

LUDLOW FAIR

CHARACTERS

RACHEL, *an attractive young woman in her mid-twenties.*

AGNES, *on the heavy side, busty, not unattractive, but no raving beauty, in her mid-twenties. She would be considered "a great deal of fun."*

SCENE: The bedroom of their apartment. Two twin beds on one wall, a vanity dresser across the room. A desk with books. The room is neat and in good taste. On the table between the beds is a phone. On the desk, is a dictionary, among other books; on the vanity in among the usual paraphernalia, a box of large hair rollers and bottle of nail polish. One exit is to the bathroom, another to the living room. RACHEL wears a gown and robe; AGNES, pajamas and robe.

Ludlow Fair was first presented by Joe Cino at the Caffe Cino New York City, on February 1, 1965. It was directed by Neil Flanagan with the following cast:

RACHEL	Martha Galphin
AGNES	Jennie Ventriss

Lighting by Dennis Parichy, sets by Mr. Flanagan. Stage Manager Renée Mauguin.

RACHEL [*wandering around the room alone. She is restless; she looks at one thing and another. Finally, quite to herself*]. Oh, God; I think you're losing your head. I think you're going stark raving insane and you've got no one in this ever-loving world, sweetheart, to blame except yourself. And maybe Joe. But then. . . . Are you losing it? Hmm? Let's see. [*She pinches herself firmly. For a full two seconds she considers the effect. Matter-of-factly.*] Ouch! [*Yelling toward the bathroom.*] Agnes? [*Waits.*] How long are you going to take, anyway?

AGNES [*offstage, from the bathroom*]. What?

RACHEL. I said, are you about through in there?

AGNES. In a minute.

RACHEL. You said that an hour ago. [*She waits for an answer, none comes. Rubbing her arm.*] What a stupid thing to do. That's no kind of test of insanity, anyway. That's for drunkenness or sleep-walking or disorderly conduct or something. How do you know if your faculties are ebbing away from you, anyway? [*Seriously considering.*] You go to an analyst, what does he do? You lie down on the couch, what does he do? Ha! No, a respectable analyst, what does he do? You lie— A quick little word association. You can't give yourself a word—well, why not? [*Sits quickly on the chair at the desk.*] Ready? Ready. Very well, when I say a word you come in with the very first word that pops into your head. Yes, I understand. Very well. [*Pause, tries for a split second to think of a word. Finally.*] Word. [*Immediately answers.*] Word! [*Blank pause.*] Dog. [*Absolutely blank for the count of six. Aside.*] Oh, for Christ's sake. . . . [*Intense concentration. Mumbles.*] Dog. [*Breaking away, then firmly.*] Jesus Chri—DOG! [*Pause. With the same studied intensity.*] CAT! [*Aside.*] For Christ's sake—well, that's it—cat. Keep it up. Cat. [*Same amount of pause between words, same intensity to each word.*] Rat. Mouse. House. Rat. Dog. Cat. Mouse. Louse. Bat. Pat. Fat. Louse. [*Breaking away.*] Fat louse, Jesus Christ. Rat, cat, mouse, louse, bat, house; you don't need an analyst you need an exterminator. You can't associate with yourself. Even words. [*Calling to no one.*] Joe! [*Sees*

the dictionary on the desk, puts it in her lap.] Well, why not? As long as you don't know the word that's coming up. Now the first word that pops into your head. [*Answering herself.*] Yes, I understand. [*She opens the book, looks down, closes it. Flatly.*] Knickerbocker! [*Sighs slowly, then with redetermination.*] All right, I'll play your stupid game with you. Holiday. Take that. [*Opens the book again. Looks more closely. Reading.*] Phen-a-kis-to-scope. [*Pause. Looking at it. Continues reading.*] "An instrument resembling the zoe-thrope in principle and use. One form consists of a disk with the figures arranged about the center, with radial slits— [*Aside.*] Radial slits? [*Continues to read.*] Radial slits through which the figures are viewed— [*Becoming amused.*]—by means of a mirror." [*Closing the dictionary.*] But what's it for? Phen-a-kis-to-scope. Very well. [*She gets up, wanders to the dresser, as though she were thinking.*] Phenakistoscope. Ah, ah . . . Zoethrope! Naturally. [*Sitting at the dresser, the dictionary open in front of her, she quite casually opens the nail polish and pours an amount on one page, shuts the dictionary firmly, props it open again, like an easel against the back of the vanity. Studies it carefully from some distance.*] Ah . . . Oh, ah . . . A tree. [*Aside.*] A tree. That couldn't possibly mean anything. [*Looks back at it, studying.*] Ah. Ah. Your trouble is you have no imagination, Rachel. You're not nuts, you're just dull. Okay . . . Ah. An ostrich. That's a little better. An ostrich. Eating. [*Considering her progress.*] An ostrich, huh? That's vaguely phallic, you know. Well, vaguely. [*Shutting the book.*] That's the trouble with those things, when they start working you're in trouble. [*She gets up, carrying the book, rubs her arm.*] If you don't learn to stop pinching yourself. [*Calling.*] Agnes? Are you ever getting out of there? AGNES [*offstage*]. What? I'll be out in a minute. Christ. RACHEL. You said that an hour ago. [*She lays the book back on the dresser, wanders about.*] There's nothing wrong with you, Rachel, except you're given to talking to yourself—driven to talking to yourself. [*Falls down on her bed, stretched out, looking up blankly.*] Long pointless conversations before retiring. Well, doctor—it's this way. Joe turned out to be a rat. But then I think I knew that before he turned out. [*Props herself on one elbow.*] I was just sitting home saying to myself, Rachel, you have got to get yourself a new phenakistoscope. The one you've got is just a mess. The radial slits are all shot. And when the radial slits are

shot, there's just no hope. For a phenakistoscope. Or anything else, for that matter. [*She sits on the side of the bed, face in hands, near the point of crying for just a second, then pulls out of it and gets up.*] Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Joe. Joe. Joe. Where did you go? [*Pause.*] All the way to . . . [*Breaks off. Walks to dresser, sees dictionary.*] What have you been doing? Testing your sanity again, huh? What are you crazy or something? There's nothing wrong with you. [*Sees her reflection in the mirror. Pleased but critical.*] Five foot two. Five foot six, actually: Girls are bigger than ever. Lovely dark hair, fine hair. Opalescent skin. Lovely hips. Fine breasts. Nice legs. Nice, hell, great legs. Not bad ears; good hands. Slightly blah eyes, frankly; but then you can't have everything. [*Echo, breaking away. To herself.*] Can't have everything. What you are is probably a louse. A fool, of course, and a probable louse. Moral to a fault. And where you are a probable louse, Joe is a first-class, A-one definite louse without a doubt, and it is good to have a first-class definite louse out of your hair. [*She lights a cigarette.*] Four hundred and thirty-six dollars. [*Takes a puff; exhales.*] And thirty-eight cents. [*Wandering about.*] And several Government checks, like thirty, say. And about twenty-odd forgeries, and about four cars, and four hundred and thirty-six dollars and thirty-eight cents.

AGNES [*offstage*]. I'm out. What are you up to?

RACHEL [*without paying attention. To herself*]. Oh, God. [*Sees herself in the mirror.*] Girl, you are a mess. Just a mess. [*Pause.*]

AGNES enters. Without looking directly at RACHEL, she goes to her bed, picking up the dictionary on her way and tossing it on her bed. AGNES has a cold. She is carrying a box of Kleenex, a section of the Times folded open to the crossword, a pencil, a brush and comb, and anything else she can find. Her hair is wet, combed straight down.

RACHEL [*to herself*]. Well, what do you expect with last year's phenakistoscope?

AGNES [*without looking up, goes to her bed*]. Are you going to take a bath or what?

RACHEL. Take a bath? When did you start saying, "take a bath"? Take a bath, take a haircut, take a shower—I don't know what you're coming to.

AGNES. I got a cold.

RACHEL. What's that got to do with anything?

AGNES. Well, I abbreviate when I got a cold.

She situates herself on the bed with the paraphernalia about her, including a dish of peanut brittle.

RACHEL [*musings sadly*]. Four hundred and thirty-six dollars.

AGNES. [*without looking up from the paper and brushing her hair*]. And thirty-eight cents.

RACHEL. I just wish I knew if I did the right thing.

AGNES. Look. A guy robs a store. If you turn him in, are you doing the right thing?

RACHEL. Do I know this guy or not?

AGNES. What guy?

RACHEL. Who robbed the store. In your hypothesis.

AGNES. Leave my hypothesis out of it. What difference does it make? He robbed a store—you turn him in.

RACHEL. He didn't rob a store.

AGNES. Are you going to take a bath or what?

RACHEL. I don't think so.

AGNES. You going to stay up and read all night or what?

RACHEL. Four hundred bucks. God.

AGNES. If you're going to start brooding I'm going to bed.

RACHEL. If just once we'd say to ourselves—you do that, girl, and you'll be sorry for it later.

AGNES. Yeah. Not bloody likely. [*Blowing her nose.*] Jesus, I'm coming down with something.

RACHEL [*studying her*]. You know what you are?

AGNES. Yeah? Make it good.

RACHEL. Susceptible.

AGNES. Susceptible. You hook the dud and I'm susceptible. I got a lousy job in lousy Kew Gardens and a lousy date tomorrow for lunch and a lousy dentist appointment and a lousy boss and a lousy love life and a roommate who takes out her aggressions on me. And all you can say is I'm susceptible. I'm dying. Face it Agnes, you got a lousy life.

RACHEL. I meant susceptible to colds. Or drafts.

AGNES. "Agnes Mulligan: This Is Your Life!" And the TV screen goes blank for thirty minutes.

RACHEL. Why do you always have a cold? You've had a cold since I've known you.

AGNES. Maybe I'm allergic to you. I wear low-cut dresses is why.

knew when I was nine, with a name like Agnes, I was in for a dumpy figure and a big bust and low-cut dresses and susceptibility to drafts.

RACHEL. Well, don't wear them.

AGNES [*almost always speaks as if she is talking to herself*]. If I'd had any brains I'd have changed my name.

RACHEL. Why don't you?

AGNES. What's the point of having a big bust if you don't wear low-cut dresses. [*She puts the crossword on her lap, picks up the dictionary. Then, almost dreamily.*] What I can't wait for is a big house and about six handmaids and a big bed to sprawl all over. You know . . . I want to keep my figure—what there is of it. After I'm married, I mean. I really do. I want to look as nice as possible. God, I think that's important.

RACHEL. Oh, would you shut up?

AGNES [*has opened the dictionary absently during the last speech. She shuts it and looks at RACHEL*]. What the hell did you do to the dictionary?

RACHEL. Oh. I made a Rorschach.

AGNES [*pause*]. Yeah.

RACHEL. I was checking my responses. What does it look like to you?

AGNES [*reopening the dictionary, unamused*]. It looks like I better know the meaning and derivation of all the possible words between "obsecrate" and "ocelot."

RACHEL. What does it look like, though? Do you get an ostrich?

AGNES. I don't get anything except mad. Jesus, Rachel.

RACHEL. I'm sorry.

AGNES [*pause*]. Good Lord. Nail polish, huh?

RACHEL. Yeah. I thought maybe I was going insane.

AGNES. And the simple act of pouring nail polish into the dictionary didn't confirm anything, huh?

RACHEL. Don't pester me. Do I eat peanut brittle in bed? I thought you'd never get out of that tub. Don't you know not to leave a screwed-up girl alone with herself for three-quarters of an hour? *She has said it comically, but suddenly feels sad, puts her head in her hands again.*

AGNES. Well, I was soaking. [*Notices her.*] Aw, come on, for Christ's sake.

RACHEL. I only want to know if I did the right thing.

AGNES. Look, a hundred of that was mine. He was a bum, what can I tell you? He was a bum and a thief and you turned him into the Secret Service and now what are you conjuring up? Lonely Joe in a cell? Well, forget it.

RACHEL. You're not funny.

AGNES. He was a bum. [*Aside.*] Damn, I'm all over peanut brittle.

RACHEL. He was. Of course he was. But I had no idea he'd done any of that other.

AGNES. How long had you known him?

RACHEL. Three months.

AGNES. Well in three months you're supposed to know everything about the guy? Every bank he's robbed, for Christ's sake?

RACHEL. He hadn't robbed any banks.

AGNES. Federal bank notes passed totaling into the hundreds; you want to get technical, he's robbed a bank. A Federal bank at that. So you had fun; it wasn't worth it.

RACHEL. You're a lot of help. I think I'm going over the edge and you sit there complacently sticking to the blanket.

AGNES [*trying to wipe the blanket and Kleenex off her hands*]. This damn stuff. I'm growing fuzz.

She sets the dish of candy on the table.

RACHEL. What will they do to him, do you think?

AGNES [*quickly, disgruntled*]. I think they'll hang him.

RACHEL [*getting up*]. Stop it! Now you just stop it!

AGNES. Hey, come on. He'll go to jail. He stole my dough and you dough and the Federal Government's dough and God know whose else's dough and he'll go to jail.

RACHEL. I just couldn't believe it.

AGNES. Yeah, me too.

RACHEL. We really had fun, too.

AGNES. Well, don't think about it, okay?

RACHEL. We really did.

AGNES. She says we really had fun, I tell her don't think about it she says we really had fun. Jesus. Listen. You know what happened to the fag bookkeeper sits next to me out at work? He picked up this guy. . . .

RACHEL. Agnes, I do not care what happened to the fag bookkeeper out at Standard Universal Plumbing.

AGNES. Standard Universal Fixtures. [*Pause. Firmly.*] There is a

such thing as plumbing any more. [*Pause. Continuing.*] He took this guy he'd met up to—

RACHEL. Really! I don't—

AGNES. Look, do you think I'd trouble you if it wasn't pertinent? I'm not in the habit of telling you bedtime stories for the hell of it, am I? He picked up, good Lord, this guy! Apparently they just wander around till they see eye to eye with someone and then run right off the street and hit the sack, which, if you want to know my opinion, sounds a little capricious but not altogether impractical. Anyway, this big lug went home with him and "Stars Fell on Alabama," I suppose, or whatever the hell happens. Anyway, the next morning Henry waves good-by and two days later he sees this doll's picture in the paper—he'd been picked up for murder, my dear, of four or five fairies out in California and God knows how many more between here and there. Poor Henry almost died. He'd spent the night with this guy.

RACHEL [*pause*]. Fine! I'm sorry, I don't see the connection.

AGNES. You said you really had fun and you couldn't believe that Joe could possibly be—

RACHEL. —We happened to have been going together for three months!—

AGNES. —And you didn't know a damn thing about him—

RACHEL. You think a one night fling is the same—

AGNES. And you'd had some fun and you didn't know beans about him—

RACHEL. I didn't just pass him on the street!

AGNES. No, you didn't just meet him on a street—

RACHEL. Like your bookkeeper—

AGNES. You met him at Bickford's.

RACHEL [*defiantly*]. Longchamps! Honestly. I happen to be in love with him. That's why I'm wandering around this damn stupid—wondering—why the hell. Oh, Christ.

She sits back on the bed, stretches out, rolls over on her stomach, sobs once.

AGNES [*getting up*]. Oh, come on. Have a box of Kleenex.

RACHEL [*her face buried in the pillow*]. I don't want them.

AGNES. They pop up.

RACHEL. Go away. Why did I say anything? What had it cost me really? Nothing.

AGNES goes to the desk, gets a bottle of liquor out of the bottom drawer, fixes two drinks—just liquor, no mix.

AGNES. Honestly. Here. Have a shot. Me too, it's good for a cold. If I'm going to be running around nursing a roommate all night. Me? I'm always nursing someone else's broken heart. Just once I'd like a broken heart of my own.

RACHEL [sitting up, takes the drink]. You're great.

AGNES. I snore actually. Why don't you go to bed?

RACHEL. I can't. I don't think. You go on. . . . It isn't late, is it?

AGNES. No. I hate you like this, I pass up more good cracks.

RACHEL. I think maybe I should call in the morning.

AGNES. And tell them what? That he really didn't do it? Not here or in Denver or in Tucson? They knew twice what you did about him. [Moving toward her purse on the vanity.] I got a hangnail. Damn that typewriter.

RACHEL. I could drop the charges.

AGNES [looking through her purse for a file]. I doubt if they'd let him out for you. Besides, I don't know about you, but I'd be scared to death if he got out now.

RACHEL. I don't know what I should have done.

AGNES. Please don't worry about it. It's done. It's over; that's it.

RACHEL [long sigh, not looking at AGNES]. Yeah.

RACHEL is sitting gloomily, looking off into space.

AGNES [finding something in her purse]. You collect coins? [Pause. No response.] I got a Tasmanian penny at Riker's yesterday.

RACHEL [not listening]. No.

AGNES [temptingly]. It's got some crazy fruit tree on it.

RACHEL [not listening]. No.

AGNES [two fingers in the air, making a hand shadow]. See the rabbit? [Pause.] You going to bed soon? Why don't you read some thing?

RACHEL. I tried it.

AGNES. Turn on the radio.

RACHEL. I tried it.

AGNES. What haven't you tried?

RACHEL. Oh, I'm being such a lunk. Really. Who's your lunch with?

AGNES. The boss's son. Tonsils. I told you about him. [Nasally. He talks like that. And with a Harvard accent yet. He's got the kind of face, I swear as soon as it gets warm he's going to put on a funny pair of sunglasses. [Pause.] I feel I should sympathize with

you, but honestly, Rachel, I've seen this happen I'll bet ten times since I've been living with you.

RACHEL. Not exactly this.

AGNES. And you say, "not exactly this" every time. It's a bore; you know what I mean?

RACHEL. All right. It's a bore. I couldn't agree more. How many boy friends have I had? Since you've been here? Not so many.

AGNES. I'm not your datebook. I don't know.

RACHEL. Since you've known me?

AGNES. I don't know. What am I?

RACHEL. Roger. Just after you moved in.

AGNES. Floyd. You'd just broke up with.

RACHEL. Then Roger.

AGNES. Then Val.

RACHEL. Tom. Then Val.

AGNES. And Marvin. What a loser he was.

RACHEL. And Joe. Six. God. It's just too much.

AGNES. In what? Nine months. Not even a year.

RACHEL. They were nice guys, though. All of them, really.

AGNES. Oh, charmers. All. Burghers of Calais.

RACHEL. It's too much.

AGNES. It's an unearthly waste of time, you know? You know what you could do in nine months?

RACHEL. Very funny.

AGNES. I wasn't even *thinking* that! Jesus! I meant like get to know someone. Get married—get engaged, at least.

RACHEL. Well, with Joe it was nearly three months. [Looks aside at the phone, then reaches for it and sets it in her lap.] Oh, God.

AGNES [at the vanity dresser, still filing her nails, she is not looking at RACHEL. She drops her file]. Fuck! [Bends to pick it up.] I've got to quit saying that. Jesus. [Looking at RACHEL now, who is very slowly dialing a number.] Rachel. [No response. Firmly, flatly.] Rachel.

RACHEL [not listening]. What?

AGNES [firmly, flatly]. If you're calling your mother I'm moving out.

RACHEL [not listening]. What?

AGNES [same inflection]. I said if you're calling your mother I'm moving out. Out into the street, into the rain. I don't care; I'll be happier there. I'll catch pneumonia, I'll go to Saint Vincent's Hospital, I'll be happier there, believe me.

RACHEL [*putting the phone down*]. What's wrong?

AGNES. Nothing's wrong, I've just had it with the Daisy Mae routine.

RACHEL. It isn't that bad.

AGNES. You are on that phone for one minute and you have an accent strong enough to paper the walls. And I've lived with one Southern girl and couldn't take that, but this nightly metamorphosis bit I don't need.

RACHEL. Well, maybe it would help. There are times when you feel like calling your mother; what's wrong with that?

AGNES. Well, then; call my mother. But you get a line from here to Dogpatch, Virginia, and I'm moving out. I can't take it. I don't intend to sit here and listen to it. The days of the Cotton Queen are over as far as I'm concerned.

RACHEL. It isn't Dogpatch; I wish you'd quit saying that.

AGNES. What is it?

RACHEL. Cullerton.

AGNES [*flatly*]. Cullerton. Virginia.

RACHEL. North Carolina.

AGNES. North Carolina. Jesus. How long did it take you to learn to lose the drawl?

RACHEL. How long? About five years.

AGNES. Five years. To learn not to drawl. [*To herself.*] Van Gogh didn't study that long to learn. Of course he couldn't drawl. [*Winces, turns to the mirror.*] I'm going to put up my hair. I wasn't going to, but if we're up for the night.

RACHEL. Go on to bed. I think I will.

AGNES [*looks into the mirror*]. Oh, Jesus. [*Looks away blankly. Count ten. Looks back blankly. Count ten.*] Agnes, you're a vision. [*To RACHEL, without turning around. RACHEL slides under the covers of her bed, opens a magazine, doesn't read it.*] You know, three years ago I had kinky hair.

RACHEL [*without listening*]. No kidding.

AGNES. I had it straightened. [*Pause.*] Ever since I've had straight hair.

RACHEL. Why don't you just let it be straight; it looks nice like that.

AGNES. No. What I'm not is Veronica Lake. I used to go to this beautician—this gal. Nearly killed me. Inside. She says, Agnes—she was Jewish, you know—Agnes, she says, I'll do wonders for you—you won't recognize yourself. Your own mother won't know

you. For nearly a year, every week. She'd comb me out and reset me exactly the same. Agnes, I'll do wonders for you. I came out looking exactly the same as I went in. Solid year.

RACHEL. Why did you keep going back to her then?

AGNES *begins to set her hair, rolling it onto large rollers and slipping a bobby pin onto the roller. This is a comically realistic process, done quite matter-of-factly.*

AGNES. I don't know. It's just nice to run into a positive attitude once in a while. I finally quit. She called me up after a couple of weeks, wanted to know what happened. I didn't have the heart to tell her my mother still recognized me. I told the beautician I'd bought a wig. [*RACHEL laughs.*] She tells me—oh, Agnes—you gotta bring it over. I do wonders with wigs. Your own mother won't recognize. . . . [*Pause.*] You gonna stay up all night or what?

RACHEL. I don't know. [*She stretches out in bed.*]

AGNES. Why did you ask for the bathroom if you don't want to shower or something, huh?

RACHEL. Look—Agnes— [*Sitting up. Rather intense.*] Can we talk? Straight on this? So I can decide what I think for a minute, huh? Really, now—just straight for a minute or two and I'll be all right. I'll swear I don't know what the hell I'm going to do from here if I don't straighten myself out on this. I don't want to call Mom any more than you want me to, but I just want to—

AGNES [*getting up, she goes for a cigarette*]. Sure. Of course we can; talk to Doctor Muller. My fees are reasonable.

RACHEL. No, now—not even like that—just straight. So I know what I feel, or think or something! Sit down, now; stop flying around. See, I did like Joe and an awfully lot, too—

AGNES [*she has lit the cigarette. She sits down on the side of the bed opposite the table*]. Fine. Okay.

RACHEL. Well, don't interrupt! God.

AGNES. Okay, okay.

RACHEL. While you wrinkled up in that damn tub I honestly thought I was losing my mind; you come back in here and I say, Agnes: I think I'm losing my mind, could you take a minute out of your life to listen to me and I get twenty minutes of Charlie Chaplin.

AGNES. Okay! [*Pause.*] So go on.

RACHEL. I'm sorry. It's just, Jesus. I don't know anything; I just can't seem to do something that doesn't backfire, boomerang in my face. Blow up right in my face. I do something heatedly, because I'm mad and it's the right thing to do, I know—and then the whole thing blows up in my face. They're practically ready to hang Joe and all because I turned him in for filching some money from us. Not that much, really, either; I didn't talk to him, I just turned him in. God knows what kind of fix he was in to take money from us.

A rapid exchange follows between AGNES and RACHEL.

AGNES. You want a cigarette?

RACHEL. I just . . . NO! God! I don't want a cigarette.

AGNES. Okay, so you don't want a cigarette.

RACHEL. I just put one out. I have no urge for a cigarette at all. Thank you.

AGNES. I only asked, don't make a production out of it!

RACHEL. Well, I do not want a cigarette.

AGNES. Okay.

RACHEL. Is there anything else?

AGNES. All right, I said. *Christ!*

RACHEL [*intensely*]. Well I'm trying to say something and little Miss Helpful Agnes butts in with—

AGNES. Would you hand me the ash tray anyway?

RACHEL [*takes the ash tray, slams it down on the bed beside AGNES. Very loud. Jerky*]. CHRIST! Here! Cram it.

AGNES. I merely asked for the ash tray. [*RACHEL looks away, disgusted. Pause.*] Any particular place you'd like me to cram it! [*Silence.*] Well, I'm waiting for you to go on.

RACHEL [*still looking the other way. Quietly*]. Whenever you're ready.

AGNES. I'm ready.

RACHEL [*still not looking at AGNES*]. There's no point in my talking to myself. I could talk to myself by myself.

AGNES. I was listening to you.

RACHEL [*beginning to get tired, weary*]. Sure.

AGNES. I was. I heard every feeble-minded word you said.

RACHEL. Sure.

AGNES. You want me to repeat it?

RACHEL. No.

AGNES. You said, "God knows what kind of fix he was in to have to take money from us."

RACHEL [*silence. Then she turns to AGNES*]. Did I?

AGNES. You did. You said you do something and it blows up in your face; boomerangs, orangoutangs, backfires. And you do what's right and an innocent guy—which is a lie—is going to get hanged—which is a lie, and, "God knows what kind of fix he was in to have taken money from us." One more word and you'd have said, "It's only money."

RACHEL. Well, that's the stupidest thing I've ever said in my life then.

AGNES [*gets up*]. I'm going to roll my hair.

RACHEL. I can't even talk about him straight.

AGNES. What it boils down to is he was a damn good-looking stud and you—

RACHEL. Now, I resent that! For Christ's sake—

AGNES. Well, a good-looking guy then. And you're damn mad that you misjudged him and that you won't have him around again. And on top of that you trusted him enough to leave him here for a few hours when he was short—and you have to admit that he was very often short—and he took a month's pay from you. Now it's reasonable that you'd be pissed off. I would be too. I'd call the cops.

She turns to the mirror and continues to roll her hair.

RACHEL. I did.

AGNES. Well, there you have it.

RACHEL [*sitting up in bed. Pause. Quietly; defensively*]. It isn't just physical.

AGNES [*not turning*]. When someone says it isn't just physical, you can be pretty sure it's just physical.

RACHEL [*sliding back down into bed*]. I guess I am tired. I didn't sleep at all last night. Are you going to bed?

AGNES. Not now. I probably couldn't breathe anyway. I need a respirator.

RACHEL. How come?

AGNES. All night long I've been telling you I was a dying woman. I have a cold.

RACHEL. Oh.

AGNES. In my head.

RACHEL [*sleepily, from beneath the covers*]. Why don't you rub yourself with Vicks or something?

AGNES. Because I've got a luncheon date with the boss's son and I don't want to smell like Vicks. Even for him. I'll give him my cold first.

RACHEL. That's silly.

AGNES [*quite to herself*]. His soup would probably taste like menthol, for Christ's sake.

RACHEL [*flopping over on her other side*]. I think I'm going to sleep.

AGNES [*paying no attention*]. "Suddenly it's springtime." [*Drops one of the rollers.*] Fuck. . . . I've got to quit saying that. [*Looks at the roller; gets up and picks it up; goes back to the vanity.*] Get some sleep.

RACHEL. It won't look so bad tomorrow—I know. You know, though; you're probably right. I just miss him a lot and in a few days I'll see everything in a better perspective.

AGNES. In a few days you'll be knocked up by some stud named Herkimer probably!

RACHEL [*sitting up*]. I will not be knocked up by anybody. . . . In a few days or nothing.

AGNES. Okay. I just meant, you've established a pattern by now. An orbit, so to speak, and by Thursday you'll be head-over-heels mad for someone totally different. You'll pass the sun again, so to speak.

RACHEL [*under the covers again*]. I'm not that bad.

AGNES. Very well, you're not that bad.

RACHEL. At least my mother would have told me it would be better tomorrow. That's all I need to get to sleep probably.

AGNES [*flatly*]. It'll be exactly the same tomorrow. "The world it was the old world yet. And I was I; my things were wet."

RACHEL [*half sits up again, disgusted*]. What?

AGNES. Nothing.

RACHEL. What do you mean, "My things were wet?"

AGNES. Nothing. It's a poem.

RACHEL. I know it's a—

AGNES. "Down in lovely muck I've lain; happy till I woke again. The world it was the old world yet and"—

RACHEL. —"And I was I, my things were wet." So all right. What's lovely about a muck?

AGNES. He was drunk.

RACHEL. At Ludlow fair or some place, I know he was drunk. What's lovely about a muck?

AGNES. Well, maybe they pronounced it differently in Shropshire.

RACHEL. Very funny. [*Flopping back down.*] Are you coming to bed? I'm dead. I've just knocked myself out.

AGNES. Sure. You keep me awake all morning and ask me if I'm coming to bed.

RACHEL [*covered by the blankets*]. I'm sorry.

AGNES. Sure. You going to sleep or what?

RACHEL [*a little muffled*]. I said I was. If I can.

AGNES. Well sleep it off. I don't know why you should worry any more about Joe than you did about whoever it was before. You've got to admit the pattern is evident there somewhere. Maybe you should really go to an analyst, you know? No joke. You probably have some kind of problem there somewhere. [*She turns to her. RACHEL turns over. AGNES turns back to the mirror.*] I mean no one's normal. He's bound to find something. It might keep you away from dictionaries, you know? Jesus. [*Muffled noise from RACHEL.*] Well, I say if it helps, do it. To hell with how funny it looks. God knows I'd like to find—I'm absolutely getting pneumonia. [*Gets up to get the box of Kleenex and carries it back to the vanity, talking all the while.*] I'm going to be a mess tomorrow. I probably won't make it to work, let alone lunch. A casual lunch, my God. I wonder what he'd think—stupid Charles—if he knew I was putting up my hair for him; catching pneumonia. No lie, I can't wait till summer to see what kind of sunglasses he's going to pop into the office with. Probably those World's Fair charmers. A double unisphere. [*Turns.*] Are you going to sleep? [*Pause. No reply.*] Well, crap. [*Turning back to mirror.*] I may be tendering my notice, anyway. You've gone through six men while I sit around and turn to fungus. It's just not a positive atmosphere for me, honey. Not quite. You're out with handsome Val or someone and I'm wondering if the boss's skinny, bony son will come up to the water cooler if I. . . . [*Trails off, becomes interested in the roller. Now to someone—as at dinner.*] No. No Stroganoff. No, I'm on a diet. [*Correcting herself.*] No. I will not admit that. Good or bad if he says Stroganoff and baked potatoes it's Stroganoff and baked potatoes. And sour cream. And beer. He's probably on a diet himself. He could fill

out, God knows. [*Turning to RACHEL.*] You know what Charles looks like? [*Pause.*] He looks like one of those little model men you make out of pipe cleaners when you're in grade school. [*Turning.*] Remember those? If I ever saw Charles without his clothes, he's so pale and white, I swear to God I'd laugh myself silly. He's Jewish, too. I'll bet his mother is a nervous wreck. I'll bet she thinks every woman on the block is pointing at her. Look, there goes Mrs. Schwartz; starving her children to death. Poor Charles. Shakes like a leaf. Of course Mrs. Schwartz wouldn't admit that either. No woman would admit her son was nervous; what's he got to be nervous about? The nerve of being nervous. My kid brother got an ulcer, my mother went to bed for three weeks, totally destroyed. Of course she spent about two thirds of her life totally destroyed. Upset—bawling. Weeks on end sometimes. My brother was great. He never paid the slightest attention to her; she'd get one of her spells and run off to bed bawling, it never bothered him for a minute. Off she'd go, the slightest provocation. Eric would say, "Mother's bedridden with the piss-offs again." I used to come home for a holiday or something and I'd say where's Mom and Eric would say, "Oh, she's bedridden with the piss-offs again." [*As if directly to someone, over lunch. Casually.*] You know, Charles, you've got nice eyes. You really have. Deep. I like brown eyes for a man. I don't like blue eyes, they always look weak or weepy. Either that or cold. You know? Brown eyes are warm; that's good. They're gentle. [*Quickly.*] Not weak, but gentle. [*Half to herself. Lightly.*] I used to want to have a girl; a little girl with blue eyes. For a girl that's good. So I used to always picture—God, idealize, really—very heavy-set, blond men. Swiss types, you know. [*Back to Charles.*] But a son I'd want to have brown eyes. That's better for boys. [*Looks at the sleeve of her robe.*] You think? [*Almost embarrassed.*] I don't know any more— Oh, yes; I got it at Saks. It was on sale, I believe. [*Breaking off, disgusted.*] Now, what the hell does he care where I got it? And it wasn't on sale, knucklehead. And it wasn't Saks. [*Concentrating on her hair.*] It was Bonds. Not that he'd know the damn difference. [*She drops a roller, it bounces across the floor. She picks up another without even looking after the first one.*] Fuck. [*Finishing her hair.*] I've got to quit saying that

This last said without listening to herself; second nature. She picks up a jar of cold cream, slowly, distantly, applies a dab to her lower lip. Pause. She sits still, staring off vacantly. A full thirty-second pause.

Curtain.

