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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

I'm Not Rappaport

by Herb Gardner

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Author's Note: Setting and Carousel Music

Tony Walton's set design for this play, a sketch of which appears on the inside front cover, is the design I strongly recommend for productions of I'M NOT RAPPAPORT, and is the set on which most of the stage directions are based. However, arrangements for the use of this design *must* be made with Mr. Walton's representative, Paul Martino, at International Creative Management, 40 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. The quality and use of the Carousel music, where indicated, is essential to the mood of this play. The "Show Tape" incorporating all the Carousel music in this script, used in the original New York production, can be acquired from Masque Sound, 630 Ninth Ave. #410; New York, N. Y. 10036. (212) 245-4623.

This "Show Tape" will be an excellent guide to how the individual songs on the Carousel music records were used dramatically, what sections of the songs, etc. It is important that the audience feels that this music is coming from a real Carousel somewhere in the park, rather than background underscoring. The Carousel music comes from two albums produced by AudioFidelity Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 86, Rahway, N.J. 07065. They are "Big Bertha", AFSD, 6145 (for "We All Scream For Ice Cream", "That Old Gang Of Mine", " Queen City March", Springtime In The Rockies") and "Come To The Fair", AFSD, 6144 (for "Sidewalks of New York"). These albums can be used *only* if a credit appears in the production program, as follows: "Carousel Music recordings used with the permission of AudioFidelity Enterprises, Inc." However, performance rights to the records do not include the rights to use the individual songs, which must be acquired as indicated on page 3. The organization "UCPA " on page 58 should be pronounced as though rhyming with "look-pa".

For Shel.

AMERICAN PLACE THEATRE

James Walsh Lewis Allen Martin Heinfling

present

Judd Hirsch Cleavon Little

in

I'm Not Rappaport

by **Herb Gardner**

with

Michael Tucker, Ray Baker, Liann Pattison, Jace Alexander

and **Cheryl Giannini**

Setting Designed by **Tony Walton** Costumes Designed by **Robert Morgan** Lighting Designed by **Pat Collins**

Fight Staging by **B.H. Barry**

Directed by

Daniel Sullivan

"I'm Not Rappaport" was originally presented by the Seattle Repertory Theatre.

The Producers wish to express their appreciation to Theatre Development Fund for its support of this production.

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Nat ..... JUDD HIRSCH
Midge ..... CLEAVON LITTLE
Danforth ..... MICHAEL TUCKER
Laurie ..... LIANN PATTISON
Gilley ..... JACE ALEXANDER
Clara ..... CHERYL GIANNINI
The Cowboy ..... RAY BAKER

SETTING: A bench near a path at the edge of the lake in Central Park.
TIME: Early October, 1982.

ACT I

Three in the afternoon.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene 1: Three in the afternoon, the next day.
Scene 2: Five in the afternoon, the next day.
Scene 3: Twelve days later, eleven a.m.

UNDERSTUDIES

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance.

For Nat—Salem Ludwig; for Midge—William Hall, Jr.; for Clara and Laurie—Carolyn Hurlburt; for Gilley—Tim Ransom.

I'M NOT RAPPAPORT was originally presented by the Seattle Repertory Theatre in December, 1984.

The play was subsequently presented by James Walsh, Lewis Allen, and Martin Heinfling at the American Place Theatre in New York City on June 6, 1985. The cast was as follows:

NAT ..... Judd Hirsch
MIDGE ..... Cleavon Little
DANFORTH ..... Michael Tucker
LAURIE ..... Liann Pattison
GILLEY ..... Jace Alexander
CLARA ..... Cheryl Giannini
THE COWBOY ..... Ray Baker

Directed by Daniel Sullivan. Setting by Tony Walton. Costumes by Robert Morgan. Lighting by Pat Collins.

This production was transferred to the Booth Theater in New York City on November 19, 1985 with the following cast:

NAT ..... Judd Hirsch
MIDGE ..... Cleavon Little
DANFORTH ..... Gregg Almquist
LAURIE ..... Liann Pattison
GILLEY ..... Jace Alexander
CLARA ..... Mercedes Ruehl
THE COWBOY ..... Steve Ryan

CHARACTERS

NAT
MIDGE
DANFORTH
LAURIE
THE COWBOY
GILLEY
CLARA

SCENE

Early October, 1982. A bench near a path at the edge of the lake in Central Park; New York City.

ACT I
Three in the afternoon

ACT II
Scene 1: Three in the afternoon, the next day.
Scene 2: Six in the evening, the next day.
Scene 3: Twelve days later, eleven A.M.

IMPORTANT: All stage directions and set descriptions in this edition are given from the **audience's** left and right.

I'm Not Rappaport

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A battered bench on an isolated path at the edge of Central Park Lake, early October, 1982, about three in the afternoon. To the left of this center bench is a smaller even more battered one with several of its slats missing. Behind these benches is the Gothic arch of an old stone tunnel, framed above by an ornate Romanesque bridge which spans the width of the stage. Before the curtain rises we hear the sound of a carousel band-organ playing "The Queen City March."*

AT RISE: *Two men, MIDGE and NAT, both about eighty years old, are seated at either end of the center bench; they sit several feet apart, an old briefcase between them. MIDGE is black and NAT is white. MIDGE wears very thick bifocals and an old soft hat; he is reading "The Sporting News." NAT wears a beret and has a finely trimmed beard, a cane with an elegant ivory handle rests next to him against the bench. The two men do not look at each other. A Jogger runs by on the bridge above, exits at right. An autumn leaf or two drifts down through the late afternoon light. Silence for a few moments; only the now distant sound of the Carousel music.*

NAT. O.K., where was I? (*No response. He smacks himself on the forehead.*) Where the hell was I? What

were we talking about? I was just about to make a very important point here. (*to MIDGE*) What were we talking about?

MIDGE. (*No response. He continues to read his newspaper for a moment.*) We wasn't talking. *You* was talking. (*turns page*) I wasn't talking.

NAT. O.K., so what was I saying?

MIDGE. I wasn't listening either. You was doing the whole thing by yourself.

NAT. Why weren't you listening?

MIDGE. Because you're a Goddamn liar. I'm not listening to you anymore. Two days now I ain't been listening.

NAT. Stop pretending to read. You can't see anything.

MIDGE. Hey, how 'bout you go sit with them old dudes in fronta the Welfare Hotel, them old butter brains—(*pointing about the lake*) the babies at the Carousel, them kids in the boat—or some o' them junkie-folk yonder, whyn't you go mess with them? 'Cause I'm not talking to you anymore, Mister. Puttin' you on notice of that. You may's well be talking to that tree over there.

NAT. It's a lamp-post.

MIDGE. Sittin' here a week now, ain't heard a worda truth outa you. Shuckin' me every which way till the sun go down.

NAT. (*slapping the bench*) I demand an explanation of that statement!

MIDGE. O.K., wise-ass; for example, are you or are you not an escaped Cuban terrorist?

NAT. (*slapping the bench*) I am not!

MIDGE. O.K., and your name ain't Hernando—

NAT. Absolutely not!

MIDGE. So it's a lie—

NAT. It's a cover-story! (*pause*) My line of work, they give you a cover-story.

MIDGE. Are you sayin'—?

NAT. All I'm saying, and that's *all* I'm saying, is that in my particular field you gotta have a cover-story. More than that I can't divulge at the present time.

MIDGE. Honey-bun, you sayin' you're a spy?

NAT. I'm saying my name is Hernando and I'm an escaped Cuban terrorist.

MIDGE. But what kinda weirdo, bullshit cover-story is—?

NAT. You don't think I *said* that to them? That's what *I* said to them. I said to them, an eighty-one year old Lithuanian is a Cuban Hernando? That's right, they said, tough luck, sweetheart; yours is not to reason why. That's how they talk. Of *course* you don't believe it! You think *I* believe it? Such dopes. But it's a living. I beg you not to inquire further.

MIDGE. But why'd they pick an old—

NAT. Do *I* know? You tell *me*. A year ago I'm standing in line at the Medicaid, a fellah comes up to me—boom, I'm an Undercover.

MIDGE. (*impressed*) Lord . . .

NAT. Who knows, maybe they got something. They figure an old man, nobody'll pay attention. Could wander through the world like a ghost, pick up some tidbits.

MIDGE. (*nodding, thoughtfully*) Yeah . . .

NAT. So maybe they got something, even though, I grant you, they screwed up on the cover-story. All I know is, every month, a thousand bingos is added to my Social Security check.

MIDGE. Bingos?

NAT. Bingos. Dollars. Cash. It's a word we use in the

business. Please don't inquire further. (*silence*) Please, I'm not at liberty. (*longer silence*) O.K.; they also gave me a code name. "Harry."

MIDGE. Harry?

NAT. Harry Schwartzman.

MIDGE. What's your real name?

NAT. Sam Schwartzman. (*outraged*) Can you believe it? Can you *believe* it? That's some imaginative *group* they got up there, right? That's some bunch of geniuses! (*then, shrugging*) What the hell, a thousand bananas on your Social Security every month you don't ask fancy questions.

MIDGE. Best not, best not. (*leaning closer*) So, do ya . . . do ya ever pick up any information for them?

NAT. Are you kidding? Sitting on a bench all day with a man who can't tell a tree from a lamp-post? Not a shred. (*glances about, leans closer*) Fact is, I think they got me in what they call "deep cover." See, they keep you in this "deep cover" for years; like five, maybe ten years they keep you there, till you're just like this regular person in the neighborhood . . . and then, boom, they pick you out for the big one. Considering my age and general health, they're not too bright. (*reaches into briefcase*) O.K., snack-time.

MIDGE. (*nodding*) Yeah. Deep cover. I hearda that . . .

NAT. (*taking foil-wrapped sandwich from briefcase*) Here. Tuna salad with lettuce and tomato on whole wheat toast. Take half.

MIDGE. (*accepting sandwich*) Thank ya, Sam; thank ya.

NAT. Yeah, comes three o'clock, there's nothing like a nice, fresh tuna salad sandwich.

MIDGE. (*chewing*) Uh-huh.

NAT. (*chewing*) Crisp.

(*Silence for several moments as their old jaws work on the sandwiches.*)

MIDGE. (*suddenly*) Bullshit! (*sits upright*) Bullshit! Lord, you done it to me *again*! You done it! (*throws the sandwich fiercely to the ground*) Promised myself I wouldn't let ya, and ya done it again! Deep cover! Harry Schwartzman! Bingos! You done it again!

NAT. (*smiling to himself as he continues eating*) That was nice . . . a nice long story, lasted a long time . . .

MIDGE. (*shouting, poking NAT sharply*) That's *it*! That's it, no more conversin'! Conversin' is *over* now, Mister! No more, ain't riffin' *me* no more!

NAT. Please control yourself—

MIDGE. *Move* it, boy; *away* with ya! This here's *my* spot!

NAT. Sir, I was—

MIDGE. This is *my* spot, I come here first!

NAT. I was merely—

MIDGE. Get offa my spot 'fore I lay you out!

NAT. *Your* spot? Who made it *your* spot? Show me the plaque. Where does it say that?

MIDGE. Says right here . . . (*remains seated, slowly circling his fists in the air like a boxer*) You read them hands? Study them hands, boy. Them hands wore Golden Gloves, summer of Nineteen and Twenty-Four. This here's *my* spot, *been* my spot six months now, my good and peaceful spot till you show up a week ago start playin' Three Card Monte with my head. Want you *gone*, Sonny! (*continues circling his fists*) Givin' ya three t'make dust; comin' out on the count o'three. *One*—(*rises, moving to his corner of the "ring"*)

NAT. Wait, a brief discussion—

MIDGE. Sound of the bell I'm comin' out. *You* won't

hear it but I *will. Two*—

NAT. How you gonna hit me if you can't *see* me?

MIDGE. Dropped Billy D'Amato in the sixth round with both eyes swole shut. I just keep punchin' till I hear crunchin'. *Three!*

NAT. (*rising, with dignity*) Please, sir—this is an embarassing demonstration—

MIDGE. (*moving in NAT's general direction, a bit of remembered footwork, jabbing*) O.K., comin' out, comin' out; comin' at ya, boy, comin' at ya—

NAT. (*moving behind bench for protection*) Sir, you . . . you have a depressing personality and a terrible attitude!

MIDGE. *Prepare* yourself, Mister, prepare yourself, get your—(*MIDGE suddenly lunges, bumping against the bench, stumbling—he struggles to keep his balance, grabbing desperately at the air—then falls flat on his back in the path. He lies there silently for several moments. Quietly, frightened:*) Oh, shit . . .

NAT. (*aware that MIDGE is in danger, whispering*) Mister . . . ? (*No response. He leans forward; urgently.*) Mister, Mister . . . ? (*Silence. He moves towards MIDGE as quickly as possible.*) Don't move, don't move . . .

MIDGE. (*trembling*) I know . . .

NAT. Could be you broke something . . .

MIDGE. (*softly*) I know. Oh, shit. Never fall down, *never* fall down . . .

NAT. (*kneeling next to him, trying to calm him*) It's nothing; I fall down every morning. I get up, I have a cup of coffee, I fall down. That's the system; two years old you stand up and then, boom, seventy years later you fall down again. (*gently, firmly*) O.K., first thing; can you lift your head? (*MIDGE hesitates, frightened,*

then raises his head a bit.) Good sign. Put your head back. (*as MIDGE carefully rests his head back*) Good, good, good . . . (*carefully, knowledgeably, touching MIDGE, checking for damage*) O.K., feeling for breaks, checking the pelvic area . . . feeling the hip now . . . If you like this we're engaged. (*MIDGE moans softly, frightened.*) Don't worry; breaks is also nothing. Everybody breaks. Me, I got a hip like a tea-cup. Twice last year; I just got rid of my walker. (*Continues checking MIDGE's left leg, MIDGE winces.*) I was also dead once for a while. Six minutes. Also nothing; don't worry. They're doing a By-Pass, everything stops; they had to jump-start me like a Chevrolet. (*starts checking MIDGE's right leg; MIDGE apprehensive*) Six minutes dead, the doctor said. You know what it's like? Boring. First thing you float up and stick to the ceiling like a kid's balloon, you look around. Down below on the bed there's a body you wouldn't give a nickel for. It's you. Meanwhile you're up on the ceiling, nobody sees you. Not bad for a while, nice; you meet some other dead guys, everybody smiles, you hear a little music; but mostly boring. (*He has finished checking MIDGE's legs.*) O.K.; can you move your arms? (*MIDGE demonstrates a few, short, boxing jabs.*) Excellent. O.K., good news: each item functional. Now, from experience, lie there and relax five minutes before you get up. (*MIDGE murmurs obediently.*) O.K., best thing for relaxing is jokes— (*rising to center bench near him*) Willy Howard, you hearda him? The best. O.K., years ago he had this great routine, see—

MIDGE. That was another lie, wasn't it?

NAT. What?

MIDGE. 'Bout you bein' dead.

NAT. A *fact*, that was an absolute—

MIDGE. Man, you ain't even *friendly* with the truth! *Lies.* Goddamn *lies.* (*slaps the ground*) It's your Goddamn lies put me on the canvas here! Got me fightin', fallin' down—

NAT. *Not* lies—(*sits upright on bench*) Alterations! I make certain alterations. Sometimes the truth don't fit; I take in here, I let out there, till it fits. The *truth*? What's true is a triple By-Pass last year at Lenox Hill, what's true is Grade Z cuts of meat from the A. and P., a Social Security check that wouldn't pay the rent for a chipmunk; what's true is going to the back door of the Plaza Hotel every morning for yesterday's club-rolls, I tell them it's for the pigeons. I'm the pigeon. Six minutes dead is *true*—(*takes bunch of pages from briefcase*) here, Dr. Reissman's bills; here's the phone number, call him. A fact. And that was my *last* fact. Since then, alterations. Since I died, a new policy! This morning I tell the counterman at Nedick's I'm an American Indian. An Iroquois. He listens; next thing I know I'm remembering the old days on the plains, the broken treaties, my Grandpa fighting the Cavalry. Not important *he's* convinced; *I* am, and I love it. I was one person for eighty-one years, why not a hundred for the next five?!

MIDGE. (*after a moment, resting on his elbows, thoughtfully*) Them club-rolls; how early you figure a fellah oughta show up down there to—

NAT. *Rolls, rolls*; you missed the whole *point*—

MIDGE. (*rising carefully to small bench*) The *point*? I *got* the point; the point is you're crazy, the point is you ain't never seein' your marbles again!

NAT. Ah, how fortunate, an expert on mental health. My daughter Clara, she's another expert—(*holds up one of the pages*) here, wants to put me in a home for the ridiculous. "No sense of reality," she writes, "in need of

supervision," she writes. This she writes to my therapist, Dr. Engels. Trouble is I don't have a therapist and I'm Dr. Engels. I give her the address of the Young Socialist's Club on Eighty-Sixth, I'm listed there as Dr. Friedrich Engels. (*leans closer to him*) Crazy, you say? Listen to me, listen to Dr. Engels. You're a wreck. Look at you; is this who you want to be? Is this what you had in mind for old, this guy here? A man who obviously passed away some time ago? Whatta you got left, five minutes, five months? Is this how you want to spend it? Sitting and staring, once in a while for a thrill falling down? (*urgently*) No, *wrong*; you gotta shake things *up*, fellah; you gotta make things *happen*—

MIDGE. (*truly outraged*) *Hold* it now! Hold that mouth right there! You tellin' *me* how to live? *You* tellin' *me*? You talkin' to an *em*-ployed person here, Mister! (*retrieving his newspaper from NAT's bench, returning with great dignity to his own*) Midge Carter; you talkin' to Midge Carter here, boy—Super-in-tendent in charge of Three Twenty-One Central Park West; *run* the place, *been* runnin' it forty-two years, July. They got a furnace been there long as *I* have—an ol' Erie City Special, fourteen *tonner*, known to *kill* a man don't show he's boss. Buildin' don't move without that bull and that bull don't move without *me*. Don't have to make up nobody to be when I *am* somebody! (*settling himself proudly on small bench*) Shake things up, huh? Don't shake *nothin'* up. How you figure I keep my job? Near fifteen years past retirement, how you figure I'm still Super there? I ain't mentioned a raise in fifteen years, and they ain't neither. Moved to the night-shift three years ago, outa the public eye. Daytime a buncha A-rab Supers has come and gone, not Midge. Dozen Spic Doormen dressed up like five-star generals, come

and gone, not Midge. Mister, you lookin' at the wise old invisible man.

NAT. No, I'm looking at a dead man! (*points cane at him*) Fifteen years, no raise; it's a dead person, a ghost! You let them rob you!

MIDGE. They don't rob me; *nobody* robs me, got a system. You see that boy come every day, five o'clock? That's Gilley; give him three bucks, nobody robs me. Ten blocks from here to my place, walks me there, protects me.

NAT. From who?

MIDGE. Him, for one. Fifteen a week, he don't rob me—but nobody *else* neither, see; now *that's* Social Security—

NAT. (*laughing*) Oh, God—

MIDGE. Keep chucklin', sugar; ain't nobody dyin' of old age in *this* neighborhood.

NAT. Job! I see what your *job* is. Groveling! You're a licensed groveler!

MIDGE. (*rises from bench, shouting*) Super at Three Twenty-One, still got a *callin'*—only thing people got to call *you* is "hey, old man!"

NAT. What do *you* know? What does a *ghost* know? (*rising proudly*) People *see* me; they *see* me! I *make* them see me! (*his cane in the air*) The night they rushed me to Lenox Hill for the By-Pass, as they carried me out on the *stretcher*, six tenants called the Landlord to see if my apartment was available. Now, every *day*, every day at dawn I ring their bells, all six of them—the door opens, I holler "Good morning, Vulture; Four B is still unavailable!" I hum the first two bars of "The Internationale" and walk away.

MIDGE. (*moving towards him*) Old *fool*, crazy old fool; they can't see *you*. They can hear ya, but they sure can't *see* ya. Don't want to *look* at your old face; mine

neither—I just help 'em out. Don't you get it, baby?—*both* of us ghosts only *you* ain't noticed. We old and not rich and done the sin of leavin' slow. No use to fight it, you go with it or you break, boy; 'specially bones like *we* got.

NAT. (*shouting*) Traitor! Traitor in the ranks! It's people like you give old a bad name—

DANFORTH'S VOICE. (*shouting*) Carter—

NAT. It's *your* type that—

DANFORTH'S VOICE. Carter—(*PETER DANFORTH enters on the bridge,* U.L., *jogging; he is the same man who ran by earlier. DANFORTH is in his early forties and wears a newly purchased jogging outfit.*) Carter . . . ah, good, *there* you are, Carter . . .

MIDGE. (*glancing about, not sure who it is or where the voice is coming from*) Midge Carter, here I am.

DANFORTH. (*slowing his pace*) Here, up here . . . on the bridge . . . (*jogging in place, cordially*) Danforth . . . Peter Danforth, Twelve H . . .

MIDGE. (*squinting up*) Danforth, right . . .

DANFORTH. (*breathlessly*) Been looking for you—several days now—they told me you might be in this area—our meeting, remember?

MIDGE. Our meetin', yeah . . .

DANFORTH. How about right here, soon as I finish my run?

MIDGE. Right here, you got it.

DANFORTH. Be right with you . . . (*quickening his pace again*) Three more miles, be right with you, Carter; looking forward to it . . .

MIDGE. (*shouting up, as DANFORTH exits right*) Lookin' forward to the meetin', yessir; been on my schedule . . . (*suddenly whispering, terrified*) Oh shit, the Man, the Man, he found me—

NAT. What man?

MIDGE. *The* Man, *the* Man, been duckin' him, he *found* me.

NAT. *What* man? What is it, Carter?

MIDGE. (*sits on center bench, trembling, brushing off clothes, adjusting hat, trying to pull himself together*) Mr. Danforth, Twelve H, Head o' the Tenants' Committee. Place is goin' co-op, he says they got some reorganizin' to do, says he wants to see me private . . .

NAT. (*softly, nodding*) Ah, yes . . .

MIDGE. Last fellah wanted to see me private was when they found my wife Daisy under the Seventy-Ninth Street Crosstown. (*buttoning sweater, trying for a bit of dignity*) See, problem is, it's been gettin' around the buildin' that I'm kinda nearsighted—

NAT. (*sitting next to him*) Nearsighted? Helen *Keller* was *near*sighted.

MIDGE. Got the place memorized, see. But last week I'm in the basement, lady from Two A sees me walk right smack into the elevator door. Mrs. Carsten, Two A, she's standin' in the laundry-room watchin' me. Figured I'd fake her out, so I do it *again*, like I was *meanin'* to do it, like it's this *plan* I got to walk into the elevator door—dumb, dumb, *knowed* it was a dumb move while I was *doin'* it. Just kept slammin' into that elevator door till she went away. I'm shoutin', "gonna have this thing fixed in a jiffy, Mrs. Carsten!" Next thing I know Danforth wants to see me private. (*hits himself on the head*) Panicked on the *ropes* is what I did; that's what blew it for me in the ring too . . .

(*Silence for a moment.*)

NAT. (*quietly*) Are the cataracts in both eyes?

MIDGE. (*after a moment; quietly*) Yeah.

NAT. How many times removed?

MIDGE. Left twice, the right once. But they come back.

NAT. That's what they do. They're dependable. And how bad is the glaucoma?

MIDGE. Drops an' pills keep it down. 'Cept night-times. Night-times—

NAT. Night-times it's like you're trying to close your lid over a basketball.

MIDGE. No lie. No *lie.* When'd it start with you? Start with me four, five years back; nothin' on the sides. No p'ripheral vision, doc says. Five years back—(*He waves.*) So long, p'ripheral vision. Then one mornin' there's this spot in the middle . . .

NAT. Ah, the spot, the spot . . .

MIDGE. Like the moon, this dead pearly spot . . .

NAT. The moon exactly . . .

MIDGE. And it gets to growin' . . .

NAT. Oh, yes . . .

MIDGE. Then, thank the Lord, it stops. Then what you got is the pearly moon spot, no p'ripherals, and this ring between 'em where folks come in and out.

NAT. Exactly; like birds. (*leans close to him*) You get color or black and white?

MIDGE. Mostly blue. Blue shadows like. Weird thing is, all my dreams is still in full color, see everything real sharp and clear like when I was young—then I wake up and it's real life looks like a dream.

NAT. Exactly! Same with me *exactly*! I hadn't thought about it till this minute! (*his arm around MIDGE*) Carter, we're connected. Why? Because we both got vision. Who needs sight when we got vision! Connected! Yes, even with your cowardly personality and your chicken-shit attitude. Yes, I'm sure now. Our meeting with Danforth will go well, I'm convinced.

MIDGE. *Our* meetin'? What—

NAT. Yes, I have decided to handle this Danforth matter for you. Don't worry, the Exploiters, the Land-Owners, the Capitalist Fat Cats, I eat them for lunch.

MIDGE. (*alarmed*) Hold on now, boy, I never asked—

NAT. Don't thank me. I ask for nothing in return, only to see justice. Don't thank *me*; thank Karl Marx, thank Lenin, thank Gorky, thank Olgin—

MIDGE. Hey, don't need *none* o' you guys—

NAT. But mostly thank Ben Gold; in Nineteen-Nineteen I join the Communist Party and the human race and meet Ben Gold. *He's* the one, *that* was vision—(*as MIDGE starts to edge away from him on the bench*) Ben Gold who organized the Fur Workers and gave them a heart and a center and a voice! What a voice, you thought it was yours. I'm matching skins at Supreme Furs, he makes me Assistant Shop Chairman; I'm at his side when we win. A ten percent wage increase and the first forty-hour week in the city! We win! (*bangs his cane on the ground*) Where is he? Where is Danforth? Bring him to me. Bring me the Fascist four-flusher!

MIDGE. (*softly, covering his face*) Oh my God . . .

NAT. (*turns to answer MIDGE*) O.K., O.K., the Soviet Union, throw it up to me; everybody does. They screwed up, I'm the first one to admit it. I promise you, Carter, they lost me, *finished.* I gave up on them . . . but I never gave up on the ideas. The triumph of the proletariat, a workers' democracy, the ideas are still fine and beautiful, the ideas go on, they are better than the people who had them. Ben Gold, they hit him with the Taft-Hartley and the fire goes out, but the voice goes on; the conflict goes on like the turning of the stars and we will crush Danforth before supper-time. (*He taps his cane with finality; sits back, crosses his legs, waiting for his adversary. MIDGE is silent for a moment. Then he turns to NAT, quietly, calmly.*)

MIDGE. You done now? You finished talkin'? (*NAT nods, not looking at him.*) O.K., listen to me; Danforth comes, don't want you speakin'. Not a word. Not one word. Don't even want you here. Got it? You open your face once I'm gonna give Gilley ten bucks to nail you permanent. Got that? Am I comin' through clear?

NAT. (*turns to MIDGE, smiling graciously*) Too late. I have no choice. I'm obligated. The conflict between me and Danforth is inevitable. I am obligated to get you off your knees and into the sunlight.

MIDGE. No you ain't. Lettin' you outa that obligation right now. (*leans towards NAT, urgently*) *Please*, it's O.K., I got it all worked out what to say to him. Just gotta hang in till I get my Christmas tips, see—they only got to keep me three more months till Christmas and I'll be—

NAT. Christmas! Compromises! How do you think we lost Poland? Danforth has no right! The man has no right to dismiss you before your time—

MIDGE. Man, I'm eighty-*one*—

NAT. And when we finish with *him*, at five o'clock we'll take care of the hoodlum, Gilley; the one that walks you home. Together we'll teach *that* punk a lesson!

MIDGE. (*looks up at the sky, desperately*) Why, Lord? Why are you doing this to me? Lord, I asked you for help and you sent me a weird Commie blind man . . .

NAT. What Lord? Who is this Lord you're talking to? Oh *boy*, I can see I've got a lot of work to do here . . .

MIDGE. (*turning sharply* U.R.) Shit, here he comes, the Man comin' now . . .

NAT. (*turning* U.R.) Ah, good, I'm ready . . .

MIDGE. (*grips NAT's arm*) Please, baby; I'm askin' ya, please be quiet—

NAT. Calm down, Carter—

MIDGE. Never done you no harm—

NAT. It's not him anyway. (*leans to right, peering up at Bridge*) No, definitely not him. It's a pretty girl.

MIDGE. How do you know?

NAT. Because of the glow. When I could see, all pretty girls had a glow. Now what's left is the glow. That's how you can tell.

(*LAURIE enters* U.R. *on the Bridge, and she* is *a pretty girl; soft, delicate, innocent, about twenty-five, wearing a dress to match the gentle October day. Carrying a large sketchpad and a box of charcoals, she crosses to an old stone ledge beneath a lamppost at the far left side of the Bridge, unaware of MIDGE and NAT who are some distance below her. Once at the ledge she closes her eyes and breathes deeply, inhaling the view of the lake; then she settles herself on the ledge and proceeds briskly, studiously, to sketch the view—all this as MIDGE and NAT continue their dialogue.*)

NAT. (*continued*) Yes, definitely; a pretty girl . . .

MIDGE. (*rising urgently from bench*) Maybe so, but the Man comin' *soon*—(*pulling NAT to his feet*) time for the *Man*, time for you to *go*—

NAT. Calm down, Carter, you're hysterical—

MIDGE. (*moving NAT away from bench*) Ain't you got an appointment someplace? Whyn't you go tell somebody you're an Apache—

NAT. (*with genuine concern*) All right, all right, *you* will handle Danforth; I will permit it.

MIDGE. (*warily*) You mean that?

NAT. Of course, but first you must calm yourself—

MIDGE. I'll calm myself—

NAT. This is essential. In your present state the Land Baron will walk all over you; I cannot allow that. Here, this will do the trick—(*reaches quickly into his jacket-pocket, withdrawing small brown business-envelope*) Here, some Government Grass to relax you. Official, legal; dope from Uncle Sam. The doctor prescribes, the government pays; two ounces a month for the glaucoma. Dilates the capillaries, relieves the pressure; everywhere. (*takes a joint from the envelope*) Here. All rolled. Be my guest. Medicaid is paying.

MIDGE. (*peering anxiously off right*) Better not; makes me foolish sometimes. Ain't no time to get foolish—

NAT. Not foolish. Happy. I promise, you'll laugh at the Six O'Clock News. Even your children become amusing. (*lights joint, inhales, hands it out to MIDGE*) Please, calm yourself. Here, take a hit, Danforth will be a piece of cake; one puff, the man is a Danish.

MIDGE. (*still very much on guard*) You swear you'll keep your mouth shut when the Man comes, shut *tight*—I'll take a puff.

NAT. Here, direct from the White House. (*MIDGE hesitates a moment; then takes a deep drag.*) Good; now hold it in as long as you—

MIDGE. I know, I know; I was smokin' dope while you was eatin' Matzoh balls, baby. (*another deep drag, hands it back to NAT*) Fair stuff. Just fair.

(*The distant sound of the Carousel band-organ begins off left as though carried on the autumn breeze. LAURIE looks up from her sketching for a moment, smiles, hearing the gently drifting melody of*

"That Old Gang Of Mine." MIDGE and NAT will pass the joint back and forth between them as their dialogue continues, the grass gradually starting to reach them.

MIDGE. (*continued; glancing anxiously* U.R.) Man say three miles, he sure takin' it slow.

NAT. Maybe he dropped dead. (*on the inhale, handing joint to MIDGE*) A lot of these running people; boom.

MIDGE. (*on the inhale*) Young fellah like him?

NAT. They're the first ones; the young ones. Boom. They're running, they're smiling; boom. You should be here in the evening, they drop like flies . . . (*chuckling, taking joint from MIDGE*) Boom, boom, boom . . . (*MIDGE chuckles along with him, NAT studies the joint fondly for a moment.*) All my life I fought for Socialized Medicine . . .

MIDGE. Stopped smoking dope when I turned seventy . . .

NAT. (*peering up at LAURIE*) That girl just went from very pretty to beautiful . . .

MIDGE. Scared of goin' foolish. My Daddy went foolish five years before he died, didn't know his own name. Sad to see. Hope I ain't the only one hearin' that music.

NAT. (*moving towards bench, squinting up at LAURIE*) Now she's Hannah Pearlman . . .

MIDGE. Who?

NAT. (*sits on bench; softly*) Hannah Pearlman. She worked as a Finisher, stitched linings for yachting-caps, Shiffman's Chapeaux on West Broadway. Nineteen Twenty-One.

MIDGE. (*joins NAT at bench; squints up at LAURIE for a moment*) No, ain't her. Tell you who you got there; that's Ella Mae Tilden . . .

(*Both looking up at LAURIE as they talk, getting more and more stoned; the gentle Carousel music continuing, bringing the past with it on the breeze. Now, in this delicate, dappled, late-afternoon light, LAURIE truly seems to have the glow that NAT described.*)

NAT. Very shy, shyer even than me. She would sit on her stoop in the early evening, a fine, fine face like an artist would paint . . .

MIDGE. Ella Mae; best wife I had, number three. Five all told. It's Ella Mae give me John, it's John give me Billy, and it's Billy give me these teeth . . .

NAT. I passed that stoop a million times, I couldn't say hello. Funny-looking fingers from the stitching, she sat on the stoop with her hands hidden, like so . . .

MIDGE. Eight grandchildren professionals and Billy's the dentist. Billy give me this smile—(*He demonstrates.*) Put the teeth in, smiled, and left Ella Mae. Smile needed a new hat, and the hat made me walk a new way, which was out . . .

NAT. Also she was married. Yeah, went to work so her greenhorn husband could go to Law School, become an American Somebody. Comes June, Arnold Pearlman graduates, suddenly finds out he's an attorney with a yiddish-speaking wife who finishes yachting-caps. Boom; he leaves her for a smooth-fingered Yankee Doodle he met at school. Four months later Hannah

took the gas; a popular expression at that time for putting your head in an oven . . .

MIDGE. Poor Ella Mae cryin', me hearin' my new mouth say goodbye. She was near seventy then but when my mind moves to her she is fresh peach prime . . .

NAT. September, a month before she took the gas, I see her in the Grand Street Library, second floor reading-room. A special place, quiet, not even a clock; I'm at the main table with "Macbeth," I look up, there's Hannah Pearlman. She doesn't see me, her head is buried in a grammar book for a ten-year-old. She looks up, she knows me, she smiles. My heart goes directly into my ears, bang, bang, bang, I'm deaf. I don't speak. I can't speak. I'm there in the house of words, I can't speak. She puts her hands under the table, goes back to her book. After a while she leaves. I didn't *speak* . . .

MIDGE. (*bangs his fist on the bench*) Goddamn smile got me two more wives and nothin' but trouble! Damn these teeth and damn my wanderin' ways . . . (*Takes out huge handkerchief; the Carousel music fades.*)

NAT. I didn't *speak*, I didn't *speak* . . .

MIDGE. (*blowing his nose*) There's dope makes you laugh and dope makes you cry, I think this here's cryin' dope.

NAT. (*bangs his cane on the ground*) Stop, stop! Nostalgia, I hate it! The dread disease of old people! Kills more of us than heart failure!

MIDGE. (*drying his eyes*) When's the last time you made love to a woman?

NAT. Listen to him, more nostalgia! My poor shmeckle, talk about nostalgia! It comes up once a year, like Ground Hog Day. The last time I made love was July Tenth, Nineteen Seventy-One.

MIDGE. Was your wife still alive?

NAT. I certainly hope so.

MIDGE. No, I meant—

NAT. I know what you meant. With Ethel it wasn't always easy to tell. (*smacks his forehead*) *Shame* on me! A good woman, a fine woman, was it *her* fault I would always be in love with Hannah Pearlman?

MIDGE. See, last time for me I was bein' unfaithful. Damn my fickle soul, I cheated on them all. Daisy, I was seventy-six, still had somethin' on the side; somethin' new.

NAT. Carter, this is the most courageous thing I ever heard about you.

MIDGE. No courage to it, it's a curse. "Don't do it, Midge; don't *do* it," I kept sayin' while I did it. *Damn* my cheatin' soul.

NAT. No, no, you were *right*! You dared and did, I yearned and regretted. I *envy* you. You were always what I have only recently become.

MIDGE. A dirty old man.

NAT. A *romanticist*! A man of hope! Listen to me, I was dead once so I know things—it's not the sex, it's the romance. It's all in the head. Now, finally, I know this. The shmeckle is out of business, but still the romance remains, the adventure. That's all there *ever* was. The body came along for the ride. Do you understand me, Carter?

MIDGE. I'm thinkin' about it . . .

NAT. Because, frankly, right now I'm in love with this girl here.

MIDGE. (*after a moment*) Well, fact is, so am I. I got to admit. (*peers up at LAURIE for a few seconds*) Son-of-a-gun . . . First time I ever fell in love with a white woman.

NAT. The first? Why the first?

MIDGE. Worked out that way.

NAT. All the others were black? Only black women?

MIDGE. Listen, you ran with a wild, Commie crowd; where *I* come from you stuck with your own. Bein' a black man, I—

NAT. A what?

MIDGE. A black man. Y'see, in *my* day—

NAT. Wait. Stop. Excuse me . . . (*A beat; then NAT takes his bifocals out of his jacket-pocket, puts them on, leans very close to MIDGE. He studies him for a few moments; then, quietly:*) My God, you're right. You *are* a black man.

(*Silence for a moment. Then NAT bursts into laughter, pointing at MIDGE.*)

MIDGE. (*after a moment, catching on to the joke, a burst of laughter*) Sly devil, you sly ol' *devil* . . .

NAT. (*laughing happily, pointing at MIDGE*) Hey, had ya goin', had ya *goin'* there for a minute, didn't I . . . ?

MIDGE. (*claps his hands, delighted laughter building*) Had me goin', had me *goin'*, yeah . . . Lord, Lord . . .

NAT. (*hitting his knees, roaring*) I love it, I love it, I love it—(*Fresh gales of stoned laughter, they rock on the bench.*)

MIDGE. Stop, stop, I'm gonna die . . .

NAT. I'm gonna drop dead right here . . . (*suddenly stops laughing*) Wait a minute, Carter; is it *this* funny?

MIDGE. (*stops laughing, considers it, bursts into laughter again*) Yes, it is. It is, definitely . . . (*They point at each other, laughing at each other's laughter,*

laughing now at the fact that they are *laughing; they fall on each other, shaking with mirth, threatening to roll off the bench. MIDGE suddenly leans back on the bench and abruptly falls asleep, snoring loudly.*)

NAT. Carter, what are you doing? We're right in the middle . . . (*MIDGE keeps snoring.*) How do you like that? One joint, look at this.

(*MIDGE suddenly wakes up and, as if by request, bursts into song.*)

MIDGE. (*singing*)
"I'm Alabamy bound,
There'll be no heebie'-jeebies hangin' 'round . . .
(*rises to his feet, singing, strutting, gradually working in a small soft-shoe*)
Just gave the meanest ticket-man on earth
All I'm worth
To put my tootsies in an upper berth.
Just hear that choo choo sound,
I know that soon we're gonna 'cover ground . . ."

(*NAT rises to his feet, inspired, joining in the soft-shoe, finishing the song with him*)

MIDGE and NAT. (*harmonizing*)
"And then I'll holler so the world will know,
here I go,
I'm Alabamy Boooouuund!"

(*LAURIE, who has been listening to MIDGE and NAT sing their song from her ledge on the Bridge, far*

above them, smiles at them now, nods her approval, holds her hands up in a brief moment of applause, then returns to her sketching).

MIDGE. I think the woman's crazy about us.

NAT. Please, I knew it when she first showed up.

MIDGE. You got any more of that dope?

NAT. Now we're gonna do a Willy Howard routine. You think you were laughing *before*, wait'll you hear—

MIDGE. How about I do a Joe Turner song first, and *then* we do Willy Howard?

NAT. You just sang.

MIDGE. (*sitting NAT on bench*) That was half an hour ago.

NAT. Really?

MIDGE. (*looking up, announcing this for LAURIE*) "So Long, Goodbye Blues," by Big Joe Turner, Boss of the Blues—(*singing soulfully; a slow steady rhythm, snapping his fingers, performing for LAURIE*)
"Well now, so long, goodbye baby
Yeah, well, soon now I'm gonna be gone
And that's why I'm sayin', baby—"

NAT. (*a burst of applause, rising*) That was exquisite. Now here's Willy Howard—(*glancing up at LAURIE, performing this for her*) O.K., Carter, I'm Willy Howard, you're the Straight Man. Whatever I say to you, you say to me "I'm not Rappaport." You got that?

MIDGE. Yeah.

NAT. O.K., picture we just met.

MIDGE. O.K.

NAT. Hello, Rappaport!

MIDGE. I'm not Rappaport.

NAT. Hey, Rappaport, what happened to you? You used to be a tall, fat guy; now you're a short, skinny guy.

MIDGE. I'm not Rappaport.

NAT. You used to be a young fellah with a beard, now you're an old guy without a beard! What happened to you?

MIDGE. I'm not Rappaport.

NAT. What happened, Rappaport? You used to dress up nice, now you got old dirty clothes!

MIDGE. I'm not Rappaport.

NAT. And you changed your *name* too!

(*A beat—then NAT bursts into laughter; even if he wasn't stoned, this routine would leave him helpless. MIDGE regards him solemnly, thinking it over—then suddenly gets it, joining NAT's laughter, pounding NAT's shoulder.*)

MIDGE. (*through his laughter*) "And you changed your *name too* . . ." Lord, Lord . . . (*shouting up at LAURIE to make sure she got the punch-line*) "And you changed your *name too*!"

DANFORTH'S VOICE. (*shouting*) Right with you, Carter . . . (*DANFORTH enters on bridge, at left, jogging.*)

MIDGE. (*still laughing*) Oh, shit; he's here . . .

DANFORTH. Right with you . . .

NAT. (*laughing*) He's here! Good!

MIDGE. (*trying to control his laughter*) He's here, gotta shape up, boy . . . (*scurries to bench to get NAT's briefcase*)

NAT. (*delighted*) Don't worry, we'll take care of him—

MIDGE. No, no, there's no "*we*"; there's no "we" here—(*grips NAT's arm urgently, tries to stop himself from laughing*) You don't say *nothin'*, Mister, you don't open your *mouth* . . . (*a fresh burst of laughter*) You'll ruin me, boy; I'll be out on the street *tomorrow* . . .

(*DANFORTH stops on Bridge, winding down from his run, jogging in place, controlling his breaths, stretching himself against the Bridge lamp-post at right.*)

NAT. A piece of cake. The little I can see, the man is a wreck.

MIDGE. (*still chuckling softly*) Please, *please*, baby . . . are you my friend?

NAT. Of course.

MIDGE. Then go over there, friend. (*points to stone ledge, far left, at edge of lake*) Sit over there and don't open your mouth. Not a word.

NAT. (*after a moment*) You'll call me when you need me?

MIDGE. (*hands NAT his briefcase*) Soon's I need you. Please, move it.

NAT. (*He has stopped chuckling.*) O.K., O.K. . . . (*Reluctantly, he starts down left.*) Remember, I'm ready.

MIDGE. I know that.

(*DANFORTH, having completed his winding-down ritual on the Bridge, starts down towards MIDGE at the bench, entering through the Tunnel Archway, mopping himself with a towel. NAT settles himself with some dignity on the far left ledge, some distance from them, crossing his legs, his briefcase and his cane at his side. LAURIE has stretched out on the Bridge ledge above, her eyes closed, a "Walkman" plugged into her ears, her shoulder-bag under her head.*)

DANFORTH. Carter, hi.

MIDGE. Hi.

DANFORTH. Don't think we've ever really been for-

mally introduced. I'm Pete Danforth. (*They shake hands.*)

MIDGE. Hi, Pete. They call me "Midge."

DANFORTH. Hi, Midge. Glad we decided to meet here. Chance to stay outside; y'know, after my run. Truth is, I hate running. Being immortal takes too much time. (*He chuckles.*)

MIDGE. (*sitting on bench*) "Midge" for midget. My third wife Ella Mae give me the name; near two and three-quarter inches taller'n me so she called me "Midge." Name stuck with me fifty years.

DANFORTH. Tell ya one thing, it's good to be reminded of what a great park this is. Goddamn oasis in the middle of the jungle.

MIDGE. Next two wives was normal-sized women, so it didn't make much sense. Name stuck with me anyway.

DANFORTH. Luckily my teaching schedule gives me two free afternoons this semester. Chance to really use this park. It's been years. I teach Communication Arts, over at the Manhattan Institute on Sixtieth. No air in the place. Dreary. Been thinking about holding one of my classes out here in the—

MIDGE. What kinda arts?

DANFORTH. Communication. Communication of all kinds. Personal, interpersonal, and public; pretty much the whole range of—

MIDGE. You teach talkin'.

DANFORTH. (*He smiles.*) More or less; yes.

MIDGE. So you must know we 'bout at the end of the chit-chat section now; right?

DANFORTH. Right, right . . . (*sits next to MIDGE on bench, carefully folding his towel*) Funny thing, by the way, I really didn't know—that is, I wasn't aware until just a few days ago—that you actually worked in the building; that you were employed there.

MIDGE. Keep to myself. Do my job.

DANFORTH. Of course. I just wanted you to know that the problem we've got here had not come to my attention sooner simply because you, personally, had not come to my attention. Frankly, I've been living there three years and I've never run into you.

MIDGE. I'm mostly down in the boiler-room; don't get a lot of drop-ins.

DANFORTH. Of course. (*silence for a moment*)

MIDGE. Keep movin', boy, you on a roll now.

DANFORTH. Yes, well, as you know, Three Twenty-One will be going Co-op in November. We'll be closing on that in November. We've got Brachman and Rader as our Managing Agent; I think they're doing an excellent job. As President of the Tenants' Committee I'm pretty much dependent, the whole Committee is really, on their advice; we've basically got to place our faith in the recommendations of our Managing Agency.

MIDGE. And they're recommendin' you dump me.

DANFORTH. Midge, we've got some real problems about your remaining with the building staff.

MIDGE. Ain't that the same as dumpin' me?

DANFORTH. (*after a moment*) Midge, it's not for four weeks, it's not till November, but, yes, we will have to let you go. There are various benefits, Union Pension Plan, six weeks Severance Pay; that's a check for six weeks salary the day you leave, that's . . . Midge, I'm sorry . . . (*sadly; shaking his head*) God, I hate this; I really hate this, Midge . . .

MIDGE. How 'bout *I* hate it first, then you get your turn.

DANFORTH. (*quietly*) Midge, think about it, isn't this the best thing for *every*body? The pressure on you, tenants' complaints, trying to keep up. (*his hand on MIDGE's arm*) Time, Midge—we're not dealing with an

evil Tenants' Committee or a heartless Managing Agent—the only villain here is time. We're *all* fighting it. Jesus, man, have you seen me *run*? It's a joke. I can't do what *I* did a few years ago either.

MIDGE. Hey, don't sweat it, son. See, Brachman and Rader, all due respect, is full of shit. Fact is, you need me. (*leans back calmly*) Got an ol' Erie City boiler down there; heart of the buildin'. Things about that weird machine no livin' man knows, 'cept Midge Carter. Christmas. Take me till Christmas to train a new man how to handle that devil. (*pats DANFORTH's knee*) You got it, have the new man set up for ya by Christmas.

DANFORTH. Midge, we're replacing the Erie City. We're installing a fully automatic Rockmill Five Hundred; it requires no maintenance. (*Silence for a moment; MIDGE does not respond.*) You see, the Rockmill's just one of many steps in an extensive modernization plan; new electrical system, plumbing arteries, lobby renovation—

MIDGE. Well, *now* you're *really* gonna need me. Pipes, wires, you got forty years of temporary stuff in there, no blueprints gonna tell you where. Got it all in my head; know what's behind every wall, every stretch of tar. (*clamps his hand on DANFORTH's shoulder*) O.K., here's the deal. My place in the basement, *I* stay on there free like I been, *you* get all my consultin' free. No *salary*, beauty deal for ya—

DANFORTH. Midge, to begin with, your unit in the basement is being placed on the Co-op market as a garden apartment—

MIDGE. Don't you get it, baby? Blueprints, blueprints, I'm a walkin' treasure-map—

DANFORTH. Please understand, we've had a highly qualified team of building engineers doing a survey for months now—

MIDGE. (*suddenly*) Hey, forget it.

DANFORTH. You see, they—

MIDGE. I said forget it. Ain't interested in the job no more. Don't *want* the job. Withdrawin' my offer. (*turns away; opens his newspaper*)

DANFORTH. (*moving closer*) Midge, listen to me . . .

MIDGE. Shit, all these years I been livin' in a garden apartment. Wished I knew sooner, woulda had a lot more parties.

DANFORTH. I have some news that I think will please you . . . (*his hand on MIDGE's arm*) Two of the older tenants on the Committee, Mrs. Carpenter, Mr. Lehman, have solved your relocation problem. Midge, there's an apartment for you at the Amsterdam. No waiting-list for *you*, Mr. Lehman seems to know the right people. Caters especially to low-income senior adults and it's right here in the neighborhood you've grown used to—

MIDGE. Amsterdam's ninety percent foolish people. Ever been in the lobby there? Ever seen them sittin' there? Only way you can tell the live ones from the dead ones is how old their newspapers are.

DANFORTH. As I understood it from Mr. Lehman—

MIDGE. Amsterdam's the end of the line, boy.

DANFORTH. I'm sorry, I thought—

MIDGE. You ask Mr. Lehman *he* wants to go sit in that lobby; you ask Mrs. Carpenter *she* ready to leave the world. You tell 'em both "no thanks" from Midge, he's lookin' for a garden apartment.

DANFORTH. See, the problem is—

MIDGE. Problem is you givin' me bad guy news, tryin' to look like a good guy doin' it.

DANFORTH. (*after a moment*) You're right, Midge. You're right. You're dead right. (*bows his head, genu-*

inely upset) I've handled this whole thing badly, stupidly, *stupidly*. I'm sorry, this whole thing . . . this is terrible . . .

MIDGE. (*patting DANFORTH's hand*) Don't worry, Pete, you're gonna get through it.

DANFORTH. (*rises, pacing in front of bench*) Damn it, I tell you what I *can* do—what I *will* do—I'm getting you *ten* weeks Severance, Midge. *Forget* six, a check for ten weeks salary the day you go, I'm gonna hand it to you *personally*. And if the Committee doesn't agree, the hell with them; I'll shove it through, that's all. Least I can do. Ten weeks Severance; how does that sound to ya?

MIDGE. Well, better than six, I guess . . . (*nods thoughtfully*) Sounds better, but I—

DANFORTH. (*shaking MIDGE's hand with both of his*) That's a promise, Midge. Shove it down their throats if I have to. (*moving briskly towards the stone steps at right to exit*) I'm sure we'll have no problem with—

NAT. Unacceptable. (*calmly, rising from ledge at far left*) We find that unacceptable. (*DANFORTH stops, NAT moves slowly towards him.*) Mr. Danforth . . . Mr. Danforth, I'll speak frankly, you're in a lot of trouble. (*brisk handshake*) Ben Reissman; Reissman, Rothman, Rifkin and Grady. Forgive me for not announcing myself sooner but I couldn't resist listening to you bury yourself. Our firm represents Mr. Carter, but, more to the point, we act as legal advisors to the HURTSFOE unit of Mr. Carter's union. HURTSFOE; I refer to the Human Rights Strike Force, a newly-formed automatic-action unit who, I'm sorry to say, you're going to be hearing a lot from in the next few weeks. (*sits next to MIDGE on bench, DANFORTH standing before them*)

Personally, I find their methods too extreme; but I report and advise, that's all I can do. The ball is rolling here, Mr. Danforth.

MIDGE. Go away.

NAT. Mr. Carter keeps saying to us "go away"; we were arguing this very point as you ran by earlier. But, of course, as he knows, we are an automatic function of his union for the protection of all members. I have no choice.

MIDGE. (*grips NAT's arm*) Man wants to give me ten weeks severance—

NAT. A joke. The fellow is obviously a jokester.

DANFORTH. Mr. Reissman—

NAT. Speak to me.

DANFORTH. I'm not sure that I understand the—

NAT. Of course not. How could you? (*crosses his legs, continuing calmly*) I will educate you. The situation is simple, I will make it simpler. We don't accept ten weeks severance, we don't accept twenty. What we accept is that Mr. Carter be retained in the capacity of advisor during your reconstruction period, which I assume will take a year, maybe two. At this point, we'll talk further.

MIDGE. (*to DANFORTH*) I don't know him; I don't *know* this man.

NAT. Quite so; Mr. Carter is more familiar with Rifkin and Grady, the gentler gentlemen in our firm. It was thought best to send "The Cobra" in on this one. An affectionate term for me at the office.

DANFORTH. (*sharply*) Look, Riessman—

NAT. Speak to me.

DANFORTH. (*steps towards him, firmly*) I don't know what your game is, fellah, and I don't know your organization; but I *do* know Local Thirty-Two of the Service Employees Union—

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