Samuel French Acting Edition

You Should Be So Lucky

by Charles Busch

SAMUEL FRENCH

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ISBN 978-0-573-69511-7

www.SamuelFrench.com
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FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

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To Kenneth Elliott

for so many years of deep friendship and collaboration

You Should Be So Lucky opened in New York City on November 2, 1994. It was produced by Primary Stages, Casey Childs, Artistic Director in association with The Herrick Theatre Foundation. It was directed by Kenneth Elliott. The Production Stage Manager was John Frederick Sullivan. The cast (in order of appearance) was as follows:

MR. ROSENBERG----------Stephen Pearlman

CHRISTOPHER ----------Charles Busch

POLLY----------Nell Campbell

WALTER---------- Matthew Arkin

LENORE ---------- Julie Halston

WANDA WANG----------Jennifer Kato

TIME & PLACE

The Present.

A small railroad apartment in Greenwich Village. We are in the living room. A door up left leads outside and an archway up right, covered with a curtain of beads, leads off to a kitchen and bedroom. The decor is a mad combination of Chinese kitsch and Art Nouveau, all collected for next to nothing at flea markets. The walls are crowded with antique fans and samurai swords. The dominating feature of the room is a large Victorian sofa, smothered in heavily fringed velvet throws and pillows. Once one becomes accustomed to the fake opulence of the room, one notices the cracked moldy walls and half-stripped woodwork.

It's mid-afternoon, on a hot summer day.

YOU SHOULD BE SO LUCKY

ACT I

Scene 1

MR. ROSENBERG enters from the archway with an old-fashioned ice pack. HE is a tall, imposing man in his sixties, dressed in a beautifully tailored suit. HE projects an elegant elder statesman quality and also a cuddly grandfatherly warmth. His speech still retains a trace of his Lower East Side roots.

ROSENBERG. (*Talking to someone in the kitchen.*) This is really quite a place, (*Up center, to himself.*) quite a place. So many things. (*To himself.*) What does it remind me of? A whorehouse in Shanghai or my Aunt Basha's apartment in Riverdale? (*To the person in the kitchen.*) Please accept this in the spirit in which it's intended, Christopher, I realize I'm a complete stranger, but you really should find yourself a good plasterer. These walls ... (*Muttering to himself.*) *ah zoy tzebrachn mir kin platzn.* (*To the person in the kitchen.*) You should have your landlord replace these old windows. You'd be amazed at

how much heat you'll save in the winter. Keep in mind these are just suggestions.

(CHRISTOPHER enters from the kitchen holding a tray of tea things. HE is a very boyish young man in his early thirties. HE is an eccentric blend of intense timidity and equally intense enthusiasm.)

CHRISTOPHER. Here's your tea, Mr. Rosenberg. What are you doing standing up?

ROSENBERG. I'm fine. I'm perfectly fine.

CHRISTOPHER. You fainted on the sidewalk. Thank you very much. (*Sets tea on the coffee table.*)

ROSENBERG. I am feeling much better. (*Switching subjects quickly.*) Christopher, this could be a charming apartment. High ceilings.

CHRISTOPHER. I really should fix it up, I suppose. But you know, I'm the kind of person who never likes being tied down to any one place. I never know how long I'm going to stay.

ROSENBERG. How long have you been here?

CHRISTOPHER. Twelve years. Sugar?

ROSENBERG. Please.

CHRISTOPHER. It's been quite a while since I've entertained anyone.

ROSENBERG. How long's it been?

CHRISTOPHER. Twelve years. Milk?

ROSENBERG. No. Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Handing him a teacup.*) Here you go. Here's your tea.

ROSENBERG. This is a fine piece of china. You really should get that chip repaired.

CHRISTOPHER. I really should. It hasn't been broken very long.

ROSENBERG. How long?

CHRISTOPHER. Twelve years. Are you sure you should be moving around?

ROSENBERG. It was just a little dizziness.

CHRISTOPHER. No, you blacked out completely.

ROSENBERG. This humidity is deadly for senior citizens.

CHRISTOPHER. Maybe you should see a doctor. I'm very close to St. Vincent's.

ROSENBERG. I'm fine. I'm just lucky that I didn't hit my head on the pavement. Christopher, you're a true Samaritan; bringing me into your apartment, a complete and total stranger. Please, let me give you something for your generosity. (*HE puts his teacup down on the coffee table and takes out his wallet.*)

CHRISTOPHER. Please, put that away.

ROSENBERG. (*Handing him money.*) There's a marvelous seafood restaurant on Hudson Street. Have a Surf and Turf on me.

CHRISTOPHER. You'll hurt my feelings if you go on like that.

ROSENBERG. You're quite a kid. (*Putting the money away and slowly crossing up right and then to up center.*)

CHRISTOPHER. My mother was a nurse. I guess I take after her.

ROSENBERG. (*Seeing a framed photo on the table.*) Are these your parents?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes.

ROSENBERG. A handsome couple.

CHRISTOPHER. That was their wedding photo.

ROSENBERG. Are they still living?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing right and up to him.*) No, they both died when I was very young. They were both extraordinary people. My mother was not only a nurse but a poet, a flautist and a champion figure skater.

ROSENBERG. Oh my.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Picking up and displaying a tray from furthest up table.*) These are her medals. And my father was a horseman, a puppeteer and a piano tuner. (*Picking up an object from the sofa table just above sofa.*) This was his pitch pipe.

ROSENBERG. Are you musical?

CHRISTOPHER. Oh no. I'm afraid I didn't inherit much from them. Even the clutter I found for myself.

ROSENBERG. (*Crossing down right around barber chair to right of it.*) This is a nice old-fashioned piece of furniture. Are you a barber?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing down to left of barber chair opposite Rosenberg.*) I'm an electrologist. (*ROSENBERG looks puzzled.*) An electrologist. I remove unwanted hair from people.

ROSENBERG. Really? You went to school for this?

CHRISTOPHER. Oh yes. I'm a trained professional.

ROSENBERG. Is it painful, this ... plucking?

CHRISTOPHER. More discomfort than pain. And we do not pluck. We do not pluck. I just get livid when ignorant people dismiss us as mere pluckers. (*Showing him a chart, just above barber chair.*) I have a needle with an electric charge that destroys the papilla, the seed of the hair directly below the root. I can show you before and after photos of my clients. You probably wouldn't be interested.

ROSENBERG. No, I would. Please. (*CHRISTOPHER hesitates.*) No, I really would. Show me.

CHRISTOPHER. Okay. (*CHRISTOPHER crosses tentatively left to desk.*)

ROSENBERG. I admire a fellow who's enthusiastic about his work.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Putting down teacup, HE opens top drawer of desk and rifles through a bunch of papers.*) I can almost be obsessive. My sister, Polly, says I'm a natural born electrologist because I have a great need to smooth things over. Here they are. (*Takes out an envelope with photos and crosses down left to better light by window, urging Rosenberg to join him.*) This is Miss Fernandez. She's from New Rochelle. Here she is before.

ROSENBERG. (*Crossing to Christopher's right.*) Oh my, the poor woman. We used to call those mutton chop whiskers.

CHRISTOPHER. It was a challenge. Even then I thought she was a handsome woman. When she wore black, she looked rather like Johnny Cash. (*Finding another photo.*) Here she is several months later. Isn't she gorgeous?

ROSENBERG. Sort of a prettier Anthony Quinn.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Abruptly putting photos back in envelope.*) I'm sorry if I fail to find that amusing. We worked very hard for nearly a year clearing up her ... um, whiskers.

ROSENBERG. Forgive me for being flip.

CHRISTOPHER. If you could have seen her expression of pure joy when we finally got rid of her moustache. Her face is my greatest achievement, my *Schindler's List.*

ROSENBERG. You're very deep.

CHRISTOPHER. Not really. It's just that my superficiality is rather complex. (*HE crosses up and returns photos to desk drawer.*)

ROSENBERG. You know, Christopher, I might be in the market for your services. It's this little bit on my back and shoulders. A light dusting that could use some electrolysizing. Do you think that's terribly vain or womanish of me?

CHRISTOPHER. Au contraire, Mr. Rosenberg. I applaud your vanity. Bravo. (*Striking an unconsciously effeminate pose.*) There is nothing effeminate about good grooming.

ROSENBERG. I'm thinking about making a few changes in my life. My wife died just over two years ago. She was a remarkable woman. We had a forty-two year romance. Are you married?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

ROSENBERG. Y'ever been married? Engaged?

CHRISTOPHER. No. I'm afraid I'm the cat that walks alone.

ROSENBERG. My friend, you're missing out on something.

CHRISTOPHER. I am passionate about my work *and* my hobbies. (*Pointing to shelf above desk.*) I paint goblin faces on dried yams.

ROSENBERG. Yams? Well, um, recently I told myself, "Enough already, stop with the grieving, get on with your life." Perhaps I'm a fool but I thought I'd try dating again. (*Crossing to center of sofa.*) Perhaps I should make a few improvements to give myself a more attractive appearance. (*Sitting.*) How much do you charge?

CHRISTOPHER. Forty dollars for an hour's session. That's pretty standard. You can check if you want but I don't bargain. I'm a trained professional. (*Insecure.*) You think that's too much?

ROSENBERG. No, no. I thought it would be more. I have no plans for the rest of the afternoon. Could we start right now? Unless you have other appointments.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing up to desk and retrieving his appointment book.*) I may. Let me see. Hmmm. (*It's empty.*) I think I can fit you in.

(There's loud POUNDING on the front door.)

POLLY. (*Outside.*) Christopher! Open up! I need you! I know you're in there!

CHRISTOPHER. My sister Polly.

ROSENBERG. (*Getting up.*) You'd better answer it. We'll do this some other time.

CHRISTOPHER. No, you'll never come back. And it's been so slow.

POLLY. (*Outside.*) Please let me in!

ROSENBERG. She sounds like she's in trouble.

CHRISTOPHER. She's an unemployed actress. Her entire union's in trouble.

POLLY. (*Outside.*) Christopher, please!

(CHRISTOPHER crosses left and up, opens the door and POLLY falls in. A flamboyant, jazzy redhead. SHE lugs in some suitcases, shopping bags, a hat box and a dead looking plant. SHE immediately drops everything, save the plant, which SHE deposits on the desk. SHE speaks in a lovely British accent.)

POLLY. Thank God!

CHRISTOPHER. What is all this?

POLLY. The effects of a lifetime. (*Seeing Rosenberg.*) Please sir, whoever you are, move a little to the right. (*Crossing down to left of sofa.*) I need to fling myself on that divan. I can't even fling. I'm quite beyond the dramatic gesture. (*In a fit of tears, SHE throws herself dramatically onto the sofa.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing down to left of sofa.*) Polly, this is Mr. Rosenberg.

POLLY. (*Not yet recovered.*) Yes.

CHRISTOPHER. What happened?

POLLY. (*Sitting up.*) Sam threw me out. Out into the streets.

CHRISTOPHER. Polly, you must get your name on a lease. You can't go on like this.

POLLY. What do you mean? Never before has a man tossed my clothes out of an eighth floor window. No, I should never have involved myself with someone so much younger.

CHRISTOPHER. And so volatile.

POLLY. You don't know how many nights I feared for my life. He can't accept that he's a failure. A failed playwright.

CHRISTOPHER. He's only twenty-four.

POLLY. He failed before he began!

CHRISTOPHER. I hadn't heard from you in a month.

POLLY. Darling, I was his prisoner in the San Remo. I might as well have been in Kuwait. The whole situation came to a boil when I flung his damned manuscript into the fire and watched it burn.

ROSENBERG. (*Sitting sofa right, next to her.*) You destroyed his play? I can see why he was miffed.

CHRISTOPHER. I hope it was only a one act.

POLLY. It was a verse trilogy. The play was his child and I gladly watched it turn to ashes. Burn! Burn! I'm burning your child!

CHRISTOPHER. Polly played Hedda Gabler in Tulsa. I saw it. She was absolutely brilliant.

POLLY. My greatest fan.

ROSENBERG. Polly, you sound British.

POLLY. Well, I've lived for many years in England.

CHRISTOPHER. She studied at The Royal Academy and played one season in Manchester.

POLLY. Two seasons.

ROSENBERG. (*To Christopher.*) Pardon me for saying this, but, you talk a little funny too.

CHRISTOPHER. I spent a long weekend with her.

ROSENBERG. Where are you both from originally?

CHRISTOPHER/POLLY. Albuquerque.

CHRISTOPHER. Polly, what are you going to do?

POLLY. Start again. Somewhere. Somehow. Frankly, I'm at your mercy.

CHRISTOPHER. It's a very small apartment.

POLLY. But I can make myself useful. I can do manicures and pedicures. It'll be better than me paying you rent. (*To Rosenberg.*) Darling, let me see those cuticles.

CHRISTOPHER. Leave him alone. (*Crossing up left and picking up her luggage.*) What can I say? I guess you've already moved in. Is this it?

POLLY. My entire world.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Noticing the plant on the desk.*) Why'd you save that dead plant?

POLLY. That plant is far from dead. That plant is nesting.

CHRISTOPHER. It's an amaryllis?!

POLLY. The most glorious amaryllis. And it's due to bloom some time early fall. We have to set it in the bottom of a closet in the dark. I promise you, Christopher, I will have my own place before it blooms. (*CHRISTOPHER crosses right, exiting with her luggage into the archway up right.*) Mr. Rosenberg, what line of work are you in?

ROSENBERG. I'm in the financial world. I advise.

POLLY. (*Flirtatiously.*) How I wish I had some assets you could advise me on.

CHRISTOPHER. Stop flirting with him. Don't take her seriously. She's always acting.

ROSENBERG. Frankly, I was enjoying the performance.

POLLY. (*Rising and taking a deep curtsy.*) Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing left, down around coffee table and Polly to desk. HE picks up his cup of tea.*) Polly gets everything she wants simply through charm. I've been her slave all my life.

ROSENBERG. I can see why. She's a very vivacious young lady.

CHRISTOPHER. And totally selfish and egocentric.

POLLY. I've had to make my own way in the world. I've had a less than spectacular career in the theatre and it's left scars.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, you were this way when you used to drown my dolls in the bathtub.

POLLY. I didn't.

CHRISTOPHER. Have you forgotten "Titantic Barbie"?

POLLY. Well, I always resuscitated her. Now, I need to do the same for you.

CHRISTOPHER. Here we go.

POLLY. It's kismet that brought me here. You need me. You live like some pathetic eccentric immersed in a world of shadows and dusty corners. Meet my brother, Miss Havisham.

CHRISTOPHER. You really have a lot of nerve barging in here and asking for my help and then criticizing me. I have a very full life. I provide a service that frees people from society's unjust stigma against excessive body hair. I have a wonderful family of loyal friends.

POLLY. Oh cool down. You're so touchy about the slightest bit of criticism. (*Crossing in to Rosenberg at sofa.*) Mr. Rosenberg, my brother and I are both classic examples of adult children of alcoholics.

CHRISTOPHER. Who was an alcoholic?

POLLY. Mother was. Believe me, Chris, I know a lot about this. Adult children of alcoholics find it impossible to complete things. I've never seen you finish a crossword puzzle or a plate of escargot. Classic.

CHRISTOPHER. But Mother wasn't an alcoholic.

POLLY. How would you know? You were only nine when she fell out the window. I was eleven and keenly perceptive.

CHRISTOPHER. But Polly ...

POLLY. (*Getting up.*) Mother was a drunk! Don't argue with me! And you're going to follow in her wobbling footsteps. An alcoholic drinks out of loneliness and frustration.

CHRISTOPHER. Are you finished?

POLLY. I'm just getting revved up.

CHRISTOPHER. Mr. Rosenberg, I'm really sorry. This strange woman has some fixation that I'm her brother. Why don't you go into the bedroom and change. There's a kimono on a hook inside the armoire.

ROSENBERG. (*Repeating.*) In the armoire. (*HE exits.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing right to sofa center, picking up tea tray.*) Polly, you really are wrong. I'm not lonely. I do have friends. Close friends. Norma Leeds, for one. (*Crossing right, up and around sofa, depositing tea tray on sofa table up center.*)

POLLY. (*Crossing left to window seat.*) She's ninety-two and hasn't spoken since her last stroke.

CHRISTOPHER. Um ... Steven Deautsch.

POLLY. He's ten years old. Who do you think you are? Michael Jackson? (*Sitting on window seat.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing down right, around to right of barber chair. HE removes a decorative lamp shade from the gooseneck surgical lamp above chair.*) Roger Bernstein's my age.

POLLY. I'm surprised you don't count him as three people.

CHRISTOPHER. He's on a different medication now. (*Putting lamp shade on stool, just below archway up right.*)

POLLY. (*Getting back up.*) These aren't friends. These are cases.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Impatiently. Opening electrolysis cabinet on wall behind chair.*) Polly, I have work to do.

POLLY. (*Quickly crossing up to above desk, indicating plant on desk.*) Christopher, look at that plant. You are that amaryllis.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Wearily. Turning barber chair to face upstage and adjusting seat back into a prone position.*) Oh Polly ...

POLLY. You are that amaryllis. You've been in decades of withdrawal, alone in a dark closet.

CHRISTOPHER. This symbolism is really hokey. (*HE turns on the electrolysis machine. We hear a HUM.*)

POLLY. I'm an actress, not a playwright.

CHRISTOPHER. (*HE grabs a length of paper towel from underneath cabinet and places it over the barber chair.*) I was doing so fine ...

POLLY. No you weren't. Christopher, you have no life. You have excuses to be busy.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Pulling down surgical lamp, so that it is directly over chair.*) Enough already. (*Crossing left between sofa and coffee table, to Polly.*) You want me to admit that things are grim? Well alright, things are very grim. Mr. Rosenberg is the first client I've had in weeks. New York Magazine won't even take my ads anymore. I owe them too much money. Make your phone calls now, darling, because I don't know how much longer we'll have a telephone. My few friends, if I can call them that, are all on Medicare or Mental Disability. (*Unseen by them, ROSENBERG stands in the archway wearing Chris' kimono.*) I'm at the end of something. I don't know what I'm going to do.

POLLY. (*With theatrical tenderness.*) I'm here now. (*Notices Rosenberg.*) I've been very naughty keeping you from your client. I think I'll take a nappy. I am emotionally depleted. Don't let me sleep too long, darling. (*SHE exits through the archway.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Extremely tense. Up and crossing left to up left and retrieving his lab coat that's on a hook*

behind front door.) Mr. Rosenberg, you've been very patient. (*Putting on the coat.*) I'm going to give you this session free of charge.

ROSENBERG. (*Crossing to just below right of sofa.*) That's not necessary.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing back down to coffee table and opening it, HE takes out a pair of rubber gloves.*) I may not have a life, but I do have my principles. Please, get in that chair. (*ROSENBERG begins to sit in the chair.*) On all fours! (*ROSENBERG climbs into the chair on his hands and knees. As CHRIS puts on his rubber gloves, HE mutters to himself.*) She has some nerve, barging in here ... telling me what to do.

ROSENBERG. I feel like a collie at the dog show.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Humorlessly.*) Shoulders down. Raise your haunches.

ROSENBERG. Maybe we should do this some other time. You seem a little *fetutzed.*

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing right to just above chair.*) I am not *fetutzed.* I am a professional eyeing you with cold objectivity. (*HE flips light switch on wall just below archway.*) Now, we'll find a small area of flesh to experiment on, in case it burns. (*HE grabs electrolysis goggles that are hanging just below cabinet.*)

ROSENBERG. I think you've got something else on your mind.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Putting on the goggles and grabbing the electrolysis needle just inside the cabinet.*) Mr. Rosenberg, I am a licensed depilatory technician. Now lift that kimono. We will experiment on the buttocks.

(CHRISTOPHER raises his needle. MR. ROSENBERG looks terrified.)

BLACKOUT

ACT I

Scene 2

Several weeks later. Early evening. POLLY is standing in the middle of the room wearing a beautiful ball gown. SHE crosses down left to mirror on wall. The sound of a BLOW DRYER is heard offstage.

POLLY. Christopher, hurry! (*Crossing directly up, then right to archway.*) Flavia and Leonce will be here any minute. Forget the shoes. (*Crossing down right.*) This gown is so long. No one will even see my feet. (*SHE picks up a matching shawl from barber chair and puts it on.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Offstage.*) Be patient. You're going to be ecstatic. I promise you.

POLLY. I shall be extremely cross if I'm late for the Rainbow Room. No, really, darling, stop blow drying those pumps. I'm going barefoot. It's a charity ball for the homeless. It'll make a statement. (*To herself.*) I wonder if I should wear any rings. No, girl, keep it simple.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Entering with the matching satin pumps and crossing down right, just left of Polly.*) Here they are.

POLLY. (*Dropping shawl back on barber chair.*) How'd they come out?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Showing them to her.*) Darling, you'd never know that they were once psychedelic green. (*Putting them on the floor and helping her into them.*) They're still slightly damp.

POLLY. Ooh squishy. I feel like an extra in "The Poseidon Adventure." My God, this dress is divine.

CHRISTOPHER. It really costs six thousand dollars?

POLLY. Claudio Perucci is a major designer and frighteningly heterosexual. What your poor sister had to endure to borrow this rag. Now if I can just navigate past old Norma's door without her spitting at me.

CHRISTOPHER. She couldn't do that. She's completely paralyzed.

POLLY. Her spitting has the accuracy of a Scud missile. You know she loves you and hates me.

CHRISTOPHER. You're just paranoid because of that silly gift she gave you.

POLLY. A tiny coffin with my wax effigy. (*The INTERCOM buzzer goes off. POLLY crosses up around sofa to it.*) It's Flavia. Wouldn't you know ... for once she's prompt. (*SHE answers it.*) Sweetness, is that you?

FLAVIA. (*On the intercom.*) It's Flavia, darling.

POLLY. (*Into intercom.*) I'll be right down.

CHRISTOPHER. You really look great. (*Crossing right, then up to archway.*) Let me take a picture. Where's the camera?

POLLY. (*SHE crosses left and down to just above desk.*) Sweetness, there's no time. You've turned me into a princess. (*Looking through her purse on desk.*) Let's see, have I got everything? Lipstick, compact, keys, joints, condoms—where's my lucky rabbit's foot? (*SHE discovers it on desk, putting it in purse.*) Darling, I wish you could come. (*Crossing to up center, in front of door.*)

CHRISTOPHER. The last thing I'd want to do. (*Crossing to her.*) Remember every detail and tell me about it in the morning. (*Embracing her.*)

POLLY. It shan't be too early. Good-bye, darling. (*SHE opens the door and exits with a flourish.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*HE sees her earrings on sofa table. Calling off:*) Polly, your earrings!

POLLY. (*Returning.*) It would serve me right if I forgot the damn things. (*Kisses him on the cheek.*) Love you. *Au revoire, mon frère.* (*SHE strikes a pose in the doorway.*) *Je vais à la gloire!* (*Exits.*)

(CHRISTOPHER sighs and looks around at the empty, still room. The INTERCOM buzzer goes off. HE runs to the intercom.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Into intercom.*) Polly, what did you forget?

ROSENBERG. (*Over intercom.*) It's Sy Rosenberg.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh. (*HE buzzes him in, turns and notices that Polly has left her matching shawl on barber chair.*) She forgot her shawl. (*HE runs to the down left window, opens it and calls to her.*) Polly! Polly! (*She's gone. HE crosses to the shawl, picks it up, and stands for a minute, transfixed and mesmerized by its elegance. The DOORBELL rings. CHRISTOPHER drops the shawl on the window seat down, crosses up left to door and lets Mr. Rosenberg in.*) Good evening.

ROSENBERG. (*Entering.*) I saw your sister coming out the front door. She looked very elegant.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Closing door and following down left to window seat.*) We've done nothing for days but get her ready for this big extravaganza, and she left her shawl.

ROSENBERG. Oh, yes. Tonight's the charity ball for the M ...

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing in to Rosenberg.*) Metropolitan Coalition for the Homeless. Everyone's going to be there.

ROSENBERG. Except you and me and the homeless. Do you mind?

CHRISTOPHER. You couldn't drag me to something like that. It sounds hideous. I have this fantasy of what a glamorous ball should be like, something out of Proust or an MGM musical. Somehow, I don't think this one could compare.

ROSENBERG. Maybe not. (*ROSENBERG takes off his suit jacket and hands it to Christopher.*) Damn it, I forgot. I wanted to bring you some real hangers. (*HE sits*

down wearily on the sofa.) I'm forgetting everything these days.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing left and up to hang jacket on a single metal hanger on a hook in the upstage window.*) You look exhausted. I don't mind canceling tonight.

ROSENBERG. No, I look forward to coming here. When Polly's not around, it's extremely restful.

CHRISTOPHER. Restful?

ROSENBERG. It's the conversation, Christopher. If it weren't for that, I think I'd give it up.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing down to left of sofa.*) No. Your back and shoulders are almost as smooth as Harlow's. For only six weeks we've made great progress.

ROSENBERG. No one's going to see them.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing up to just behind Rosenberg on sofa.*) You just had a rough day. (*Massages Rosenberg's shoulders.*)

ROSENBERG. I still miss Miriam so much. She's more real to me than my own daughter.

CHRISTOPHER. You still haven't called Lenore. You promised me.

ROSENBERG. Those lines of communication are closed.

CHRISTOPHER. What if I called her? I could tell her how much you needed her. I could say that you ...

ROSENBERG. Look, Christopher, that would only be a band-aid. The fact is that she doesn't like me and I know this is a terrible thing for a father to say but I really don't like her.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing up around sofa to right and then down to behind barber chair.*) She must have some good points. (*Adjusting paper towel behind barber chair.*)

ROSENBERG. Lenore inherited her mother's legs and plastic surgeon. Chris, I'm a realistic man. No mumbo jumbo for me. But I want Miriam to haunt me. A tap on the window. Her breath on my cheek. I could live on that.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing in to Rosenberg, sitting next to him.*) If you'd like, I could take out my Ouija board. Norma next door gave it to me. Norma once told me that children born at twilight like I was, have the power to even see spirits.

ROSENBERG. And have you?

CHRISTOPHER. Hmmm. A few months ago, I'd have put money down that I saw Hubert Humphrey at the D'Agostino. Should we try to contact Miriam?

ROSENBERG. Let the dead rest. If they could come back, we might not like what they have to say to us.

CHRISTOPHER. I used to wish my mother would haunt me. A couple of years after she died, I was sure I heard her voice and even caught a glimpse of her in the backyard. I've never seen my father although I've tried. (*Pause.*) It's probably a good thing that neither of my parents are floating around here. Polly and I haven't turned out to be exactly any parent's dream. Hey, would you like a drink? I think tonight we could both use a shot of bourbon.

ROSENBERG. (*With deep sincerity. Taking Christopher by the shoulders.*) You know something, kiddo? I think you're just great.

(CHRISTOPHER is startled by Rosenberg's sincerity. HE feels tears welling in his eyes and quickly pulls away.)

ROSENBERG. What's wrong? I've said something?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Getting up and starting to cry.*) Nothing. I'm so embarrassed. (*HE crosses right to just above barber chair.*)

ROSENBERG. Don't be.

CHRISTOPHER. Mr. Rosenberg, this may not be the best time ... I'm tired and ... I suppose I'm just relieved that Polly got off to the Rainbow Room. (*Starts to weep softly.*)

ROSENBERG. (*Getting up.*) Christopher, you are going to that ball.

CHRISTOPHER. Huh?

ROSENBERG. You heard me. (*Crossing left to desk and picking up phone.*) I'm going to make a few phone calls and you are going to that *forcockta* ball.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing to him above coffee table and taking the phone out of his hands.*) Please don't. (*Crossing in front of Rosenberg and putting the phone back on the desk.*) If I was crying, it's because ... I don't know ... you've touched me in some way. Don't do this.

ROSENBERG. (*Crossing down below coffee table, then right.*) Why don't you want to go?

CHRISTOPHER. I'm pathologically shy.

ROSENBERG. You have no trouble talking to me.

CHRISTOPHER. I can only talk to Jewish senior citizens.

ROSENBERG. I hear Kissinger's going to be there.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm serious. Don't make me go.

ROSENBERG. I'm not going to force you to go. I wanted to do a good turn for you.

CHRISTOPHER. Why?

ROSENBERG. Why?

CHRISTOPHER. Why are you doing this?

ROSENBERG. Do I really need a reason?

CHRISTOPHER. I'd be interested in hearing one.

ROSENBERG. Well, I have the money to indulge myself and I'm in the mood to be extravagant. Does that make you feel better?

CHRISTOPHER. I don't know how I feel.

ROSENBERG. Could it be so extraordinary that I simply like you?

CHRISTOPHER. But you've known me for such a short time.

ROSENBERG. I'm a pretty good judge of character and believe me, you're a character. (*Sitting.*) I've never met anyone like you.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not unique. There are thousands of us living in peculiar circumstances all over the village.

ROSENBERG. Then I should gather all of you together in the Javits Center. I'd have a helluva time. Look, I get a kick out of you. Must I explain? Chris, sit. (*CHRIS does so.*) You remind me of my father. Yes. Isadore Rosenberg. It's true. You see, my father was a dreamer. He invented the first collapsible suitcase thought he never made a cent from it. He was an immigrant, barely conversant in the English language. Had no business sense. He slaved all of

his life at a bench in a factory. But he had a great dignity. It was always "Mr. Rosenberg," never "Izzy." The way we lived. On cold nights, all of us in one bed with our shoes on to keep from freezing, our stomachs rumbling from the eight of us having to share one small pullet for dinner. Hearing the cries of the Polish lady next door giving birth. But despite the hardships, my papa filled me with such wonderment. He could create magic with a phrase. The stories. How I wish I'd written them down. I'd forgotten how much I needed that magic. You cast the same kind of spell. So let me make a dream come true for you. What do you say?

CHRISTOPHER. It's all so complicated. What would I wear? I don't even have a pair of black shoes.

ROSENBERG. Easily solved. Next anxiety?

CHRISTOPHER. Socks, shirt, tie. Cuff links. You really could get me in?

ROSENBERG. One phone call. Judy Cunningham is a pal of mine. It's her charity. Look, I know I can be a steamroller. If you really don't want to go ...

CHRISTOPHER. I do want to go. I'd love to go.

ROSENBERG. Now he'd love to go. (*Getting up, crossing right and down around coffee table to left and finally, up to phone on desk.*) Then, kid, we've gotta get moving.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Getting up.*) What do I do?

ROSENBERG. Get yourself cleaned up. (*Clapping his hands.*) Go, go, go!

CHRISTOPHER. I'm going. (*Crossing right and up to archway. HE stops.*) I can't believe this is happening. (*HE exits into the archway.*)

ROSENBERG. (*Picking up the phone, crossing down to just below left of coffee table and dialing.*) Hello, this is Seymour Rosenberg. I'd like to speak to Mrs. Cunningham ... thank you. (*Pause.*) Judy, it's Sy Rosenberg. Dear, forgive me for taking you away from your guests. I'm sure you're all getting ready to leave for the Rainbow Room. I need to ask you a small favor ... No, I'm afraid I can't make it but I have a very dear friend, a young man, a protégé of mine and I'd like very much for him to attend.

(The LIGHTS change. We hear MUSIC and the sound of a CLOCK ticking to indicate the passage of time. ROSENBERG crosses up stage center, making a new phone call.)

ROSENBERG. Hello Morty, Sy Rosenberg. I hope I'm not interrupting your dinner. I'm in a bit of an emergency. I need one of your finest tuxedos. An Armani, something very distinguished and stylish and I need shoes, socks, shirt, cuff links, the works and I need it delivered in the next twenty minutes. Not for me, for a very dear friend. Well, it's like a fairy tale.

(Once again, LIGHTS, MUSIC, TICKING. ROSENBERG crosses and sits at desk, making a new phone call.)

ROSENBERG. Hello Chickie, Sy Rosenberg. How are ya? Look Chickie, I need a car sent over in a half hour. Not the usual. Something wonderful. Have you got a white Rolls? Perfect. Bill it to me and send the car around to 312 Bank Street, just off of Bleeker. Apartment 2E.

(MUSIC and TICKING sound. The LIGHTS get brighter and it's now forty-five minutes later. CHRISTOPHER enters transformed. HE's wearing an elegant tuxedo and looks like a young prince.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Entranced. Crossing down right.*) How do I look?

ROSENBERG. You're a very handsome young man. I don't want you to say anything. But I would like you to look outside that window.

(CHRISTOPHER crosses left to down left window and looks down.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Astonished.*) Is that car supposed to ...

ROSENBERG. It's a white Rolls. A little vulgar, but it's fun. It's yours for the night. Enjoy.

CHRISTOPHER. And it won't turn into a pumpkin?

ROSENBERG. It never will. But, don't lose that shoe. It's a rental. (*HE crosses up right and puts on his coat.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Suddenly insecure. Crossing to desk, adjusting desk chair and turning off desk lamp. Then,*

crossing up center and turning off lamp on sofa table.) Mr. Rosenberg, what if I ...?

ROSENBERG. You're gonna give your name at the door. You're gonna walk inside, head up, back straight. You're gonna look everyone in the eye and say to yourself, "I have more wit, charm and intelligence than all of you." You're gonna dance, eat and mingle. You've got your keys? You've got cash?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Very touched.*) Yes. I've got everything.

ROSENBERG. You certainly do. Don't waste another minute.

(CHRISTOPHER opens the front door. MR. ROSENBERG exits. CHRISTOPHER turns off light switch on wall just right of door. Overcome with emotion, HE stands for a moment in silhouette, then exits.
LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT I

Scene 3

POLLY is discovered on the telephone at the desk stage right.

POLLY. Darling, please don't be so upset. I feel awful about it. Claudio, just calm down. Of course, you know

the dress made a complete sensation. I'm sure the Times will run a photo in the Style section ... I know, I know, I know I promised to return it today, but I just can't. Now stop that. You know that I am the most responsible person in the world. For God's sake, I take care of my invalid aunt. I know what responsibility and obligation mean. (*Calling off to an imaginary aunt.*) Aunt Rose, do be careful with that walker. Don't overdo it. Nurse, would you please ... Claudio, it's just madness here. (*The INTERCOM buzzes. POLLY crosses to it, buzzing in Rosenberg downstairs.*) No, no. Claudio, you can't send someone over for the dress, because I'm not even home. I'm in Paris. Yes, yes, it is a very good connection. I'm afraid I won't be back for at least a week. Darling, I really must run. Our guide is here. We're taking a private tour of Versailles. You know, all the little rooms that have been locked up since the revolution. Le Petit Trianon and everything. (*The DOORBELL rings. SHE opens the door and lets Rosenberg in.*) Excuse me, Claudio. (*POLLY strategically places down the phone and motions Rosenberg to be quiet.*) *Un moment, monsieur, je suis à la telephone avec mon coutouriere en Amerique.* (*Picking up telephone.*) Claudio, you can see I'm just frantic. I'll call you as soon as I return. Bless you, darling. (*SHE hangs up. Then, to Rosenberg:*) Well, if it isn't the Scarsdale fairy godfather.

ROSENBERG. Good afternoon, Polly.

POLLY. Your friend, Cinderella, is visiting the old crone next door and will be home shortly. May I get you some coffee? We're running a bit late today.

ROSENBERG. No, thank you. I'll just get changed. (*HE exits through the archway. From off.*) Were you surprised to see your brother at the Rainbow Room?

POLLY. (*Crossing to archway.*) Surprised is hardly the word. Contrary to rumor, I am not the wicked stepsister. I was thrilled to see Chris all dolled up and so downright vivacious. I can't thank you enough for doing this.

ROSENBERG. Did you have a splendid time?

POLLY. (*Crossing to and sitting on sofa.*) I don't know if I'd say "splendid." It certainly was fraught with drama. It was all so silly, really. This, um, gentlemen friend of mine lent me some pieces of his wife's jewelry for the evening. Well, I guess he hadn't told her and didn't realize she'd be there last night. Naturally, she recognized the jewelry and it all got rather ugly. Food flying. But, the good news is that the stain on the dress will come out.

ROSENBERG. (*Re-entering through archway.*) I'm sure it'll all be forgotten by tomorrow.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Entering through the door.*) Mr. Rosenberg, I hope I haven't kept you waiting. Please have a seat. I'll be right with you.

(ROSENBERG sits in the barber chair. CHRISTOPHER grabs his lab coat and puts it on.)

CHRISTOPHER. I was next door telling Norma all about last night. You should have seen her, Polly. I actually got her to put her dentures in. I swear she looks just like Agnes Moorhead. (*HE opens the electrolysis cabinet behind the barber chair.*) We really should get

started. I'm not in a rush, but I met someone last night and he's coming over in a few hours.

POLLY. (*Overjoyed.*) You met your prince.

CHRISTOPHER. I don't know about that. He's a publicist. (*Crossing to, kneeling at, and opening the coffee table to remove an instrument and rubber gloves.*) He's quite young, but he's worked with everyone from Lainie Kazan to serial killers.

POLLY. (*Suggesting that there might've been more to Christopher's encounter.*) Mmm hmm?

CHRISTOPHER. Don't get excited, Polly. It was just a romantic night. I'm not getting married.

ROSENBERG. (*Sincerely surprised.*) You're a ... homosexual?

POLLY. (*Incredulously acid.*) Oh, no.

ROSENBERG. (*Embarrassed.*) Not that it's an issue. Not at all. I'm a liberal. I ... I ... It never occurred to me. There's nothing effeminate about you.

POLLY. (*Confused.*) We are talking about *my* brother?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Irritated.*) Yes, Polly.

ROSENBERG. (*Fumbling.*) Well, there's nothing to discuss. You're a gay. Big deal. Everyone has a right to ... Today, it's the "in" thing. *Angels in America.* Far be it for me to ... So, um, Chris, your new friend—is he handsome?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Amused. Up and crossing back to electrolysis cabinet.*) Uh huh.

POLLY. Is he rich?

CHRISTOPHER. I don't think so.

ROSENBERG. Is he Jewish?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes. (*HE turns on the electrolysis machine.*) His name is Walter Zuckerman. We hit if off and he's coming over later. That's really all there is to it.

ROSENBERG. (*Pleased.*) What a night you must have had.

CHRISTOPHER. It was perhaps the greatest night of my life. (*Crossing to and sitting on sofa.*) Here I was actually thinking of going back to Albuquerque, but, now, I never want to leave this warm, friendly, quaint little city.

ROSENBERG. Did you meet Judy Cunningham?

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, yes. She found me almost the minute I arrived and she introduced me to everyone. It was like I was wearing an enchanted tuxedo. Words just tumbled out of my mouth. (*To Polly.*) Darling, you've never seen such poise outside of a Constance Bennett picture. I spoke with Mario Buatta and Dina Merrill and, let's see, um, Spaulding Grey and Betty Comden—she was awfully nice, and Orson Bean. (*HE puts on the rubber gloves.*)

POLLY. My word.

ROSENBERG. You see, you can relate to people. Next time, it'll be even easier.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not sure I can do it without the tuxedo. (*Up and crossing to Rosenberg.*) By the way, everything is packed and read to go back.

ROSENBERG. It's paid for. It's yours to keep.

CHRISTOPHER. You can't do that. It's too much.

(ROSENBERG motions him to say no more.)

POLLY. Isn't that marvelous. I don't suppose the Rolls is ...

ROSENBERG. That went back.

(CHRISTOPHER removes a cotton ball and rubbing alcohol from the cabinet and begins to prep Rosenberg's neck and shoulders.)

POLLY. (*Stumbling to get out of an awkward situation.*) Oh, yes ... I'm sure. I was just wondering ... (*Sighs. Stands and crosses to the archway.*) Last night had a bit too much mad frenzy for me. Wake me up before the century turns. (*Exiting through the archway.*)

ROSENBERG. My, but it's close in here. Maybe you could turn on the air conditioner.

CHRISTOPHER. It is awfully fierce. (*HE crosses to the air conditioner.*)

ROSENBERG. I hope you have that thing serviced yearly. You don't want it to die on you during the hottest day of the summer.

(CHRISTOPHER turns on the old unit which rumbles to a start. The LIGHTS in the room dim. The air conditioner has created a power surge, altering the electrical output in the room. CHRISTOPHER returns to his work.)

ROSENBERG. This young man who's coming over. You really like him?

CHRISTOPHER. Sure, but it's just a first impression.

ROSENBERG. I'm a believer in first impressions. You two have similar interests?

CHRISTOPHER. Oh yes. He loves old movies. Especially *Women's Prison* starring Ida Lupino. (*HE takes the electrolysis goggles from underneath the cabinet and dons them.*) I always used to fantasize that she was my mother.

(CHRISTOPHER removes the electrically charged electrolysis needle from the cabinet and begins to go to work. HE manipulates a foot pedal at the base of the chair which operates the pen. We hear the NEEDLE buzz twice. On the second buzz, every major LIGHTING FIXTURE in the room goes on and off individually. There is obviously something wrong with the electricity.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Matter-of-factly.*) The wiring in this building is so decrepit. You can't have too many appliances on at the same time. For instance, I can't simultaneously blow dry my hair, use a power tool and make toast. I'm afraid I'm going to have to turn off the air conditioner. (*HE grabs a paper towel from below the cabinet to protect his sterile gloves, crosses to the air conditioner and turns it off.*) The landlord keeps promising to rewire this building. (*HE crosses down to the second window and opens it.*) Sometimes, if I open this window, I get a good breeze from the river. Let's get cracking.

(CHRISTOPHER returns to Rosenberg, picks up the needle and starts to work again. We hear another BUZZ. ROSENBERG flinches.)

CHRISTOPHER. I'm sorry. Did you get a shock?

(Suddenly ROSENBERG gasps, has a heart seizure and collapses. HE is motionless and quite dead. CHRISTOPHER is oblivious to Rosenberg as HE stares at the needle to figure out the problem.)

CHRISTOPHER. That's never happened before. (*HE looks down and thinks that Rosenberg is pulling a prank.*) Mr. Rosenberg. Mr. Rosenberg? C'mon. (*Suddenly aware that something terrible has happened, HE begins to gently slap Rosenberg on the face.*) Mr. Rosenberg? Are you alright? Mr. Rosenberg? Polly! (*In hysterics, CHRISTOPHER exits through the archway. The following dialogue is heard from offstage.*) Polly! Come here quick!

POLLY. What is it?

CHRISTOPHER. It's Mr. Rosenberg. Something happened to him. He's unconscious. The electric current must have been too strong. He's had some sort of seizure.

(The TWO bolt through the archway, POLLY leading the way. SHE picks up Rosenberg's wrist, trying to detect a pulse. Then, SHE leans over to listen to his heart. Finally, SHE waves her hand in front of his face to detect breathing. CHRISTOPHER paces through the whole process.)

CHRISTOPHER. Is he alright? Of course he's alright.

POLLY. (*Dropping Rosenberg's arm in repulsion.*) He's dead.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Pushing her away and grabbing Rosenberg.*) No, he's not! Wake up. Wake up!

POLLY. His heart isn't breathing at all.

CHRISTOPHER. Don't say that. (*Near tears and feverishly slapping Rosenberg.*) Mr. Rosenberg, please, wake up!

POLLY. Chris, stop it! He's dead. This is no time for hysterics.

CHRISTOPHER. (*On the verge of hysteria.*) Polly, you don't seem to understand. I have executed another Rosenberg! I am a murderer!

POLLY. He was an old man. He never looked well. He most likely had a heart attack.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Realizing his loss, and kneeling beside Rosenberg.*) He can't be gone. I couldn't even say good-bye. I can't even say good-bye.

POLLY. You do have malpractice insurance, don't you?

CHRISTOPHER. I never got around to it. Oh, I don't care. I accept my punishment.

POLLY. There's only one thing for us to do.

CHRISTOPHER. What's that?

POLLY. Ditch the body. If we can squeeze him through the bathroom window, he'd fall into the air shaft. (*Crossing to stage left.*) We'll need alibis and good ones. I don't suppose your friend Orson Bean would take us in?

(The INTERCOM buzzes. POLLY crosses up and answers it.) Hello? Who's there?

WALTER. *(On intercom.)* Walter Zuckerman, Is Chris there?

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, my God.

POLLY. *(Into intercom.)* I'm sorry. My brother just stepped out.

(CHRISTOPHER rushes to the intercom, pushing POLLY out of the way.)

CHRISTOPHER. Walter, you're rather early.

WALTER. *(On intercom.)* No. We said three.

CHRISTOPHER. I thought it was four. Maybe you should come back later.

WALTER. *(On intercom.)* I'm having trouble understanding you. Someone's opening the door downstairs. I'll come up.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, my God.

POLLY. Ditch the body!

CHRISTOPHER. No, no. We won't do that. I need time. Help me bring him over to the sofa. We'll lie him down there and cover him with throws and pillows. *(HE crosses down to clear the coffee table to stage right.)* I'll keep Walter distracted. We won't even let him into the apartment. Help me move him.

POLLY. He's a big man. My back's never recovered from that last *Nunsense* tour.

CHRISTOPHER. We've got to hurry. We need to clear all the pillows and throws off the sofa.

(In a mad frenzy, THEY pull everything off the sofa and then cross to either side of the body. The DOORBELL rings.)

CHRISTOPHER. Is that you, Walter?

WALTER. (*Through the door.*) It's me.

CHRISTOPHER. I'll be right there. (*To Polly.*) Now, let's flip him over gently like a crepe. (*Beginning to lift the body.*) Let's lift him up gingerly. Gingerly.

(THEY walk the body to the center of the sofa. All THREE fall backwards onto the sofa.)

CHRISTOPHER. You take his legs. I'll get his head.

(THEY position the body across the sofa. ROSENBERG's knees are bent. POLLY pushes down on them with one lunge and the body is perfectly placed. CHRISTOPHER starts draping the body with a velvet Victorian throw.)

CHRISTOPHER. Now, let's drape everything over him for a nice, casual effect.

(CHRISTOPHER starts heaving pillows at Polly. The TWO place colorful pillows all around and over the corpse to disguise its contours.)

CHRISTOPHER. Darling, that red one would look ever so much prettier beside the puce.

POLLY. This is silly.

WALTER. (*Offstage.*) Chris! Hello!

(CHRISTOPHER dashes to the door, with POLLY at his heels. CHRISTOPHER realizes he is still wearing the lab coat. HE frantically takes it off. POLLY helps and hangs it up. CHRIS straightens himself and opens the door.)

CHRISTOPHER. Here I am.

(WALTER is a good-looking guy in his thirties. Somewhat neurotic, it doesn't interfere with his natural charm.)

WALTER. I thought you forgot about me.

CHRISTOPHER. I certainly did not. (*HE ushers Walter in and closes the door.*) Walter, this is my sister, Polly.

POLLY. Hello, Walter.

WALTER. I have a feeling I caught you off guard.

CHRISTOPHER. I suppose you have. I ... I ... I was nude.

POLLY. So was I. We're nudists.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Regretting that line.*) Experimenting with it. It was our first time. Doubt we'll ever do it again. It's such a beautiful day. Polly, we're going for a walk.

WALTER. Must we? (*HE crosses right, down and around to the front of the sofa.*) It's so hot. On the radio, they said a schnauzer exploded on Third Avenue. Can we sit down?

(CHRISTOPHER crosses down and intercepts Walter's attempt to sit on the sofa, ushering him down stage left to a hideous, metal, straightback chair with a tiny triangular seat. It's more sculpture than chair.)

CHRISTOPHER. Of course. Why don't you sit over here. It's so much nicer.

WALTER. (*Sits with great effort. Sincerely.*) Gee, I thought this was an ashtray.

CHRISTOPHER. It's based on a sculpture by Giacometti.

(CHRISTOPHER and POLLY with nowhere else to sit, kneel just right of Walter.)

WALTER. Must you kneel? I feel like Hans Christian Andersen.

POLLY. (*Rising abruptly.*) I really must go. (*SHE crosses to the door and opens it.*)

CHRISTOPHER. I don't want to chase you out.

POLLY. You're not at all. I'll be right back.

CHRISTOPHER. But, you've got nothing on underneath that robe.

POLLY. So true. I suppose I'll try this nudist thing out on Mrs. Abbotelli on the front stoop. Lovely meeting you, Walter. 'Bye. (*SHE exits.*)

WALTER. You did want to get together today?

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, yes. (*Sits hesitantly on the farthest edge of the sofa.*)

WALTER. For a minute there, I wasn't sure. Since last night, I've thought a lot about you.

CHRISTOPHER. Same here.

WALTER. It's the strangest thing. I feel like I've known you for, I don't know, forever. It's like we can dispense with all the preliminaries of friendship and just be, you know, for real. Ask important questions. Have you ever been in love?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

WALTER. Have you ever been in therapy?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

WALTER. I guess these are dumb questions. Do you have a terrible fear of death?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Sprawling across the corpse, appearing more casual.*) Not as much as I thought. You get sort of used to it. What do you think about death? I mean *really* think about it?

WALTER. (*Crossing up left, around couch and then to archway, taking in the room.*) One of my first jobs when I came to New York was with The Daily News. I assisted the photographer who shot murder victims. After awhile, nothing shocks you.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Encouraged.*) Walter, I should explain something to you. Remember I told you I perform electrolysis on people? Well, I have this client, a wonderful man. He sent me to the ball last night just like ...

WALTER. (*Coming down to right of sofa.*) The girl with the glass shoe. That was his Rolls Royce?

CHRISTOPHER. He paid for it. I have a confession to make.

WALTER. He's your sugar daddy? That's cool. I'm not judgmental. My cousin Francine is a professional dominatrix.

CHRISTOPHER. ... skip it.

WALTER. Listen, I can't believe I told you all about my rotten childhood and therapy.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Rising.*) No, I find your neuroses absolutely fascinating. I really do.

WALTER. You don't think I'm just a spoiled, suburban Jew?

CHRISTOPHER. No. Please. I mean, that whole thing about your brother making you believe you were Filipino. That's hardly standard issue, suburban angst.

WALTER. Is that couch just for display, or can we actually recline on it?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Sitting nervously and fluffing pillows.*) A neighbor's cat shed all over the pillows. If you have any allergies at all ...

WALTER. (*Sitting on sofa arm right.*) I'm that rarity. A neurotic without allergies. (*HE sits next to Chris and nuzzles his neck.*)

(Throughout the next speech, WALTER seduces Christopher, kissing his neck and finally pulling his left arm up and kissing it from top to bottom.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Guilt-ridden.*) Walter, I'd think twice about seducing me. My mother, who had a very *slight* drinking problem, fell out of her window while writing a poem. And my father, my father had his head bitten off

while performing a Punch and Judy show at the zoo. I am dogged by bad luck.

WALTER. I love it. Tell me more.

(WALTER throws Chris' left arm around his neck and tackles him directly back on the sofa. The force of the tackle dislodges Rosenberg's arm from underneath the throw and pillows.)

CHRISTOPHER. Walter, please.

(CHRISTOPHER discovers Rosenberg's arm and is near hysteria. With WALTER on top of him, CHRIS pulls his body left to try to cover the hand. Unsuccessful, HE tries to stuff the hand underneath him. WALTER's head comes up. In a panic, CHRIS stuffs his own left arm underneath himself, while grabbing Rosenberg's hand with his right hand, making it seem as if Rosenberg's hand is his own.)

WALTER. Am I too heavy on you?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

(WALTER kisses down Chris' right arm to his hand and eventually kisses the dead hand. CHRISTOPHER is horrified.)

WALTER. *(Nestling his head on Christopher's chest.)* Your hand is cold.

CHRISTOPHER. And prematurely aged.

(WALTER continues his advances with fervor.)

CHRISTOPHER. Walter, stop. Stop!

(CHRISTOPHER pushes Walter off him and pulls the pillow away to reveal Rosenberg's face. WALTER screams in wild hysteria.)

WALTER. Who is this man?

CHRISTOPHER. Seymour Rosenberg.

WALTER. You killed him?

CHRISTOPHER. Possibly. If I did cause his death, it wasn't intentional. I was performing electrolysis on him and he died from a sudden heart seizure.

WALTER. We must call the police. This man needs to be buried. You weren't planning on keeping him here, were you?

CHRISTOPHER. Walter, I'm not a ghoul. I'm just an unlucky electrologist with a sense of whimsy.

WALTER. I'll call the police if you'd like.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Crossing to Walter in front of sofa.*) Thank you and thank you for sticking around. You really didn't have to. As a matter of fact, maybe you should leave. I've never killed anyone before, but for some reason, it seems indicative of my lifestyle. You shouldn't get involved. You didn't bring a jacket or anything, did you?

WALTER. What? Are you kicking me out?

CHRISTOPHER. I'm making it easy for you.

WALTER. What if I don't want to go?

CHRISTOPHER. Walter, look at me. Look at the way I live. It's not romantic. It's pathetic. This mess. Dust everywhere. Woodwork half stripped. Fresh cadaver.

WALTER. So?

CHRISTOPHER. (*Starting to open door.*) It was wonderful meeting you, Walter.

WALTER. (*Spinning Chris around and holding him by the shoulders.*) I don't think you understand where I'm coming from. I'm attracted to you both physically and morbidly.

CHRISTOPHER. What?

WALTER. It's situations like this that made me want to move to New York. I grew up in the San Fernando Valley for chrissakes. It's nothing but malls, suntan lotion and car washes. I crave darkness. You are dark. Lonely rooms at midnight, insane fantasies, the grotesque. You embody all this. I wanted to live on the edge and experience heightened emotions. This is our first date. Where can we go from here?

CHRISTOPHER. I would like to kiss you. Just once before the police arrive.

WALTER. Before the eyes of a dead man?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes, I think he would approve. (*HE begins to advance left, in front of the sofa, to Walter.*)

WALTER. (*Backing upstage away from Christopher.*) Please, Chris, not here. You're going too far.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Like a High Priestess.*) Kiss me.

WALTER. (*Backing up right toward archway.*) I'm a very defiant person. I really am. I'd kiss you anywhere else.