

SPLIT BRITCHES

*Lesbian Practice/
Feminist Performance*

EDITED BY SUE-ELLEN CASE



London and New York

BELLE REPRIEVE

A Collaboration

**BETTE BOURNE, PAUL SHAW, PEGGY SHAW,
LOIS WEAVER**

Directed by Lois Weaver

Sets designed by Nancy Bardawil and Matthew Owen

Costumes designed by Susan Young

Music composed and directed by Laka Daisical and Phil Booth

Lighting designed by Liz Poulter

Originally produced on January 8, 1991, at The Drill Hall Arts Centre, London. Produced in association with The Club at La MaMa E.T.C., New York, and opened at La MaMa on February 14, 1991. Lighting for the New York production was designed by Howard Thies.

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“I Love My Art” was written by Edward Clark

ORIGINAL SONGS

“Under the Covers,” words by Peggy Shaw and Paul Shaw, music by Phil Booth

“Bautiful Dream,” words and music by Phil Booth

“The Fairy Song,” words and music by Paul Shaw

CHARACTERS

MITCH, a fairy disguised as a man (Paul Shaw)

STELLA, a woman disguised as a woman (Lois Weaver)

STANLEY, a butch lesbian (Peggy Shaw)

BLANCHE, a man in a dress (Bette Bourne)

An empty stage. The backdrop is a scrim painted to resemble the interior of a 1940s New Orleans apartment. There are three high-tension wires strung across the stage. Throughout the play, various painted cloth curtains are pulled across these wires to denote a change in scenery or mood.

Four o'clock in the morning.

ACT I

Mitch is wheeling three large boxes onstage with a handtruck. One is designed to resemble a steamer truck. The second is square, large enough to hold an actor, and shaped to resemble a card table, which it becomes in later scenes. The third is tall, rectangular, and large enough to hold another actor. It is turned on its back to represent a bathtub in the second act.

MITCH: Inside this box it's four o'clock in the morning. I know that sounds incredible but it's true. I know because it's *my* four o'clock in the morning. Every time it comes around, I put it in this box. I've been doing it for years now. At four o'clock in the morning, the thread that holds us to the earth is at its most slender, and all the creatures that never see sunlight come out to make mincemeat of well-laid plans. So you can imagine what it's like in there. If you listen closely you can hear them shuffling about, like the sound of rain or chittering birds. It reminds me of a soundtrack, the beginning of a movie . . . (*Stella appears drinking a Coke behind the scrim*) a clean slate. Darkness all around. Small sounds that give a taste of an atmosphere, a head turning, a body lit from behind, shadows in a dark, tiled hallway, a blues piano. (*Pianist strikes a match and begins to play the blues*)

STELLA: (*Moving to center from behind the scrim, still drinking the Coke*) Is there something you want? What can I do for you? Do you know who I am, what I feel, how I think? You want my body. My soul, my food, my bed, my skin, my hands? You want to touch me, hold me, lick me, smell me, eat me, have me? You think you need a little more time to decide? Well, you've got a little over an hour to have your fill. Meanwhile . . . (*Mitch enters with the last box, swatting bugs*) I'm surprised there aren't more bugs out this

time of year. All the ones that are out seem to be buzzing around my head.

MITCH: No, there's plenty for both of us. Don't feel singled out.

STELLA: I think it's 'cuz I eat so much sugar that they're attracted to me. Sugar in my blood. And my veins are close to the surface.

MITCH: You know that they excrete something to digest your blood, that's why they leave that bump on your skin.

STELLA: I always worry that they carry things with them, transferring them from person to person.

MITCH: That's an old wives' tale. This country has no tradition of disease being spread by mosquitoes. You're mistaken.

STELLA: Well, every year I make one big mistake. I wonder what it will be this year?

MITCH: This mistake, is it at a particular time, or can't you tell when it's coming?

STELLA: I can usually feel it coming . . .

BLANCHE: (*from inside the box*) I've always depended on the strangeness of strangers.

STELLA: Or at least after the fact I thought I knew it was coming.

MITCH: Isn't there something you can do to stop it happening?

STELLA: Such as . . .

MITCH: Change the script!

STELLA: Change the script. Ha ha. You want me to do *what* in these shoes? The script is not the problem. I've changed the script.

MITCH: It's a start.

STELLA: Look, I'm supposed to wander around in a state of narcotized sensuality. That's my part. (*Blanche and Stanley speak simultaneously from inside the two largest boxes*)

BLANCHE: You didn't see, Miss Stella, see what I saw, the long parade to the graveyard. The mortgage on the house, death is expensive, Miss Stella, death is expensive.

STANLEY: Is that so? You don't say, hey Stella wasn't we happy before she showed up. Didn't we see those colored lights you and me. Didn't we see those colored lights.

STELLA: And anyway, it's too late. It's already started.

STANLEY: Hey Stella! (*He comes out of the stage right box*)

STELLA: Don't holler at me like that, Stanley.

STANLEY: Hey Stella, Stella baby! Catch! (*He throws her a package wrapped in bloody paper*)

STELLA: What!

STANLEY: Meat.

BLANCHE: (*emerging from the stage left box*) Are we here? Is this the place? Are my necessities disembarked? How sweet it is to arrive at a new place for the first time. The future stretching out in front of us like a clean, white carpet. There's the stir and rustle of endless possibility in the air.

STANLEY: You don't say.

STELLA: Honey, we're in exactly the same place we started out from.

BLANCHE: Started out? What do you mean started out? You mean we haven't arrived?

STELLA: No, we haven't arrived, but don't worry about that now. You just take it easy.

STANLEY: Something smells fishy around here and it's not me.

STELLA: (*to Stanley*) Now you be kind to my sister. Tell her how nice she looks.

BLANCHE: I can't stand being in between. I just can't bear it.

STELLA: (*to Stanley*) You should try to understand her a little better, she's just different.

STANLEY: Different? You can say that again.

BLANCHE: I have never regretted my decision to be unique.

STANLEY: I'm gonna put an end to this charade here and now.

BLANCHE: (*as Stanley moves to center stage with a trunk and becomes a customs agent*) That my plans of late have gone somewhat awry is the price one has to pay if life is to be superb.

STANLEY: (*to Blanche*) Ticket please.

BLANCHE: (*to Mitch*) Young man, don't I know you?

MITCH: We were engaged to be married.

STANLEY: Ticket please!

BLANCHE: Did I break your heart?

MITCH: No, you broke my leg.

BLANCHE: I must be stronger than I thought.

STANLEY: Ticket please!

BLANCHE: Oh, well, all right, I have it here somewhere. (*She rummages through her bag*) Which ticket do you mean, the one that got me here or the one that will take me away?

STANLEY: Both.

BLANCHE: Oh, well I don't seem to have either at the moment. Although we must have gotten here somehow, we can't have walked, we have a heavy load. However, I present myself as overwhelming evidence that I am actually here.

STANLEY: While we're at it, I'm gonna need your passport.

BLANCHE: Passport? I wasn't aware that we were crossing any borders. What borders?

STANLEY: Passport.

BLANCHE: (*rummaging around*) Passport, passport . . . (*Mitch steps forward with her passport and hands it to Stanley*)

STANLEY: [*still staring at Mitch*] Name?

BLANCHE: Blanche DuBois.

STANLEY: That's not what it says here.

BLANCHE: I assure you that is who I am. My namesake is a role played by that incandescent star, Vivien Leigh, and although the resemblance is not immediately striking I have been told we have the same shoulders.

★!★

STANLEY: (*looking at the passport photo*) Then who's this here?

BLANCHE: The information in that document is a convention which allows me to pass in the world without let or hindrance. If you'll just notice the message inside the front cover, The Queen of England herself not only requests this but requires it.

STANLEY: You don't look anything like this photograph.

BLANCHE: I believe nature is there to be improved upon.

STANLEY: You're lying.

BLANCHE: Well, that's one way of looking at it.

STANLEY: Is there another?

BLANCHE: You wouldn't treat me like this if I wasn't at the end of my rope!

STANLEY: (*slamming his fist on the trunk*) But ya are Blanche, ya are.

(*Cat screams from Mitch and Stella*)

BLANCHE: What was that?

STANLEY: Cats. I'm afraid I'm going to have to perform an intimate search.

BLANCHE: My body?

STANLEY: Your luggage.

BLANCHE: Stella, how do I look?

STELLA: Fresh as a daisy.

STANLEY: One that's been picked a few days.

MITCH: Look, can't we just scrub 'round the search and get on with the scenes of brutal humiliation and sexual passion?

STANLEY: I'm afraid we have to find a motive in this case, and I believe it's in this trunk. (*To Mitch*) Why don't you mind your own business?

BLANCHE: How dare you speak to my ex-fiancé like that!

STANLEY: Your ex-fiancé?! This man is your ex-fiancé?

BLANCHE: That's right.

MITCH: I told her I loved her and she pushed me down the stairwell, but I forgave her as any decent man would.

STANLEY: That's not what it says in the script. In the script it says you treated her like shit because you're a stuck-up mommy's boy.

MITCH: That's a lie!

BLANCHE: I think I'm going to faint.

STELLA: Is all this really necessary?

STANLEY: Look, have you any idea how many people we have come in here saying they're Blanche DuBois, clutching tiny handbags and fainting in the foyer? I'm afraid I'll have to subject this case to the closest possible scrutiny before I allow any of you to pass any further.

BLANCHE: I see, you want me to come clean by showing my dirty laundry to the world.

STANLEY: You got it.

BLANCHE: I think I'll go into the dressing room and burst into tears.

STELLA: We're in this up to our asses now. There's no going back.

BLANCHE: Hold me Stella, I think I feel a flashback coming on.

(Lights flash, music plays, a curtain painted like a grotesque piece of torn lace is pulled on stage behind the action, the actors shuffling backward around the trunk) [And so it was that I set out to prove to the world that I was indeed myself. A difficult enough task, you might say, for anyone.]

STELLA: She threw herself at the feet of an unforgiving world to prove her identity.

MITCH: The answer was somewhere in that trunk.

STANLEY: (*thumping his fist on the trunk as the music and lights stop flashing*) This is gonna cost you, lady. What did you think you were gonna get a free ride or something? (*About to open the trunk*) What do we have here?

BLANCHE: Please open the doors one at a time! If you open them all at once pink things and fur things, dainty things, delicate and wistful things might pop out.

STANLEY: I'll open them one at a time. First things first. (*Music starts. Stanley pulls out a jacket and tosses it to Stella, then pulls out a scarf and throws it to Mitch*)

BLANCHE: I won't take it personally the way you're treating everything I own in the world.

STANLEY: Let's see, what are little girls made of? (*He sings*) I put my right hand in, I pull my right hand out (*he pulls it out empty and laughs*), I put my right hand in (*he pulls out a dress on a hanger and puts it around his neck*) and I shake it all about.

BLANCHE: I can't approve of any of this, just as you can't approve of my entire life.

STANLEY: I do the hokey-pokey and I turn myself around. That's what it's all about. So this is what little girls are made of. Tiaras, diamond tiaras. (*He puts a tiara on his head*) And what's this? (*He pulls out a gold bracelet and puts it on*) A solid gold Cadillac. This must be worth a fortune. And what have we got here? A box of valuables. (*He tosses the contents onto the floor*) Love letters, scrap books, newspaper clippings.

BLANCHE: Everybody has something they don't want others to touch because of their intimate nature.

STANLEY: (*singing, as Mitch picks up the newspaper clippings*) I put my right foot in, I take my right foot out, I put my right foot in and I shake it all about . . . (*Stanley pulls out a high-heeled shoe*)

MITCH: (*as Stanley continues singing*) There was a time when everyone was trying to get a piece of her. These are the pieces left

over, "Tipped for the Top," "What an Angel." Now the angel's in the kitchen, washing out the dishes and picking her teeth.

BLANCHE: (*as Mitch hands her the newspaper clippings*) I don't see how any of this relates to my own life except in the way people perceive my fall.

STANLEY: I put my left hand in . . . (*he shakes the box violently from inside*)

BLANCHE: (*ripping up the newspaper clippings*) Tearing . . . I hear tearing . . . be careful . . . the wings, you're tearing them!

STANLEY: They're just animals, lady, what's the matter with you?

BLANCHE: But they've been faithful their whole lives. There are things we don't know here.

STANLEY: Things are different now. (*Still struggling inside the box*) I pull the white-feathered excited body of one swan off the white-feathered excited body of another swan. (*He pulls out a handful of feathers*)

BLANCHE: What right have you to interfere with nature?

STANLEY: (*pulling feathers apart to reveal that they are a boa which he drapes across his shoulders*) And shake it all about.

BLANCHE: Birds of a feather.

STANLEY: I put my left hand in . . . (*he pulls his hand quickly out*) Oww, Stella, Stella!

STELLA: What?

STANLEY: I burned my hand.

STELLA: Oh, Stanley, it's just candle wax.

STANLEY: I know but it hurts.

STELLA: Some people think it's sexy.

STANLEY: (*pulling his hand away from her*) I can see where it might be sexy if I knew it was coming. I put my left hand in, I pull my left hand out . . . oh, a little cheerleading doll . . . (*he breaks off the arm*) the arm is busted . . . the rubber band must be broken inside.

BLANCHE: My mother gave me that.

STANLEY: (*dancing the doll on top of the trunk*) And I shake it all about . . .

BLANCHE: And before that, it was her mother's.

STANLEY: (*slamming the doll down*) Look, lady, I'm just trying to do my job here.

BLANCHE: Yes, of course.

STANLEY: And my job is to make sure you're not smuggling something personal in this here trunk. *(He reaches into the trunk)* Let's see, what's this? And what is this? *(He pulls out a purse)*

BLANCHE: This contains all of my hopes and dreams . . . this is my hope chest.

STANLEY: Hopes and dreams? Forget it. *(He sticks his hand into the purse)* I put my whole body in, I take my whole body out. *(He pulls out a scarf)* I grab myself a frilly thing and shake it all about. I pin it on my shoulders and I sashay up and down, that's what it's all about. Yes? I put my right hand in, I take my right hand out . . . *(He pulls out his hand covered in blood. Blanche and Stella exit. Mitch enters in fading light to roll away the trunk; music and lights slowly fade out. In blackout)* I am suddenly aware that the atmosphere has changed. It's dark. The night has a thousand eyes and they're all looking at me. They're burning into me, burning into my chest. If I don't sleep now, I never will . . . don't panic . . . the night seems to last forever . . . don't panic . . . I'm scared, I'm wrong, the night is making me feel . . . *(The lights return suddenly on a curtain with a painting of an oversized clawed foot of a bathtub and a straight razor lying on a tiled floor. Stella is onstage with Stanley. She is wearing a cheerleading outfit and carries a cheerleading doll)* Vivien Leigh, huh? Okay, that's your story and I'm stuck with it for now. But let's see if you can keep up the deception day after day, week after week in front of me. Let that be a challenge to our relationship. But meanwhile, relax, make yourself at home, have a drink. Tell me about yourself, stuff I haven't heard before, recent stuff like how've you been lately. I got all the time in the world and I'm all ears.

STELLA: Stanley, you come out here and let Blanche finish dressing. *(Stanley exits)* I let her keep her hopes and dreams, just like I let her keep her cheerleading memories. I pretended they were mine as well, came to know them as I know my own face in the mirror. A face that was not a twin of my older sister.

BLANCHE: *(entering stage left in a bathrobe)* I think I handled that really well. It's a tricky business, deception in the face of legal documents. Thank heavens for bathrooms, they always make me feel so new.

STELLA: Blanche, honey, are you all right in there? There was no answer, but I could hear her splashing and the sound of her radio.

BLANCHE: I can always refresh my spirits in the bathroom.

STELLA: Blanche, I brought you your lemon Coke.

BLANCHE: All right sweetie. Be right out.

STELLA: I'll wait out here.

BLANCHE: I don't want you to have to wait on me.

STELLA: I like waiting on you Blanche, it feels more like home.

BLANCHE: I must admit, I do like to be waited on.

STELLA: Well, I'm waiting.

BLANCHE: One day I'll probably just dissolve in the bath. They'll come looking for me, but there'll be nothing left. "Drag Queen Dissolves in Bathtub," that'll be the headline. "All that was left was a full head of hair clogging up the plughole. She was exceptional even in death . . ." I wonder where I'll end up. In the sea, I suppose.

STELLA: I'm waiting, Blanche.

BLANCHE: Just a few last finishing touches.

STELLA: Waiting. Waiting in the wings. Waiting for her to get off the phone.

BLANCHE: You wouldn't want me to go out looking a mess, now would you?

STELLA: Waiting for her to come home from Woolworth's with the new Tangee lipstick. And when I wasn't waiting I was following. I used to follow her into the bathroom. I loved the way she touched her cheek with the back of her hand. How she let her hand come to rest just slightly between her breasts as she took one last look in the mirror. I used to study the way she adjusted her hips and twisted her thighs in that funny way when she was changing her shoes. Then she would fling open the bathroom door and sail down the staircase into the front room to receive her gentlemen callers.

BLANCHE: (*colliding into Stella, who drops the doll*) My doll, it's broken!

STELLA: (*laughingly*) No it isn't.

BLANCHE: I did. I broke it.

STELLA: No, honey. You didn't.

BLANCHE: Yes I did. I broke it.

STELLA: (*shaking Blanche*) No, Blanche, it was already broken.

BLANCHE: I don't know why I'm like this today.

STELLA: (*embracing her*) Blanche, you know what this reminds me of? My homecoming corsage, remember? Before the homecoming

parade, when the band and all the floats were gathered in front of the war memorial. It was your senior year, you were the captain of the cheerleaders, and I was the mascot. And they gave us these big orange and maroon chrysanthemums with ribbon streamers; mine was just as big as yours.

BLANCHE: And I pinned it on your shoulder and you were so proud of its size and excited by the smell of it.

STELLA: I felt every bit as tall and glamorous as the real cheerleaders, the majorettes, the homecoming court, even Miss Mississippi herself. I stood in that November air imagining all the things a grownup woman could be . . . and then, that great big old football player came walking across the red dirt and smacked right into me.

BLANCHE: And your poor corsage, it started to bleed, it started to lose its petals one by one.

STELLA: And I started to cry. I threw a god-awful fit.

BLANCHE: You certainly did.

STELLA: My whole life was disappearing with those dropping petals. How was I going to present myself in the same parade with Miss Mississippi, her in her strapless gown and me with a handful of petals. But you put your big strong arms around me and set me right up there on the float with . . .

BLANCHE: The beauty queen herself. And there you were, all puffy-eyed and corsageless . . .

STELLA: Right next to the great white virgin, with her round bare shoulders and her rhinestone tiara.

BLANCHE: (*As the music starts*) And I took your picture and it was in the papers. (*Blanche takes off the bathrobe to reveal a cheerleading outfit and they sing*)

“*Under the Covers*”

BOTH: When life is unfair, and the world makes you sick
I know somewhere that’s bliss on a stick.

STELLA: Somewhere to go when things are unsteady

BLANCHE: Somewhere to go with cocoa and teddy.

BOTH: Under the covers, the pillows and laces
We both can share, those soft cotton places

STELLA: Lying together like spoons in a drawer

BLANCHE: Then turning over to have an explore . . .

BOTH: Under the covers, those smooth satin covers
We share our dreams

STELLA: Like goose downy lovers

BLANCHE: Tucked in together like girls in the dorm

BOTH: Under the covers everything's cozy and warm . . .

They pull hidden pom-poms from each other's sleeves and cheer:

AMO, AMAS, AMAT
WE LOVE OUR TEAM A LOT
WE'RE GONNA FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT
WE'RE GONNA WIN WIN WIN
WE'RE GONNA BE . . .

BLANCHE: FABULOUS.

Tap dance break.

BOTH: Under the covers, it's you and it's me now
Our pleasure grows, because we are two now
Lean on a pillow and look in my eyes
Spreading our knowledge and sharing our thighs
Under the covers, our fingers exploring
Those hidden dreams, we've found there is something

Stella pulls a hand covered in menstrual blood out from under her skirt.

Mother has maybe forgotten to tell
Tho' if she found out
We'd found out
She'd give us hell.

STANLEY: *(yelling from backstage)* Stella!

BLANCHE AND STELLA: She'd give us hell.

STANLEY: Stella!

BLANCHE AND STELLA: She'd give us . . . *(the song dissolves into laughter)*

STANLEY: When are you hens gonna end that conversation?

STELLA: Oh, you can't hear us.

STANLEY: Well, you can hear me, and I say hush up!

STELLA: This is my house too, Stanley, and I'll talk as much as . . .

BLANCHE: *(interrupting her)* Please don't start another row, I couldn't bear it . . . *(She exits)*

STELLA: I tried to follow her, but I got stuck. Stuck in the bathroom, where I saw myself in the medicine chest mirror. I stopped there and I stared. For three days I stared. I wasn't her little sister. And in the mirror I saw the road split, and I took mine . . .

STANLEY: (*grabbing Stella*) Stella. (*They hug; Stella exits; Stanley goes to the bathroom and starts shaving. The lights dim*)

MITCH: (*entering stage right. He carries a painting of a card table, which he places over the front of the square box*) Now and then I reached out to touch his wrists. They glittered with a dozen golden bracelets that matched the large earrings he wore. He was like a shimmering waterfall of gold, his whole front covered with golden pendants that looked like coins. Beneath, he wore a purple semi-transparent shift that matched the dark makeup around his large bedroom eyes. There was something both fierce and warm in his face. He was glowing with a pagan intensity that matched the intense feelings brimming up in my heart, which in turn matched the brimming purple wine that was being poured, seemingly without end, into our glittering golden goblets that matched the shafts of golden scorching sunlight that poured through the high windows down onto the banqueting table, where they were scattered in a dozen colors as they hit the gold in the glass. Finally, he rose from his throne, which was covered in a mantle of blue macaw feathers that cost ten dollars per square inch and matched the cerulean blue of the deep-piled carpet reputedly made by the tiny fingers of ten-year-old eunuchs within the forbidden city in Peking. Then he began to dance . . .

STANLEY: (*grabbing Mitch by the shoulders*) You know, a bum like me can grow up in a great country like this and be her lover, which is a hell of a better job than being president of the United States.

MITCH: You're a lucky man.

STANLEY: You know, when I think about her, it's like food, I want to eat her, just put her whole leg in my mouth, or her face, or her hands . . .

MITCH: That's a mouthful!

STANLEY: I feel so hungry when I think of her, I could eat my car, I could eat dirt, I could eat a brick wall. I have to, I have no choice. I have to touch things, and my hands bring them to my mouth.

MITCH: Your big hands!

STANLEY: Feelings grow inside me, and sometimes they fly out of me so fast and then smack, I'm out of control. When it comes to big hands, I have no competition. (*Stanley takes a swig of beer*)



Plate 9 Mitch and Stanley armwrestle as Blanche and Stella look on
Photo: Sheila Burnett

MITCH: When it comes to big hands, she knows she's got your big hands all over her. *(He takes a swig)*

STANLEY: *(challenging him to arm wrestle)* My big pioneer hands all over her rocky mountains.

MITCH: *(taking the challenge)* All over her livestock and vegetation.

STANLEY: Her buffalos and prairies.

MITCH: Her thick forests and golden sunsets.

STANLEY: All over her stars!

MITCH: She's in your hands!

STANLEY: She's in my hands and ... yeeaaa ... *(he pins Mitch's arms down)*

MITCH: That's right! Bite me! Bite me! Suck on me ... oops.

STANLEY: *(pulling away from Mitch)* What are you talking about?

MITCH: Mosquitoes! Biting me, biting me . . .

STANLEY: (*both of them slapping at bugs*) Suck on me, suck on my body!

MITCH: What do you think I'm here for, your entertainment? A Coney Island for you?

STANLEY: A joyride on my ankle! A suck on my wrist! I'll eliminate you! (*He mimes a machine gun and makes a gun noise*)

MITCH: Remove you from my space! Pow!

STANLEY: Away from my body, you aggravating hungry bugger.

MITCH: Bugger off! Away with you!

STANLEY: You're spoiled . . . Splat!

MITCH: You're educated . . . Squash!

STANLEY: You remind me of my fate.

MITCH: You remind me of my immortality! Leave me my blood.

STANLEY: Blood!

MITCH: Bloody sheet.

STANLEY: Bloody night.

MITCH: Blood on your hand!

STANLEY: It's my hand, I'm dealing the cards.

MITCH: (*running after Stanley around the box*) Deal me!

STANLEY: If you want another card I'll hit you with it.

MITCH: Hit me!

STANLEY: When it comes to big hands I got no competition.

MITCH: Take me!

STANLEY: Your shuffle.

MITCH: Cut me in!

STANLEY: Throw your checkbook out the window!

MITCH: Empty my pockets!

STANLEY: I'm a royal flush, I win every time. (*He challenges him to arm wrestle*)

MITCH: (*taking the challenge*) I'm the last sailboat across the horizon before the sun sets.

STANLEY: Nobody can audition for my part.

MITCH: I flop and smash and throw things.

STANLEY: I turn and punch the air!

MITCH: I sweat.

STANLEY: I smell.

MITCH: I smell!

STANLEY: I smell of car oil, I smell of your blood.

MITCH: I smell of . . . cologne!

STANLEY: I'm hungry, ha, hungry! I'm gonna eat rough memories.

MITCH: I'm gonna eat tough dreams.

STANLEY: Digest hard words. Hard, hard words.

MITCH: I'm gonna spit them out!

STANLEY: It's gonna cost you my hunger!

MITCH: I'm gonna pay!

STANLEY: (*grabbing Mitch*) I'm gonna eat my car. I'm gonna eat dirt!

MITCH: I'm gonna eat a tree! Eat your whole leg!

STANLEY: I'm gonna eat the sun and then I'll sweat!

STANLEY AND MITCH: (*in a frenzy*) Bite me! Bite me! Suck on me!

BLANCHE: (*opening the bathroom curtain and entering wearing a man's jacket, pants and cap*) Suck my wrist.

Stanley sings.

"I'm a Man"

STANLEY: When I was a little boy, at the age of five
I had something in my pocket, kept a lot of folks alive
Now I'm a man, made twenty-one
I'll tell you baby, we can have a lot of fun
'Cos I'm a man
Spelled M . . . A . . . N . . . Man
Oohh . . . oowww . . . oowww
All you pretty women, standing in a line
I can make love to you, in an hour's time
'Cos I'm a man
Spelled M . . . A . . . N . . . Man

Dance break.

The line I shoot will never miss
When I make love to you baby, it comes to this
I'm a man

Spelled M . . . A . . . N . . . Man
Oohh . . . oowww . . . oowww . . . oowww . . .
I'm a man, yes I am, I'm a man . . .

STANLEY: (*gradually noticing Blanche has a finger up her nose*)
Hold it, hold it. (*To Blanche*) Is there something I can help you
with?

BLANCHE: Please could you give me a tissue. I think I've got some-
thing stuck up my nose.

STANLEY: Would you like me to have a look?

BLANCHE: Please don't trouble. I think a tissue would probably do
it.

STANLEY: (*handing her a tissue*) Here.

BLANCHE: Probably a boogey, I expect.

STANLEY: An acquaintance of mine lost his sense of smell from
having a booger stuck up his nose . . . better?

BLANCHE: Not really, no.

MITCH: Can I help?

BLANCHE: Oh no, please, it's only something stuck up my nose.

MITCH: Try sticking your little finger in as far as it'll go.

STANLEY: Then blow your nose.

MITCH: Please let me look, I happen to be a doctor.

BLANCHE: It's very kind of you.

MITCH: Turn around to the light please. Now look up. Now look
down. Now look up again . . . I can see it . . . keep still . . . (*he*
twists the tissue and pokes it up her nose) There!

BLANCHE: Oh dear, what a relief, it was agonizing.

MITCH: (*holding up the tissue*) It looks like a piece of Christmas
pudding.

BLANCHE: Thank you very much indeed.

MITCH: Not at all.

BLANCHE: How lucky for me you happened to be here.

MITCH: Anybody could have done it.

BLANCHE: Never mind, you did and I'm most grateful.

MITCH: There's my train . . . Goodbye. (*He exits*)

BLANCHE: And that's how it all began, just through me getting a booger stuck up my nose. *(She takes off her cap, turns to face Stanley, then walks away upstage left as the lights dim and music starts. Mitch enters and motions for Blanche to dance with him, as Stanley shuffles a deck of cards)*

STANLEY: Hey Mitch, you in this game or what?

MITCH: Deal me out. I'm talking to Miss DuBois. *(They begin to dance as Stella wanders on)*

STELLA: Look, we made enchantment.

STANLEY: Who turned that on? Turn it off.

STELLA: Ah-h-h-h let them have their music.

STANLEY: I said turn it off!

STELLA: What are you doing?

STANLEY: That's the last time anybody plays music during my game. Now get OUT! OUT! *(The music stops; Stella is laughing quietly)*

STELLA: I guess you think that's funny.

STANLEY: Yeah, I thought it was pretty funny.

STELLA: Well, maybe I blinked at the wrong time, 'cuz I missed the joke.

STANLEY: Oh, so now you're an authority on what's funny.

STELLA: I didn't say that. I said I didn't think that that was funny.

STANLEY: Well, if you know so much, why don't you show me what is funny.

STELLA: Look, I don't want to get twisted out of shape about it, I just didn't think it was all that funny.

STANLEY: Oh, you thought it was just a little bit funny.

STELLA: No, not even a little bit funny.

STANLEY: So, show me!

STELLA: This is ridiculous.

STANLEY: Show me what's funny.

STELLA: You want me to show you what's funny.

STANLEY: Yeah, show me funny.

STELLA: Okay, I'll show you funny . . . *(She rips Stanley's sleeve)*
That's funny.

STANLEY: That was not funny.

STELLA: You want funny? *(She rips off the other sleeve)* That's funny.

STANLEY: That was not funny.

STELLA: Okay. What about this? *(She rips off half of Stanley's shirt)* Or this? *(She rips off the other half)*

STANLEY: That's not funny.

STELLA: I'll be right back. *(She bustles offstage and comes back with a seltzer bottle, then sprays Stanley)* That was funny.

STANLEY: That was not funny.

STELLA: I'll be right back. *(She comes back with a giant powder puff and powders Stanley)* That was funny.

STANLEY: That's not funny.

STELLA: I'll be right back. *(She comes back with a cream pie. As she nears Stanley, Stanley unexpectedly tips it into Stella's face)*

STANLEY: Now *that* was funny. *(Stanley exits. Mitch enters, pulling a curtain with a painting of a giant orchid. The Cassandra aria from Les Troyens comes on loudly, then fades)*

MITCH: The bell sounds and they're both middle weights. They know the rules, and they've been publicized as an even match. 'Ere, you've paid good money to see them, you want to see a battle, you want to see blood. Round One is I Love You, Round Two is You See Me For Who I Really Am. You never see a person more clearly than the first time they lay hands on you. After that, it's all up for grabs. *(To Stella)* He's gonna be back and he's gonna say he's sorry.

STELLA: *(wiping the pie from her face)* Sorry. *(She laughs)* Sorry . . . sorry, sorry. *(laughs)* The Indian women. The Indian women, wrapping their soft bodies in thick silk the colors of a church window. Sari. *(laughs)* I'm sorry too. It makes me laugh. They can't take it back. What the gods give they cannot take back, they can only add to what they've given, to make the gift painful to have. Cassandra! Zeus gave her the gift of the seer, and then she wouldn't have sex with him, but he couldn't take back the gift. He couldn't have her, so he made sure no one would believe her . . . She knew all those men were in that wooden horse, but they wouldn't listen . . . *(laughs)* That's hysterical. It was their loss, that curse! Zeus made a prophetess and then spit in her face. And just what do you think went on inside that horse? Hundreds of warlike men, spitting, smoking, dreaming death in the belly of a fake horse . . . I dream a purple darkness . . . purple . . . the color of the sari . . . darlings. I'm

in here. I'm on drugs. I'm braless, shirtless, I'm giggling, I'm lost, I'm in love. I'm stuck in the stomach of a fake horse, can you hear me? I hear you. Cassandra tell me what will happen. I promise I'll believe you! I . . . I'm in love with you Cassandra, you blonde, you seer, you whisperer . . . tell me what's going to happen . . . come here . . . let's make it happen. Please don't, blonde seer. I can't, I'm already married. Take your hands off my breasts, I'm already married. I'm in here. The horse! I'm in the belly of a horse, smoking, shirtless. I'm preparing for a war. (*She begins to strip off her house dress to reveal a tight, strapless dress*) Someone stole my woman, stole her from my house, filched her from history, and I'm here to get her back. I am a powerful warrior. (*She poses like Marilyn Monroe*) Come sweet prophetess, what is going to happen? Tell me, I'm nailed to this story. Cut me down. I'm in here. Can't you see me? I'm having sex with the fortune teller that men don't believe. Sex . . . sex! (*She sings*)

"Running Wild"

STELLA: Running wild, lost control
 Running wild, mighty bold
 Feeling gay, reckless too
 Carefree mind, all the time, never blue
 Always going – don't know where
 Always showing – I don't care
 Don't love nobody, it's not worthwhile
 All alone and running wild

Stanley has entered the audience and applauds Stella loudly as the piano starts the intro for Stella's next song.

"Sweet Little Angel"

STELLA: I've got a sweet little angel
 And I love the way she spreads her wings
 I've got a sweet little angel
 And I love the way she spreads her wings
 When she spreads those wings over me
 She brings joy in everything

STANLEY: (*clapping loudly and talking to the audience*) Is she good or what? She is so good . . . can you believe how good she is? (*Stella stops singing*) Any moment this dame spends out of bed is wasted, totally wasted. (*Stanley runs to Stella and drops to his knees*)

STELLA: I could smell you coming.

STANLEY: You say the sweetest things.

STELLA: Women have to develop a sense of smell. Just in general. Just as a matter of fact. Like in a war. In a war, you learn to smell

the enemy. You learn to cross the street. You learn to see through their disguises.

STANLEY: I am not your enemy.

STELLA: No . . . but you have many of the characteristics. Not that I go by appearances, just smell and instinct.

STANLEY: What are you looking for?

STELLA: You're tense.

STANLEY: I'm always tense. It keeps me in check, keeps me in balance.

STELLA: It's hard to watch.

STANLEY: That's 'cuz you don't know that it's leading to something.

STELLA: And are you gonna tell me what that is?

STANLEY: It's a fact of life, you figure it out.

STELLA: I already did. I don't have to spend long on the likes of you, not one as experienced as I am. I know that your tension is sexual, and it's a desire that I share in, but not for your pleasure, for my own. I'm lookin' for it, I might not find it in you, I might find it somewhere else, as a matter of fact, and there's nothing you can do about it. You don't satisfy me, you're not real.

STANLEY: Are you saying I'm not a real man?

STELLA: I'm saying you're not real. You're cute. Could be much cuter if you weren't quite so obvious.

STANLEY: Then it wouldn't be me. I am not subtle.

STELLA: Try it, just for tonight.

STANLEY: You mean put it on like clothes? I couldn't pull that off.

STELLA: No, take it off. Take it all off. I want to see what you're really made of. I want to see what it is that makes me want you. That makes me want to have you as I've never had anyone. Strip. Take it off, then we'll talk.

STANLEY: Talk is cheap.

STELLA: I want to see you naked like a baby.

STANLEY: No more talk, let's make a deal.

STELLA: We are partners in this deal. I have my part, you have yours.

STANLEY: I can live up to my end of the deal, how 'bout you.

STELLA: Put your cards on the table, I'm calling your bluff.

Blackout.

STANLEY: Hey, turn on the light!

STELLA: I like it in the dark.

STANLEY: I don't like the dark, I like to see.

STELLA: (*As the lights slowly fade up*) You can see if you get your eyes used to it.

STANLEY: I don't want to get used to it, I'm afraid of the dark.

A low light reveals their silhouettes dancing as the pianist sings.

"Sweet Little Angel"

PIANIST: I've got a sweet little angel
 And I love the way she spreads her wings
 I've got a sweet little angel
 And I love the way she spreads her wings
 When she spreads those wings over me
 She brings joy in everything

 I asked my angel for a nickel
 And she gave me a twenty-dollar bill
 I asked my angel for a nickel
 And she gave me a twenty-dollar bill
 When I asked her for her body
 She said she'd leave it to me in her will . . .

 Well my angel if she quit me
 I believe I would die
 Well my angel if she quit me
 I believe I would die
 If you don't believe me
 You must tell me the reason why.

Stella has pulled off Stanley's ripped T-shirt as they dance. She jumps up and wraps her body around Stanley and throws the shirt to the ground as they exit. Blackout.

ACT TWO

The stage is empty except for the large rectangular box on its side, with the painting of a tub across the front. A dim orange light comes up on Stella standing and stretching in the bathtub in her slip.

STELLA: The fire is keeping me awake. It reminds me of the night Yellow Mountain was burning. All night long I could see Yellow



Plate 10 Stanley in the famous Marlon Brando T-shirt pose with Stella
Photo: Sheila Burnett

Mountain burning on my bedroom ceiling. I was afraid that the burning debris would fall from the mountain on to our roof and burn through the ceiling. Meet up with a flicker that was already there, waiting to devour me.

MITCH: (*A light behind the scrim reveals Blanche in a nightgown holding a cigarette and Mitch standing beside her. Mitch lights her cigarette*) There's a shadow over by the window. It's a woman. She's smoking a cigarette. (*Blanche blows smoke into Mitch's face; he coughs*) The smoke is coming my way. Maybe she wants me to go with her. (*Blanche passes around the scrim and crosses to center stage, where she picks up Stanley's torn T-shirt*)

STELLA: The fire has leapt out of control. It's too late, the firemen have all gone home to their wives. Had to hose down their own houses, to protect them from the falling debris.

BLANCHE: (*Examining Stanley's shirt*) This shirt smells of success to me. These elements of manhood . . . there's something about Stanley I can't quite put my finger on. I can't put my finger on his smell. I don't believe he's a man. I question his sexuality. His postures are not real, don't seem to be coming from a true place. He's a phoney, and he's got her believing it, and if she has children he'll have them believing it and when he dies, they'll find out. (*She crosses to Stella*) Have you ever seen him naked?

STELLA: (*drinking Coke*) It's the sugar that satisfies me. The cool liquid running down my throat is only temporary. It's when the sugar hits the bloodstream, that's when my heart starts pumping.

BLANCHE: There's something about the way he smells, something about the way he has to prove his manhood all the time, that makes me suspicious. I'm looking at the shape, not the content.

STELLA: (*straddling the edge of the tub*) Don't you love that feeling when you lean against a solid surface and you can feel your heart beating under your body.

BLANCHE: The noises he makes, the way he walks like Mae West, the sensual way he wears his clothes, this is no garage-mechanic working-class boy, this is planned behavior. This is calculated sexuality, developed over years of picking up signals not necessarily genetic is what I'm trying to say.

STELLA: I remember leaning my abdomen against the cold sink and feeling my heart beating between my legs.

BLANCHE: I'm trying to say, what I mean is, perhaps he was a man in some former life. Perhaps he's just a halfway house, to lure you into a sexual trap, a trap well laid, with just the right flavors, just

the right mood to seduce you . . . what I'm trying to say is, I think he's a fag.

STELLA: The thing about Coca-Cola is that one sixteen-ounce bottle has more than four tablespoons of sugar.

BLANCHE: But now you have the chance to get out. To end this charade before it's too late . . .

STELLA: Enough to keep you up half the night.

BLANCHE: Only someone as skilled as I am at being a woman can pick up these subtle signs.

STELLA: Enough to curb your appetite.

BLANCHE: I'm well trained, equipped. I know how to talk to him, to flirt with him, not get involved really, to decorate his arm, to aid him in his charade, to give him a passing grade.

STELLA: Sugar in a sixteen-ounce bottle.

BLANCHE: (*grabbing Stella's hand*) I'm the real woman for you. I can show you satisfaction. A rewarding, cultural life; me and you, you and me, Blanche and Stella, Stella and Blanche . . . You were such a pretty girl. (*Stella pulls away*) What day was it that you changed? You were tipped for the top and you threw it all away. You were headed upward to the good, right life and suddenly you changed.

STELLA: Pure sugar, liquid sex.]

BLANCHE: Stella, you haven't been listening to a word I've been saying.

STELLA: (*Stanley has come through the audience and is standing facing Stella and Blanche*) The fire is still burning . . . my clothes sticking to my chest just like Mama's dress against her naked belly. Now why did she stay at the sink so long . . . (*She walks towards Stanley*) and every day without underwear. (*She jumps into Stanley's arms*)

STANLEY: Hey! (*Stanley spins her around, then they walk offstage together*)

BLANCHE: Trouble is, Marlon Brando does look gorgeous. And I know that if I met him at the time he was in that film I'd want to lick his armpits. I don't suppose he'd be able to open himself up to that though . . . surrender himself. But he does have that big shapely mouth . . . I guess I'm pretty taken with this actor in the film. But what if the film was life and I could just walk right into it? I don't suppose he'd welcome me, probably give me a hard time. Just like

he gave Blanche . . . I mean Miss Leigh . . . and what would she say if this drag queen poured out of the camera lens and blew up to size right there in front of her. Yes, well, she had to deal with Marlon Brando all day and Laurence Olivier in the evenings . . . I'd say she had enough problems without me on the set . . . I feel like an old hotel. (*Pianist starts the prelude to "Beautiful Dream"*) Beautiful bits of dereliction in need of massive renovation. There's that record again. Have you ever had something stuck in your head for a very long time, like a record playing over and over and every time it stops there's applause, and then it starts all over again . . . (*The music stops and Blanche ticks her hand in the tub*) I like a warm bath. It's the warmth I'm after, not the cleanliness. I don't even mind Stella's cheap, common soap . . . Oh I did it you know, I did lead the grand life . . . chauffeurs, limos. I used to go to clubs and know I was the most attractive person there . . . now I don't go to clubs.

STANLEY: (*pulling in the painted vaudeville curtain behind Blanche*) Ha Ha.

BLANCHE: (*with the music beginning again*) Now, here it comes . . . the record . . . and there's a dark burgundy curtain opening on the stage, and there we are, just me and Vivien . . .

STANLEY: HA HA. Did you hear what I said? HA HA HA. (*He exits*)

BLANCHE: (*singing*)

"*Beautiful Dream*"

Cold wind blowing through the empty rooms
 Windows broken, floors damp and rotten now
 No sound in the silence
 No step in the stillness
 No warmth in the cold air
 Only shadows moving in the half-light
 Empty lockers, lines of empty hooks
 Vacant showers, all deep in dust now
 Just a modest price bought you paradise
 No one wondered would it last
 Running out of stream, now the beautiful dream
 Has passed.

No one greets me as I step inside
 Hot and ready for whatever comes my way
 No warm body waiting for me
 No pulse of a warm heart near me
 No strong arms around me
 No one lying warm and sweet beside me

Thought we'd party 'til the end of time
But it's over, seems so long ago now
Down the long parade, see them slowly fade
As they all leave one by one
Running out of steam, now the beautiful dream
Has gone.

So I fill the tub, rub-a-dub-dub-dub
But I still freeze up inside
'Cuz the water's cold
And the dream has grown old and died
Running out of steam
Now the beautiful dream
Has gone.

(The lights fade, the curtain is pulled offstage, Blanche moves to the tub upstage left and climbs in) Bubbles, bawbles, bumholes . . . (She smells the soap) Municipal, that's the word. Now I'm going under . . . can't hear the noises at all . . . just the odd humps and hoomps and grinds . . . my hair is floating about . . . whooosh . . . up in the air again. (Blanche reappears in the tub wearing the bubble dress as a ukelele strums in the background) Listen . . . there it is again, the record, going around and around and then the applause. Until something replaces that song and that wild applause, I know I'll cling to it. I'll always choose applause over death.

Lights behind the scrim reveal Mitch in fairy costume perched on a ladder and looking down on Blanche in the tub. He is playing the ukelele and singing.

"The Fairy Song"

MITCH: I was sitting on my asteroid, way up in the sky
When I saw you through the window, and I thought I'd
drop by
You were looking sad, bothered and forlorn
Wondering where your days of youth and beauty all had
gone.

Now I don't possess a magic wand, my wings are rather
small
As far as fairies go I'm nothing special at all
But still I've got that something that I know you'll just
adore
That special kind of magic, gonna sweep you off the floor.

CHORUS

I'm a supernatural being, I'm your sweetie-pie
And I've come here from somewhere far, away up in the sky

I'm here to play a song tonight by Rimsky-Korsakov
And if you play your cards right we might even have it off.

Blanche mouths the words as Mitch continues singing.

Now I was sitting in the bathtub, minding my own biz
When this vision came from outer space and now I'm in a tiz
He was gorgeous, he was handsome, he was eager just to please
And he said that he'd come here so me and him could have a
squeeze.

I'm a supernatural being, I'm your sweetie-pie
And I've come here from somewhere far, away up in the sky
I'll take you to my fairy dell, in my fairy car
And hang a sign "Do not disturb" upon the evening star.

*Dance break, Blanche twirls around and motions Mitch to join her.
They dance.*

BLANCHE: (*speaking*) Are you sure that you're a fairy?
I'd imagined they were blonde.
And frankly I'm not leaving 'til I've seen your magic
wand.

MITCH: (*singing*) My wand, alas, I left at home, you'll have to come
on spec
But I promise when we get there you can hold it for a sec.

CHORUS

*Mitch and Blanche exit. Blanche re-enters with Stella and Stanley,
who resets the table box and holds a birthday cake*

STANLEY: (*singing in monotone*) Happy birthday to you, happy
birthday to you, happy birthday . . . Blanche, happy birthday to you.

BLANCHE: What a lovely cake. How many candles are on it?

STELLA: Don't you worry about that right now. Why don't you tell
us one of your funny stories.

BLANCHE: I don't think Mr. Kowalski would be interested in any
of my funny stories.

STANLEY: I've got a funny story, what about this: there's these two
faggots sitting on the sofa, which one is the cocksucker? (*Long pause*)
The one with the feathers coming out of his mouth.

BLANCHE: In the version I heard it was two pollacks.

STANLEY: I am not a pollack. People from Poland are Poles. There
is no such thing as a pollack. And in any case, for your informa-
tion, I am one hundred percent American.

STELLA: Well, now that we're all getting along so well, why don't you blow out the candles, Blanche, and make a wish.

STANLEY: Be careful what you wish for.

Blanche blows out all the candles. They relight. She blows them out again, but again they relight. As she goes to blow them out again, Stanley brushes her aside and sticks the candles upside down in the cake one by one. Blackout. The bathtub is removed and a painting of an oversized naked light bulb is pulled onstage.

STANLEY: Stella! Blanche! Mitch! It's dark. I'm afraid.

STELLA: Let's play a game. *(She blindfolds him and spins him around)*

STANLEY: This is not funny. Stella. Mitch. *(The lights slowly fade up. Stanley is wandering around the stage blindfolded)* Don't panic . . . I feel these original sins burning into me. I feel I'm never safe. There I am at four a.m. with giant monsters spelling out my life in large slimy letters above my body, just far enough above it to heat it up. To make my skin bead in sweat starting just under my hair, above my forehead, on the back of my neck, on my chest and the back of my knees. Don't panic . . . I was born this way. I didn't learn it at theatre school. I was born butch. I'm so queer I don't even have to talk about it. It speaks for itself, it's not funny. Being butch isn't funny . . . don't panic . . . I fall to pieces in the night. I'm just thousands of parts of other people all mashed into one body. I am not an original person. I take all these pieces, snatch them off the floor before they get swept under the bed, and I manufacture myself. When I'm saying I fall to pieces, I'm saying Marlon Brando was not there for me. *(Pianist starts playing softly)* James Dean failed to come through, where was Susan Hayward when I needed her, and Rita Hayworth was nowhere to be found. I fall to pieces at the drop of a hat. Just pick the piece you want and when I pull myself back together again I'll think of you. I'll think of you and what you want me to be. *(He sings all the verses to a song in the style of the Frank Sinatra hit "My Way," while crawling onto the table with the birthday cake and presents on it. As he gets to his knees on top of the table, one hand breaks through a box and comes out covered in blood, the other hand goes into the cake and then into a box filled with feathers. He sings the final stanza kneeling on the cake)* WHERE THE FUCK IS EVERYBODY?! *(Blackout. After a short pause the lights come up on Stella and Stanley)* What time is it?

STELLA: It's four a.m.

STANLEY: Help me make it through the night.

STELLA: Don't I always?

STANLEY: I'll be tired tomorrow, I'll be tired all day.

STELLA: Don't think about tomorrow. (*They embrace and kiss as the lights fade to black. The lights come up upstage right on Mitch stuffing cake into his mouth*)

MITCH: (*talking with his mouth full throughout*) I think it all started to go wrong when I wasn't allowed to be a boy scout. There were more important things to be done. Vacuuming, clearing up at home, putting the garbage out. I used to get so angry putting out the garbage, I'd kick the shit out of the garbage cans in front. I thought about what I was missing. It gave me a repulsion for physical activity. Swimming was the only exception, and even then it took me a long time to learn, as I was afraid of deep water. Then one day I fell in love with a beautiful young man. He came like a messenger from another world bearing a message of simple physical desire. But it was already too late, for me everything about the body was bound up with pain and boredom. I even used to eat fast because I found it so boring. Soon the boy left. He knew better than to spend his life cooking dinners for someone with poor appetite. Then I was alone. I lived in a small room near a fly-over. I stopped going out except to go to the laundry and get groceries. At night I would lie awake on my bed, and imagine I could hear things. (*The sound of a ukelele from offstage. He opens one of the gift boxes on the table and the sound comes again. He reaches into the box and pulls out a ukelele, then sings a song in the style of "The Man I Love," by George and Ira Gershwin. As he sings, tap-dancing Chinese lanterns – the remaining members of the cast in lantern costumes – enter and begin dancing around him. During the song the lanterns begin running into each other and floundering around the stage. The audience begins to hear them mumbling from under their costumes*)

BLANCHE: [Oh, what are we doing? I can't stand it! I want to be in a real play! (*bright light pops on as Stella drops her lantern to the floor*) With real scenery! White telephones, French windows, a beginning, a middle and an end! This is the most confusing show I've ever been in. What's wrong with red plush? What's wrong with a theme and a plot we can all follow? There isn't even a fucking drinks trolley. Agatha Christie was right.

STELLA: Now we all talked about this, and we decided that realism works against us.

BLANCHE: Oh we did, did we?

STELLA, STANLEY AND MITCH: Yes we did!

BLANCHE: But I felt better before, I could cope. All I had to do was learn my lines and not trip over the furniture. It was all so clear.

And here we are romping about in the avant-garde and I don't know what else. I want my mother to come and have a good time. She's seventy-three for chrissake. You know she's expecting me to play Romeo before it's too late. What am I supposed to tell her? That I like being a drag-queen? She couldn't bear it. I know she couldn't. She wants me to be in something realistic, playing a real person with a real job, like on television.

STELLA: You want realism?

BLANCHE: What do you mean?

STELLA: You want realism, you can have it.

BLANCHE: You mean like in a real play?

STELLA: If that's what you want.

BLANCHE: With Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh?

STELLA: You think you can play it?

BLANCHE: I have the shoulders.

STANLEY: I have the pajamas . . . okay, let's go for it. (*Mitch and Stella exit, striking the light bulb curtain. Stanley sweeps the table with his forearm knocking the cake and presents to the floor*) I cleared my place, want me to clear yours? It's just you and me now, Blanche.

BLANCHE: You mean we're alone in here?

STANLEY: Unless you got someone in the bathroom. (*He takes off his pajama top and pulls out a bottle of beer*)

BLANCHE: Please don't get undressed without pulling the curtain.

STANLEY: Oh, this is all I'm gonna undress right now. Feel like a shower? (*He opens the beer and shakes it, then lets it squirt all over the stage, then pours some over his head before drinking it*) You want some?

BLANCHE: No thank you.

STANLEY: (*moving towards her, menacingly*) Sure I can't make you reconsider?

BLANCHE: Keep away from me.

STANLEY: What's the matter, don't you trust me? Afraid I might touch you or something? You should be so lucky. Take a look at yourself in that worn-out party dress from a third-rate thrift store. What queen do you think you are?

BLANCHE: (*trying to get past him*) Oh God.

STANLEY: (*blocking her exit*) I got your number baby.

BLANCHE: Do we have to play this scene?

STANLEY: You said that's what you wanted.

BLANCHE: But I didn't mean it.

STANLEY: You wanted realism.

BLANCHE: Just let me get by you.

STANLEY: Get by me? Sure, go ahead.

BLANCHE: You stand over there.

STANLEY: You got plenty of room, go ahead.

BLANCHE: Not with you there! I've got to get by somehow!

STANLEY: You can get by, there's plenty of room. I won't hurt you. I like you. We're in this together, me and you. We've known that from the start. We're the extremes, the stereotypes. We are as far as we can go. We have no choice, me and you. We're tried it all, haven't we? We've rejected ourselves, not trusted ourselves, mirrored ourselves, and we always come back to ourselves. We're the warriors. We have an agreement . . . there's plenty in this world for both of us. We don't have to give each other up to anyone. You are my special angel.

BLANCHE: You wouldn't talk this way if you were a real man.

STANLEY: No, if I was a real man I'd say, "Come to think of it, you wouldn't be so bad to interfere with."

BLANCHE: And if I were really Blanche I'd say, "Stay back . . . don't come near me another step . . . or I'll . . ."

STANLEY: You'll what?

BLANCHE: Something's gonna happen here. It will.

STANLEY: What are you trying to pull?

BLANCHE: (*pulling off one of her stiletto-heeled shoes*) I warn you . . . don't!

STANLEY: Now what did you do that for?

BLANCHE: So I could twist this heel right in your face.

STANLEY: You'd do that, wouldn't you?

BLANCHE: I would, and I will if you . . .

STANLEY: You want to play dirty? I can play dirty. (*He grabs her arm*) Drop it. I said drop it! Drop the stiletto!

BLANCHE: You think I'm crazy or something?

STANLEY: If you want to be in this play you've got to drop the stiletto.

BLANCHE: If you want to be in this play you've got to make me!

STANLEY: If you want to play a woman, the woman in this play gets raped and goes crazy in the end.

BLANCHE: I don't want to get raped and go crazy. I just wanted to wear a nice frock, and look at the shit they've given me!

STELLA: (*entering with Mitch*) Gimme that shoe! (*Pianist starts "Pushover" as she grabs Stanley and sings to him*)

"Pushover"

STELLA: All the girls think you're fine, they even call you Romeo,
You've got 'em, yeah you've got 'em runnin' to and fro,
oh yes you have.
But I don't want a one-night thrill, I want a love that's for
real,
And I can tell by your lies, yours is not the lasting kind.

You took me for a pushover, you thought I was a pushover,
I'm not a pushover, you thought that you could change my
mind.

Mitch sings to Blanche.

MITCH: So you told all the boys that were gonna take me out
You even, yeah you even had the nerve to make a bet, oh
yes you did,
That I, I would give in, all of my love you would win,
But you haven't, you haven't won it yet.

You took me for a pushover, you thought I was a pushover,
I'm not a pushover, you thought my love was easy to get.

MITCH AND STELLA: Your tempting lips, your wavy hair,
Your pretty eyes with that come hither stare,
It makes me weak, I start to bend and then I
stop and think again,
No, no, no don't let yourself go.
I wanna spoil your reputation, I want true love,
not an imitation,
And I'm hip, to every word in your conver-
sation.
You took me for a pushover, I'm not a pushover,
You can't push me over, you thought I was a
pushover . . .

STELLA: (*to the audience*) Did you figure it out yet? Who's who,

what's what, who gets what, where the toaster is plugged in? Did you get what you wanted?

STANLEY: Hey Stella, I just figured it out. Wasn't Blanche blonde?

STELLA: That's right. And come to think of it, it was suspicious she didn't have a southern accent.

STANLEY: I knew it all along. The person we've been referring to as your sister is an imposter.

STELLA: Incredible! There's no flies on you Stanley.

STANLEY: What did you say?

STELLA: I said there's no disguising you, Stanley. You're one hundred percent.

STANLEY: I thought you said something else . . . something about flies.

STELLA: Well, come to think of it, there is something in that area I've been meaning to open up a little.

STANLEY: So, you figured it out.

STELLA: Yeah, I figured it out.

STANLEY: And in those shoes. Un-fuckin'-believable! You know what this means?

STELLA: No, what?

STANLEY: This means that you are the only thing we can rely on, because you are at least who you seem to be.

STELLA: Well Stanley, there's something I've been meaning to tell you . . . *(She sings)*

*You took me for a pushover (All join in) I'm not a pushover
You can't push me over, you thought I was a pushover.
DON'T PUSH!*

Encore.

"I Love My Art"

*I've been mad about the stage since childhood,
When I roamed the sage and wildwood,
The attraction for the dazzling lights,
Caused me troublesome nights
Now I realize my one ambition
I can make a full and frank admission,
I am madly in love with my art, I love to play my part,*

*I love the theatre, I love it better than all my life, and just
because*

*It's so entrancing, the song and dancing, to the music of
applause,*

*I love the stage and all about it, it simply goes right to my
heart,*

I love the glamour, I love the drama,

I love I love I love my art

I love the glamour, I love the drama

I love I love I love my art

THE END