



## UNEASY PIECES

by Rose Scollard

**September 12 - 29**

*First Runner Up - 1985 Alberta Culture Playwriting Competition*

**"BEDTIME STORIES YOUR MOTHER NEVER TOLD YOU"**

Three bizarre plays with three bizarre twists that take you into the Twilight Zone of male/female relationships. A lady of the night who men *never* forget; a wife who would give *anything* to be rid of her husband; and a young fiancée who *really* knows how to bring out the beast inside of her - all in this season's witty and hair-raising opener.

**WORLD PREMIERE**

# Nosy Parkers

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*Nosy Parkers* premiered with Theatre Network at the Edmonton Fringe Festival in August of 1985. The play was directed by Sherry Wells and opened Theatre Network's season with two other plays under the overall title *Uneasy Pieces*, Sept 11 - 29, 1985.

Cast and creative team:

Harry Miller	William Davidson
Quincy Ross	Judith Haynes
Director	Sherry Wells
Sets and lighting	Daniel Van Heyst
Costumes	Heather Redfern

## **Characters**

QUINCY ROSS *a prostitute*

HARRY MILLER *her client*

*[When the play opens the stage is in darkness. HARRY MILLER is talking on the phone]*

HARRY:

Yeah, That's what I said. Buy Intercomp ... I know, I know. It's in the basement. But it's bottoming out, believe me... No! Tomorrow will be too late. Buy now ... So it closes in an hour. Buy all you can before then. If I didn't take chances where would I be?...Right. So long then, Max. *[Lights come up as HARRY is talking, revealing a penthouse bedroom. The design is clean, abstract, with a lot of chrome and glass. HARRY is in bed with the phone in his hand. Sitting on the other side of the bed drawing a stocking up her calf is QUINCEY ROSS. She is slender, classy, moneyed looking. Her clothes, which she dons in a slow meticulous manner, are stylish and perfectly made. HARRY hangs up]* Sorry about that.

QUINCEY:

Is it always like that, business at high tide? *[Fastens the stocking in place]*

HARRY:

Always. Some of my best deals are made in the heat of the moment, so to speak. I'm going to make a killing on that little phone call.

QUINCEY:

I should charge you extra. *[Reaches for second stocking draped over head board. HARRY pulls her down playfully]*

HARRY:

You should charge extra anyway. *[Phone rings and he picks it up]* Miller here...Bill!... No, you're not interrupting anything... *[Smiling, QUINCEY rises with stocking and sits in a chair to put it on]* Petromart? Sell short. ...I know, I know, I hate selling short too, but my gut says the bottom's dropping out .... I know it's going up, but not for long. You know me, Bill. I trust my own judgement. Have you ever known me to be wrong?...Well that was one time, yes. But how many times like that?... Just sell it, okay? ... Oh, I'll be in before closing. In about half an hour. You can hold the fort till I get there? *[HARRY hangs up and looks at QUINCEY speculatively.]* Like I was saying, you don't charge enough. *[QUINCEY looks at self in dresser mirror and smooths her slip over her hips]* I mean it. I know class when I see it. You could get away with forty percent more and no one would bat an eye. And that's on your own. With a manager you could double, triple your take.

QUINCEY:

You offering?

HARRY:

*[Laughing]* Not exactly my line of work. But...*[Looks intrigued]* I don't know. It's an interesting idea.

QUINCEY:

Fancy yourself as a pimp, do you? *[Looks around for her dress, spots it on the couch and heads for it]*

HARRY:

*[Immediately cool]* What kind of word is that? That is not a classy word.

QUINCEY:

You think this is a classy business? *[Puts dress on and picks up belt from behind a chair]*

HARRY:

It can be, with the right approach. Hell, I don't have to tell you. The right clothes. Discreet demure manner. Limited, hand-picked clientele. But you drag in the nasty references and you're gonna spoil it for yourself. The customer wants to feel clever, that he's doing a risqué thing, that he's part of the glitter world, pampered, indulged. But why am I telling you? You know all about it.

QUINCEY:

I guess I do. *[She opens a sleek briefcase on the to reveal a mirror and cosmetics. She sits down before it and adjusts her makeup]*

HARRY:

You want my advice, stick with the winners. While you still can. Keep away from the old farts. Amberson? The guy that introduced us? Not your type. Too old. Go for the ones on the make. They'll pay for class. They pay for class in their cars and their clothes and they'll pay for it in a woman.

QUINCEY:

That your advice for the day?

HARRY:

And it's all free, too. *[Grabs a robe]* I can't help myself, you know. Everyone I meet, every situation, it flashes on the screen as a business deal. With you, I see a gold mine. You should milk it for all it's worth. And now, I'm going to shoo you along.

QUINCEY:

Back to the grindstone. *[Packs away her makeup]*

HARRY:

*[While he talks, HARRY rounds up his clothes which like QUINCEY'S are scattered round the room and puts them on. Unlike QUINCEY, he doesn't put them on in any particular order but as he finds them.]* You bet. Who was it said wasting time is a sort of personal homicide? Well, That's my motto. I have all my time allocated. That's another hint you could take from me. Keep a tight handle on your time. For one thing, never spend more than four percent of your time on the opposite sex. It's a hard and fast rule with me.

QUINCEY:

That could be detrimental in my line of work.

HARRY:

You've got a quick mind, I like that. We'll have to get together again. *[Looks at watch]*

QUINCEY:

Used up the four percent, have I. *[Makes a few adjustments to her hair with a small brush]*

HARRY:

Actually we're fifteen minutes into tomorrow's time. See? I told you you were good. How'd you get into this racket, anyway? Don't tell me. A nice upper class lady, time on her hands. Bored with the club. Bored with the junior league. Bored with junior. A *Belle de Jour*. Am I right? *[Spots a shoe under the bed]*

QUINCEY:

*[Pops brush in case and snaps it shut]* Actually, I was raped.

HARRY:

*[Immediately defensive, backs off a little]* I suppose you're going to give me some kind of sob story.

QUINCEY:

I'm not going to give you any kind of story. We're out of time, remember? *[Looks about for her shoes]*

HARRY:

*[Feeling provoked, can't let it go]* You know what I wonder? What I wonder is when you women are gonna face reality. *[Pulling out shoe, angrily forces it on his foot. Realizes he doesn't have his sock on]*

QUINCEY:

Reality. *[Studied, as if hearing the word for the first time. Finds a shoe under the table and picks it up]*

HARRY:

*[Working up a head of steam]* You know what makes the world turn? Drive. Male drive. Rape is an essential part of that drive. You get rid of rape and you get rid of free enterprise. *[Finds a sock balled up and angrily flaps it straight]*

QUINCEY:

*[Looking for her other shoe]* Interesting theory.

HARRY:

Theory nothing. All this liberation crap hides the real issue. You take the animal drive out of men and the world will fall apart. You'll get along better in the world if you realize that. The thing to do is to turn the situation to your own advantage and profit. Handle yourself the right way, think things through, you can carve out a pretty comfortable niche for yourself.

QUINCEY:

So you would say rape is justifiable? *[Finds other shoe and slips it on]*

HARRY:

Not justifiable, inevitable.

QUINCEY:

You could see yourself as a rapist then?

HARRY:

*[Warily]* Under the right circumstances, who knows? All this glass and chrome, it's just a veneer. Under the surface you'll find a pretty basic guy.

QUINCEY:

Primal man.

HARRY:

Something like that. I like the ladies. No one likes them more. But they have to keep their place. What I mean is, women, most women are exhibitionists. They go around displaying what they have, they can't expect you not to make a grab for it. Am I right?

Ninety percent of rapes, the women are asking for it. In the first place, they put them self in the situation it can happen. They wander the streets after hours. They go home from a party with a stranger. A woman who goes off with a stranger, she's signaling she wants it, right?

QUINCEY:

A lot of rapes are by a man the woman knows.

HARRY:

Then she's probably a teaser. She teases him. He takes it up to a point. Then bam! [*He smacks one hand off the other*]

QUINCEY:

You have strong views on the subject.

HARRY:

Lady, I have strong views on everything. It's the only way to be. Anyway, what I'm saying is, rape does not have to be a fate worse than death.

QUINCEY:

Oh, I agree. My rape was a great relief. Liberating, even.

HARRY:

Liberating. What's that supposed to mean?

QUINCEY:

What I said. It was a release.

HARRY:

You mean you enjoyed it?

QUINCEY:

No, it was more...I suppose you'd have a hard time believing that there can be forces as strong as your precious male drive, but there *are* — forces that are just as inevitable, just as irresistible....

HARRY:

Such as?

QUINCEY:

You don't want to know about it.

HARRY:

Any force that's stronger than male drive, I want to know about it.

QUINCEY:

Maybe another time. Like you said, we're way into tomorrow's four percent.

HARRY: HARRY:

So tomorrow I'll abstain.

QUINCEY:

We're well into another hour of *my* time.

HARRY:

Ah, I see. The old come-on. [*She makes to leave*] Wait, I didn't say I wouldn't. [*Fumbles around in bedside drawer*] Here you go. A crisp new hundred.

QUINCEY:

A hundred and fifty.

HARRY:

What?

QUINCEY:

It was your idea I should charge more.

HARRY:

You got nerve, I like that. A hundred and forty. [*Fumbles in drawer again*] I said *forty* percent, remember?

QUINCEY:

A hundred and forty it is.

HARRY:

[*Moving to bar and mixing drinks*] So tell me, then, why was this rape of yours so liberating.

QUINCEY:

Just remember, you asked for it.

HARRY:

Asked for it — I *paid* for it.

QUINCEY:

Before I begin, I would like you to understand something.

HARRY:

What's that?

QUINCEY:

My definition of evil.

HARRY:

Hey! I don't go for that moralizing stuff. In my book, there's desire and there's necessity. And that's all there is.

QUINCEY:

A predictable answer. Most people don't figure it out, you know. The true nature of evil.

HARRY: HARRY:

Look, we stick the other guy for three reasons — fun, profit and revenge. I don't see that as evil. Those are drives. Basic natural drives.

QUINCEY:

You think it's that simple? Evil isn't something that stands back for you to look at and decide about. It hangs about in the shadows, ready to grab you from behind and work you over.

HARRY:

*[Enlightened]* Ah. We're having a little personification here, are we? Evil as rapist? In other words, evil is a man.

QUINCEY:

Nothing so simple. I see evil more as a beast. An all powerful, many-fingered beast, reaching into every part of your being, insinuating, persuading, corrupting.

HARRY:

Look. Don't go all miasmal on me, okay?

QUINCEY:

This is a sentient beast we're talking about. It knows you're a candidate even before you do and it likes you to know it's there to recognize it for what is it.

HARRY:

I can't stand a woman pulling the blues. My mother was like that. Guilt, tears, gloom. My father got so he couldn't be in the house.

QUINCEY:

Resistance is sweet to it. You ward off one tentacle, another comes slipping in, probing, taunting corrupting.

HARRY:

All right! I get the picture. Evil the many fingered beast.

QUINCEY:

It started about two and a half years ago. I went to a party. I was going to a lot of parties then. My marriage had broken up and I was in a bit of a tail spin. Well, this party. It was like any other, a bit wilder perhaps than some. Lots of booze, lots of hustle, a little coke. Anyway, some time in the small hours I passed out. I woke up next morning in a strange bed.

HARRY:

Some of my sweetest moments have been waking up in strange beds.

QUINCEY:

There was nothing sweet about this. I felt terrible. Drained of life. Sucked dry. And there was an unrelenting pain in my head.

HARRY:

A hangover.

QUINCEY:

This was not like any hangover I'd ever had. It felt like some creature had burrowed into my brain and was squeezing from the inside.

HARRY:

Fanciful.

QUINCEY:

I suppose I'm getting ahead of myself. But I remember thinking even then that it was like having someone's hand inside my head, fumbling around, pinching and tormenting me.

HARRY:

*[Grunts impatiently]*

QUINCEY:

After four or five days it subsided But it never went away entirely. There would be quiet times, but it would flare up the minute I had a drink or got upset about anything. I learned to live with it. I stopped drinking, ate regularly, kept work to regular hours and it was bearable. Just. Then, one day, I was in the bathroom cleaning my teeth. That's when I first saw it.

HARRY:

Saw what?

QUINCEY:

I didn't see all of it.

HARRY:

Come on. What did you see?

QUINCEY:

Did you notice the point where you moved from being victim to being the victimizer?

HARRY:

I've never been a victim

QUINCEY:

Well I have. Most women, I expect, see themselves as victims at one time or another.

HARRY:

You're a tease, you know that.

QUINCEY:

It isn't teasing. It's just that I want you to understand what it's like to move from a state of innocence to one of guilt.

HARRY:

Guilt isn't in my vocabulary. *[Beat]* You were in the bathroom.

QUINCEY:

Yes. I was in the bathroom. In front of the mirror. I was just standing there brushing my teeth when it came down out of my nostril. Flip! Down and up again. I thought I was imagining it, it was so fast. I tipped my head back and looked. *[Looks over to herself in the mirror]*

HARRY:

And what was it?

QUINCEY:

Nothing. There was nothing there.

HARRY:

Well of course! What could be there?

QUINCEY:

That's what I told myself. It was early morning and I was still half asleep... Two days later I saw it again. This time it was slower. It whipped down and dangled there for a few seconds before it retreated. I went to pieces, screamed at myself for ten seconds straight. When I stopped it had gone and I couldn't see it any sign of it.

HARRY:

Ah... What was it like?

QUINCEY:

Long. Black and snaky. Like a tentacle.

HARRY:

You expect me to believe this?

QUINCEY:

After that, I saw it all the time. It stayed out longer and longer, not all of it, just the arm dangling there, exploring my face. At night, in the dark, I could feel it moving about my lips.

HARRY:

Didn't you try to get rid of it?

QUINCEY:

Of course. Every time it appeared I made a grab for it. But it was always too fast for me. I went to the doctor, but it was cunning, didn't show itself at all. He gave me a thorough examination but he couldn't find a thing.

HARRY:

You went to the wrong kind of doctor. Look. Let me tell you about women.

QUINCEY:

If you must.

HARRY:

You see, women, they're all the same way. They have this unreasoning feat of invasion. My wife? Incredibly worked up about it. Ants, mice, birds, anything smaller than a jackrabbit is bent on getting inside her. She's convinced!. We go camping, she's a great sport. Chops the wood, puts up the tent single-handed. And tough! I've seen her shoo bears off with a frying pan. But come bed time all those irrational fears take over. Won't get into bed until she's tamped every orifice. You can understand why I've never found camping too exciting.

QUINCEY:

I don't see what this has to do with me.

HARRY:

Same thing, isn't it? The primal fear of invasion. A good shrink would have straightened you out in five sessions.

QUINCEY:

This was real! I could see the damned thing, couldn't I? Dangling there, taunting me. It got more and more brazen. I couldn't go out. The idea that someone might see the thing ....

HARRY:

But wouldn't you *want* them to see it? To prove it was there.

QUINCEY:

I didn't need proof. It was there, all right. *[She has turned fully to the mirror and HARRY is no longer able to see her face. This makes him slightly uneasy]* I put up with it for some time. Then one day I was determined to get rid of it. I got a pair of tweezers, extra large, more like tongs really, and waited in front of the mirror. I waited for a long time. Waited and watched. Even after it came out I waited. It groped around for some minutes. I thought I was going to be sick. But I stayed quite still waiting for it to lose its wariness. Finally when it seemed to be off its guard, I clamped the tweezers over the end of it. *[She stops as if blocked]*

HARRY:

And?... Well?... What happened, dammit!

QUINCEY:

*[Breathing noticeably as if the memory is choking her.]* I yanked as hard as I could. The pain!... But I didn't lose my grip. It was my only chance to get rid of it. I was ready for resistance, but *such* resistance! No matter how I pulled, I couldn't dislodge it. It was as if I had hold of an octopus whose tentacles reached into every part of my brain. The pain was unspeakable. Finally, I lost the battle. I let go. The pain didn't stop for a long time. It was punishing me, you see.

HARRY:

This is a disgusting story. *[He massages the bridge of his nose]*

QUINCEY:

You insisted on hearing it. *[Pulls cigarettes out of her purse and puts one in her mouth. Offers the pack to HARRY but he waves them away.]*

HARRY:

I thought you were going to tell me about your rape.

QUINCEY:

I'm getting to it. I just want you to understand how driven I was.

HARRY:

So I understand. Go on.

QUINCEY:

I became more and more of a recluse. I stayed home as much as I could. Going out only when the thing was quiet. And then. . . *[Pause]*

I'd gone to dinner with someone, someone I was very attracted to. He was handsome, intelligent. It was a wonderful evening. We both seemed bent on romance — music, soft lights, heady wine, the waiter hovering in the background. We were deep in conversation, our heads almost touching across the table. Suddenly he backed off as though I'd slapped him. I knew what had happened. I tried to pretend that everything was normal, tried to continue the conversation but the mood couldn't be repaired. The next day I took sick leave from work and virtually became a hermit.

HARRY:

You're trying to tell me that this guy actually saw it?

QUINCEY:

Yes.

HARRY:

But what did he say?

QUINCEY:

What could he say? "Pardon me, there's something dangling from your left nostril."?

HARRY:

*[Blowing his nose]* There was nothing there. This is a hysterical condition we're talking about. Probably sexually oriented. You just needed to get laid.

QUINCEY:

Well, not too long afterwards, I was. *[Gets up restlessly and moves about the room, again getting out of Harry's line of vision]*

HARRY:

*[Turns to get her back into view]* Oh yeah. But I thought you weren't leaving the house.

QUINCEY:

It was the first time I'd been out in days. The thing in my head, it seemed to me it had got bigger in there. That there wasn't enough room for it and whatever else was in my skull. I was driven out by the pain. Just walking the streets.

HARRY:

I'll bet.

QUINCEY:

It was about two in the morning. I was crossing a parking lot when this brute comes at me like a commando raid, hits me across the chin and knocks me flat. The next thing I know, I'm stretched out on the gravel with my underwear ripped away and the creep breathing all over me. The streetlight picked out his face. He was a revolting specimen, about twenty-five, heavy set, bad skin. I thought it would never be over. Then, as he was panting and heaving over me, I saw a shadow flip over his face and just sort of vanish into his head. A many legged shadow, it seemed to me. But I didn't have time to think about it. He hit me, kicked me once or twice, took my wallet and left. I was in bad shape for quite a few days, so I didn't notice.

HARRY:

Notice what?

QUINCEY:

That it wasn't there any more.

HARRY:

The thing in your head was gone.

QUINCEY:

Completely. *[Almost to herself]* At least I thought so at the time.

HARRY:

*[He has been listening to her story with a bemused expression, rubbing his nose occasionally, and his temples]* Man. You have one hell of a weird imagination.

QUINCEY:

Headache? Shall I open a window *[He nods]* Aspirin?

HARRY:

There are some in the bathroom cabinet. Maybe you could freshen my drink, too. *[She fusses about solicitously, finding the aspirin, and slipping a footstool under his feet. He responds to the fussing, obviously enjoying himself]* So that was then you took up hooking, after he raped you?

QUINCEY:

Oh no. I was still much too proper. Besides, at that point I didn't realize... Well, it wasn't obvious to me, that I would have to. I thought the thing was gone altogether.

HARRY:

And it wasn't?

QUINCEY:

I was so sure. You see, they found him.

HARRY:

The rapist? You reported it then.

QUINCEY:

They found him the next morning. He'd been dead for about four hours. He still had my wallet on him.

HARRY:

Dead!

QUINCEY:

It must have happened just after he raped me. He was only two blocks away from the parking lot. In an alley. He'd put up a terrible struggle, by all the signs. Cans knocked over. Windows smashed.

HARRY:

He was murdered?

QUINCEY:

They didn't think his wounds were man-made.

HARRY:

What do you mean!

QUINCEY:

His head... It was all eaten away.

HARRY:

No way! Tell me another one!

QUINCEY:

From the inside.

HARRY:

Hey, wait a minute. Hold it. I remember that guy. A cowboy, right?

QUINCEY:

He was wearing cowboy boots.

HARRY:

Sure. It was in the papers. They said he died of exposure and the dogs got at him.

QUINCEY:

That's what they said.

HARRY:

You want me to believe, you really expect me to believe that this thing in your head, this mental illusion, went over into his head and...ate it?

QUINCEY:

I don't want you to believe anything.

HARRY:

*[Rubbing at his nose]* Well, it's a good story. You should try Twilight Zone. They take that sort of thing.

QUINCEY:

I was normal for about two months. Went back to work. Even considered dating again. Then I realized, the signs were unmistakable, that I hadn't got rid of my problem.

HARRY:

The creature came back?

QUINCEY:

I don't think it was the same one. I think that it had somehow reproduced in there.

HARRY:

Hmm. *[He is losing interest. He is more concerned with his nose.]*

QUINCEY:

That was when I realized my dilemma. The thing was growing in there, I could feel it. It would only be a matter of time before it started showing itself and the whole recluse thing would happen again. Not to mention the pain.

HARRY:

You should have walked the streets. Maybe someone would have raped you again.

QUINCEY:

I did. But there's not as much of that sort of thing going on as you might think. I soon realized that rape wasn't an efficient way to deal with my problem. I needed something more regular.

HARRY:

What was I saying? Regular sex. There's nothing like it for mental health.

QUINCEY:

*[Looks in mirror]* I was a long time in making up my mind. By the time I did, it had grown. Started showing itself like the other one. *[Harry looks in mirror too. His expression is uneasy]*

HARRY:

You're really sticking to that crazy idea of yours, aren't you? A thing in your head that can only be relieved by sex. It's too far fetched. *[Hand steals up to bridge of nose]*

QUINCEY:

I think passion attracts it. The creature passes over in the moment of orgasm.

HARRY:

But if you have an orgasm too...

QUINCEY:

It doesn't happen too often in this business.

HARRY:

But if you do?

QUINCEY:

Then it stays with me. I have to try again.

HARRY:

Well, I don't have to worry, do I? Judging from your performances earlier on. She smiles wanly and turns away. He regards her uncertainly for a moment and then grins. That's some story, you know that? I mean, just think if it were true.

QUINCEY:

It is true, Harry.

HARRY:

No, really. Think of all those poor unsuspecting guys just out for a night of fun.

QUINCEY:

It isn't easy you know. Most of the men who hire me, I know they don't deserve it. But it's not really my fault, is it? I was raised to have liberal views. Live easy on the land, try not to impinge too much on others. But now I'm in a position where I must impinge to survive.

HARRY:

We've all got to impinge.

QUINCEY:

I look back sometimes and wonder about myself. How innocent I was. Just work hard, they told me. Keep yourself presentable and it will all come to you. They didn't tell me about the downside. About the evil sitting there, tongue lolling, tail slapping, panting happily, waiting for you.... And the dreams, they didn't tell me about those either. Do you dream?

HARRY:

Nothing memorable. The other night, though., I . . .

QUINCEY:

Mine are only too memorable. I wish I could pluck them from my brain. Eating things, that's the worst. Feeling the flesh tear, giving way to your teeth, the blood.

HARRY:

You're getting miasmal again.

QUINCEY:

Every man I see now, it's in terms of victims. No matter how classy, how impressive he's just... I mean take you. You're really quite nice. There's no good reason to condemn you. You just happen to be in the path of my .....necessity. *[HARRY shows some signs of impatience]* Well, I suppose I'd better go. I do have another appointment. Is there anything I can do for you before... before I leave?

HARRY:

Maybe you could get me a damp cloth. And close the window.

QUINCEY:

Sure.

HARRY:

Christ! This really is settling in... *[Phone rings]* Miller here... Oh Bill... You did? Good. You'll see. By ten o'clock tomorrow we'll be justified... No. I won't be coming in... I know I said, but I just don't feel up to it... Oh I'm a bit under the weather, headache, chills, you know. Flu probably... Yeah it's not like me at all... Sure....Yeah....Will do. Tomorrow then. See ya.

*[He hangs up, rubbing nose. Tilting head back, he feels the sides of his nose with both hands. Gets up from chair and goes to dresser mirror, peers in trying to look up nostril. Starts suddenly and looks more closely. Rummages in drawer and finds a little shaving mirror. Looks in the mirror then turns it over to the magnifying side. He seems to be catching sight of something. Blows nose vigorously and looks in Kleenex. Then in mirror again]*

HARRY

I could swear there's something up there. Talk about the power of suggestion. *[Laughs, but keeps an eye on himself in the mirror]* She's putting me on, of course, pulling my leg. Aghh! *[Looks in horror at his image]* Aghh! Grahh! *[Tilting his head back, he looks, eyes rolling at his reflection and then grabs the small mirror again for a closer look.]* I can't be seeing this. It's not possible. Nah, it was nothing. Nothing! *[Settles back]* I mean apart from everything else, it wouldn't be moral., right? Passing it on like that? It wouldn't be fair. I mean, my *God*, it wouldn't be fair. *[Looks again]* No. I can definitely see something. Dammit! Why me!

QUINCEY:

*[Re-enters the room with a damp cloth]* Did you say something?

HARRY:

No.

QUINCEY:

*[Putting the cloth gently on his brow]* I thought I heard you calling out.

HARRY:

You thought wrong.

QUINCEY:

You okay?

HARRY:

Perfectly okay. The aspirin are starting to kick in.

QUINCEY:

I thought my story might have upset you

HARRY:

Of course not.

QUINCEY:

Sometimes guys don't take it as calmly as you.

HARRY:

They get a little worked up, do they?

QUINCEY:

You wouldn't believe it. It's like I raped them. They feel victimized, invaded.

HARRY:

Invaded! Are you kidding?

QUINCEY:

You didn't feel that way then?

HARRY:

I told you. Invasion's strictly a female fear.

QUINCEY:

Well, I'm glad you're all right. I should go now.

HARRY:

Yeah, I'll be in touch.

QUINCEY:

Actually, I do feel a bit like a rapist.

HARRY:

Will you get out of here!

QUINCEY:

Yeah sure. Bye Harry.

*[QUINCEY exits. HARRY sinks into his chair, rubbing nose moodily.]*

HARRY:

Invasion. Shit! What an idea.

*[Looks surreptitiously up nose with mirror as light fades]*

HARRY:

What an idea!

**THE END**

# The Swapper

by Rose Scollard



# THE SWAPPER

by Rose Scollard

## *The Swapper*

premiered with Theatre Network Sept 11 - 29, 1985  
launching the theatre's season with two other plays  
under the title *Uneasy Pieces*.

### Cast and creative team:

Miriam	Judith Haynes
Thelma	Christine MacInnis
Gladys	Valerie Pearson
Director	Stephen Heatley
Sets and lighting	Daniel Van Heyst
Costumes	Heather Redfern

## Characters

Miriam - a hairdresser

Thelma - her friend and customer

Gladys - an elderly customer

*[Miriam's apartment on the ground floor of a high rise. She is running a small beauty salon out of her home.]*

*Three women are in the room, MIRIAM the hairdresser and two customers. GLADYS, an elderly woman with a gullible expression, is under the dryer. THELMA, thirtyish with a shy but somewhat sulky manner, is in curlers. MIRIAM is fastening a strip of cotton batting around the edge of the curlers where they meet Thelma's face and neck. There is the sound of children squabbling beyond.]*

MIRIAM:

I'm telling you, Thelma, divorce is not something to be taken lightly. It needs to be planned. *[Children crescendo to the point where they cannot be ignored. MIRIAM crosses to hallway and shouts.]* Cool it, you guys, or I'm coming in there! *[Sound is smothered but it persists]* I mean it! *[Now there is complete silence and she returns to Thelma.]* Like I was saying, divorce should be planned as carefully as any other aspect of your life. It's crazy how many people just wait till the explosion and then spend all their time and energy picking up the pieces. Do you want that to happen to you? *[THELMA, who winces every time the cotton is poked under a curler tries to shake her head.]* Don't move! *[Finishing with the cotton she fills a small bottle with fluid from a larger bottle.]* Take me. Like a fool, I stuck around, trying to keep it all together. Then Denny up and leaves me with three mouths to feed and no skills to get the wherewithal. I tell you, I'd sure do it different the second time around. *[She is about to apply the liquid to Thelma's scalp when she glances over at Gladys.]* Oh my God! Mrs. DeVilkin. Her brains must be scrambled eggs by now. Come on Gladys, let's see how you turned out. *[Hauling the old lady from under the dryer, she positions her in front of the mirror and begins rapidly divesting her head of curlers, pulling it this way and that. GLADYS smiles expectantly into the mirror.]* What I mean, Thelma, is you've got to train yourself to be single.

THELMA:

You're forgetting about Ferney, Miriam. Ferney's not going to stand around cheering me on while I make plans to leave.

MIRIAM:

Does he have to know? It should be easy enough to get some skills on the quiet.

THELMA:

Give it a rest Miriam, This lecture of yours: "Divorce, preparation for" it just doesn't apply to me.

*[The curlers out, MIRIAM now attacks Gladys's head with a comb. Though her head is pulled about roughly the old lady's smile only broadens.]*

MIRIAM:

Violence is the best part of the treatment, eh Gladys? A few typing lessons, book keeping. There are dozens of courses you can take.

THELMA:

It's just not that easy. Ferney's opposed to me going out at night

MIRIAM:

I'm talking about self improvement, not a night on the town.

THELMA:

That's what I mean, though. Ferney gets upset if I try to upgrade myself. I think he feels threatened.

MIRIAM:

Typing's not biochemistry, for God's sake. It's like knitting or washing floors. How could he object?

THELMA:

He just would.

MIRIAM:

So what's he going to do? Break your fingers?

THELMA:

*[Offended]* Ferney never touches me.

MIRIAM:

He doesn't have to. You do the job for him. *[She fluffs up Gladys's hair. Looks at it cheerfully.]* You've got to assert yourself, Thelma. Face the problem head on.

THELMA:

I can't. It's just not in me.

MIRIAM:

I'm not saying you have to deal with it all at once. Just one thing at a time. The typing lessons, now. You could take them in the daytime. He'd never know. I'll even give you the money for it. Or come down here and learn hairdressing. Earn yourself a little money. We're only six floors apart. You could slip down here in the afternoon and he wouldn't be any the wiser.

THELMA:

I know how it was before; the time I took that night course? He wouldn't say a word. Not a damn word. Just go on slurping his beer and looking at the box. I'd get to the elevator, to the car sometimes. I'd even have the key in the ignition. Then something would happen. My stomach would close in on itself like a fist and I'd end up spending the evening in my room.

MIRIAM:

You know, it's not entirely Ferney's fault.

THELMA:

What do you mean?

MIRIAM:

I've seen the same thing in my kids. Georgie and Shirl, they're little demons right? Never satisfied unless they're testing their limits. And mine. But Joey. He's entirely different. Never steps outside the boundaries, even when he knows there's not a chance in the world he'll get caught. And I take advantage, right? I know I shouldn't but sometimes I can't help myself. He's the one I unload on. He's the one gets all the work to do because I know he'll do it. I put it all onto poor old Joey. Maybe you and Ferney are a little like that.

THELMA:

I don't know what you're talking about.

MIRIAM:

Sure you do.

THELMA:

Ferney's a creep!

MIRIAM:

I couldn't agree more. But it doesn't take away from the fact that a large part of the problem is you. You won't take responsibility for yourself.

THELMA:

I'm non-assertive. A lot of people are like that.

MIRIAM:

But Thelma, you not only don't assert yourself, you retreat, shedding options as you go. Bit by bit, you hand over all your power to Ferney. He may not even want it, but when it's offered like that, it's only natural to take it.

THELMA:

He wants it, all right.

MIRIAM:

Well it's a criminal act against yourself to keep giving it to him.

THELMA:

I have to give it to him.

MIRIAM:

If he beat you, I could understand it. Some women you wouldn't believe the way they're knocked about.

THELMA:

You just don't understand.

MIRIAM:

Maybe not. I'm tempted to think it's laziness. At the very least avoidance of hassle. But let me tell you about hassle. You take a step back from it and you find it's moved with you, and you have to take another step back. *[Finishing Gladys's comb-out, she hold up a hand mirror at the back of her head.]* There now isn't that dazzling? Oh my God! *[Snatches up Gladys's hand]* Honestly, Gladys, you oughta take better care of your hands. *[Turns hand over and studies it]* Everyone should take care of their hands. That's how you tell the *real* rich from the *nouveau* rich, didn't you know that? The way their hands are kept. *[Fetches bowl of soapy water]* Now you just soak your pinkies in here while I work on Thelma. It'll be worth every penny. You'll see! *[She returns to Thelma and picking up the small squeeze bottle starts anointing the rollers on her head.]* Isn't she something? I don't know where she gets it from but she's rich as Rockefeller, and more than willing to part with it. Now then, let's get this done with.

THELMA:

I hate this part.

MIRIAM:

Come on now, there's nothing to it. Just a little perm solution.

THELMA:

It has a disgusting smell. Like death.

MIRIAM:

Death! Give me a break!

THELMA:

Someone told me that's what happens with a permanent. The solution makes the hair die a little so that it shrivels slightly. The longer you leave it on the more the hair dies and the frizzier it gets.

*[Upon hearing this, GLADYS picks up the hand mirror and examines her own head of frizz.*

*MIRIAM grabs it away from her and shoves her hands back in the soaking solution. ]*

MIRIAM:

Bull! It's simply a chemical process that makes the hair curl.

THELMA:

It still smells like death.

MIRIAM:

*[Works away on the rollers, anointing each carefully,] Sit still! You'd think I was dousing you with sulphuric acid or something. To get back to what I was saying, you should take it slowly. Some people are for walking out, get a separation, get it over with fast. But when you have no resources, no security, what can you do? Better to take your time about it. Spread the process over three, four years and train yourself to do something, so you can get along without the guy financially. Then, if you plan it right, four years down the road you're a free agent. *[A wail from off stage cuts her off in mid-squeeze. She hurries out.]* Kids!*

GLADYS:

*She's full of it! *[Taking her fingers out of soak, she fishes in her purse and brings out a package of filter tips. The gullible old lady look is gone.]**

THELMA:

*[Concerned with her dripping rollers] Hmm?*

GLADYS:

*[Snapping off the cork tip she lights up.]* If you want a divorce, you want it now, not four years down the road.

THELMA:

I don't think Miriam likes you to smoke in here? With all the chemicals...

GLADYS:

I'll take my chances. I had three husbands you know. And I didn't put up with any of them a minute more than I had to.

THELMA:

What did you do, divorce them?

GLADYS:

Killed 'em

THELMA:

Sure you did.

GLADYS:

Faster, cheaper, and much more satisfying. *[Inhales deeply and arches a wicked brow at Thelma.]* You don't believe me. But it's true. Popped off every one of them. And no one can ever prove it, either.

*[Resting her elbow on the counter, GLADYS makes a slight sweeping motion with her cigarette, ridiculously elegant, and exhales slowly at her reflection. She is wearing a very good woolen sleeveless dress, but looks slovenly. A bra strap has slipped down. Catching Thelma staring at it she hoists it back into place.]*

THELMA:

You don't look as if you could finish off a fly, let alone three husbands. How did you do it?

GLADYS:

*[With leering emphasis]* Why? Are you interested?

THELMA:

*[Shrinking back]* I don't know what you mean.

GLADYS:

Sure you do. And what's more, you wish you could ...

*[MIRIAM returns, picks up Gladys's hand and goes to work on it with a menacing looking tool.]*

THELMA:

Hey! Wait a minute!

MIRIAM:

What?, Oh that stuff takes about twenty minutes to set.

THELMA:

But you only did half my head!

MIRIAM:

Oh right! Which side did I do? The left? No the right. *[Picking up the bottle she works rapidly, occasionally splashing it on Thelma's face. GLADYS reads a magazine but every so often she glances over the top of the page and catches Thelma's eye.]*

THELMA:

I know what she means all right!

MIRIAM:

Did you say something?

THELMA:

No. *[The eye contact goes on]*

MIRIAM:

There, that's done. Now just sit patiently for about twenty minutes. *[Another cry from beyond]*  
I'm really going to fix their wagons this time! *[Hurries out]*

GLADYS:

*[Leaning over in a conspiratorial manner]* How much?

THELMA:

*[Uneasily]* What?

GLADYS:

How much is it worth to you? *[THELMA doesn't answer]* Ten years. Give me ten years and I'll do it for you.

THELMA:

*[In spite of herself]* Ten years! Miriam's way is only four. Five at the outside.

GLADYS:

No, no. I mean ten years of your life. Ten years and he dies right away. Today if you like.

THELMA:

*[Laughing, her anxiety relieved by the humour of it]* I'm sorry. It's just so preposterous. Ferney facing off with a seventy-year-old hit lady!

GLADYS:

It's a deal then.

THELMA:

Why not. The women in our family all live well into their eighties. I can afford ten years. *[Laughs and is then serious]* If only it were true. To be rid of Ferney with no fuss. Ten years would be a small price.

*[MIRIAM returns.]*

MIRIAM:

Well, Gladys. Let's get at those hands.

GLADYS:

*[Gathering coat and purse]* Another time. I gotta go.

MIRIAM:

How come?

GLADYS:

Got something to do. *[Vague, but excited.]* You know, an appointment. A date.

MIRIAM:

A date? With a fella?

GLADYS:

*[Winking at Thelma]* Yeah. With a fella.

MIRIAM:

*[Helping Gladys on with her coat]* Boy, Gladys. You really know how to reel 'em in, don'tcha?

THELMA:

To die at seventy instead of eighty. I could handle that.

GLADYS:

What do I owe you? Forty? *[Hands over money]* Yeah well, gotta rush. See ya.

MIRIAM:

Come in some time this week. I'll do those hands for you.

GLADYS:

Yeah. I wouldn't want anyone thinking I was *nouveau* rich. *[She is about to go but returns and leans over Thelma.]* Painless?

THELMA:

*[Lost in her own thoughts]* Hmm?

GLADYS:

Do you want it painless or do you want him to know he's going?

THELMA:

*[Laughing, getting into the spirit of it]* Let the jerk suffer. *[Shakes her head in disbelief as GLADYS exits]*

MIRIAM:

What was that all about?

THELMA:

Just a private joke.

MIRIAM:

She's a real kidder, that Gladys. Don't you love her? All those fossilized gestures of chic. Straight out of the thirties.

THELMA:

She's strange with it, though. I wouldn't want to be at her mercy.

MIRIAM:

Gladys? She's a pussy cat.

THELMA:

You've known her a long time?

MIRIAM:

She's been in once or twice. A harmless, silly old girl easily parted from her money.

THELMA:

When you were putting the solution on my hair, she kept catching my eye. Her eyes would come up over her magazine and bore right into me

MIRIAM:

A trick of light.

THELMA:

I kept getting these breathtaking flashes of what life would be like without Ferney.

MIRIAM:

Wishful thinking.

THELMA:

As if I could just snap my fingers and he'd disappear.

MIRIAM:

Face it, Thelma. There isn't any easy way out.

THELMA:

What time is it?

MIRIAM:

Relax, will you? Come on I have to rinse this stuff out.

THELMA

Really, though. If Ferney gets home and I'm not there...

MIRIAM:

You're in the building aren't you? You can phone up if you're late. You know what's difficult for you? To relax and enjoy. Most women just love to sit and have themselves worked over.

THELMA:

How can I relax when I know he might be up there, strutting around, waiting for his supper.

MIRIAM:

Look, you just can't hurry a perm. It takes the time it takes. You're only going to be a few minutes late. You can phone up and tell him.

THELMA:

No!

MIRIAM:

I give up. Just come over here and let me get on with it. *[Leads her to chair by sink and pushes her into it in a reclining position.]* Think pleasant thoughts. Think about what you're going to do with the forty dollars.

THELMA:

What forty dollars. Oh. You mean the forty dollars for the perm. That's yours.

MIRIAM:

Uh uh. This one's on the house.

THELMA:

You have three mouths to feed, remember? Really Miriam, I don't want it.

MIRIAM:

*[Getting a fresh towel she wraps it around Thelma's neck.]* Use it to take that first step. A few lessons. A new dress. Just remember, you've got time to make it happen. You have youth on your side.

THELMA:

Youth!

MIRIAM:

You have most of your thirties ahead of you.

THELMA

Yeah. And Ferney's using them up fast.

MIRIAM:

Forget about Ferney for once. *[There is flash and bump outside the balcony window.]* What was that!

THELMA:

*[Sitting up]* What?

MIRIAM:

Something fell into the yard. It was like a comet or a meteor or something. Didn't you see it?

THELMA:

No.

MIRIAM:

*[Goes to window and looks out]* Oh my God!...*[Blocks Thelma's view]* Don't look!

THELMA:

Why?... What is it?... It's Ferney isn't it! *[Pushes by to look]*

*[Light goes down and there is a swirl of shadows and nightmare sounds. Lights come up on the same room. MIRIAM is talking on the phone. THELMA is sleeping on the couch.]*

MIRIAM:

I tell you Kate, it was horrible! Unspeakable! . . . Yes, she's with me. She's taking it pretty bad. I was up with her most of the night. I finally got her off about five thirty. I mean, to see your husband smouldering there like barbecued meat. Try keeping that out of your dreams . . . Of course . . . I know! Much better off. When she comes to her senses, she's going to see that. Ferney was a creep. All the same, it was a rough way to go. He came flying off that balcony lit up like a torch . . . Yes, the police have been coming and going all night. And the fire department . . . . Cooking fat. He was heating a pan of fat on the stove. There was no sign of what he was planning to cook.

THELMA:

*[Opens her eyes]* He never cooked.

MIRIAM:

Listen, I have to go, Kate. She's awake. . . . Yeah, I will. Bye.

THELMA

Ferney never cooked. He never even made coffee.

MIRIAM:

But with you not being there. Perhaps he was hungry enough to fix himself something.

THELMA:

He wouldn't have cooked. *[Still lying flat, looking out into space she pushes back a curl from her forehead.]* He would have gone out or something.

MIRIAM:

How are you feeling?

THELMA

*[Sits up slowly, gingerly. She is a mess, haggard disheveled, pale and drawn. She has a deep and hacking cough.]* Well, the shock of his death seems to be subsiding a little.

MIRIAM:

That's encouraging.

THELMA:

But I feel none of the jubilation I expected.

MIRIAM:

Jubilance! For pity's sake, Thelma! It's been less than twenty-four hours. It was a horrible, horrible death!

THELMA:

If only I didn't feel so tired. *[Picks up hand mirror and pulls at hair. Some of it comes away in her hand.]* My hair is so brittle. *[Coughs]*

MIRIAM:

That's a bad cough.

THELMA:

*[Clutching at chest.]* If I breathe in too suddenly it catches me. *[Smooths away a little line at the corner of her mouth.]* I look so old.

MIRIAM:

It's the shock.

THELMA:

What time is it?

MIRIAM:

Early afternoon. Two. Two-thirty. I'm not sure.

THELMA

When I saw him there, all scorched and blackened, not like a real body at all, something went out of me.

MIRIAM:

Don't talk about it, now. You should try to rest.

THELMA:

Something small and clean. It went out of me.

*[MIRIAM makes soothing noises and tries to stroke her shoulder but THELMA pulls away and looks in mirror anxiously.]*

MIRIAM:

You must get hold of yourself.

THELMA

My shoulders, look how thick they are. They're closer to my neck. Do they seem that way to you?

MIRIAM:

I'll make some coffee. Better yet, why don't I go out and get something stronger. Some scotch. Or rye. What would you like? *[Thelma says nothing. Miriam puts on her coat.]* Rye then. I won't be long. If the kids give you any trouble just throw something at them. *[Exits]*

*[THELMA sits peering at herself for a minute or two, pushing at her hair and coughing. She gets up and moves around as though stiff and in pain. There is a sudden squall of sound — Children squabbling and the previous nightmare sounds all intermingled — then silence as a skinny, tough-looking woman in her thirties, with blazing, frizzy red hair, makes a provocative entrance. There is something familiar about her.]*

THELMA:

I'm afraid Miriam isn't talking customers today. She...

GLADYS:

I was hoping she'd finish my nails for me.

THELMA:

*[Looking uncertainly as recognition dawns.]* Gladys?

GLADYS:

My hair went back to its original colour, but the perm is still with me. Apparently the powers of darkness are no match for Miriam.

*[GLADYS sits, crosses her legs, revealing a lot of skinny thigh. Fishing in her purse she pulls out her cigarettes and lights up. THELMA's cough is triggered by the smoke. She sits down heavily, aware of the pain in her chest.]*

THELMA:

I don't understand. You have all Gladys's mannerisms. But your face. You look so young!

GLADYS:

That was the idea wasn't it?

THELMA:

You're still onto that are you? About getting ten years of my life. *[GLADYS nods. Thelma is suddenly cautious, Uncertain of this conversation.]* Well all right then, suppose we say you did get ten of my years.

GLADYS:

Oh I did. Make no mistake about it.

THELMA:

I still don't see how you can look so young. You don't look a day over thirty five.

GLADYS:

*[Humorous and sinister]* Ohhhh! You thought I was going to get your eighties didn't you.

THELMA:

Something like that.

GLADYS:

We don't just add on the years we bargain for. Who wants to take the risks just to get to be an octogenarian, wheezing and stooping and crumbling at the joints. It has to be a little more worth it than that. *[She waits for Thelma's reaction.]* You still don't get it, do you? How old are you?

THELMA:

Thirty-three.

GLADYS:

There you are. Thirty-three to forty-three, that's what I got *[Pauses]* Did you look in the mirror today?

THELMA:

Only when I had to. This last twenty-four hours has really taken it out of me. I feel like I've aged... *[Stops, suddenly apprehensive]*

GLADYS:

You got it! Your body is now forty-three years old.

THELMA

I don't believe you.

GLADYS:

Think about it. The slack skin. The sagging stomach. The weakness in the legs.

THELMA:

My chest is sore too.

GLADYS:

*[Apologetically pats her hand.]* I smoke too much.

THELMA:

I didn't think I'd be this run down in my forties.

GLADYS:

If you'd been living the last ten years yourself, you probably wouldn't.

THELMA:

*[Suddenly clueing in]* You mean what you do affects me? How I'm going to feel? *[Coughs again]*

GLADYS:

You should see a doctor about that. I smoke two packs a day. *[Puffs contentedly]* You gave up ten years. I wouldn't be surprised if you lose another five, ten maybe, by how I live them. I may as well tell you now, I like a good time.

THELMA

I've missed my thirties?

GLADYS:

'Fraid so.

THELMA:

But those were my best years. You didn't say I had to give up my *best* years. That wasn't part of the bargain.

GLADYS:

*[Suddenly cool]* If you wanted different years taken you should have specified. It's irreversible now.

THELMA

But I didn't really even agree to it. I was just going along with the joke.

GLADYS:

You don't mind him being dead, though. Admit it.

THELMA:

But I wouldn't have chosen it. Never!

GLADYS:

You must have chosen. At some level you chose, or I wouldn't have been able to do it.

*[MIRIAM returns with a brown bag under her arm.]*

MIRIAM:

Well now, we can just fix ourselves a little drink. *[Takes bottle out of bag and then spots Gladys.]*  
Oh sorry, I didn't see you there. I'm Miriam.

GLADYS:

*[Grins and puffs on her cigarette.]* I'm a friend of Thelma's.

MIRIAM:

We were just going to have a drink. *[Gets out glasses and ginger ale and mixes drinks]*

THELMA:

I saw him at the exact moment the life went out of him.

MIRIAM:

Thelma! Take it easy.

THELMA:

He was burnt beyond recognition, but he caught my eye. Was that when I became . . .  
unsalvageable?

GLADYS:

You know it wasn't.

THELMA:

Before then.

GLADYS:

Yes.

THELMA:

When I chose.

*[MIRIAM gives THELMA her drink. She takes it but holds it absentmindedly, lost in her thoughts.]*

GLADYS:

*[Taking her drink, holds up glass to Thelma.]* Drink up. It's time you started to live a little.

THELMA

*[Bitterly]* Live!

GLADYS:

You said it. No matter how bad you think the years to come will be, you can be sure that what comes after will be a hell of a lot worse.

*[Lights reddened and fade]*

**THE END**

# The Hero

by Rose Scollard



MUSEUM OF THE ARTS  
"THE HERO" BY R. SCOLLARD  
THEATRE WORKS '25  
E. VAN HEYST

# THE HERO

by Rose Scollard

## *The Hero*

premiered with Theatre Network Sept 11 - 29, 1985  
launching the theatre's season with two other plays  
under the title *Uneasy Pieces*.

I

### Cast and creative team:

Malory	William Davidson
Nicola	Judith Haynes
Ida	Valerie Pearson
Director	Stephen Heatley
Sets and lighting	Daniel Van Heyst
Costumes	Heather Redfern

## Characters

NICOLA                    *a young woman, thirtyish*  
IDA CUDGEL             *Nicola's cleaning lady*  
MALORY                 *Nicola's prospective fiancé*

*[A penthouse suite, decorated all in white. There are sliding windows to a balcony at which white draperies billow. Except for a few cleaning items, a vacuum cleaner, a duster, etc., and Ida's coat hat and purse, there is no clutter and the room has an ethereal, almost ceremonial look.*

*The curtain rises on IDA, a doughty, energetic woman of middle age. She is standing on the sideboard adjusting a huge white banner she has just hung. On the banner is a linear drawing of the "mistress of the animals", a tall goddess-like figure with outstretched arms. In each hand of this figure is clutched a wild beast: a stag on the right, a panther on the left. On the wall under the banner a dagger is mounted. Its long blade gleams murderously.]*

IDA:

There now, let's hope you stay put. *[Her work completed, she gets down from the sideboard onto a chair and from there to the floor. She regards her handiwork.]* Not exactly love's young dream, are you? *[Humming to herself, she replaces items on the sideboard: a white runner, two candlesticks, two long stemmed glasses and an empty decanter. When she's finished, the sideboard looks like an altar. The phone rings and she answers it.]* Nicola Martin's residence, Ida Cudgel speaking.... No. But she should be back any minute.... Oh, it's you Malory.... Yes it has been a while.... Oh, pretty good, considering the ailments I've come through. What with my back and my bladder.... Bladder.... distended.... She didn't say she was expecting you. But she's fixed the place up special.... Ten minutes?.... I'll tell her.... Arnold? I'm divorcing the lunatic. He's lived off me long enough.... Yes.... Yes, I will. For sure. Bye now. *[Hangs up phone.]*

*[She continues humming and tidying and putters off into the kitchen. After a moment or two there is the sound of someone at the door and NICOLA MARTIN enters. She is young slender and corporate looking. She places the bag she is carrying on the table and extracts a bottle of red wine.]*

NICOLA:

Ida, I'm back.

IDA:

Oh, hi Nicky. I've done everything you said.

NICOLA:

*[Opening wine.]* It looks great. You got the banner hung, too. Good.

IDA:

I know you said to wait, but I ran out of things to do.

NICOLA:

It's fine. Looks wonderful, doesn't it?

IDA:

I dunno. I wouldn't want it presiding over my romantic evening.

NICOLA:

Well, this isn't a romantic evening, Ida. So set your eager little heart at rest.

IDA:

If you say so.

NICOLA:

What does that mean?

IDA:

Malory called.

NICOLA:

What did he want?

IDA:

Just to say he'd be here in ten minutes.

NICOLA:

Rats!

IDA:

You weren't expecting him?

NICOLA:

No.

IDA:

But all this fuss. I thought it was for him.

NICOLA:

Well it isn't. Look, I think that will be all for this week, Ida. I left your envelope on the table.

IDA:

*[Gathering coat and purse.]* Okay. I'll just put away the cleaning things.

NICOLA:

I'll take care of it.

IDA:

But what about Malory?

NICOLA:

I'll take care of that too. *[Picks up vacuum and looks pointedly and humourously at Ida.]* There's really no need for you to hang about. *[Exits.]*

IDA:

*[Puts on coat.]* Sheesh! Romance. Spare me the thrilling details. Give me a free-for-all with some beersoaked Palooza, any day. *[Exits.]*

*[NICOLA enters in a robe. While she is making a few minor adjustments to the room, her attention is caught by something on the balcony. She looks out for a minute or two and we get the feeling she is in rapport with something outside. She then closes the curtains and exits again. A minute later we hear the shower running. IDA re-enters.]*

IDA:

Nicky! I forgot my envelope! *[Hears shower, shrugs, collects envelope. She is about to leave when a thump on the balcony gets her attention.]* What was that? *[A loud whirring sound like wings beating and some indeterminate muttering noises.]* Pigeons, I bet. Bloody pests. All right you little bastard. *[She whips the curtains open, sees what is outside, closes them with a yelp and staggers back clutching at her breast.]* Holy.....! That just about goitered me. *[She thinks a minute, pulls herself together and, braced for confrontation, opens curtains purposefully. She shakes a duster at whatever is without.]* Here, you, beat it! Scram! Get outa there! I said get outa there, you scabby lump! *[She stops flapping and looks through the window.]* The tits on that thing! Come on now, buggger off. *Off.* Aghh! Snarl at me will you? I'll fix you. *[Exits and returns with broom. There is a furious battle off, in which she is defeated. She goes to sideboard and pours herself some wine.]* Don't think you're going to stay there. Nicola won't put up with you. You can count on it. She's not going to have any great feathery blot on her perfect landscape. *[Takes a long swig and nods self-righteously, hesitates and goes back to the window peering thoughtfully.]* I wonder. Nah. It couldn't be. I mean, look at the size of it. I never hear of one that big. But what else could it be? Anyway, even if it is, it's not mine. Mine's just a little guy. *[Pauses.]* I'd better do it, though. Go through the motions. Just to be safe.

*[Locating her purse, she pulls out a mask, a sharp-faced, furry animal like a weasel or a fox. She puts the mask on and weaves slowly towards the window making gestures of propitiation with her hands and stumbling through a rough dance-like figure as she approaches. She is muttering something under her breath, scarcely audible, incantation like. She finishes, looks out at the creature, then takes off her mask.]*

IDA:

Well, you're not mine. I knew you weren't. No, you've got to be someone else's. But whose? Look at you -- scaly legs, giant wings, tits like a stripper. You couldn't be Nicky's! Things are getting out of hand you. *[Closes curtain as doorbell rings again.]* I'm coming. Keep your pants on.

*[She lets MALORY in, a handsome, swashbuckling type, loose limbed, beautifully dressed, holding flowers.]*

MALORY:

It's great to see you, Ida. Hey the place looks...unusual.

IDA:

Nicola gets the credit.

MALORY:

Hmm. It looks so different. Ceremonial, you know what I mean?

IDA:

She did change things round a bit.

MALORY:

The room seems to float, the way she's done it.

IDA:

I dunno. I like things more down to earth myself.

MALORY:

I like it. Do you think she's guessed what I'm up to?

IDA:

I dunno. What are you up to?

MALORY:

*[As if on cue takes a small box from his pocket, pulls out a sparkling ring and turns it in the light.]* What do you think?

IDA:

*[Takes it from him, admiringly.]* When I can see again, I'll tell you.

MALORY:

*[Looking around.]* Candles, wine. Do you think she knows?

IDA:

She did say this evening was special.

MALORY:

Isn't that just like her?

*[Flutter of sound from the balcony.]*

MALORY:

What was that?

IDA:

Nothing. You were saying?

MALORY:

Well I've been planning this for weeks, trying to gauge exactly the right moment and there she was planning right along with me. *[Looks at banner.]* This is new.

IDA:

I just finished hanging it.

MALORY:

Fierce looking lady, isn't she. Like a goddess, or something. I feel as if I'm bringing flowers to a shrine. It's close in here. We should open a window.

IDA:

*[Blocks his way and takes flowers from him.]* Here we should get these in water. There's a vase in the kitchen. Why don't you go and get it. *[He goes out and she peers anxiously through the curtains.]* Oh go away, will you? *[MALORY returns with the vase filled with water and she thrusts the flowers back at him.]* Good. Now why don't you arrange them.

MALORY:

Me?

IDA:

It's your offering.

MALORY:

Yes. Offering is the word. Have you ever noticed how other men are with her, fawning and panting around her as though they don't quite measure up? But Nicky and I -- we're on a different plane altogether... Well, you know how it is between us.

IDA:

I knew long before I met you. Mr. Perfect. Your reputation preceded you.

MALORY:

*[Laughing, delighted at the appraisal, but determined to tease IDA.]* So did Nicky's. I heard what a man-eater she was.

IDA:

Nicky? Get away with you!

MALORY:

But it's true! I tell you, Ida, I still can't open a closet around here without half expecting to find....

IDA:

*[Glances nervously at window.]* What?

MALORY:

The bleaching bones of former lovers. *[Laughs and sets flowers at the altar.]* Uh, were you finishing up here?

IDA:

Oh, I'm all finished. *[There is an awkward silence. Having left herself with no excuse to stay IDA cast her eyes about the room looking for something to cling to. ]* As a matter of fact, it's been a long day. I was hoping for a drink before I left. *[Sits down and looks at him expectantly.]*

MALORY:

Oh, well let me get it for you. What do you like? Sherry?

IDA:

Rye. A double, straight up.

MALORY:

One double rye coming up. It *is* stuffy in here. I'm going to open the window.

IDA:

*[Leaping to her feet and blocking him.]* No.

MALORY:

Why not?

IDA:

It's, uh, the sun. It's blinding at this time of day.

*[Fluttering and muttering sounds from without. The sound seems to have taken on a slightly mellifluous quality. But there is a decidedly ominous note to it.]*

MALORY:

*[What the hell is that? Opens curtains and falls back.]* Holy.... Will you look at that thing!

IDA:

I wouldn't get too close. It can get pretty snappish. *[Goes to liquor cabinet and finishes making her drink. She also pours one for Malory.]*

MALORY:

Intriguing looking beast..

IDA:

Gives me the creeps.

MALORY:

No, no. There's something noble about it. Expressive. *[IDA hands him his drink and then flaps at the creature outside.]* Hey, don't do that. It'll fly away.

IDA:

That's the idea.

MALORY:

But we want it to stay till Nicky's here. I'm sure she's never seen anything like this.

IDA:

I wouldn't bet on it.

MALORY:

What do you think it is?

IDA:

Beats me.

MALORY:

That long auburn hair. The feet like burnished brass. *[Suddenly alert.]* Did you see that?

IDA:

*[Alarmed.]* No! What!

MALORY:

The way it's moving its lips, you'd swear it's trying to speak.

IDA:

Oh, God!

MALORY:

It's singing. I can almost make out the words.

IDA:

Come away from there. You don't want to listen to that.

MALORY:

I must listen to it. I somehow feel a lot of things will clear up. Things between Nicola and me

IDA:

I thought everything was perfect.

MALORY:

There are always unresolved questions. Even in the best of relationships.

*[NICOLA enters. She is dressed in white, belted at the waist in gold, and her hair is piled up and casually pinned to her crown. She looks a little put out.]*

NICOLA:

Malory, I wasn't expecting you. Still here Ida?

IDA:

*[Darkly.]* I thought I should stay, under the circumstance.

MALORY:

Nicky, wait till you see this! *[Drags her to window.]*

NICOLA:

Oh, yes.

MALORY:

You knew it was there?

NICOLA:

Yes. It belongs to me.

MALORY:

What?

IDA:

Nicky, Are you out of your mind? Malory, Nicky and I need to talk a minute.

MALORY:

Sure.

IDA:

*[Pulling NICOLA to the other side of the room.]* Come over here.

*[MALORY whistles under his breath and looks out at creature nonchalantly but he is very much interested in what the women are saying and gradually, unconsciously, eases closer to them.]*

IDA:

You haven't been wearing your guise.

NICOLA:

Ida, I'm way beyond that.

IDA:

But Nicky, you have to do it. Every morning, every day, if you want to keep things like that out of your life.

NICOLA:

I don't want to keep her out of my life.

IDA:

Five minutes a day, that's all it takes to banish these things. A five minute orison every morning. Or at night, if you prefer. Except I don't like thinking of things like that at night.

NICOLA:

I stopped all that nonsense months ago.

IDA:

But why? No, don't tell me. I don't want to know why. Nicky, listen to me. Get rid of that thing, right now, and get on with your romantic evening.

NICOLA:

This is *not* a romantic evening.

IDA:

Oh yeah? Well tell him that. He's got a ring.

NICOLA:

A ring!

IDA:

With a rock the size of Gibraltar. You don't think he's bent on romance?

NICOLA:

Well he can just get unbent. That's not what all this is about.

MALORY:

What's what about?

NICOLA:

There's no reason why you shouldn't know. That creature out there is my emanation.

*[IDA moans slightly.]*

MALORY:

Your....emanation.

NICOLA:

I suppose you find that word offensive.

MALORY:

No. well....no. I find it unexpected....You don't hear it used much.

IDA:

Not in polite society, you don't.

MALORY:

So that creature out there is....yours.

NICOLA:

Yes. She is.

MALORY:

I, uh, suppose this makes me sound a bit unworldly, but I've never actually seen one before, an emanation, I mean.

IDA:

It's not something a man would expect to see.

MALORY:

Other women I've known were very prim about this sort of thing.

NICOLA:

*[Opening the curtains wider and straightening them.]* It's a typical attitude.

IDA:

It's the right attitude. A man shouldn't be burdened with such things.

MALORY:

But all the secrecy. As though there's something distasteful about it.

IDA:

You don't think *that's* distasteful?

MALORY:

I won't say it doesn't have its ominous aspects.

NICOLA:

You seem ambivalent about her.

MALORY:

I find it....well, the face....it's so....

NICOLA:

*[Teasing.]* Beguiling?

MALORY:

Well yes....in a menacing sort of way.

NICOLA:

Menacing!

MALORY:

And the breasts....beautiful. But I find them more sepulchral than erotic.

NICOLA:

Sepulchral! Malory!

MALORY:

Okay, you're right. I am ambivalent. Attracted and repelled at the same time.

NICOLA:

You've been taught to be repelled without really knowing what it is. It's your conditioning.

MALORY:

I suppose it is. As you say, I don't know much about it.

NICOLA:

It's simple. An emanation is the embodiment of the things that a woman casts out of her personality. The things that society expects you to repress. You're supposed to banish them in a certain ritualistic manner.

MALORY:

Yes. The orison. I have heard of that. And you wear something like a mask when you do it.

NICOLA:

A guise. It is like a mask.

MALORY:

I had no idea emanations were so substantial.

IDA:

They aren't, if you do what you're supposed to.

NICOLA:

She wasn't always like that. Until a short time ago she was a shabby lurking sort of thing. The feathers were lacklustre, the breasts all shrivelled up. All those years I did my orisons, and she would fade away. But I always felt bad afterwards. I'd look in the mirror and I'd see the same lacklustre quality in me. Then...I let her stay once for a few days. I was busy, had a disorganized week, just didn't do anything on a regular basis. It was amazing how she filled out.

MALORY:

Bigger, you mean?

NICOLA:

Just filled out. And, this is what was crazy, I seemed to be filled out too. Seemed to be more *there*. After that I went longer and longer between orisons, and I felt better and better.

MALORY:

I think you've left it a little too long this time.

NICOLA:

It was the voice that won me over in the end. It told me things. Made sense of all my new feelings.

IDA:

But that's what they do. They play on your sympathy. Mine is always whimpering and wanting to snuggle up. You just have to steel yourself. I feel bad afterwards too.

NICOLA:

What I'm telling you is I've stopped doing them altogether.

IDA:

But that's madness! You know what could happen!

NICOLA:

I want it to happen.

MALORY:

What could happen.

IDA:

Look, Nicky. Why don't you just sit down for a minute. Malory will get you a drink and....

NICOLA:

Come on, Ida.

IDA:

I've heard stories.

MALORY:

Like what?

IDA:

There was this woman once.

NICOLA:

Old wives' tales.

IDA:

She was like you. It went very badly for her.

MALORY:

Listen, Nicky. I think Ida's right. We should sit calmly and talk this over.

NICOLA:

There's nothing to talk over.

MALORY:

But don't I have a say in this?

NICOLA:

To be blunt about it, no. It's a private ceremony.

MALORY:

I came here with a ceremony of my own in mind.

NICOLA:

I heard. It's just that it's a very important event for me. You should leave if you can't handle it.

MALORY:

If I knew what it was I'm supposed to handle.

NICOLA:

It's very simple. *[There is a sound, slightly musical and eerie.]*

MALORY:

There is it, the singing again.

NICOLA:

Yes. It's nearly time.

MALORY:

I'd love to know what she's singing about.

NICOLA:

Oh, it's an old story restored to its true form.

MALORY:

You know what she's singing about? Well tell me.

NICOLA:

If you're sure.

MALORY:

I'm sure. Go ahead.

*[Lights dim and a baleful golden glow suffuses everything. There is a melodic background sound, unobtrusive, like waved lapping or pines whispering. NICOLA listens for a moment or two, then begins to recite in a subdued but clear voice.]*

NICOLA:

The song is of a woman, a goddess I think,  
wise and beautiful, with a terrible aspect.  
It was difficult to look on her, so awesome was her beauty.  
Men found it damaging and looked aside  
when they came before her.

For many years she languished, lonely and unloved,  
ruling her kingdom by the sea.

Then at last one came to her,  
a warrior and a hero.  
was bathing,  
wrestled with her in the laughing surf,  
matched her strides along the damp shore.

Side by side they swam together.  
Side by side they rested  
on the sea worn rocks.

Warmed by the sensuous sun,  
her body stirred to this hero among men.

All unsuspecting, languid with longing,  
Gladdened by his power she set aside her strength.  
Then in a manner all unforeseen to her,  
Treacheroously, infamously her lover did use her,  
"I do this for you," he murmured.  
"In the name of our love."  
And when he arose she was chained to the rock.

MALORY:

That's plain wrong. I know that story and it didn't happen that way.

IDA:

I knew you wouldn't like it.

MALORY:

In the first place it was a girl, not a goddess. A princess, perhaps, but without all those powers.  
And as for chaining her to the rock, that can't be the way you heard it.

NICOLA:

Through the long days he kept her there.  
Through the wave-beaten nights he did not leave her.  
I will not forsake you," he said,  
I will be ever beside you,  
I will teach you what it means to be beloved by me."

Worn down at last by the waves and his pleading  
She gave up her bright godhead  
Relinquished what he asked.  
At long last she pleased him,  
Slender and frail, clinging to the cold rock,  
She moved him.

"Let me go now," she pleaded.

"There is one more ordeal," he told her.  
"One last thing."

The dawn broke, fetid and unwholesome.  
The hero looked to the east  
anxiously peering.

Then what he awaited stirred in the waters,  
Broke up dangerously through the oily sea,  
All he had cast out in once emanation.  
Raging and fearsome she towered above him  
Dimming the light and spoiling the sea.  
The hero drew his sword on his misshapen foe.  
In the grey half-light they struggled for mastery.  
So bloody was their battle the sun would not witness it.

Then weak and worn, dangerously discouraged,  
Brought by his adversary almost to the death,  
Once last mustering of his strength made the hero,  
One last great lunging blow he dealt to his assailant,  
Groaning she fell back, he saw her life blood oozing.  
Mortally dispatched she sank into the foam.

The sun came out then, shone on the hero,  
Stringent and clear, the water anointed him.  
Assuaged, he turned, ready for his trophy,  
Turned as in a dream to where his beloved,  
Free at last of her pride, her wisdom, and her vigour,  
Gleamed like a prize on the black rock.

*[The singing stops. There is a moment's silence as the lights return to normal. NICKY comes out of the rather ethereal mode she was in while translating the song and turns to MALORY.]*

NICOLA:

Well?

MALORY:

As you said, it's an old tale. But the way I heard it the maiden was rescued from the monster, not severed from it. You're saying the monster was part of her?

NICOLA:

A part the hero found repellant and cut away.

MALORY:

I prefer the version I heard.

NICOLA:

I didn't expect you to understand. The message is just too unsettling, if you're a man.

MALORY:

Message! Look, it's simple. You've allowed things to get out of balance and it's given you a distorted view of the situation. All you have to do is get your guise, or whatever you call it, and send that thing packing.

NICOLA:

That's not white what I had in mind.

MALORY:

Well perhaps you'll tell me what you do have in mind.

NICOLA:

*[Softly.]* Incorporation.

IDA:

You can't be serious!

MALORY:

You're going to merge with that thing?

NICOLA:

*[Lights candle.]* At first, when you stop saying the orisons, the emanation doesn't have all that much appeal. Then, as time passes, it becomes more...significant. And of course the more significant it becomes, the more indispensable it becomes. Eventually there comes a point when you don't want to be separate from all that power.

MALORY:

And you've reached that point.

IDA:

I've heard of women who tried this and the results were not pleasant.

NICOLA:

I'd rather be whole than pleasant.

MALORY:

I want to know what happens when you merge with that thing.

IDA:

She'll be different.

NICOLA:

Not different. Stronger.

MALORY:

*[Takes her arm but she pulls away.]* You know, Nicky, assertiveness can be very interesting in a woman. In you it's very appealing, but you only want to take it so far. Beyond a certain point...

NICKY:

Beyond your comfort level you mean.

MALORY:

I'm simply trying to express my feelings about this, Nicola!

NICOLA:

I know what you're trying to express. That age-old desire to have women in their proper place, clinging and virginal and....muzzled!

MALORY:

That's ridiculous.

NICOLA:

You don't want a woman, you want some kind of clinging....damsel.

MALORY:

*[Laughing it off.]* Nicky.

NICOLA:

A damsel in distress, with all the repellent things in her nature neatly cut away, waiting to be rescued and carried off and protected for ever after.

MALORY:

Nonsense!

NICOLA:

Well personally, I'm not much interested in happy ever after. I want to take what's mine and I mean to do just that.

MALORY:

I don't think so.

NICOLA:

*[Looking out at the creature.]* She's mine! All the power, the insight...even the ugliness -- I have a right to it.

MALORY:

No!

NICOLA:

Why not.

MALORY:

Because this is the way it's always been.

NICOLA:

Not always. There was a time. ...

IDA:

*[Looking out.]* It's coming down off the railing!...It's going to come in here!

NICOLA:

I want it in here.

MALORY:

Well I don't! *[There is a great fluttering and flapping without, mingled with muttering sounds that galvanize him to action. He opens cupboards and drawers. ]* Where is it?...Where do you keep it? Your guise, Nicola!

IDA:

Yes Nicky, your guise. You must use it.

*[NICOLA looking on in an astonished, almost amused manner doesn't answer. At last MALORY finds what he is looking for in sideboard drawer. It is a medusa like mask with lolling tongue and snaky hair. A terrible visage.]*

MALORY:

Oh God!

NICOLA:

Guises aren't supposed to be pretty.

MALORY:

You'd better use it. Do what has to be done. *[Holds out mask to her.]*

IDA:

He's right, Nicky.

NICOLA:

You're asking me to banish the source of my vitality.

MALORY:

That hideous bundle of feathers?

NICOLA:

So now it's hideous.

*[Dismissing him NICOLA turns to window and stretches out her arms in a votive manner. ]*

MALORY:

I'm not going to let you do this.

*[NICOLA Moves to sideboard and pours wine into a goblet.]*

MALORY:

We have our powers too. Our rituals.

IDA:

It's true, Nicky. Listen to him.

MALORY:

We're not called upon to use them often. But they're always there, no matter how deeply submerged.

*[NICOLA raises the goblet to the Mistress of the Animals and takes a sip. Then she turns slowly to the balcony.]*

IDA:

Nicky! You don't see the danger!

*[Still holding the mask MALORY takes down the dagger from the wall. ]*

MALORY:

Yes. Our rituals. It was all in the song wasn't it. The other women I've known were very conventional, lovely women, but conventional There could be no opportunity with them, I see it now.

NICOLA:

*[Distracted.]* Opportunity for what?

MALORY:

For testing. For reaching beyond the ordinary. I always felt when I saw you with other men, there was something missing between you. Something puny in them keeping them from being heroes in your eyes.

NICOLA:

"Hero" is hardly the term I'd use.

MALORY:

I always thought I was on a different plane to them. But now I see I haven't measured up, either.

NICOLA:

Measuring up isn't an issue with me.

MALORY:

I want you to know I welcome this chance to prove my mettle.

NICOLA:

*[Uncertain again at his choice of words.] Mettle? [MALORY raises the dagger. ]* What are you doing?

MALORY:

*[Holding the dagger out sword fashion, intones slowly but intensely.]* I challenge you, as I challenge all that question my mastery. I reject you as I reject all that is loathsome and grotesque and unbidden.

NICOLA:

She doesn't answer to you, Malory.

IDA:

Yes. She should banish it herself.

MALORY:

Banishing is not what I have in mind. *[Advances to window.]*

IDA:

You can't kill it!

NICOLA:

Kill it? Malory! *[She grabs his arm and he pushes her roughly aside.]*

IDA:

Too much of her will be cut away!

*[MALORY moves slowly onto the balcony into a maelstrom of sound and activity. NICOLA follows, clutching at him. He pushes her aside. They both disappear from view. There is a great crescendo in sound, a scream from Nicola, then a sudden silence. IDA moans. After a minute or two MALORY backs into the room, bloodstained and disarrayed.]*

IDA:

Not much of a fight, was it.

MALORY:

I wouldn't say that. I would look on it as quite a victory.

IDA:

I'm sure the story will improve. . . .Nicky!

*[NICOLA stumbles into the room, weak vague and very pale. IDA rushes over to her full of concern. MALORY, who has removed his bloodstained jacket hands it to IDA.]*

MALORY:

Here. See what you can do with this. I'll see to Nicola.

IDA:

But she needs...

MALORY:

No, no, she's fine. *[He pulls NICOLA away from IDA who is reluctant to let her go. NICOLA sinks weakly onto the couch.]*

IDA:

Poor thing. She looks so lack lustre. So washed out.

MALORY:

*[Gently rubs her hand.]* She looks just fine. Frail and lovely. *[Gestures to balcony.]* You'd better clean that up. And take down that cursed picture.

*IDA exits, returns with laundry basket and goes with it to balcony. NICOLA seems to have fainted. MALORY strokes her hair lovingly. The light in the room returns to normal and once again the room is light and billowy. NICOLA opens her eyes and looks about her brightly. Her voice is frail, reedy, almost childlike.]*

NICOLA:

Malory. I feel so strange. Did I faint? What happened.

MALORY:

Nothing of consequence.

NICOLA:

Is Ida still here?

MALORY:

She's just finishing up.

*[IDA comes in from balcony with her basket. It is filled with a broken feathery object. She places it on the chair by the sideboard and pulls down the banner. She puts the banner on top of the basket and exits with her load. ]*

NICOLA:

*[Snuggling into MALORY's embrace.]* Hmm. I feel so light. This is a floating sort of room, isn't it.

MALORY:

*[Approvingly.]* Very feminine.

NICOLA:

I like a room that floats. Don't you?

MALORY:

I do. *[He nods and pulls her close as the lights fade.]*

**THE END**