

MAGIC

Based on the Novel and Screenplay “*Magic*”

by

William Goldman

Adapted for the stage by

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ACT I

Scene I

Merlin Jr.'s room. Full of magician's stuff. Posters, magic hats, outfits, memorabilia and other things. Corky enters the room quietly and finds Merlin on the couch, sleeping.

Merlin Jr. is old and dying but in his youth was a gifted, talented and successful magician. Although you couldn't tell from the room, he made a very good living performing magic.

Corky is a man in his late 30s/early 40s and has failed in everything he has done. Has been studying under Merlin Jr. to be a magician for years but never had the guts to perform in front of people. He is worn out but does not give up. He loves Merlin like his own father. He taught Corky everything he knows and has faith that Corky will succeed.

MERLIN

(eyes still closed)

Did you knock em out, Corky?

CORKY

(answers nervously)

I did everything right.

MERLIN

(eyes open)

You mean it went perfect? Don't I wish I'd been up to going---your first time ever on your own, and me not there to see.

CORKY

Don't you make it more than it was.

MERLIN

And don't you give me that inferiority crap. I'm an old man, I only want to hear good news. The five lift go OK?

CORKY

(getting medicine for Merlin) I never did it better.

MERLIN

When you're famous, don't forget me.

CORKY

(giving Merlin his medicine)

I'll never forget you, now open.

MERLIN

What's the point, I'm ready for the taxidermist anyway.

(takes his medicine reluctantly)

Not three guys alive can do what you can do with cards. I tell you kid, you're as good as the game already, and before you're done, you're gonna leave 'em all behind.

CORKY

Sure, sure, sure, another Houdini

MERLIN

(mustering all his energy)

Houdini was a schmuck, I'm talking giants, like Copperfield even.

(composing himself)

Were you scared? I was when I started.

CORKY

(starts to manipulate the cards as if he were back onstage)

I suppose you could say I was reasonably panicked.

MERLIN

Any other magicians?

CORKY

(shakes his head no)

The men all wanted to be Bob Dylan and the girls did Barbara Walters

A bunch of them panicked before their time.

MERLIN

Not you, though.

CORKY

(beat)

No...no not me.

(Corky starts to reenact the show, holding up cards, fanning them out, he looks around to see the people ignoring him and starts to sweat and get nervous)

(staging note...Corky could possibly be facing back stage as he performs, backlit as if facing an audience)

MERLIN

You start with the flourishes? *(Corky nods)*

Those are the best attention grabbers *(Corky smiles nervously as he is back on stage, bombing)*

And the flourishes, they were great?

CORKY

(responding quickly)

Oh, they were great!

Then I told this pudgy lady at ringside to please pick any card she wanted as long as it was the ace of spades.

(reenacting that moment, getting more nervous, more frenetic)

I forced the ace on her just right and everybody loved it *(pulls the ace of spade out and holds it up)*

So when I had 'em I went right into the Rising Aces!

MERLIN

And the five lift worked great?

CORKY

(still working the imaginary crowd, nervous, sweating, looking around)

It really did!

MERLIN

I'm telling you kid, you're as good as the game.

CORKY

(facing backstage, throws the cards in the air and lowers his head)

Thank you. Then I took a few bows and got off.

(turning to Merlin, he smiles nervously)

MERLIN

(pause)

Aw kid, don't bullshit me...

CORKY

I really did do everything right. *(beat)* Only, nobody much cared.

MERLIN

And? *(beat)*

Go on.

CORKY

I um...I guess I cracked.

(turning to the imaginary back stage audience)

YOU STUPID SONS OF BITCHES, I said, DON'T YOU KNOW HOW HARD THAT WAS? THAT'S A THOUSAND HOURS OF MY LIFE YOU JUST SAW!

MERLIN

They don't care from hard kid, they just want to be entertained.

CORKY

(turning back to Merlin, humiliated)

I didn't exactly do you proud, all in all.

MERLIN

Did you talk to the people, Corky? Did you use your charm? Give the good patter?

CORKY

(turns away)

I can't, you know that?

MERLIN

You got to! You think people liked my magic? They liked ME. All my great jokes about how everyone was always mistaking me for Cary Grant. That's what won them over. The magic just kept them there. *(tired, dying)*

Corky? *(no reply)* You want to be as good as the game don't you?

CORKY

You know I do.

MERLIN

(weak, last breaths) Then you better find yourself some charm kid.

CORKY

(truly curious) How?

MERLIN

...you'll think of something.

LIGHTS OUT

Scene II

We are back in the same club that Corky failed in the first scene. This time there are 3-4 tables and chairs on the stage indicating that the next act will be facing the audience. Sitting at one of the tables is Ben Greene. Ben is an old man who has been doing this a long time and knows how to find GREAT talent. Ben is Corky's agent.

Server brings 2 beers to Ben's table and delivers drinks to another table where a couple sits and faces stage back.

Enter George Todson. George is a middle aged man, with a bad toupee and is an executive at one of the major television studios. He has the final say of any and all acts that appear on his network. Ben has brought many talents to George and over the years the network has been very successful because of the talent that Ben represents.

George Todson

(shakes Ben's hand and sits) I guess this Whithers is your latest sensation? *(looks around, into the audience, and says, sarcastically)*

You've booked him into a very classy spot Ben

BEN GREENE

I found him here...not easy getting him to move.

TODSON

He likes this place?

GREENE

He bombed here his first time out, didn't give up, worked his ass off, came back a year later and hit it big. *(takes out a cigar and takes a beat)*. Never been a magician like him.

TODSON

(clearly upset and under his breath) You dragged me down here for a *magician??* I'm in the network business, we can't book those guys on KIDDIE SHOWS anymore!

GREENE

...you're father got his start working for me you little fart! Don't tell ME what bombs. Magic is misdirection, that's all it is and misdirection is getting the people to look in the wrong place at the right time.

TODSON

So?

GREENE

Well, of course magic's had trouble on TV....you can't misdirect a goddam camera.

ANNOUNCER V.O.

Ladies and gentleman, please say hello to Corky Whithers! *(audience applauds)*

CORKY

(slightly nervous, hard to hear) Ordinary deck of cards

TODSON

(to Greene) Loaded with stage presence. I can't decide, does he remind me more of Errol Flynn or Valentino.

CORKY

(fanning cards to the girl at the other table) Would you pick any card you want...as long as it's the ace of spades.

(she pulls out the card, looks at it and holds it up so the audience can see it. It's the ace of spades. Sporadic clapping)

TODSON

(not impressed at all) Dynamite opening Bed. Does he actually get better? Amazing.

GREENE

I guess he's a little tense tonight on account he knows we're here.

CORKY

My teacher was a great man, Merlin Junior. *(the guy at the table laughs)* Truly, and this is his version of the Rising Aces.

(he moves to the table with Greene and Todson and nervously moves to the other table. Hands the deck to the girl again and holds the 4 aces) Here are the four aces *(holds them up and counts them out for the audience then says to the girl)* Now, would you please pick any card you want and cover the aces *(she does)*

Thank you...now *(he pauses as if paralyzed)* omigod, uhhhh...I'm sorry, uh I did that wrong, you don't cover the aces in THIS trick...uh....on sec.

VOICE FROM THE BACK OF THE AUDIENCE

He's gonna pull a 5 lift...watch him!

(Corky, still paralyzed looks around the back of the audience, covers his eyes in hopes he can see who said that)

TODSON

(looks around) Goddam drunks!

VOICE FROM THE BACK OF AUDIENCE

He's not lifting the top card, he's gonna grab five!

CORKY

(staring around for the heckler, clearly upset) I'm sorry...if you think you can do better, you're welcome to try!

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE

Just gimme a hand getting up there schmucko and step aside! *(Corky leaves the stage and moves to the back of the audience)*

TODSON

What's going on here??

CORKY

(from the back of the audience) You really think you're good??

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE

I'll guaranfuckingtee it!!

(Corky walks back to the stage carrying a ventriloquists dummy named Fats. Fats is dressed like a longshoreman. He is everything Corky isn't, abrasive, vulgar, you name it. Corky handles him brilliantly.)

CORKY

(back up onstage with Fats) Well, you've ruined the Rising Aces.

FATS

You see the girl with the jugs? *(indicating an audience member)*

CORKY

The young lady in the white sweater, yes. I see her...so what?

FATS

I wonder if she'd like a little roll in the shavings with me.

CORKY

You think you're funny...

FATS

Well THEY do...

(Corky and Fats continue their act mute as Todson talks to Greene)

TODSON

(not taking his eyes off Corky and Fats) Nice gimmick, the dummy. What's his name?

GREENE

Fats.

TODSON

Really a clever schtick.

CORKY

(interrupting each other) I will now change a diamond into---

FATS

(to the audience) ---I guess the reason I'm such a great lover is---

CORKY

---I don't want to hear about your sex life---

FATS

tell us about yours then.....everybody likes short stories---

CORKY

(to the audience) ---Don't encourage him. *(holds up a deck of cards)* Pick a diamond and I'll hold it and it'll change into a heart.

FATS

(taking a card) If you're so great, change it while I'm holding it.

CORKY

You won't give it back? *(Fats nods no)* There's another trick ruined! You're impossible tonight!

TODSON

(to Greene) Kid's good I'll give ya that.

GREENE

Good? I've got maybe the best magician in fifty years matched with the X-rated dummy on the block. *(glances at Todson)*, eat your heart out.

CORKY

I'd like to try some estimations---

FATS

---you're not gonna change my diamond into a heart? (*Fats slowly lifts his hand up to look at the diamond*) ---Jeeeesus---

CORKY

---what?---

FATS

(*turning the card slowly to the audience*) It turned into a heart while I was holding it. (*looks at Corky, then the audience and back. Looking at the audience*) How'd he dooooo that??

(*applause as Corky and Fats take a bow and exit. The other tables clear*)

TODSON

How did he do that? (*getting Greene's attention*) You say he really bombed here the first time out?

GREENE

Course, he didn't have the dummy.

TODSON

Dummy helps, no question. Local talent?

GREENE

Grew up around Grossingers. I think his old man worked at the health club, gave massages, something like that.

FATS V.O.

Shit, it's old Gangrene. (*Corky and Fats enter stage left*)

TODSON

(*laughs*) Gangrene...that's funny

GREENE

Just wanted to make a quick "in the flesh" intro---Corky, our visitor from New York, George Todson.

CORKY

(*shakes hands*) How do you do, sir?

TODSON

You've got a lot of potential---you're...

FATS

(Fats interrupts him) ...What about me?

TODSON

You're good too Fats.

FATS

Thanks. Mr. Wigson *(looking at the top of Todson's head)* I mean Mr. Toupeson

CORKY

Todson!

GREENE

(laughing) Now that's what I call funny.

FATS

Is this THE George Todson? The guy known throughout televisionland as "Limp Dick" George?

CORKY

He doesn't mean anything.

FATS

(to a roaring laughing Ben Greene) You'll strain your pacemaker.

GREENE

(to Todson) Give us one sec?

TODSON

How DID you change the diamond to the heart?

FATS

I'M the misdirection---while we're bullshitting, you could bring an elephant on stage---

GREENE

---which is why THIS magician wouldn't bomb on the tub. The camera watches their faces, not Corky's hands.

CORKY

(quietly) You think he liked it?

GREENE

Calling him “Limp Dick” George probably didn’t advance our cause, but on the whole I would say it was senfuckingsational!

FATS

See? I’m catching.

CORKY

What happens next?

GREENE

Now? We reel him in slow. It’ll be months before I bring you to New York, not till they’re ready to make a deal. Meanwhile, you’ll finish here and I’ll book you at a small lounge in Vegas and Atlantic City, for the experience. Same with the talk shows, nice and easy. The Michael Douglas show, Merv Griffin, Phil Donahue, all building up to Johnny Carson. (*indicating Fats*) you keep your motormouth here in line, and it’ll be my job to get those droolers at Woolworth’s panting for you. Sound OK?

CORKY

Yesssir.

GREENE

You’re a good kid, Corky.

FATS

(leans in to Corky’s ear) Hey, you know what I think?

CORKY

What do you think?

FATS

We’re gonna be a staaaarrrr.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE III

A clearly expensive restaurant in NYC. Ben Greene is sitting at a table in a very private room. The Maitre D’ opens the door and introduces Corky to Ben.

MAITRE D’

Mr. Greene, a mister Corky Whithers. (*he exits upon Ben’s nod*)

CORKY

Hi. *(beat)*

Is everything ok? *(beat)* With the network people I mean.

GREENE

Have a cigar, for later Corky. *(Ben hands him a huge cigar, then another)* Take two, they're big.

I invented conspicuous consumption.

CORKY

Listen, if you're trying to get my attention, you've got it.

GREEN

Do me a favor? Try not to turn shiteel. That's almost an automatic once a guy makes it big. I'd love to see you beat the odds.

CORKY

Maybe I won't make it big. *(excited)* What is it? I've just come 3,000 miles, no more games...tell me!

GREEN

Two years ago you couldn't get arrested. Two years from now you're gonna have it all. CBS wants a pilot special Corky.

CORKY

A what?

GREENE

A pilot special, but it's not set-set. Boiler plate needs slugging out, who'll spend how much for publicity, how much for guest stars, you'll have to take the medical exam, just agent stuff *(notices Corky's face)* What's wrong?

CORKY

I don't think I want to take the medical exam.

GREENE

Any special reason?

CORKY

You mean is there anything the matter with me? No, I haven't got leukemia.

GREENE

What then?

CORKY

It's a matter of principle. *(Ben waits)*

Remember that first night you came backstage at the Stardust and said you wouldn't mind handling me? Remember what I said?

GREENE

Goddam right...you said I could represent you but you wouldn't sign.

CORKY

That was principle too. Because if we're happy with each other, our word should be enough. To hell with signing some piece of paper.

GREENE

But why is this with the medical exam "principle?"

CORKY

(louder) They're saying there's something wrong with me. *(then quieter)* Well, I say I'm fine. I'm fine and I don't need any doctors poking around inside, thank you!

GREENE

Are you serious about this? *(Corky nods)*

GREENE

I mean, is this a dealbreaker?

CORKY

(nodding) I guess it is....

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE IV

Corky and Fats are in the NYC hotel room. They are both looking into the mirror.

FATS

Corky's so cheap he sent his girlfriend out to hustle last night---

CORKY

---not true, not true, just ignore him---

FATS

---and when she came back this morning he asked how much she'd gotten and she said, "sixteen dollars and ten cents" and Corky said "my God, who gave you the ten cents?" and she said "Everybody" (*beat*) Dammit

CORKY

(*looking at his own lips*) "and she said 'everybody'" Everybody...body, buh, buh, buh, body. (*examining his lips as the phone rings*) "and she said, 'everybody.'" (*he picks up the phone*)

GREENE V.O.

Couldn't budge em Cork. (*Corky grips the phone and stares*) You there?

CORKY

I thought you said they wanted me---

GREENE

---they do, but---

CORKY

---didn't you explain about the principle?---

GREENE

Kid, this is company policy---LEGAL company policy. I'm sitting here with three of our genius lawyers. My God, their I.Q.s alone must total up to a hundred! We've called CBS a dozen times and they're not about to spend half a million and find out on taping day there's some kind of health problems---

CORKY

(*loud*) There's no problem!!

GREENE

Corky---

CORKY

---you---make---them---understand! (*as he slams down the phone*)

(Corky starts pacing the room, looks in the mirror at himself. Stares closer. He feels a pulse in his temple, something else on the other side of his head. Beathing heavier. Fats is sitting watching. Pacing again and back to the mirror as the phone rings)

GREENE

Kid, I don't have to ask what the trouble is because I know what it is.

CORKY

I told you before---(*as he is about to scream again*)

GREENE

---it's success kid. Please believe me, that's all you're afraid of. You want it but you're frightened of it, it happens to all of em at this stage.

CORKY

---principle, can't you get that?

GREENE

I'll take the goddam medical with you. Christ, I've had two strokes, my varicose veins are in all the best medical journals, if I'm not afraid of what they'll find---

CORKY

---not afraid---

GREENE

---just stay right there---I'll be right over, we'll talk it through, we'll---

CORKY

(yelling) I'm not afraid!!

GREENE

Hang tight Cork, I'm on my way.

CORKY

(still yelling)

I---won't---be---here!! (slams the phone and picks it back up again to call the front desk) Hey, yeah yeah, call me a cab will ya?

(grabs his luggage and starts packing as Fats watches him. He packs up Fats and leaves)

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

THE BUNGALOW COLONY: This is a group of cabins surrounding a lake in the Catskills, NY. They vary in sizes and are nothing fancy. Corky grew up in this area and his family used to vacation in one of the cabins right on the lake. It's clear that no one has been in these cabins for quite some time. This is where Corky escapes to.

FEMALE

What you see is what you get. This is the largest cabin on the lake, as you requested. (gesturing) Bedroom's back there, kitchenette, bathroom across and here's your key.

CORKY

(handing her money) Fine.

(She glances at Corky, takes the money, walks out and closes the door. Corky moves to the window to watch her walk away.)

FATS

(muffled and distant) Hellllllp---helllllllllp---calling all schmuckos---save meeeeeee

(Corky takes Fats out of the suitcase)

FATS

I hate the country already, it's full of leaves. All you hear is crunch, crunch, crunch. (looks around) This...is Grossinger's? You think I'm some palooka from Palookaville? You book us into this dump for a coroners' convention? (Corky says nothing)

Why the silent act? (Fats looks out the window with Corky) I wonder if her ass is on ball bearings.

CORKY

---shut up---

FATS

---oooh---hooo---sounds like I stepped on a corn.

CORKY

No, it's just...(sad)...I carried her picture all these years and she didn't remember me.

Corky puts Fats down on the corner of the couch and goes to the bathroom. He comes out quickly, goes to the kitchenette returns and looks around. Picks up the phone which automatically dials the main office. The female answers.

FEMALE V.O.

Hello?

CORKY

I'm sorry

FEMALE

What?

CORKY

No, soap.

FEMALE V.O.

(sighs) I didn't think you'd like it. You leaving now?

CORKY

No no, I didn't mean no soap THAT way, I meant there wasn't any...soap. Or towels for that matter.

FEMALE

Oh (*giggles*), I'll bring some right over.

(Corky unpacks his clothes and puts them in the dresser. The female knocks on the door. Corky picks up Fats and opens the door.)

FEMALE

Here you go....omigod!! You brought Fats!!

FATS

And you thought Peg didn't remember.

PEG

You knew who I was too?

FATS

Well, why didnt you two at least grunt at each other.

CORKY

---she was showing me around and with the dust and the sun...reflecting, I couldn't tell for sure and the time I was sure, I figured she'd have said something but she didn't so I shut up.

FATS

(looking at Peg) What's your story?

PEG

(to Fats) Well, it's been so long and I watch you on the TV but when he didn't say anything, I didn't want to embarrass anybody.

FATS

We're all so goddam sensitive I could whoopsee.

PEG

He's just as cute as on the tube.

FATS

(outraged) Cute? Virile, yes. Sexy, yes! Ronald Reagan is cute.

PEG

(to Corky) Could I hold him just once? *(Fats starts panting excited)* I'll be careful. *(Corky hands him over)* He's heavy---

FATS

(outraged again, this time his mouth doesn't move) Husky you bimbo!

PEG

His lips didn't move.

FATS

(very Humphrey Bogart) That's cause you're not stroking my levers, sweetheart.

CORKY

(pointing to the opening in his back) Right in there *(Peg puts her hand in the opening and Fats head pops up)*

FATS

(big) She goosed me!

CORKY

Ignore him. Go right ahead.

(Peg touches the various levers. His eyebrows move up and down, mouth moves, eyes move side to side as Fats starts making sexual noises and moans. Peg starts laughing)

CORKY

Don't encourage him. *(Peg hands Fats back to Corky)*

PEG

So if you need anything else--- *(Peg starts leaving turns)* ---hey, you wouldn't want any wine or anything would ya?

CORKY

(quick nod) Terrific! Yeah, Sure, uhh...lemme unpack my stuff and maybe clean up...with soap. And I'll be right up---

FATS

---wait a minute, what stuff? There's mostly ME...and I wanna stick around.

PEG

(giggling) Take your time. Make yourself comfortable. I'll bring some down. *(Peg gives Fats a hug and leaves.)*

FATS

(they watch her leave) She hugged me to her bosom. I suppose she found me irresistible.

CORKY

Don't we all

FATS

How late you gonna hang out with her?

CORKY

I don't know, why?

FATS

If you stay up late, that might mean you were getting hugged to her bosom too. *(Fats looks away from Corky)*

FATS

Which might just make old Fats jealous *(beat)* and we wouldn't want that *(longer beat and turning to look at Corky)* Would we now?

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE II

Lights up to find Corky and Peg at the small kitchen table, 2 glasses of wine, almost empty along with less than a half bottle of wine. When the lights come up they are laughing as if the end of a cute story. Fats and his suitcase are in the bedroom.

PEG

You never really told me why you were here.

CORKY

Hiding. *(she looks at him)* My agent---he looks like the Ancient Mariner in that poem we hated in high school---*(she nods)*---he's negotiating for a shot for me to maybe make it big. We argued---I thought it was principle. *(finishes his wine, pours himself more and she holds her glass up for more)*. The truth is probably I'm scared of success, that's all.

PEG

You always were this weirdly timid person, Corky. That's for sure.

CORKY

Folks still run this place?

PEG

Nah, they took a condo near Lauderdale, said it was mine but I couldn't make a go of it.

CORKY

You miss em?

PEG

No more than they miss me. Don't tell me you miss yours.

CORKY

(long pause as he stares off) Course I do. Every kid cares about his parents.

PEG

Where is that written for chrissakes? Your old man never once gave a squat for you and your ma just took off, didn't she?

CORKY

(nervously gets up and looks around) Well, I guess they weren't very happy, either of em. Too bad you couldn't make this place work.

PEG

The Catskills are dying, and that's the truth. Me and Duke are looking to sell.

CORKY

(staring at Peg, interrupting) God you're beautiful.

PEG

Don't I wish.*(sips her wine)*

CORKY

*(sitting down again)*I had such a crush on you.

PEG

Well, no one ever accused you of having good taste Corky.

CORKY

When we moved away, I whittled you a present. A wooden heart.

PEG

You never gave it to me.

CORKY

(slightly hesitant) I lost it before I got it finished. Anyway, what if you didn't like it? I mean, what if you laughed?

PEG

As has already been stated, weirdly timid. But I knew you had a crush. I was always pretty for you.

CORKY

I didn't say pretty

PEG

And you didn't pick up on my Duke mention either. He is, after all, my consort, my spouse. *(pause)* I'm very big on enlarging my vocabulary.

CORKY

Are you very big on Duke?

PEG

(pauses for a moment, drinks) We separate what seems like every full moon. It hasn't been your everyday Debbie Reynolds marriage.

CORKY

Where is he?

PEG

Quick business trip. *(looks at her watch)* More specifically, at this hour, I would guess he'd be seducing some barmaid.

CORKY

Sorry

PEG

(shurges) Whatever

CORKY

Does he still look so much like Elvis Presley?

(Peg starts to answer, puts her head in her hands and starts crying. Corky pours a little more wine and hands it to her.)

CORKY

Here---hearty burgundy, very medicinal.

PEG

(looking up with her make up all runny) Admit it---NOW I'm beautiful. *(pause)* I should go.

CORKY

I'm so glad we had the chance to catch up. *(he opens the door for her)* See you tomorrow.

PEG

Good night Corky Withers.

CORKY

Good night Peggy Ann Snow.

(Corky turns, grabs the glass and finishes the wine. We hear the muffled sound of Fats in the luggage from the bedroom. Corky goes to get the suitcase, opens it and takes Fats out.)

FATS

Ahhhhh...I was dying in there. *(no reaction from Corky)*. Sooooo...how was the orgy? Did you score?

CORKY

The high point of the evening was when I reduced her to tears.

FATS

Hey schmucko, attaway--- *(Corky puts Fats in his spot on the couch and moves toward the bathroom)* ---when are we moving?

CORKY

(shrugs) Tomorrow, day after...soon.

FATS

What'd you close the door for?

CORKY *(offstage)*

I'm contemplating taking a piss, you mind?

FATS

Ohhh---dainty, ain't he? Stick your head our one second. *(Corky sticks his head in)*

FATS

(teasingly) Were you thinking of herrrr?

LIGHTS FADE OUT

SCENE III

Walking along the lake you can hear sounds of birds chirping, crickets, leaves scattered on the ground. There's a park bench at the far end of the stage. They enter far stage right with the bench on front of stage left. They enter talking.

PEG

So how long did you work with this Merlin guy?

CORKY

I worked *for* him. He taught me everything, but I never performed or like that, never on my own.

PEG

Why not?

CORKY

Probably afraid I'd fail.

PEG

Dope

CORKY

It wasn't till the week he took really sick that I got the guts to try---amateur show in L.A. (*they walk slowly across the stage and sit on the bench*)

PEG

You bring any tricks up with you?

CORKY

I don't do tricks--- (*she looks at him funny*)---tricks means something set up beforehand, a box with a fake lid, a stacked deck of cards...I don't do that.

PEG

You just use whatever's available? (*Corky nods as Peg picks up a rock and hands it to him*) Here---amaze me.

CORKY

(*Catching it*) A rock? Come on willya?

PEG

That was available.

CORKY

What the hell. I'll try, give me the rock. *(Peg hands him the rock. Corky shows his hands, one holding the rock, and makes it disappear.)*

PEG

(excited) Do it again!!

CORKY

Do what again? *(He does it again)*

PEG

You bastard!! *(Starts to laugh)* I really love magic. *(They get up and start heading back)*

CORKY

Not magic, just skill. All explainable.

PEG

I don't think I want to believe that. Can you explain everything?

CORKY

Pretty much.

PEG

What can't you explain?

CORKY

(Getting a little agitated) Look---I don't want to get into this---magic's just to entertain, you're not supposed to take it seriously.

PEG

(Pushing it) What *can't* you explain??

CORKY

(Corky stops) Merlin...his wife was his assistant before me. They were close, they really cared and those last days in the hospital with her...*(pause)*...those last days, he claimed he could read her mind.

PEG

You believe that, don't you?

CORKY

(Starts walking again, she follows closely) Course but...*(looks at her)*...please, let's not get into this.

PEG

It'll be fun

CORKY

I'd fail.

PEG

So what?

CORKY

(They stop just before going off stage) I don't want you to think bad of me, let's say.

PEG

Forget the whole thing.

CORKY

I'm trying to get *away* from pressure...please.

PEG

Who's putting you under pressure? Not me! I just thought it might be a kick *(turning to walk off stage)* but it's forgotten.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

SCENE IV

Back in Corky's cabin. Lights come up as they are already sitting and handling the cards.

CORKY

Ok, you're shuffled both decks right? *(Peg nods)* Take either deck then. *(She does)* Pick one card from your deck and look at it. *(She does)*

PEG

Now what?

CORKY

(Getting louder) You must *really* look at it.

PEG

I'm looking, I'm looking, don't get mad.

CORKY

(quieter) Put it back and cut the cards as much as you want. *(She does)* Now take my pack and find your card and take it out. *(She does)* Ok, just keep that one card.

PEG

What happens now?

CORKY

What happened with Merlin, was she put the card next to her heart while he went through her deck kind of like this. *(He starts ruffling through the deck)*

PEG

What's my card?

CORKY

I don't know---you've got to think hard.

PEG

(Closes her eyes) OK I'm thinking really hard. *(Opens her eyes and looks at him)*

CORKY

(Embarrassed) Sorry *(starts to put the deck down)*

PEG

Just a damn minute! You've got to think hard too. I want this and you're so goofed up with doing it wrong you won't even try. *(Louder)* Well, I'm concentrating my ass off! *(Quieter)* Close your eyes and think.

CORKY

(Closing his eyes) I'm sorry, I told you, I asked you please *(opens his eyes suddenly)* Omigod, it's red isn't it?

PEG

(Getting excited) I don't know, maybe it is and maybe it isn't. *(playfully)* I give away nothing!

(She closes her eyes, holds the card to her heart as he searches feverishly through the deck trying to find her card. He pulls a card out and puts the deck on the table)

CORKY

Turn the card

(She turns over a ten of hearts. He turns over a two of diamonds)

PEG

Listen, we came close, what the hell, we had fun and that's the name of the game. *(She gets up as if to go to the kitchen)*

CORKY

(Loudly) Sit down Peg! *(she hesitates at first)*

PEG

(Sitting)

CORKY

(Continuing in the same loud tone) That was your fault...you started out fine, I got the red fine, but then you let me drift, you humiliated me Peg and I want to know why!

PEG

Corky, Jesus....forget---

CORKY

I was in bad shape in New York Peg *(stands up, rubbing his temples)* I had to run and where do you go when there's no place to go, you go home, except there was nothing but empty houses and old cemeteries and then I figured I'd stop by here and ask your folks about you, where were you living, what city, how many kids. I never expected to find you. I've loved you all my goddam life and I needed a piece of good news about Peggy Ann Snow...and now you humiliated me. *(gesturing sharply)* Shuffle the goddam cards FAST.

(Peg does exactly that. Cards falling out of the deck, she looks at him and keeps shuffling)

CORKY

We're going to do it right this time *(getting more intense)* I just know we will because we both want it enough.

PEG

But...what if it...I mean, how upset will you be if you miss?

CORKY

VERY! *(beat)* but that's not going to happen...is it Peg? Are you done shuffling? *(she nods)* Then take your card and look at it and put it back, and cut them. *(She does exactly as he asks, fearing that he might explode. He takes the other deck and begins fanning out the cards, looking at everyone carefully)*

CORKY

Look at me Peg *(she does)* we're not going to close our eyes this time, we're going to watch each other just like Merlin and his wife, only you're not dying...are you, Peg?

PEG

Should I think now?

CORKY

Yes! Very hard!

PEG

I am!

CORKY

NO! I can tell by your eyes you're not.

PEG

I'm frightened is why---

CORKY

(Still fanning and looking) ---nothing to be afraid of---

PEG

But if it goes bad---

CORKY

---I'm calm. It won't go bad---not if two people want something as much as we want this---*(Continuing to stare into each other's eyes)*

CORKY

---it doesn't matter---nothing in this world matters except what we're doing, do you believe that?

PEG

I would like...to believe that...yes.

CORKY

---there must be nothing in your mind but your card...nothing in your mind but...what??

PEG

(She is clutching her card tightly and close to her heart) My card?

CORKY

(Slowing his ruffling, narrowing in on a few cards, then two, then one) ...is it...please...is it...the three of clubs? *(A smile slowly comes to Peg's face and bigger as she nods and slowly reveals the three of clubs)*

CORKY

(Clearly relieved) ...see...?...see...?...I...I didn't fail.

(Peg sits there watching him and is terribly moved. She slowly gets up and moves to Corky. She kisses him, stands him up, kisses him again as he kisses back. She takes him by the hand and starts to lead him to his bedroom. All the while, Fats has been sitting on the couch watching the whole scene)

LIGHTS FADE OUT SLOWLY

LIGHTS FADE UP SLOWLY

(No one is in the room except Fats and he is now lying on the couch as if he just fell over from where he was sitting. Peg walks out wearing one of Corky's shirts)

PEG

I'll bet they don't give service like THAT at Grossinger's. *(Corky follows her out of the bedroom as she moves to the kitchen to get some water. She brings him a glass)* Drop in again in fifteen years.

CORKY

Why the jokes?

PEG

I'm kind of feeling my way along, I never fooled around before. *(Looks at Corky)* It's true, I guess sex wasn't that big a deal in my life.

CORKY

What about Duke?

PEG

Mainly, he blew in my ear a lot. *(Corky tries not to laugh but can't)* True. I deceived him into thinking it drives me mad. He tongues away and I moan a lot but secretly I'm making grocery lists. *(Kisses Corky)* I can be a very crabby lady when I put my mind to it. *(she goes back into the bedroom to get dressed)*

CORKY

I'll take you just like you are. *(she doesn't respond)* Well?

PEG

(Poking her head out. Pants are on and only a bra)

Huh?

CORKY

I meant that about taking . Will you come or not?

PEG V.O.

What are you talking---

CORKY

---I'm serious, I got lots of money with me, let's you and me take off. Just us.

PEG

(Comes out buttoning her shirt) I dump Duke and you'd leave Fats, that's your offer?

CORKY

It's not crazy goddamit! You don't care for Duke and you know it---

PEG

(Gently) I'm sorry baby, but it's just impossible. *(Corky kisses her)* Well...improbable, maybe. *(Corky holds Peg, kisses her lips and cheeks)* Unlikely then...let's put it that way. *(Peg kisses him back)*

PEG

A man appears after fifteen years and says, "run away with me," a girl ought to at least be able to take a bubble bath and think a little. *(Corky smiles and nods)* After that I'll get dinner started.

CORKY

(Holds up his index finger, kisses it, then gently places it on each of her nipples over her shirt.) I saw that in a French movie once.

PEG

Why the hell were you so shy all those years ago...*(Corky opens the door for her, she kisses him and walks out)*

CORKY

What d'ya say, sports fans! *(Fat's, still laying on the couch, grunts. Corky sits him up)* Getting your period?

FATS

Kind of blue is all. *(Corky does a dazzling flourish with the cards)* that don't help. Everbody's passing me by, laddie and I'm just stilling here like some lump *(sigh)* I miss the city bad.

CORKY

(Picking up Fats) The country grows on you---

FATS

---so does fungus---

CORKY

---I told you once already we'd leave---

FATS

---when?---

CORKY

---when *I*

---when *I* want to, now drop it---

FATS

---What's so great here?---tell me THAT---

CORKY

---simmer down!

FATS

(Quietly) OK, how's about this for a solution? You stay around and turn hayseed, I'll head on back to Manhattan where there's action.
(no reply from Corky) I take it the silence means no?

CORKY

Discussion's over, that's all!

FATS

(Suddenly big) I---want---out---of---here!!

CORKY

(Mimicking) Simmer---the---hell---down!!

FATS

Just because---

CORKY

---watch it mister---

FATS

---just because---

CORKY

---you've been warned---

FATS

(Bursting out) ---just because some sagging bitch of an ingenue drops her pants for you---

CORKY

---That's it!---

FATS

(Imitating Peg) ---oh, Corky, you do it so good, oh my God, Corky, you're even better than the garbage man---(Corky grabs Fats, Fats screams while Corky grabs his suitcase to put Fats in)

(Ben Greene takes a step on stage. He's been standing in the doorway long enough to see what's happening to Corky. Corky notices Ben standing there, happy to see him)

CORKY

How do you like it? I think it's gonna be terrific *(Ben just looks at him with no expression)*

FATS

What's with Gangrene? *(to Ben)* Blue Cross repossess your tongue?

CORKY

Come on in Ben. I'll do the whole routine. *(stops)* How the hell did you ever find me? You're amazing.

FATS

I'll bet it was that kid cab driver, he must have called the office and found you.

CORKY

Is that it? That's right, I told him I was with William Morris *(shaking his head)* he looked like a hustler so I gave him a hundred to shut him up. How much did you give him to talk?

GREENE

Doesn't matter

CORKY

You're right, you're here, that's the main thing, so grab yourself a seat and watch, but remember I haven't got this anywhere near performance level yet.

GREENE

(Cutting him off) How long you been like this kid?

CORKY

Like what? *(laughs)* Omigod, you don't think that was for real, how you think I rehearse??

GREENE

No good.

CORKY

It's for the *act* for chrissakes, watch now (*to the audience*) Ladies and gentlemen, for your viewing pleasure, my version of The Miser's Dream

FATS

Was it a wet dream

CORKY

Shut up...imagine if you will---

FATS

---when I have a wet dream, all that happens is I wake up covered with sawdust.

CORKY

If you don't stop interrupting, I'm going to put out a contract on you with a mafia woodpecker

FATS

---what I wouldn't give for a woodpecker

CORKY

---don't encourage him, ladies and gentlemen (*to Ben*) merely a great beginning wouldn't you say?

GREENE

Is this why you wouldn't take the medical exam? Figured someone would find out?

CORKY

Bullshit!! I'll take the stupid exam, I was afraid of success, like you said, I needed to get my head on straight. I'll take the exam, do the show, whatever you want.

GREENE

What I want kid, is for you to see somebody

CORKY

Who...who would I see?

GREENE

(*Big*) Quit with the games!

FATS

(*Bigger*) Quit with the yelling

CORKY

(Bigger) Shut up!!

FATS

He should show a little gratifuckingtude, you been slaving, coming up with great new stuff *(to Ben)* That was blockbuster material mister. When I come back with wanting a wood pecker, they'll PLOTZ in Vegas, that's funny!

GREENE

Nothing's funny. Not any more *(moves to the door)*

CORKY

What're you gonna do?

GREENE

Make a few phone calls.

CORKY

Tell people, you mean?

GREENE

Corky, you're not in control.

CORKY

Ben, you owe me a listen, don't you think? *(Ben stops, nods and sits down)*

I was out of control, nothing loony tunes or like that, but back in the city, I could feel myself starting to slip down the iceberg.

GREENE

So you took off *(Corky nods)* And now you're fine?

CORKY

(Nodding again) On account of Peg

FATS

She's the local town pump, terrific knockers---

CORKY

---shut up! I've known her since high school. I never figured I'd have a chance with her, only now, everything's changed. She believes in me, and if you went around telling lies, if she stopped believing...I don't think I'd like that.

GREENE

Girls are for down the line kid. Right now, you've gotta let me help. I know a lot of people, great doctors---

FATS

--he means head shrinkers---

CORKY

---shut up---

FATS

--he thinks you're a fruitcake---

CORKY

---he doesn't, he never said that. He's on our side---

FATS

(Big) He's the fucking villain, don't forget that...NEVER FORGET THAT

GREENE

Kid, you're not, as we sit here, responsible and I can prove it.

CORKY

How?

GREENE

Easy. I'll ask you to do a little something. Something anyone ought to be able to do. And if you do it, we'll forget the whole thing and if you can't, we'll think about getting you to see somebody fast. Is it a deal?

CORKY

Name it.

GREENE

Make Fats shut up for five minutes. *(Corky starts to laugh)*

CORKY

Five minutes? I can make him shut up for five years.

GREENE

Wonderful. *(Ben gestures for Corky to sit down. He does and puts Fats down next to him)*

CORKY

I feel like the village idiot if you want to know the truth. *(Ben is silent. Corky looks at Ben and is silent)*

Can we talk, or has it gotta be strictly semaphore? *(Ben shrugs)* How long so far?

GREENE

(Looks at his watch) Thirty seconds.

CORKY

Gosh, that leaves four and a half minutes to go, think I'll make it? *(Ben lights a cigar, no response)* You don't happen to have another of those. *(Ben hands him a cigar)* Take two, they're big. Remember when you said that?

GREENE

A pro never forgets his good lines kid.

CORKY

How long now?

GREENE

(Looks at his watch again) Coming up on a minute.

CORKY

(Corky opens the cigar, rolls it between his fingers, puts it in his mouth, takes it out.) Think we'll laugh about this someday?

GREENE

Might

CORKY

(Corky drums his fingers on the arm of the chair/couch) It'd be a terrific scene if you ever write your autobiography---*(excited suddenly)*---hey, I know what you should call it: *Falling Upwards* or *How to Succeed in Business by Outliving Everybody*. *(Corky laughs and Ben Greene smiles a small smile)* Two minutes yet?

GREENE

Minute forty five *(Corky leans his head back and closes his eyes. Greene sits, staring, smoking his cigar slowly, watching every move Corky makes. Reaches over and flicks his ash in the ashtray)*

CORKY

This is very cruel of you, you know that?

GREENE

I don't mean it to be.

CORKY

(Eyes open) I don't know if I'll ever be able to forgive you.

GREENE

That would be sad.

CORKY

Time?

GREENE

Two and a half minutes to go. *(Long pause)*

CORKY

(His head begins to shake. He says softly) ...I can't make it...

GREENE

(Just as soft) I didn't think you could kid...*(Corky runs to Fats, picks him up and loudly)*

FATS

Hello, everybody, this is Mrs. Norman Maine---my mother thanks you, my father thanks you, my sister thanks you and I thank you. You have nothing to fear but fear itself, nothing to give but blood, sweat and tears, nothing to lose but your chains---*(building)*---here he is boys---*(louder)*---here he is world---*(huge)*---heeeeeeeere's FATS!!! *(Ben Greene gets up slowly as Corky watches him)*

FATS

(Looking at Corky) You're not letting him out of here

CORKY

I think you better sit down. *(Greene starts slowly to the door)*

CORKY

(Putting Fats back in the corner of the couch) I need my chance.

GREENE

(Walking to the door) Your only chance is to get help fast and that's what I'm gonna see happens. *(Corky runs to the door and grabs Greene by the shoulder to spin him around)* DON'T---YOU---EVER---RAISE---A---HAND---TO---ME---AGAIN!!

CORKY

You're taking my one chance---

GREENE

---I'M your one chance!! *(exits)*

(Corky watches him exit, turns slightly in disbelief, not knowing what to do.)

FATS

(From the couch, lips not moving) He's right...the Postman is right...you ARE crazy.

CORKY

I tried to stop him, didn't I?

FATS

Tried?---TRIED??---you FAILED!! *(Corky pacing at a frantic pace)* Goddamit, look at me!!! *(Corky stops and stares at Fats)* You know it's the hatch for you.

CORKY

But there's nothing wrong with me---

FATS

---I know that and you know that, but all those pissant drones who run the world, they hate us because we're special. They'll put you somewhere deep and lonely---

CORKY

---don't---*(Corky starts twitching, eye is blinking)* ---talk that way.

FATS

---cut the migraine shit schmucko---*(Corky starts massaging his temples)*---don't you care about anything? Christ, don't you even care about the girl?

CORKY

Peg? I love Peg---

FATS

---I hope she loves you too---so on visiting day she can bring crayolas and the two of you can color together *(Both Corky and Fats go at it, full tilt!)*

CORKY

---what do you want from me!!!---

FATS

---you know goddam well what---

CORKY

---I don't *(pacing, rubbing his temples)*

FATS

---liar---

CORKY

---tell me---

FATS

---weakling---

CORKY

---I'm not, I'm not---

FATS

---stop the Postman---

CORKY

---I can't---

FATS

---gutless fuck---

CORKY

---I CAN'T!!---

FATS

---STOP THE POSTMAN!!---

CORKY

---HOW, HOW... WITH WHAT??---

FATS

(For the first time we see Fats' mouth move and his head turn to Corky as he says)

---ME---MEE---MEE---MEE---MEEEEE!!!---

(Corky stops, staring at Fats. Thinking for a moment, then grabs his jacket, grabs Fats and exits)

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE V

Lights come up to an empty cabin. Corky comes in carrying Fats by his legs. Fats' hair in his other hand. Fats has blood all over his face and his clothes. Corky has blood on his face, his hands, jacket and pants. He throws Fats on the table and starts pacing again. Holding Fats' hair in both hands as he thinks of his next move.

FATS

(softly)

Laddie...laddie

CORKY

What?

FATS

My head...you broke it. *(Corky kneels next to the couch and assesses the damage to Fats. Continues in deep anguish)*

CORKY

What'll I do?

FATS

...can't think...help me...

CORKY

I will, don't you worry. I'll take care...*(Corky starts to sit Fats up on the couch and moves to get his luggage as Fats lets out a loud and long moan of pain. Corky opens the bag, takes out another set of clothes and another wig. He takes Fats' clothes off and puts them in the bottom drawer of the dresser, under other clothes.)*

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE OUT

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE UP

(Corky is on the couch putting the finishing touches on Fats. As if nothing ever happened.)

CORKY

This should do it...better?

FATS

I guess *(beat)* Does it show?

CORKY

(Making final adjustments to his clothes, putting his hat on)

I'll put this on and no one will be able to tell at thing *(puts Fats on his lap and looks him up and down)* I've been doing some thinking.
What would you say if I called the police and told?

FATS

Get serious.

CORKY

He's...dead.

FATS

He was giving senility a bad name. He woulda died next week, next year at the outside. All you did was edge God out a little, nothing wrong with that.

CORKY

I still say---

FATS

---you're not being logical, look---Gangrene was taken care of because he was going to have you put away and if you tell the cops,
they'll have you put away---

CORKY

---but what would we do with him?

FATS

Did you take all of the identification from Gangrene...everything from his pockets, his watch, everything?

CORKY

I did exactly what you said.

FATS

Then who's gonna know? Besides, who's gonna find him out in the woods under a pile a leaves and rocks and branches. The animals will get to him before anyone else does.

(Corky and Fats look at each other as)

LIGHTS OUT

ACT III

SCENE 1

Lights fade up slowly as morning usually does. Fats and Corky are sleeping on the couch, still dressed from the night before. Phone rings. Corky jumps up quickly, looks around, looks at his clothes, answers the phone immediately.

CORKY

Hello...hello?

PEG

Water's boiling for your coffee, can I bring you breakfast?

CORKY

NO...wait...what? (*calming down*) oh, yeah, of course, that would be nice.

(Corky hangs up, checks his pockets and discovers Ben Greene's wallet, watch and two cigars. Looks around and puts them in the bottom drawer with Fats' bloody things. Starts taking his shirt off and moves into the bathroom. Fats remains on the couch.)

FATS

Hey schmucko...you ok in there?

CORKY

(Stick his head out as he washes his hands in a t-shirt and his pants)

Yeah, sure...fine.

FATS

You suuuuure?? You can't let on to Peg. She'll hate you forever.

CORKY

(Comes walking out, grabs another shirt and puts it on) I'm great Fats. You worry about yourself. (Peg knocks on the door, loud knock as if someone was kicking the door. Corky looks at Fats, takes a deep breath and opens the door.)

PEG

(Comes in holding a tray with coffee and breakfast on it) Sorry, I had to use my foot. Breakfast is ready. (Corky grabs the tray as Peg continues) Careful, Duke got home late last night, way after dinner, he didn't much like the notion of me being here alone with a man. He's watching us right now.

CORKY

You think it's smart for you to come here? *(Peg stands in the doorway as Corky brings the tray to the table)*

PEG

He wants to watch us together.

CORKY

Does he have a telescope? Because if he doesn't, I'd like to say that going to bed with you was maybe the three best things that ever happened to me and I'd love some instant coffee and I adore you with cream and sugar, and your breasts belong in the Louvre, and breakfast, which is a museum in Paris and I plan on visiting with you once you get wise and decide to leave the old ear-blower.

PEG

(Looking down and away from Corky) Are you ever something.

FATS

He means Parris Island, where marines take basic training, not Paris France *(Peg smiles)*

CORKY

Don't encourage him *(Corky turns to Peg to find Duke standing next to him in the doorway)*

Duke is a man's man. He looks like a mountaineer, someone who spends their life in the wilderness hunting wild boar with his bare hands. He's also a little on the ignorant side.

CORKY

My God, Duke...how are you?

DUKE

Doin ok. *(they shake hands)*

PEG

(Moving to the table)

You take your coffee....?

CORKY

Everything

DUKE

Sorry I wasn't here to greet you...with the entertaining and all *(Duke glances at Peg while she prepares Corky's coffee. There is obvious sexual tension in the room. Fat's watches from the couch)* But somebody's got to earn a living.

CORKY

You're still in real estate right?

DUKE

Gave that up. Dull. What I really love is the outdoors, fishing, hunting: *that* probably seems dull to someone like you.

CORKY

No, not at all (*Peg hands him the coffee*) Perfect!

DUKE

Doing a little selling nowadays---sundries, like that. Surprised Peg here didn't bring you up to date.

CORKY

She may have---truth is, once I start drinking wine, you can forget about me.

FATS

(*Fats starts talking from the couch*) Corky can get drunk on water. (*Duke looks at Fats. Corky picks Fats up*) ---course he can also get drunk on land.

CORKY

(*To Fats*) You can do better than that.

FATS

What's the point, you're too stupid to understand the punch lines.

CORKY

That's not true.

FATS

Not true? You were eleven before you could learn to wave goodbye. In a battle of wits, you're unarmed. (*whispers to Duke*) The only way Corky'll be able to broaden his mind is to put it under a train.

DUKE

(*Duke is intrigued, looking at Fats, then looking at Corky*) Clever. It really is.

FATS

Don't tell him that, tell me that...I'm the talent.

DUKE

My mistake.

FATS

Listen, that stuff you sell? You don't happen to have a penis do you, my last one caught Dutch Elm disease, it's murder getting an erection. (*Duke starts laughing as Corky puts his hand over Fats' mouth.*)

CORKY

You travel a lot in your work?

DUKE

My God, how do you do that? It's terrific, I'm really glad you're here for me to see.

CORKY

Thank you (*Fats still mmmmming. Corky looks at Fats*) Will you be good now?

FATS

Ask him if he's glad I'm here too.

DUKE

(*Smiling*) The both of you. (*Duke smiles and starts heading to the door.*)

PEG

How long you gonna be?

DUKE

As long as it takes to board up the far cabins.

PEG

Don't get all overheated and catch cold now. (*closes the door behind him*)

CORKY

How'd I do?

PEG

(*very happy*) Just unbelievable

FATS

Too bad Fats wasn't here---he might have been a little help, gotten a few laughs---

PEG

(*To Fats*) You're always unbelievable.

FATS

(*Whispering to Corky*) Brains as well as boobs.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE OUT

SCENE II

Lights up. Corky is cleaning the cabin when Duke knocks on the door rather aggressively. Corky opens the door.

DUKE

You drive a Rolls?

CORKY

Don't I wish.

DUKE

Well, it's somebody's white Rolls parked out there.

CORKY

Was it a corniche?

DUKE

A what?

CORKY

Did the top come down? A convertible? (*Duke nods*) That's gotta be Gangrene's, Why would he leave it though?

DUKE

Whose is it?

CORKY

My agent's. (*Corky looks out the window*) Key in and everything? He's rich as hell. But still, you just don't leave an 80 thousand dollar car and walk away. He must have come looking for me.

DUKE

Looking for you?

CORKY

If I level with you will you not nose it around? (*Duke nods*) I'm in hiding. I've got a lot of career problems and I haven't been behaving all that normal.

DUKE

Can you find out what's happened?

CORKY

I can sure as hell try. *(Corky picks up the phone, waits for Peg to answer)* Hi Peg, can you get me an outside line please? What's that? Yeah, sure, coffee would be great. *(Corky dials a number)* Hi Sadie? It's me, is he in? *(beat)* Thanks. *(Corky covers the phone and says to Duke)* Could I have maybe two minutes of privacy? This may get kind of raunchy. *(Duke walks out the door but looks in the window. Corky secretly takes his finger and hangs up, unbeknownst to Duke)* Don't yell at me, goddamit---of course I appreciate that you're worried about me, but...I'm sick of hearing about my erratic behavior mister, at least I'm not senile, at least I'm not leaving my car in the woods...huh?...boy, am I smart...here I call you up to find how you are and I end up telling where I am. How'd you ever find me? And I schtupped that bastard cabbie a hundred bucks not to tell. You came up and parked and then what? Snuck around like an old pervert? We were on a long walk is why you didn't find anybody---*(quickly)* never mind who "we" is, finish about the car. *(Duke is listening as Corky starts laughing)* I'd love to have seen that, a rich old fart like you trying to hitchhike a ride to Grossinger's. When you got there, why didn't you have them come unstick your car? *(louder)* Quit yelling, all right, all right, nobody touches your Rolls but a Rolls man, forgive me. One sec...Duke *(Duke comes back in)* Leave the car exactly where it is. *(back to the call as Duke leaves)* So you're paying for two Rolls guys to come up and take care of your car? *(louder)* WELL TAKE CARE OF IT! *(Peg walks in holding the tray of coffee)*

PEG

Everything alright?

CORKY

(nodding and continuing on the phone) Yesssir...that's the "we." *(whispering but making sure that Peg can hear)* Yesssir, a lot. *(louder)* It's not ridiculous. I've known her always...*(beat)* yes, very, but that's not why I love her, I'm not some moonstruck kid---yes, she married, but it's about to break up anyway. I'm no homewrecker, believe me---*(looks at Peg who is ready to walk out the door)* and I'm not talking about puppy love Ben...I'm talking about salvation.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE III

Back out in the woods. Peg and Duke are walking, Peg is lagging behind then sits on the bench, remembering her time with Corky as Duke takes out his flask and drinks a long drink

DUKE

Some fish....some fish he takes me for, your old pal I'm talking about.

PEG

I suspected.

DUKE

That story is fulla holes-

PEG

---why do you keep repeating that, so a car's here, who cares?

DUKE

People just don't leave a Rolls in the woods goddammit!

PEG

Corky agrees with you---it's a crazy story but there it is.

DUKE

(suspecting something is going on with her and Corky) Some happy coincidence---guy drives ninety miles and you and Corky *just* happen to be off in the woods while he's snooping. *(beat as Duke stares at Peg)* You put out for him in the woods did you?

PEG

I love it when you're drinking---

DUKE

---well, why didn't you tell me about this goddam legendary walk before?

PEG

No comment.

DUKE

Listen to me---I *know* his story's bullshit because I got the car out of the mud and it was nothing---now if I can do it, anybody can---

PEG

---maybe he tried, maybe he couldn't, he was old---

DUKE

---Corky never said he was old---

PEG

---he must have, to me---

DUKE

---when?---

PEG

---we were having dinner probably---*(she gets up to head back to the house)*

DUKE

---uh huh---he got drunk fast and flaked out, that's what he said earlier---*(grabbing her arm and spinning her around)*---how did you know he was old, did you see him?---*answer THAT!*

PEG

---no, I never saw him---

DUKE

---why not, he must have rung the bell, a man drives ninety miles, he's gotta ring the goddam doorbell, wouldn't you agree?---

PEG

---I didn't answer any bell, now quit this---(*pulling her arm out of his grip*)

DUKE

(*grabs her arm again*) Why not??! What were you doing that was so imp...(*she pulls her arm away*) did he ring while you were screwing? Is that it? That's it isn't it??

PEG

It isn't

DUKE

---why didn't you invite him in to watch?---

PEG

---Shut your dirty mouth!!!---

DUKE

---did you screw Corky?/

PEG

NO!!!

DUKE

I'll pound you, you keep lying---

PEG

I'm not lying!!

DUKE

I got all day! (*Duke grabbing her arm again, stronger and rougher*) The truth---the goddam truth...(all out) DID YOU FUCK HIM!!??

PEG

NO!...no...I didn't (*huge*) BUT I WANTED TO! (*pulls away from his grip and runs away. Duke goes in the other direction, toward Corky's cabin*)

LIGHTS FADE OUT

SCENE IV

Corky's cabin. Fat's is in his usual spot in the corner of the couch as Duke enters.

DUKE

Hey Corky, you in here? Wanted to take you fishing. *(walks in with 2 poles as he looks around)*. Some great fishing in the lake.
Thought we can...talk. *(looks in each room and finds no one)*.

(Duke leans the poles against the wall, looks out the window and sees no one. Turns, stops for a second to look at Fats, then moves to the drawers. Starts at the top drawer and rummages carefully. Fats slowly turns his head and looks at Duke.)

(Duke snaps his head back and looks around, doesn't see anything, again stops for a split second on Fats. Keeps rummaging, second drawer. Fats turns his head again as Duke turns one more time.)

(Rummaging in the rest of the drawers he finds Fats' bloody wig and clothes. He digs further and finds Ben Greene's wallet, watch. Fats blinks his eyes and turns to look again. Duke looks out the window.)

Corky, is that you? *(opening the wallet and reading the driver's license)* Ben Greene? Greene?...Gangrene...the son of a bitch. It IS the Rolls guy.

(Fats has a switchblade in his hand. The blade is released which catches Duke's attention. He moves closer to Fats. Kneels down and moves closer. Touches him gently to see if he'll move. Leans in.)

(Fats lunges the knife into Duke's chest over and over again as Duke cries out. Duke falls on top of Fats as he keeps stabbing him. Finally Duke rolls off the couch and falls on the floor. A long beat before we see Corky get up from behind the couch, breathing heavy.)

CORKY

Jesus, Jesus---

FATS

---don't panic---

CORKY

---what have you done??---? *(he runs to the door, locks it. Looks out the window, closes the curtains)*

FATS

---I said don't panic---

CORKY

---what am I gonna do...omigod---

FATS

---you're gonna listen and---*(interrupting himself)*---and listen to me!!! *(Corky is lost in his worry, numb, looks at Fats)*

FATS (continued)

You're gonna zoom to my suitcase and whip out one of those nice long pieces of canvas and you're gonna wrap part of it around Duke here and part around Gangrene and you're gonna get a big rock and wrap the rest around it and row out and drop the bundle over the side---(beat)---and if you do it right, I'll be able to say, "good going schmucko, two birds with one stone."

CORKY

Quit with the goddam jokes!

FATS

---and after they're dumped you hustle in here and clean up good and unless you're a bigger nincomfuckingpoop than I think, inside of twenty minutes you'll be taking a nice hot shower.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

LIGHTS FADE IN

(Corky's cabin is cleaner than it has ever been. Fats is sitting in his spot on the couch, smile on his face as Corky enters the room in his robe, drying his hair. There's a knock on the door, it's Peg.)

PEG V.O.

Corky, are you in there.

CORKY

(Gives the room one more look-around and opens the door) Come on in. *(Peg walks in, she has obviously been crying, hair is disheveled)* You've had quite a day I guess.

PEG

Whatever, where's Duke?

CORKY

We had a bad scene---he tried to get me to admit I'd bedded down with you and when he couldn't, he said he was going hunting and didn't much want me around when he got back. *(to Peg)* are *you* going to be around when he gets back?

PEG

That's what I'm here to tell you. *(gestures to Corky to sit down. They sit at the table)* I drank enough cummy coffee today in enough rotten luncheonettes to qualify for the Guinness Book of Records.

CORKY

(breaking in) Who wins, me or Duke? Just tell me that first?

PEG

I will, I promised, but see, I'm not much good at thinking and I've spent all afternoon trying to learn how, so you're gonna have to bear with me. *(Corky nods)*. Ok. Duke never hit me...till today and I think...don't laugh...that means he still cares.

CORKY

---if he'd kicked you, would that have meant true love?

PEG

Dammit---(*Corky signals that he's sorry*) ok, you. God knows *you* care...it's not just that our thoughts touched like with Merlin and his wife when she was dying...that was just icing on the cake. If there's one thing I know, it's that you care. But what if that stops?

CORKY

It' won't.

PEG

People change when they get famous...so what if I left and you dumped me and Duke wouldn't take me back---(*big*) and that's when it hit me!

CORKY

What?

PEG

So what if you dump? I'm not coming back anyway, there's nothing for me, not anymore.

CORKY

Are you saying---(*Peg smiles and nods*)---MY God...you mean I win?

PEG

If I'm a prize, then you're a winner. (*They embrace, they kiss, they embrace, eyes closed as Corky holds her as tight as he can*) As soon as Duke gets home and I explain all of this to him in person, we can take off.

CORKY

(*long pause, then kind of a sweet smile*) Gee, do you think you ought to put yourself through all that?

PEG

Yeah, I do.

CORKY

You're tired. Why let yourself in for a bloodbath?

PEG

(*puzzled*) Bloodbath?

CORKY

An emotional scene---

PEG

---I got to leave Duke with his pride. He's got to understand *he* didn't fail...we failed together. (*Peg heads for the door*) Let's get packed up, he'll be home soon. You can't hunt a lot when it's nighttime. (*she exits*)

FATS

Omigod...she's leaving Duke for you?

CORKY

On the money.

FATS

(*excited*) Infuckingcredibly fanfucktastic!!!

CORKY

Thank you, sports fans!!

FATS

So where are we off to?

CORKY

Don't get emotional about this.

FATS

---about what, about what?---

CORKY

(*pause*) I think maybe there's just gonna be two of us on the honeymoon.

FATS

(*staring*) What's the punch line? (*Corky says nothing and starts packing*) You don't mean you'd leave me behind even for a little? C'mon laddie, quit the kidding.

CORKY

My head's on straight now. I want to get to know her, that's all. I want to take her places, show her things, Paris maybe, like that.

FATS

Schmucko, you never been to Paris yourself, what is this "show her" routine? (*Corky continues packing as Fats watches and pleads*) I'll be good...I promise, I'll be so good...you'll see...(Corky picks up the pace, he's getting upset) All I wanna do is tag along, I wanna see Paris too. You want me to come crawling, you want me to beg? Ok, all right, this is me, Fats, and I'm begging---

CORKY

---it's not easy for me either---

FATS

It is...it is easy...*you won't be alone. (Fats stares at Corky then says in a whisper) I'll tell...*

CORKY

What'll you tell?

FATS

Everything...I will, I swear...in the middle of the act one night, when you don't expect it, I'll scream..."*there's bodies in Lake Melody!*"

CORKY

I don't see that happening.

FATS

What makes you so sure?

CORKY

You're not working with me, not any more. I'm doing a single now.

(Corky stops, looks at Fats. Fats turns his head slowly away from Corky)

LIGHTS FADE OUT

LIGHTS FADE IN

(Corky has his bag packed, Fats is sitting on his suitcase ready to go. Peg knocks on the door)

CORKY

(opens the door and Peg walks in with 2 glasses and a bottle of scotch) How'd it go? Duke understand?

PEG

We haven't talked yet.

CORKY

You mean he isn't back? Christ...Peg?

PEG

It got kind of scary up there waiting, *(pours two drinks and hands one to Corky)* I wanted a drink but I didn't much want to drink alone.

CORKY

Let's get the hell out...send him a goddam telegram later.

PEG

Let's not go through that, my mind's made up (*drinks*) besides, he can't be much longer.

CORKY

You don't know that...he was drinking heavy when he left here.

PEG

He take a flashlight with him? Did you notice?

CORKY

All I noticed was that huge goddam elephant gun he was carrying when he hinted I vacate the premises....it's stupid waiting around.

PEG

Then I'm stupid

CORKY

I didn't say *you* were stupid, I said *waiting* was stupid.

PEG

I'm *aware* of your opinion on the subject.

CORKY

Then try agreeing with me for once instead of being stubborn

PEG

(*big*) Give it a rest Corky!

FATS

(*belts out*) AHHHHHHHHH sweet mystery of love at last I've found you (*imitating Bette Davis says*) Fasten your seatbelts everybody, it's going to be a bumpy night. (*Corky brings him over*)

PEG

(*looking at Fats smiling*) Who were you imitating?

FATS

That sound you heard was my ego breaking. That was Annette Funicello my dear.

CORKY

(as Peg starts to laugh) Don't encourage him.

FATS

I'm here to save you two from yourselves. *(to Peg)* Gimme yer palm, kid, I'll read your fortune. *(Peg puts her hand up as Fats leans down to look at it)* you've just had your first fight with this drooler you've gotten involved with---

CORKY

You've got no talent whatsoever---

FATS

Let's see you do better---dazzle us with the cards.

CORKY

Not in the mood.

FATS

All right, I'll do the dazzling.

PEG

You do magic too?

FATS

Corky does magic, I only do tricks---(excited)---I know what, get me a couple decks of cards Peg and I'll read your mind.

PEG

What do you mean?

FATS

I'll pull the same card from your deck that you've pulled from mine---

PEG

---that's not a trick---you can't do that---

FATS

---sure, you just peek at the bottom card after shuffling and it's easy as apple pie. Corky makes a big deal production number out of it sometimes, like when he's got some hot stewardess he wants to screw, he makes them think their minds have touched...never fails. *(Pegs face turns pale, she is horrified)* you'll never know how many people want to believe in magic!

PEG

(fights to hold back her tears and says softly) ---aw shit *(she falls apart, starts to cry as she heads for the door)*

CORKY

---please!---

PEG

---were you laughing every second?---

CORKY

---please I said---

PEG

---WAS I FUNNY, YOU BASTARD SON OF A BITCH! (*Peg exits. Corky closes the door and turns quickly to Fats*)

FATS

Listen to me...you gotta please just listen---

CORKY

Make it fast

FATS

I will, I will, but---

CORKY

---no buts and no jokes, just get going---

FATS

---ok, ok, just answer me one question, why do you think I blew the whistle?

CORKY

To cause pain, because I was leaving, because you were jealous.

FATS

Wrong, wrong, wrong. I did it...because I could. (*Corky says nothing*) And why didn't you stop me? Answer? You didn't because you couldn't. Get it? (*Corky looks confused as Fats starts laughing*) Look at him, he still doesn't understand.

CORKY

Got your rocks off now?

FATS

Better sit down, kid, while I hit you with an explanation. Take a load off (*Corky sits in Fat's usual spot*) Ever since we got together, I laid low, it was best for the act, I let you share the limelight, if there's one thing about me, I'm big---

CORKY

---save us---

FATS

---but then, earlier today, when I *begged* you, *pleaded* not to be left behind, when I mortifuckingfied myself, and you pissed ice water all over me, well schmucko, that tore it. If I'm boring you, walking around, I don't care. (*Corky paces nervously*) Fats don't sit quiet while some round-assed hunk steals my glory. You couldn't even make it at an amateur night before I came to the rescue. It was me. I took a failure with the charm of a tricky Dick Nixon and made a skyrocket. So, it's not gonna be you and her, it's gonna stay you and me. Except, from now on, even that's changed. Henceforth (*beat*) it's *ME* and *you*.

CORKY

You done? I got a weak stomach

FATS

You look tired

CORKY

I'm not.

FATS

Then what're ya yawning for?

CORKY

Yawning? I'm not...(*Corky stretches and yawns*)

FATS

Gotta wake ya up...crawl around a little, that should help.

CORKY

Ya think? (*Corky gets on all fours and crawls around the room*) Hey...it does help.

FATS

Up and at em! (*Corky jumps to his feet*) Thank me for making you wake up.

CORKY

Thank you!

FATS

With feeling...like I'd do it!

CORKY

(imitating Fats) I'm filled with gratifuckingtude!

FATS

Hey, you got talent after all...let's see what else you can do. *(Corky waits for instructions and does everything Fats commands)* Fats says smile, Fats says frown, Fats says touch the ceiling, Fats says jump up, Fats says jump down, spinaround, fetch a bail of cotton...a little joke I thought I'd throw in. Fats says get a knife. *(Corky freezes at the word knife)* Come on...from the kitchenette. *(Corky goes and gets the knife and returns)*. Gee, I wonder what might be fun to do with it?

CORKY

I could whittle something, you know I'm good at that, fast too, just name it---

FATS

---nah...I'm looking for something with a little more pizazz.

CORKY

(loudly) Don't do it!!

FATS

You really love old Peg don't you, goddam it's touching.

CORKY

(quietly) Please...don't kill her.

FATS

Hey, schmucko, easy, I would never dream of depriving YOU of that pleasure.

CORKY

I can't do it.

FATS

There's that old bugaboo of yours again, lack of confidence.

CORKY

I...won't! And---you---can't---make---me!

FATS

OK, OK, wow, I really stepped on a corn that time. If I can't make you, I can't make you, I can't make you, how's your head Cork?

CORKY

Fine

FATS

Good, thought for a sec' there you might be getting a migraine.

CORKY

Nope

FATS

Just shows how wrong you can be. *(Corky stands perfectly straight, thinking, clearly struggling internally but without movement. Fats watches him. Corky's eye starts fluttering, he rubs his temple. He is getting worse. Turns his head sharply as if he were on stage again, failing, looking at the audience as they laugh at him. He drops the knife and presses his hands over his eyes thinking about everything that has happened at the camp)*

FATS

Drop your hands! *(Corky drops his hands but keeps his eyes shut)* Open those baby blues. *(Corky opens his eyes, eyelids fluttering)*
Looks to me like one of those gut wrenchers. *(Corky nods manically)* He, Cork, it's getting bad fast, you're losing color.

CORKY

(whispering) ...please....

FATS

Drilling right into the brain, is it?

CORKY

.....yes...YES...

FATS

(cheery as can be) Surprise!! *(Corky standing still, watching Fats, eyelids start slowing)* It came fast, it can go fast, yes? Not so deep anymore??

CORKY

...not...so deep...

FATS

It'll be all gone soon.

CORKY

(appreciative) ...thank you...

FATS

(suddenly roaring) WANT IT BACK A HUNDRED TIMES WORSE AND HUNDRED DAYS LONG?? *(Corky shakes his head cautiously in silence)*

FATS

(pleased and contented) Then take the knife on up the hill lover *(beat)* And kiss the girl goodbye... *(Corky snaps his head and looks at Fats as...)*

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE V

Lights fade in slowly to half brightness in Peg's bedroom, we see Peg lying on the bed, she is whimpering. She has obviously been crying since she left Corky's cabin. Can only see the bed, nightstand with a small lamp on it. She hears noise offstage, a doorknob turning as Peg snaps up and sits on the side of the bed she says...

PEG

Duke?

FATS V.O.

I left schmucko down at the cabin...open up, huh? You and me gotta have a quick chat.

PEG

Corky, there's nothing to say.

FATS V.O.

I told you, he's at the cabin, you and me are the only ones can straighten this out.

PEG

(a little louder) Go away Corky.

FATS

Fats

PEG

All right, go away Fats!

FATS V.O.

That's better---at least we know who we are now. *(softer)* I've got a present that'll make you smile, promise it will. *(Peg lies back on the bed in the fetal position and closes her eyes)* He made it for you. For you to remember him by. He's leaving, Peg, but he wants you to have this.

PEG

Have what?

FATS V.O.

A wooden heart. *(Peg sits up slowly, obviously touched a little, she looks at the door again, deciding if she should open it)* He whittled it for you before he sent me up...he's quick with his hands. Say you'll keep it.

PEG

Leave it outside the door.

FATS V.O.

The reason what happened down in the cabin was that he was so humiliated Peg. See, he never dreamed you'd ever care for him but when you did, and he'd lied to you, it just killed him. He's loved you so long and he couldn't go off with you when there was a lie at the center. Please take his heart Peg. So he'll know you don't feel contempt for him.

PEG

(turns and sits on the side of the bed, as if she is going to the door) Oh, I never felt that.

FATS V.O.

At least that's something. I'll leave it by the door Peg. Bye. *(there is a sound of something being put on the floor)*

PEG

(gets up and starts to walk toward the darkness that would be her door) Wait a minute, you didn't walk away.

FATS V.O.

Brains as well as boobs *(Peg smiles and waits)* Anytime you feel like playing with my levers, you'll call?

PEG

Sure, sure.

FATS V.O.

(recites this poem as he walks away. We hear footsteps as his voice gets fainter)

Peggy Ann Snow

Peggy Ann Snow

Please follow me

Wherever you go...

(As Peg slowly moves into the darkness and toward the door, we hear the door open and...)

LIGHTS FADE OUT

LIGHTS FADE IN

We see Fats in his chair. As Corky enters and closes the door, he looks at the knife, bloody, hand covered in blood, all over his zippered jacket and pants. He drops the knife and moves to the couch and drops himself.

FATS

How are things in Glocca Morra, kid? *(Corky has his head in his hands, sobbing, trying to compose himself)* It's all right, you've had a big day, let it all out. *(Corky slowly stops sobbing, head still in his hands)* I'll try and keep the jokes under control till you're yourself again. *(Corky nods)* And I promise I won't pull the migraine routine right away either. but I had to then, you understand that...to get you moving. You're all the time thinking you can't do things you really can, you need prodding y'know. You got a terrible inferiority complex, we'll have to work on that.

CORKY

(softly) She liked...the heart.

FATS

You're a great whittler, she damn well should have.

CORKY

She smiled when she picked it up, I saw, she looked so pleased and everything, I made her happy...me...no tricks or anything.

FATS

There's that damn inferiority thing of yours again. I don't want to hear you running yourself down anymore, you got that. *(Fats stops talking abruptly)*

CORKY

What's wrong?

FATS

I don't know how to say this since I haven't got a stomach, but my stomach hurts.

CORKY

Bad?

FATS

Getting...bad. *(Corky puts his hands down still leaning over looking at Fats)*...getting real bad now.

CORKY

Goodbye...

FATS

What's going on?

CORKY

We're dying, I think is what it is...*(Corky leans back on the couch and unzips his jacket. His entire shirt is covered in blood.)*

FATS

...dying...?

CORKY

I...I put the knife deep in me...

FATS

Christ, laddie, it's spreading..

CORKY

(softer) I know...

FATS

(with a sad and scared tone) ...don't leave me here alone...

CORKY

...don't...worry...

FATS

...can you get over...?

CORKY

(slides to the floor and slowly crawls to the chair, in obvious abdominal pain) ...what...?

FATS

...put me flat...

CORKY

(laying Fats flat on the floor. Starting to die now) Fats...? She really liked my heart...

FATS

...why didn't you just leave...? Gone with her when you had the chance?

CORKY

...aw...she'd have never gone with me...I couldn't face failure again...she'd have...turned me down...I couldn't even make her open the door by myself...it was never me...always us...

FATS

...schmucko...us...was YOU.

CORKY

...huh...?

FATS

...it was you all the time...

CORKY

(pauses) ...I wish I'd known sooner...

FATS

(long pause then barely audible) ...I hope I don't die first...

CORKY

(another long pause) ...I think...chances are...we'll go together...*(Corky collapses next to Fats. They are dead. There is a long pause, then a knock on the cabin door.)*

PEG

Hey Corky, it's me. I changed my mind, let's give it a whack and see how it goes. *(beat)* What do you say? *(Peg turns the doorknob but it's locked)* I'm warning you Cork, don't play hard to get, I'm a woman, I can always change my mind again. *(she says the next line imitating Fats)* You may not have this opporfuckingtunity tomorrow. *(she giggles and knocks again as...)*

LIGHTS FADE OUT TO BLACK

THE END