress.
Write: Oh, yeah – did she get any work?
Black: Yeah, she got a role, a part, a character.
Write: What is she performing in?
Black: Come on, how can you ask me that? Of course – she's performing in *this* play.
Write: What do you mean?
Black: What do you mean – what do I mean? Isn't it clear? Do I have to explain every- thing to you? (*Slight pause.*) There are some things in the world that you will simply never understand – now I see it! And do you know why, my dear Write?
Write: No.
Black: Well... so – leave it.
Write: Leave it?
Black: Yeah – leave it.
Write: Would you be so very kind, Black, and answer one simple question?
Black: Sure.
Write: (*Screaming at him.*) What do you mean?!
Black: I mean, you and I, we are characters in a play – and so is Lisa.
Write: That sounds fine.
Black: Yeah – it is fine.
Write: But how is it that Lisa is acting in the play and she is also a *character* of the play? I mean, I can understand that she, and we, are characters in a play; but I cannot see that Lisa – at the

same time as she is a character *in* the play – can also be said to be an actress working in a theatre company putting *on* the play. Do you see what I mean?

Black: Yeah; I see what you mean – but I think it's just because Lisa has practised more than we have, and now she can play plenty of characters in the same scene.

Write: She can?

Black: Yeah; she can.

Write: So – why don't we go see it?

Black: What?

Write: (*Shouting at him.*) The play.

Black: Yeah – why don't we go see it?

Write: Good idea; sure!

Black: Fine.

Write: But wait a minute: if we're gonna go to the theatre, and sit in the dark, and spend our money – I gotta ask one question, Black.

Black: What is that, Write?

Write: Do they do it well?

Black: Yeah – they do it well.

Write: OK – so, we go?

Black: Yeah – let's go...!

THE END