

CAFE '50S

a medium-rare comedy with a shake by

STEVE KLUGER

*Everybody's talkin' 'bout the new sound,
Funny, but it's still rock and roll to me.*

—The Piano Man

FOR LICENSING AND PRODUCTION INFORMATION:

rights@stevekluger.com

Lisa Callamaro: (310) 274-6783

Gail Hochman: (212) 840-5760

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Cast of Characters

T-BIRD
MELODY
HOUND DOG
STREAKER
JOHNNY ANGEL
VENUS

and

JUKE

The whole deal takes place in a small burger joint in
Venice, California, on Monday, February 3, 1964.

ACT I — One, Two, Three O’Clock, Four O’Clock Rock

ACT II — Five, Six, Seven O’Clock, Eight O’Clock Rock

There will be a fifteen-minute intermission between rama-lama-
ding-dongs to give the juke box a chance to cool out.

ACT ONE

(While we're all sittin' out front and waitin' for things to start, we notice all of a sudden that the house lights are startin' to go out real slow. We also hear the sounds of this cheap AM transistor job slidin' from station to station.)

RADIO. *(Static.)*Dealey Plaza, where President Kennedy was assassinated ten weeks ago. The Commission expects to uncover evidence that Lee Harvey Oswald, an admitted Marxist— *(Static; commercial.)* “....go better with Coca-Cola, things go better with Coke. Life is much more fun when you're—“ *(Static.)*now estimated at \$15,000, disappeared from First Federal Savings and Loan earlier today. According to officers at the scene, the theft occurred at 10:43 this morning, when a person or persons unknown— *(Static.)*number one oldie of 1957—“That'll Be the Day,” by Buddy Holly and the Crickets. Holly would have been twenty-seven if he'd lived, but the plane crash five years ago tonight that also claimed the lives of Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper put an end to what many felt was the Golden Age of Rock and Roll.....

(While the radio fades out, we hear the first verse of this song called “American Pie” by somebody name of Don McLean.)

McLEAN. A LONG, LONG TIME AGO, I CAN STILL REMEMBER HOW THAT MUSIC USED TO MAKE ME SMILE. AND I KNEW IF I HAD MY CHANCE THAT I COULD MAKE THOSE PEOPLE DANCE, AND MAYBE THEY'D BE HAPPY FOR AWHILE. BUT FEBRUARY MADE ME SHIVER, WITH EVERY PAPER I'D DELIVER. BAD NEWS ON THE DOORSTEP—I COULDN'T TAKE ONE MORE STEP. I CAN'T REMEMBER IF I CRIED WHEN I READ ABOUT HIS WIDOWED BRIDE. BUT SOMETHING TOUCHED ME DEEP INSIDE. THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED.

(Boom. Lights out. Suddenly, in the dark, this beat-up old Wurlitzer 1015—which we all used to call “Juke”—lights up, cuts off McLean, and begins to play.)

JUKE. *(Barry Mann.)* WHO PUT THE BOMP IN THE BOMP-BOMP-BOMP-BOMP-BOMP?...WHO PUT THE RAM IN THE RAMA LAMA DING DONG?

(Well, by now the lights are all comin' back on, this time up there on the stage, and we're in this burger joint we once hung out at in the old days, back when fries only cost a quarter and life was still a kick. Or a hoot, dependin' on your vocabulary. It was down there by the beach in Venice, California, with the blonde chickies and the bubble-headed surfers, right across the street from this drugstore where they wouldn't serve ice cream cones after 9:30, even if you got there at 9:29 and a half.)

(Except for the fact that there's bunches of packin' crates scattered across the floor, the inside of the cafe looks like a malt shop you'd see on “Dobie Gillis”. I mean, what did you expect? On the walls, there's movie posters, Dr. Pepper thermometers, James Dean's face everywhere, and pennants from the years when the Milwaukee Braves and the Cleveland Indians went all the way—if you can believe that. Juke is upstage center by the door; all over the place is tables and chairs, which you hafta have if you're gonna sit down and eat, and over on the right is a whole counter that really works. I mean, we're talkin' serious soda jerkin' here. Oh, yeah—one other thing. With the tube of different colored lights archin' up and around the proscenium—and not overlookin' the fact that the long counter's shaped sorta like a phonograph arm—if you closed your eyes halfway, you might almost think the whole deal took place inside of a juke box.)

(Right now, there's this guy standin' upstage and smokin' this butt, starin' real quiet down at Juke and makin' with the deep thinker bit. This is T-BIRD. A real prince, y'know? He's about 35 and

looks it. Dressed in a pair of jeans, a white t-shirt, and a black leather jacket that says "The Peanut Gang" on the back, he's also wearin' a biker's cap that covers his blond hair. What's left of it. Hands in pockets, he listens to Juke for another couple of seconds, then walks downstage and faces front.)

T-BIRD. See, the way I got it figured is this. The flip side of gettin' old is that you don't gotta make no more excuses for bein' young. This here is a fact. Like in the old days when you were home gettin' ready to go cruise the Boulevard, and you couldn't leave the house until your pits smelled like Rose Lotion Vel. (*Removin' his cap.*) Or when you'd try to con a blind date into thinkin' that your hairline was *supposed* to start behind your ears. (*Over his shoulder; to Juke.*) HEY! I'M TALKIN' HERE!

(Juke shuts off, real PO'd.)

T-BIRD. (*Indicatin' Juke.*) He don't like me very much. (*Puttin' out the butt.*) But you know what? The minute you hit the big three-five, they stop askin' all the funny questions and makin' with the weird rules. You finally get to call it "B.O." and "bald". Nice, huh? And if the little woman should happen to mention that she ain't been gettin' any from you lately, you don't gotta worry that she's onto the number you're doin' with the little chicky from Pawtucket, on account of after a certain age, nobody *expects* your dick to keep regular hours. So what the hell do I care I can't run the mile? (*A beat.*) These are conclusions that you come to after three years of med school, where by the time they give you a rotatin' internship—whatever the hell *that* means—the only thing you've learned if you're lucky is which thermometer goes in which end. Face it. Life is fucked. So you got three choices. You can either bump yourself off, which is totally non-productive; you can drive a convertible through downtown Dallas, where they'll do it *for ya*; or you can learn how to stop the clock. Now me, personally—(*He sorta sighs and puts a finger up to his head.*)—I'd prefer makin' it with the business end of a .45. (*Lookin' down and*

mumblin'.) That's what happens when you lose the only thing that ever really mattered. (*Pause, then a shrug.*) On the other hand—realistically speakin'—who'd wanna see a terrific guy like me six feet under, huh?

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. (*Bill Haley.*) SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR....

T-BIRD. (*To Juke.*) Blow me.

(Juke switches off as MELODY enters from behind the counter. She's a real dish. Dressed in a red waitress uniform, saddle shoes, and a Peanut Gang jacket, she's somewhere in her early thirties, and right now she looks kinda upset.)

MELODY. T-Bird, there was no answer.

T-BIRD. (*Crossin' to the counter.*) Whaddaya mean, there was no answer?

MELODY. I mean I let it ring twenty-six times and nothing happened. I have this B.A. in psychology, T-Bird. It makes me very perceptive that way.

T-BIRD. He was probably in the can. Gimme a La Bamba Burger, huh?

MELODY. What do I look like, your concubine? Besides, we're out of chili.

T-BIRD. How can we be outta chili?!? I ordered six cases last Thursday!

MELODY. Johnny Angel ate it. (*Pause.*) No wonder he's at the clinic.

T-BIRD. No wonder he's in the can.

MELODY. T-Bird, I'm really worried about him.

T-BIRD. Yeah, well worry about *me*, why don'tcha? I'm starvin'—

MELODY. Why is he there? He doesn't *look* sick.

T-BIRD. Gimme the Marlon Brando, huh? With a side of beans and lotsa onion?

MELODY. *(To herself.) Why?*

T-BIRD. Because I ain't had a fuckin' thing to eat since three Twinkies yesterday night. I thought my metabolism was gonna drop dead. You know, I got this theory it's all Donna Reed's fault on account of the fudge and the brownies and the chocolate—you ain't movin'. *(Pause.)* What are you waitin' for?

MELODY. An answer.

T-BIRD. Melody, that's a very delicate matter. I don't think my buddy'd care to have me discuss it in public.

MELODY. What public? There's nobody here.

T-BIRD. That's right. Rub it in, why don'tcha?

MELODY. T-Bird—

T-BIRD. Okay—lemme put it this way. Whatsa matter with Johnny Angel is what sometimes happens when you hit the sack with somebody you don't hardly know, and you fail to take the necessary precautions. You get my drift?

MELODY. Yes.

T-BIRD. Terrific. Gimme the Marlon Brando.

MELODY. He's got a social disease?

T-BIRD. No, he's havin' an abortion! Wouldya make me lunch!!

(Suddenly, from outside, we hear this crash. T-BIRD leaps from his seat and races for the door.)

T-BIRD. What the hell was that?

MELODY. Don't look. It'll only spoil your disposition.

T-BIRD. I ain't got no disposition.

MELODY. I forgot.

T-BIRD. *(Starin' outside.)* Jesus Christ, another bulldozer. *(Turnin' to MELODY.)* Look at 'em massin' out there like the Fifth Panzer Division at Anzio.

MELODY. Pork Chop Hill.

T-BIRD. Anzio. I and Korea did not get along. *(Stickin' his head out the door.)* IT'S STILL MINE FOR ANOTHER TEN HOURS! SO KISS MY ASS!

MEN'S VOICES. *(In unison.)* FUCK YOU, SKINHEAD!

(T-BIRD slams the door and goes back to the counter.)

MELODY. I could be wrong, but I don't think they like you very much.

T-BIRD. For a change, you could be right. *(Thinkin'.)* Melody, I got an idea. How many burgers would we hafta sell to come up with the scratch by midnight?

MELODY. Eight thousand, three hundred and forty-six.

T-BIRD. Excuse me while I blow my brains out.

MELODY. Yeah, well, clean up the mess when you're done. I already packed the sponges.

T-BIRD. You think I'm foolin'?

MELODY. T-Bird, it's still possible.

T-BIRD. You really believe that?

MELODY. You really want an answer?

T-BIRD. Thanks for the support.

MELODY. Don't mention it. *(Turnin' to Juke.)* You need anything?

(Juke lights up—)

JUKE. *(The Chordettes.)* LOLLIPOP, LOLLIPOP, OH, LOLLI, LOLLI, LOLLI, LOLLIPOP....

MELODY. *(Mumblin' to herself.)* Everybody's a smart-ass....

(—and keeps on playin' underneath.)

T-BIRD. You know what really burns me up? You know what really eats me? I mean, I don't mind bein' condemned. I don't even mind gettin' torn down. But for Christ's sake—they don't even wanna put anything else *up!*

MELODY. You want to hear something worse?

T-BIRD. Not particularly.

MELODY. We're out of onions, too.

T-BIRD. You see?!? There *ain't* no point in goin' on!

MELODY. T-Bird, they're only onions—

T-BIRD. (*Risin'*.) Melody, you mind tellin' me somethin'? How come whenever life decides to take a crap, it does it all at once and on the same guy? Huh? I mean, look at the calendar. It hadda be February third, didn't it? It couldn't of been March or October or Ash Fuckin' Wednesday, could it of?

MELODY. You said you weren't going to bring up Cricket!

T-BIRD. I lied. (*Mumblin'*.) Five effin' years tonight, and I still keep thinkin' he's gonna walk through that goddamned door.

MELODY. T-Bird, I don't want to talk about it.

T-BIRD. I know you don't. That's because you'll believe anything they tell you. Ain't that right?

MELODY. Why can't you just face facts?

T-BIRD. I *am* facin' facts. What did they find when they put out the fire, huh? A pair of wheels, the dashboard, a front seat, and those two dice he had hangin' from the rearview mirror. Period.

MELODY. Yeah, but—

T-BIRD. But nothin'. If it had went over the cliff with him *in* it, there woulda been a body, too. Call me nuts, but that's the way it usually works. And the rules were the same in '59! (*Pause.*) Don't worry. Cricket'll be back. One of these days. So don't talk to me about facts.

MELODY. T-Bird—

T-BIRD. Aaah, forget it. (*Pacin'*.) Besides, I got enough on my mind anyway. I mean, we got a unit to protect here, you know? What's *left* of us. And what the hell are we gonna put for "Home Address" after today, you wanna tell me that?

MELODY. Well, the Biltmore Garage wants a grand, but we ain't got a grand on hand.

T-BIRD. Keep it up.

MELODY. What are you going to do—fire me again?

T-BIRD. Worse. I could marry you again.

MELODY. You wouldn't dare.

T-BIRD. (*Threatenin'*.) Try me.

MELODY. T-Bird, what are you so worried about? This is what we have Johnny Angel for.

T-BIRD. Some leader. I ain't noticed him *leadin'* nothin' lately.

MELODY. Dammit, T-Bird, why isn't he here yet?

T-BIRD. Because they gotta check his corpuscles, they gotta check his ticker, and they gotta find out if his lymphocytes are still hangin' out or whether they went to Santa Barbara for the weekend. *That's* why he ain't here yet. When Johnny Angel gets a social disease, he does it with class.

MELODY. I thought he said it was just a couple of tests!

T-BIRD. Those *are* just a couple of tests. What the hell did you think he meant—multiple choice? Besides, at least we know where he is. The last time he pulled a disappearin' act like this, he turned up in Philadelphia lookin' for Venus. Go figure that one out—'cause I gave up.

MELODY. Then you've never had your heart broken.

T-BIRD. I ain't? Only about a million times, that's all.

(*There is another crash from outside.*)

T-BIRD. A million and one.

MELODY. T-Bird, where did you learn all that? About the corpuscles? I mean, no offense, but I never think of you as having a cerebrum.

T-BIRD. Johns Hopkins. Pre-med. And fuck you.

MELODY. What's a lymphocyte?

T-BIRD. Beats the shit outta me. Why do you think I quit? Because I—

MELODY AND T-BIRD. (*In unison.*) —just don't like knowin' about all that extra-curricular activity goin' on inside my body. It makes me feel like I'm runnin' a motel.

MELODY. If this were a quiz show, I could clean up.

T-BIRD. (*Runnin' a finger across the counter.*) That'd be a first. (*Pause; lookin' down sad.*) Did I ever tell you about—

MELODY. —the eight-year-old with the bad heart, and the clamp on the wrong valve, but nobody believed you, so he died on the table?

T-BIRD. Yeah.

MELODY. No. (*Pointin'*.) You want a tomato on this?

T-BIRD. If it ain't brown yet.

(He turns and gives the restaurant the old once-over.)

T-BIRD. Terrific lunch-hour clientele. Has *anybody* been in today?

MELODY. Kelly was here.

T-BIRD. Swell.

MELODY. She had the Father Knows Best—

T-BIRD. And I paid for it, right?

MELODY. T-Bird, don't start on Kelly.

T-BIRD. That does it. You know, if they wasn't already acin' this joint, I'd do it myself. You can't make no profit—

(MELODY chimes in.)

T-BIRD AND MELODY. —livin' in the past.

(We hear a police siren growin' in volume. Like he was almost used to it, T-BIRD rises, crosses up center, and opens the door. He waits by it like he's got all the time in the world, which, come to think of it, maybe he has.)

T-BIRD. You think I'm kiddin' this time, don'tcha? *Don'tcha?* Well, it just so happens that I got an idea. I'm gonna go into business sellin' fallout shelters. Johnson'll kiss my ass.

(There's this poundin' of feet as HOUND DOG races through the open door. He's short and energetic and wearin' the most un-cool Hawaiian shirt you ever saw in your life. I mean, we're talkin' fuckin' ugly here. He hops onto the counter and does a karate kick—)

HOUND DOG. Ay-aaaaaaah!

(—then drops down behind it, out of sight, while the sirens meanwhile get louder. T-BIRD shuts the door and goes back to his seat.)

MELODY. A fallout shelter, huh? Last week it was a bowling alley. What happened?

T-BIRD. It don't matter. It's all progress.

MELODY. I'm not talking about progress. I'm talking about *you*.

T-BIRD. And *I'm* talkin' about Kelly.

MELODY. Kelly is a regular customer!

T-BIRD. KELLY IS A COCKER SPANIEL!

MELODY. There's no point arguing with you.

(She exits into the kitchen. T-BIRD calls out after her.)

T-BIRD. WELL, *ISN'T SHE?* *(No response.)* GO ON, *DENY IT!*

(He shakes his head, disgusted, and leans over the counter. The sirens have faded.)

T-BIRD. Hey, Mumbles. They're gone.

HOUND DOG'S VOICE. Are you sure?

(T-BIRD sighs and glances out the door.)

T-BIRD. No—actually, there's eleven squad cars out there disguised as a pet store.

(HOUND DOG's eyes appear over the counter.)

HOUND DOG. I got the dough.

(He sticks out a closed fist and opens it over T-BIRD's palm. A whole bunch of change drops out. T-BIRD looks down.)

T-BIRD. Nice haul. There's even some nickels in this one.

(HOUND DOG hops over the counter.)

HOUND DOG. Hey, look, baby, you gotta start small. Pocket shots first, then POW! You run the table. Ay-aaaaaaah! *(Another kick.)* Hey, Juke!

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Silhouettes.)* GET A JOB....

T-BIRD. *(Countin' change and indicatin' Juke.)* Go easy on him. He's actin' a little weird.

HOUND DOG. Knock it off. You'll hurt his feelings.

T-BIRD. A talkin' can opener ain't *got* no feelings.

(Peeved, Juke shuts himself off.)

HOUND DOG. See? *(Sittin'.)* Hey, did you hear—

T-BIRD. You're interruptin' my train of thought. I'm almost up to a quarter.

HOUND DOG. *Silver Screen* is having this contest where you're supposed to write in whether you think Inger Stevens' tits are real, and at the end of the month there's this drawing where— *(Noticin' T-BIRD still countin'.)* What are you, the Secretary of the Treasury? How much is there?

T-BIRD. Two dollars and eighty-six cents.

HOUND DOG. Will that help?

T-BIRD. You kiddin'? It won't even feed the rats.

HOUND DOG. All right, all right. Then put it on my tab. How much more do I owe you?

T-BIRD. Fourteen thousand dollars.

HOUND DOG. Since when?

T-BIRD. Since the Veal Sinatra day before yesterday. You'll get my statement in the mail.

HOUND DOG. Don't worry. I'll pay you back. Soon as I get a job.

T-BIRD. You *got* a job. *(Dead silence.)* Don't you? *(More silence.)* Answer me, dick-face.

HOUND DOG. It wasn't my fault! I swear to God it wasn't my fault! I never said I could tune an engine.

T-BIRD. They don't can you on account of not bein' able to tune an engine.

HOUND DOG. Yeah? Well, they don't promote you for it, either.

T-BIRD. What did you take?

HOUND DOG. Nothing.

T-BIRD. What did you take?

HOUND DOG. Nothing!

T-BIRD. Look at me—

HOUND DOG. A CARBURETOR, ALL RIGHT? I TOOK A CARBURETOR! BUT IT WAS A *LITTLE* ONE!

T-BIRD. Uh-huh. And this little carburetor—did it have anything attached to it? Like a Buick?

HOUND DOG. No!

T-BIRD. Are you sure?

HOUND DOG. YES!

T-BIRD. But you lost your job on account of it.

HOUND DOG. So what?

T-BIRD. YOU DON'T EVEN GOT A CAR!

HOUND DOG. RIGHT! BUT AT LEAST I GOT A CARBURETOR! NOW GET OFF MY ASS!

(T-BIRD shoves him into a chair and sits next to him.)

T-BIRD. Yeah? And assumin' you find a vehicle in which to *put* this carburetor—and assumin' even further that they give you your license back, which is extremely unlikely before the age of ninety, whaddaya got in mind for an agenda? Drag racin' on Pacific Coast Highway?

HOUND DOG. T-Bird, that was Cricket's idea—

T-BIRD. I know a terrific hairpin turn at Trancas Canyon—

HOUND DOG. IT WASN'T MY FAULT! IT WAS *RAINING*—

(MELODY re-enters and crosses to the table.)

MELODY. Hound Dog, you eating?

T-BIRD. No.

HOUND DOG. Yes

T-BIRD. *(To MELODY.)* What do we have for under \$2.86?

MELODY. Sour milk and day-old bread.

(T-BIRD nods and hands her the change.)

T-BIRD. But make it look nice. He's my friend.

MELODY. You could have fooled me.

(She exits. There's this real awkward silence.)

T-BIRD. Look, you know I didn't mean that.

HOUND DOG. I guess.

T-BIRD. —only around this time of year, I start gettin' sore all over again. It's kinda like birthdays—there's no way around 'em. Right?

HOUND DOG. T-Bird, you're not the only one who's allowed to miss him.

T-BIRD. Yeah. *(Pause.)* I know. *(Pause.)* Put back the fork.

HOUND DOG. What?

T-BIRD. The fork. The one in your pocket. Put it back.

(HOUND DOG takes a fork out of his ass pocket and puts it real gentle on the table, like he didn't mean to steal it.)

HOUND DOG. I don't know how it got there! I swear to God!

T-BIRD. Maybe it walked.

HOUND DOG. Maybe it did. So how come Johnny Angel isn't here yet?

T-BIRD. How do I know how come he ain't here yet? What do I look like—*What's My Line?*

HOUND DOG. I thought it was just a couple of tests.

T-BIRD. It was just a couple of tests. And panel, that's five down. Arlene Francis, you got anything to say?

(There's this loud crash from outside. HOUND DOG jumps, scared shitless.)

HOUND DOG. What the hell was that?

T-BIRD. The anvil chorus. There's going to be another one in three seconds. They always travel in pairs.

(Another crash, only a weaker one.)

T-BIRD. That was the piano version. *(Mumblin'.)* Christ, what's the use?

(HOUND DOG is peerin' out the door.)

HOUND DOG. There's another bulldozer pulling up. That makes three. *(Pause.)* It looks like they're having a convention.

T-BIRD. They can't wait, can they? We ain't even cooled yet and they can't wait.

HOUND DOG. Know what this reminds me of? Remember in *The Birds* when that chick was sitting in front of the monkey bars and they started flappin' in one by one only she didn't see 'em in time so they flew down on those kids and ate their eyes out and pecked open their heads and ate their brains and then they went and made that gas station blow up and everybody either croaked or got fried and then they ate Suzanne Pleshette—

(He stops. T-BIRD is starin' at him, not too happy.)

HOUND DOG. You get my point, don't you?

T-BIRD. Yeah. Like it was a plane crash, and I was in it.

HOUND DOG. Who did you borrow this mood from, T-Bird? Dracula?

T-BIRD. (*Pacin'.*) You know, we're lookin' at this thing all wrong—

HOUND DOG. *We are?*

T-BIRD. *Lotsa* organizations relocate, don't they? What's the difference between them and us?

HOUND DOG. Two dollars and eighty-six cents.

T-BIRD. Well, if you're gonna split hairs—

HOUND DOG. Can you still do that?

T-BIRD. Are you lookin' to get escorted outta this establishment?

HOUND DOG. Excuse me for livin'. Why don't you wait 'til Johnny Angel gets here? *He'll* know what to do.

T-BIRD. You know, I'm beginnin' to detect a little ingratitude around your vicinity.

HOUND DOG. Yeah?

T-BIRD. Yeah. (*Sittin'.*) Like who was it told the whole world to go to hell when nobody wanted you in The Peanut Gang?

HOUND DOG. Johnny Angel.

T-BIRD. And when they were gettin' ready to nail your ass to the wall at the inquest, who was it kept you outta the clink by swearin' on his mother that Cricket was the one drivin' that night?

HOUND DOG. Johnny Angel.

T-BIRD. Okay. And that time at "Attack of the Crab Monsters" when you hadda have Goobers or die, who was it lent you the dime?

HOUND DOG. You did, T-Bird.

T-BIRD. See? You owe me your life.

HOUND DOG. I owe you ten cents.

T-BIRD. Put back the ash tray.

HOUND DOG. Why isn't he here yet?

T-BIRD. (*Risin'.*) I don't know. He coulda went to the movies.

HOUND DOG. With a social disease?

T-BIRD. Yeah. Over at the Criterion, they got a coatroom where you can check your dick.

HOUND DOG. It was just a suggestion.

T-BIRD. —or maybe he went out lookin' for Venus again. In which case, he don't need a physician half as much as he needs a competent headshrinker.

HOUND DOG. What if—

T-BIRD. He'll *be* here, all right? There ain't nothin' the matter with Johnny Angel can't be patched up with a shot of rye. No matter *what* those bloodsuckers with the fluoroscopes say. (*Mumblin'.*) Fuckin' quacks.

HOUND DOG. Is this going to be the one about the eight-year-old and the heart valve?

T-BIRD. I ever tell you that before?

HOUND DOG. Yeah, but not since Friday.

(*MELODY comes back with a plate in her hands.*)

T-BIRD. Well, I ain't seen nothin' yet to alter my opinion of the medical profession. They wouldn't know a kidney from an asshole if they had their whole head up one. (*To MELODY.*) What do you think?

MELODY. I think they're fakes.

T-BIRD. Doctors?

MELODY. Inger Stevens. (*Indicatin' tits.*) You ever notice the way they point out at the end, like a couple of drills? I mean, who is she fooling?

(*She sticks the plate in front of HOUND DOG. He points to it.*)

HOUND DOG. Excuse me, but there's been a mistake. I asked for sirloin tips. This is Alpo.

(*MELODY just stares at him. He shrivels up.*)

HOUND DOG. Only kidding.

MELODY. You think so?

(She leaves. There is a pause.)

T-BIRD. It's over, Dog—ain't it?

HOUND DOG. There you go again!

T-BIRD. Y'know, I was just thinkin' of somethin' funny.

HOUND DOG. Yeah, I can tell. What was it—the hydrogen bomb?

T-BIRD. After today, where are we gonna eat?

(A beat.)

HOUND DOG. Uh, T-Bird—I mean, it's not real important or anything, but, well—

T-BIRD. But what?

HOUND DOG. Uh—after today, where am I gonna *sleep*?

T-BIRD. Whatsa matter with you? I got a floor, don't I? Whadaya need—an engagement ring?

HOUND DOG. Thanks.

T-BIRD. But just remember—I ain't *always* gonna be around to haul your ass outta the fire.

HOUND DOG. Since when?

T-BIRD. I mean—things happen. What if I got clipped by a bike? Or a tree fell on my head?

HOUND DOG. Are you okay?

(A beat.)

T-BIRD. Look, I gotta talk to you about something—

(Suddenly the door opens and a figure appears. But it ain't Johnny Angel, it's STREAKER. He's about six foot, with blond hair and blue eyes—wearin' biceps and a white tank top to show off the equipment, carryin' a skateboard over his shoulder, and trailin' his Peanut Gang jacket on the floor behind him. Cool guy usually, only right now he's staggerin' toward T-BIRD, clutchin' his stomach and gaspin' for air. There's also a trickle of blood comin' down the corner of his mouth.)

STREAKER. What—do you think—you see—Judah? The—smashed body—of a—wretched animal? It—goes on—Judah. The race—is never—over. Unhh...

(He collapses face up on the table, grabs the front of HOUND DOG's shirt, rattles around a little, and dies. There's this real long silence. T-BIRD looks down at the dead body.)

T-BIRD. Who are *you* supposed to be?

(STREAKER opens his eyes.)

STREAKER. Stephen Boyd in *Ben Hur*. *(Pause.)* Does it look like I got hit by a chariot?

T-BIRD. It looks like you backed into Inger Stevens.

(STREAKER hops to his feet and begins diggin' through his pockets.)

STREAKER. Great stuff, huh? They're blood pellets. I tried one on the bus? This old lady, she took one look and barfed all over the driver. *(To Juke.)* Hey, Juke!

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Beach Boys.)* IF EVERYBODY HAD AN OCEAN, ACROSS THE U.S.A.....

STREAKER. *(Indicatin' Juke.)* Is he gonna do that all day? 'Cause I could leave, you know.

T-BIRD. Where's your sense of humor?

STREAKER. That's funny?

T-BIRD. Okay, maybe not for Durwood Kirby—

(Juke immediately shuts off, insulted. T-BIRD turns to him.)

T-BIRD. Excuse me for livin'.

(*STREAKER grabs a chair and sits.*)

STREAKER. (*To T-BIRD.*) Hey, babe—didja hear?

T-BIRD. Don't call me babe.

STREAKER. Somebody just knocked off First Federal Savings and Loan. Bitchin', huh? It—

T-BIRD. Would you go home and put on some clothes?

STREAKER. These *are* clothes.

T-BIRD. You think so? Sleeves cut off, arms blown out to here, you look like Bamm-Bamm.

STREAKER. It was the one up at Zuma Beach, right? About a mile down from Trancas Canyon where my brother went over the cliff—

T-BIRD. (*Cuttin' in.*) Where his *car* went over the cliff, okay!?! That's all they proved!

HOUND DOG. Yeah? So where's Cricket?

T-BIRD. Maybe fillin' out the insurance.

HOUND DOG. Since 1959?!?

T-BIRD. *You* ever try callin' the Auto Club?

STREAKER. —so this robbery happens just before this roller derby I was in at Malibu—only with skateboards, you know? And—

T-BIRD. What time?

STREAKER. 10:43 this morning. Bitchin', huh? I heard it over the radio on the way to this roller derby I was—

T-BIRD. (*To HOUND DOG.*) What were you doin' at 10:43 this morning?

HOUND DOG. Taking a piss in Culver City.

T-BIRD. You sure?

HOUND DOG. What do you want—witnesses?

STREAKER. See, there were twenty of us, and I didn't think I had a chance, until I remembered something my brother always used to say about wheelies—

T-BIRD. How big was the haul?

STREAKER. Fifteen grand. Bitchin', huh? But—

T-BIRD. You use that word one more time, I'm gonna pull your tongue right outta your mouth. (*To HOUND DOG.*) You got any idea what we could do with fifteen grand?

STREAKER. Whatsa matter with “bitchin’”?

T-BIRD. (*To HOUND DOG.*) First we pick up another '49 Merc, so's Cricket'll have somethin' to drive when he comes home—

HOUND DOG. Aw, would you get back from the Twilight Zone?

STREAKER. Whatsa matter with “bitchin’”?

T-BIRD. Then we take the rest and figure out how to hold onto this place—

STREAKER. Hey—

HOUND DOG. That part's easy. All we gotta do it rent it back from the termites.

STREAKER. HEY!

(*They stop dead and turn to him.*)

T-BIRD. Somethin' wrong?

STREAKER. I was *talkin'*!

T-BIRD. Yeah?

STREAKER. Well, yeah. (*Pause.*) I won.

T-BIRD. Won what?

STREAKER. Well, see, there was 20 of us—and—well, I didn't think I had a chance, you know? But then—see— (*Pause.*) Nothin'. It ain't important.

(*T-BIRD leans in, as MELODY enters and heads for the table.*)

T-BIRD. Look, Cricket—

STREAKER. Streaker—

T-BIRD. That's what I said. I been intendin' to talk to you about your attention span. We gotta work it up to at least six seconds. I mean, how the hell did you ever *get* through *Ben Hur*?

STREAKER. (*Risin'.*) I'm goin'—

T-BIRD. To do what? Roll around bare-ass when it's twelve degrees out? You know what can happen?

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Marcel.)* BLUE MOON.....

T-BIRD. *(To Juke.)* WOULD YOU SHUT THE HELL UP?!

(JUKE shuts off; to STREAKER.) You eat yet?

STREAKER. No.

T-BIRD. Then park yourself.

STREAKER. Thanks, babe.

T-BIRD. Call me that again. I can't wait.

(MELODY reaches the table and puts an arm around STREAKER.)

MELODY. Hey, champ.

(STREAKER automatically turns beet red, while in the meantime T-Bird sits down next to HOUND DOG.)

STREAKER. H-h-h-h-h-hi, M-M-M-M-M-Melody.

MELODY. Onion rings?

STREAKER. Y-y-y-y— Uh-huh.

T-BIRD. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Melody, I thought we were outta onions.

MELODY. For you we are. *(To STREAKER.)* You want anything with that?

STREAKER. A m-m-m-m-m-m-m—

T-BIRD. It hadda begin with an “m”, didn't it? We'll be here 'til July. *(To MELODY.)* Milkshake. Chocolate. Make it two.

HOUND DOG. Is this on the house?

T-BIRD. Ain't it always?

HOUND DOG. Rack 'em.

MELODY. Right.

(She begins to leave.)

T-BIRD AND HOUND DOG. THANK YOU, MRS. CLEAVER.

STREAKER. M-M-M-M-M-M—

HOUND DOG. *(To STREAKER.)* You keep *sayin'* that.

(MELODY stops, looks back, then mumbles to herself.)

MELODY. You've only got yourself to blame. You could have been a construction worker.

(She exits behind the counter. T-BIRD turns to STREAKER.)

T-BIRD. How come you didn't ask for a cherry? You always ask for a cherry. Is this Flag Day or somethin'?

HOUND DOG. A *cherry*? You kidding? He's still trying to unload the one he's got.

(STREAKER turns to HOUND DOG.)

STREAKER. Why aren't you at work?

HOUND DOG. What are you, the Warren Commission? It just so happens that due to a difference of opinion, I'm presently between jobs.

STREAKER. Huh?

T-BIRD. They canned his ass on account of stealin' a carburetor.

STREAKER. Why? Was there a car attached to it?

T-BIRD. We been through this already.

HOUND DOG. It was just a carburetor, okay? DROP IT!

STREAKER. *(Pointin' outside.)* Then who owns that pink and white—OW!

T-BIRD. That pink and white *what*?

(He gets up and looks out the door. Slowly, he turns.)

T-BIRD. It was just a carburetor, huh? That's all. And now I got a hot Chevy in my parkin' lot. Get over here.

HOUND DOG. *(Jockeyin' around a chair.)* You don't mean this, T-Bird. What you think you want to do to me isn't what you really want in your heart of hearts.

T-BIRD. Stand still. It'll sting less.

HOUND DOG. Remember—I know Tai-Chi. Ay-aaaaaaah!

(*STREAKER turns to HOUND DOG.*)

STREAKER. Listen, as long as you won't be needing it, can I have your shake?

HOUND DOG. You're gonna get paid back for that one.

(*T-BIRD corners him and gets him in a headlock.*)

T-BIRD. Who are you kiddin'? You ain't never paid back nobody in your life.

HOUND DOG. Oh, yeah?

T-BIRD. Yeah. You wouldn't recognize the word if it crawled up your ass and caught a Greyhound to Vegas. YOU GONNA TAKE BACK THE CAR?

HOUND DOG. WATCH THE CLAVICLE! IT'S THE ONLY ONE I GOT!

T-BIRD. Good. Now you're gonna have two.

HOUND DOG. Wait! Wait! Before you kill—

T-BIRD. It's a little late for that—

HOUND DOG. —I paid for the gas, didn't I?

T-BIRD. (*Hesitatin'.*) What gas?

HOUND DOG. The refill that got us outta Tupelo, Mississippi.

T-BIRD. That was eleven years ago.

HOUND DOG. You didn't put a statute of limitations on it.

STREAKER. Statue of *who*?

(*MELODY reaches the table with the milkshakes.*)

MELODY. Limitations. It was a gift from France.

STREAKER. Oh—uh—oh.

(*T-BIRD pins HOUND DOG to the wall.*)

HOUND DOG. HOLD THAT FIST! I just thought of another one.

T-BIRD. This had better be good. It's your last shot.

HOUND DOG. Okay! Okay! If it wasn't for me takin' your two hundred bucks—

T-BIRD. Yeah?

HOUND DOG. —and puttin' that eight ball away in the corner pocket—

T-BIRD. The point, the point—

HOUND DOG. We never woulda won this joint in the first place.

T-BIRD. WHO WANTED IT?!? Close your eyes. This is gonna hurt me a lot worse than— (*Releasin' HOUND DOG suddenly.*)

Wait a minute. *You* didn't pay for the gas outta Tupelo. I did.

HOUND DOG. Prove it. Show me a cancelled check.

T-BIRD. I don't gotta prove *nothin'*. (*To STREAKER.*) Do I, Cricket?

MELODY AND STREAKER. Streaker.

T-BIRD. That's what I said. Was it him or was it me?

STREAKER. Uh—

T-BIRD. What do *you* know? (*To HOUND DOG.*) You singin' a different tune yet?

(*Juke lights up.*)

JUKE. (*Crewcuts.*) SH'BOOM, SH'BOOM, YADDA-DA-DADDA-DA-DADDA-DA-DA...

HOUND DOG. All right! I'll get rid of the car! Can I have my chin back now?!

(*T-BIRD releases him.*)

T-BIRD. That's better.

HOUND DOG. Thank you.

T-BIRD. Hand it over.

HOUND DOG. Hand *what* over?

T-BIRD. The watch. Gimme back the watch.

(*HOUND DOG sheepishly pulls a Timex outta his pocket.*)

HOUND DOG. What, *this*?

(*T-BIRD grabs it.*)

HOUND DOG. It was an accident! I swear to God!

(*T-BIRD and HOUND DOG sit while Juke keeps playin' in the background.*)

T-BIRD. (*To HOUND DOG.*) You know, sometimes I wonder how come me and Johnny Angel didn't just leave you in the middle of Route 90.

HOUND DOG. Guess what? You did.

T-BIRD. Was that my fault? You wouldn't shut up.

STREAKER. No, no—it was my *brother* that wouldn't shut up. Remember? He kept tryin' to con you guys into thinkin' he was Burt Lancaster. So's you'd give us a lift outta Lubbock?

T-BIRD. Yeah, well it was Johnny Angel fell for *that* one.

HOUND DOG. And you didn't?

T-BIRD. Cricket never had me thinkin' he was Burt Lancaster.

MELODY. (*Appearin' with the onion rings.*) No—he had *you* thinking he was Monty Clift.

T-BIRD. That was an honest mistake. I noticed a certain resemblance.

HOUND DOG. Where? Around the shoelaces?

MELODY. (*Sittin'; to HOUND DOG.*) Remember his pink carnation?

T-BIRD. Remember his pickup truck?

HOUND DOG. What was the name of that chick he had us thinkin' he was so stuck on?

MELODY. (*To herself.*) “Melody”?

STREAKER. Yeah—the one he was always writin' that poem to.

MELODY. “Melody”?

HOUND DOG. —and we all thought he was makin' her up?

MELODY. “Melody”?

T-BIRD. He wasn't makin' her up. She was that dog with the long ears.

MELODY. It started with a “P”.

HOUND DOG. Patty—

T-BIRD. Paula—

MELODY. Pam—

STREAKER. Susan—

ALL OF THEM. PEGGY SUE!

T-BIRD. Man, what a bow-wow. No wonder he wore glasses.

HOUND DOG. It wasn't his problem. She had it for Johnny Angel.

MELODY AND T-BIRD. *Everybody* had it for Johnny Angel.

STREAKER. (*To T-BIRD.*) Not me, babe.

T-BIRD. Call me that again, I crush your skull.

HOUND DOG (*To STREAKER.*) I got news for you. Johnny Angel woulda had better luck chalkin' the cue with *you* than with Venus.

MELODY. Now, there was a terrific match.

HOUND DOG. Fourteen hours—

MELODY. Twelve—

T-BIRD. (*To MELODY.*) You're one to talk. You divorced me in ten.

MELODY. Which divorce?

T-BIRD. The fourth one.

MELODY. You only married me three times.

T-BIRD. You keep forgettin' number two! At the drive-in! Don'tcha remember? The popcorn guy owed me a favor.

MELODY. (*Amazed.*) Was that *you*?

STREAKER. About Venus—

T-BIRD. C'mon, c'mon—*what* Venus?

STREAKER. Well, I believed him.

HOUND DOG. Yeah, you clapped for Tinkerbell, too.

STREAKER. So did lotsa people.

T-BIRD. They weren't twenty-six.

(Juke keeps goin' as the rest of them start laughin' with laughter. The thing nobody's noticed yet, though, is that JOHNNY ANGEL just walked through the door. And he's watchin'.)

STREAKER. Hey, Dog. Remember when we hit that pothole outside of Redondo, and the drive shaft fell out?

MELODY. Yeah. And remember who put it back in by herself?

T-BIRD. "Tried". You only tried.

MELODY. Well, *somebody* had to. You didn't even know what it was!

HOUND DOG. We picked it up for you, didn't we?

MELODY. And dropped it on my Ford.

T-BIRD. Remember when we all had crewcuts?

HOUND DOG. Remember when you still had a choice?

T-BIRD. *(To HOUND DOG.)* You got Blue Cross?

HOUND DOG. No, but I got dandruff. Wanna borrow some? You can pretend it's yours.

T-BIRD. *(Risn'.)* That does it. I'll give you a ten-second head start, then it's—

(All of a sudden, he sees JOHNNY ANGEL. He smacks HOUND DOG on the arm, who pokes STREAKER, who starts to say something to MELODY, only good luck. Juke shuts off pronto, as the rest of 'em split apart and take these jock poses. STREAKER's the first to speak.)

STREAKER. *(To JOHNNY ANGEL.)* Hey, babe.

HOUND DOG. How's the juice flowin', dude?

(MELODY sighs, rolls her eyes, and crosses to the counter. As she passes JOHNNY ANGEL, she turns to him.)

MELODY. You believe those fuckin' Lakers, man?

(JOHNNY ANGEL stares at them hard for a real long minute. Then he turns around and walks back up to where Juke ain't playin'. He looks down, expectin' a response—)

JOHNNY ANGEL. You.

(—only nothin' happens.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. I'm waitin'.

(Ditto.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. You lookin' to get turned back into a car radio?

(Juke lights up real fast.)

JUKE. *(Chuck Berry; "Johnny B. Goode".)* DEEP DOWN IN LOUISIANA, ROUND FROM NEW ORLEANS....

(JOHNNY ANGEL nods like he's real pleased—which he almost never was—then walks back downstage, turns to where HOUND DOG is, and crooks a finger.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. C'mere.

HOUND DOG. Me?

JOHNNY ANGEL. No, Lucille Ball. Get over here.

(HOUND DOG turns to STREAKER and whispers.)

HOUND DOG. If I don't come back, you can finish my sandwich.

STREAKER. Hound Dog?

HOUND DOG. What?

STREAKER. I already did.

(HOUND DOG crosses over to JOHNNY ANGEL, real nervous. Do you blame him?)

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(After a long pause.)* 10:43 this morning. What were you doin'?

HOUND DOG. It wasn't me. I swear to God it wasn't me. They won't even let me cash a *check* at First Federal Savings and—

JOHNNY ANGEL. I asked you what were you doin'.

HOUND DOG. Stealing a car in Culver City. Okay?

JOHNNY ANGEL. You sure?

HOUND DOG. I swear it on my life.

JOHNNY ANGEL. My mistake. I thought it was you.

HOUND DOG. That's the trouble around this joint. Everybody *always* thinks it was me. If I—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Shut up.

HOUND DOG. Okay.

(From across the room, STREAKER giggles. JOHNNY ANGEL turns to him.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. What are *you* laughin' at? You look like a dick with ears.

STREAKER. *(Shuttin' up quick.)* I know.

(JOHNNY ANGEL starts crossin' to the counter, then stops, turns, and goes back to STREAKER.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. By the way. You ain't been doin' nothin' stupid like readin' no calendars today, have you?

STREAKER. *(Lookin' down.)* Only sort of.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Good. Just remember one thing. No body, no deal. Cricket'll be back.

STREAKER. Yeah.

(JOHNNY ANGEL crosses up to the counter, sits down, and leans in to MELODY. T-BIRD moves upstage so that he's standin' right behind him.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. Any messages from Venus?

MELODY. No.

JOHNNY ANGEL. She said she would call.

MELODY. That was 1956.

JOHNNY ANGEL. She coulda got a busy signal.

MELODY. For eight years?

JOHNNY ANGEL. The phone. Get it fixed.

MELODY. Go to hell.

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(Thrown.)* Huh?

MELODY. You heard me.

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(Indicatin' JOHNNY ANGEL.)* You know what you're dealin' with here, don'tcha?

MELODY. Yeah. An ego-oriented, self-motivated collection of inner directed impulses. *You* get the goddamned phone fixed. You want an egg cream?

(JOHNNY ANGEL stares at her.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. You got balls.

MELODY. Just what I need.

(JOHNNY ANGEL turns around and finds T-BIRD standin' right behind him. They stare each other down for a couple of seconds.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah?

T-BIRD. Who are *you* tryin' to be?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Nobody. I ain't tryin' to be nobody.

T-BIRD. That's good. Because Stella ain't home yet, and they already took Blanche away.

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(Mumblin'.)* Shit...

T-BIRD. Look, Johnny—I gotta talk to you—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Loosen up, man. I'm havin' lunch here with my friends. *(To Juke.)* YO!

(Juke shuts off. T-BIRD crosses to STREAKER and HOUND DOG, as JOHNNY ANGEL sits at the down left table.)

T-BIRD. *(To HOUND DOG.)* Lemme borrow my wallet.

HOUND DOG. Sure.

(He takes T-BIRD's wallet outta his pocket. T-BIRD pulls out a bill.)

T-BIRD. This here's five bucks. Call a cab. Take it to the intersection of Lincoln and Lake and get out.

HOUND DOG. What's there?

T-BIRD. Heavy traffic. Try to get hit.

(He crosses down left and sits with JOHNNY ANGEL. HOUND DOG and STREAKER move up to the counter where MELODY's already at.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(To T-BIRD.)* You ever think about rentin' a new personality, T-Bird? 'Cause the old one sucks.

T-BIRD. Listen to me....

(Lights go down on them a little and stay up on the counter. HOUND DOG hands MELODY the fiver.)

MELODY. What'll it be?

HOUND DOG. Drinks for the house.

STREAKER. *What* house?

MELODY. He's right. What are you going to buy with the change—Marina del Rey?

(She begins makin' them Cokes. HOUND DOG picks up a comic book, opens it, then turns to STREAKER.)

HOUND DOG. *(Mimickin'.)* "Heavy traffic. Try to get hit." We shoulda let him have it.

STREAKER. I almost did for a second. Know what I was gonna say?

HOUND DOG. What?

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Beach Boys.)* LET'S GO SURFIN' NOW, EVERYBODY'S LEARNIN' HOW....

STREAKER. *(Turnin' to Juke.)* It's just a *skateboard!*

(Juke shuts off. Lights come up full on JOHNNY ANGEL and T-BIRD.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. You believe that fuckin' Johnson, man? Ten weeks in office, and already he's spillin' his guts over everybody—

T-BIRD. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Vietnam, right?

T-BIRD. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Christ, man—ain't that just great? Before you can finish off a pack of Luckies, you got Korea all over again. Well, they ain't gonna fool me *this* time—

T-BIRD. HEY!

JOHNNY ANGEL. You okay, T-Bird? 'Cause you look like shit. *(Pause.)* You ain't been holdin' up no bank, have you?

T-BIRD. Did they x-ray your brain or somethin'? What kinda talk is that?

JOHNNY ANGEL. That's what I'm askin'. *(Pause.)* My gun's gone.

T-BIRD. *(Lookin' away.)* Huh?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Want a brushup? .22 caliber Longhorn revolver. They call it the Buntline Special on account of Ned Bunt-

line made the first pair for Wyatt Earp. What did you do with it, T-Bird?

T-BIRD. Johnny, I swear to God I been here since—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Ten forty-four this morning?

(Upstage, STREAKER points to MELODY and addresses HOUND DOG, pullin' a piece of paper outta his pocket.)

STREAKER. Can I use her pen for a second?

HOUND DOG. What am I—the United Nations?! *(To MELODY.)* Can he use your pen?

MELODY. *(Givin' it to STREAKER.)* Here.

STREAKER. *(To HOUND DOG.)* Thanks.

HOUND DOG. *(To MELODY.)* Thanks.

(T-BIRD and JOHNNY ANGEL.)

T-BIRD. What did they say?

JOHNNY ANGEL. What did *who* say?

(There's a crash from outside.)

T-BIRD. We ain't got time for this, Johnny.

JOHNNY ANGEL. I *told* you what they'd say, didn't I? All's a swollen gland means is that you parked your boots under the wrong bed one time too many. *(Pointin' to the plate on the table.)*

Did you get these onion rings at a garage sale or somethin'?

T-BIRD. Yeah, well, it serves you right.

JOHNNY ANGEL. How come? I didn't order 'em.

T-BIRD. You know what happens when you pick up trash?

JOHNNY ANGEL. You kiddin'? That's how I met *you*.

T-BIRD. Go on, complain. I got you outta Nashville, didn't I?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah. In a hot Pontiac with stolen Illinois plates. You forgot that part. We might as well of been wearin' a sign that said "Arrest us—we're assholes." Did they teach you *that* at Hopkins, too?

T-BIRD. They didn't teach me nothin' at Hopkins. Except—
JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah, yeah, I know. The kid and the valve and the cat and the dog.

(A pause.)

T-BIRD. *(Wounded.)* What cat?

(STREAKER, HOUND DOG and MELODY. MELODY indicates STREAKER.)

MELODY. What's he writing?

HOUND DOG. *(To STREAKER.)* What are you writing?

STREAKER. My fan club application. Charter member.

(HOUND DOG looks up from his comic book and peers over STREAKER's shoulder.)

HOUND DOG. "Stephen Boyd"?

STREAKER. He's my mentor.

HOUND DOG. Have a nice life.

STREAKER. I will.

(JOHNNY ANGEL and T-BIRD. JOHNNY ANGEL is playin' with the lump in his neck.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. T-Bird, buddy—you ever hear of a guy called Hodgkins?

T-BIRD. *(Ashen.)* Oh, shit.

(STREAKER, HOUND DOG and MELODY. STREAKER turns to HOUND DOG.)

STREAKER. Don't let me be late for work, okay?

HOUND DOG. They're only bowling pins.

(JOHNNY ANGEL and T-BIRD.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. I asked you a question, man.

T-BIRD. (*Sweatin'.*) Uh, yeah. I think there's a yutz named Hodgkins owns an ice cream joint in Brentwood. How come?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Look at me.

(*MELODY, STREAKER and HOUND DOG.*)

STREAKER. (*To HOUND DOG.*) How many "d's" in "idol"?

HOUND DOG. Twelve.....

(*Lights go down on them all the way and stay up on T-BIRD and JOHNNY ANGEL.*)

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah. That's what I thought.

T-BIRD. What did they say?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Who listened? It's just a lump.

T-BIRD. WHAT DID THEY SAY?

JOHNNY ANGEL. It's a fuckin' *lump!* Look, maybe it's a zit, you know? I get 'em all the time. They sit there doin' nothin' except gettin' bigger and bigger, and then one day, POW! All over.

T-BIRD. Johnny, you don't gotta play the soldier. Not again.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Looks like you got the wrong boy here. *You're* the one with the Purple Fuckin' Heart.

(*T-BIRD looks around frantic to make sure nobody else can hear.*)

T-BIRD. Keep your voice down.

JOHNNY ANGEL. How come? *Lotsa* guys have 'em. Maybe not for gettin' shot in the ass, but you don't look a medical discharge in the mouth. *Do* you, T-Bird?

T-BIRD. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. I ever send you a postcard from South Korea?

T-BIRD. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. I had a swell time after you left. We sang songs and drew with crayons, and once when Mr. Potatohead got lost, I was the one who found him.

T-BIRD. What kinda prognosis did they give you?

JOHNNY ANGEL. It's a fuckin' lump! *That's* what kinda prognosis they gave me!

T-BIRD. Listen to me. They got this deal called chemotherapy—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Phisohex—

T-BIRD. —radiation—

JOHNNY ANGEL. —Clearasil—

T-BIRD. Was the guy an oncologist? I gotta know—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Maybe it's athlete's neck. I played football once. Did I ever tell you that?

T-BIRD. I'm gonna count to ten—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Couldn't kick a field goal for shit, but man—

T-BIRD. "Number Three—what is your name and what do you really do, please?"

JOHNNY ANGEL. I'M GONNA DIE, ALL RIGHT? THAT'S WHAT YOU WANNA HEAR, ISN'T IT? ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?

(*There is a beat; T-BIRD's a wreck.*)

T-BIRD. *Everybody's* gonna die.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah, that's right, T-Bird. And me and Cricket, we just decided to get a jump on the crowd. Okay? Drop it. You believe that fuckin' Khrushchev, man? Somebody oughtta stick a missile up his ass and—

T-BIRD. GODDAMNIT! It hadda be you, didn't it? It couldn't of been me! I mean, as long as tomorrow got cancelled anyway—

JOHNNY ANGEL. You in some kinda hurry, T-Bird?

T-BIRD. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Look, you want the lump, you can have it.

T-BIRD. I'll take it.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah, I bet you would. And that'd make *two* I owed you. Not again, man.

T-BIRD. Johnny, listen to me. Radiation. You got at least a fifty-fifty shot.

JOHNNY ANGEL. At what? In two years, I'll have a bald head and a dick that shoots blanks. *Keep your fuckin' radiation.*

T-BIRD. What have you got to lose?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Ain't that what they always say while they're cuttin' off the pieces one-by-one? And another thing, T-Bird. You open your mouth about this, and I push your face in. Now, don't make me hafta do that.

T-BIRD. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. WHAT IS IT WITH YOU?! I said drop it, okay? Christ, man—it ain't like *you're* the one who's about to check out, is it? *(No response.)* Well, is it?

T-BIRD. Things happen, Johnny. Leave it alone.

(A beat. JOHNNY ANGEL smells somethin' goin' on and rises urgent.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. T-Bird—

T-BIRD. You know you can't keep this a secret forever—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Who were you gonna nail with the gun, T-Bird?

T-BIRD. Sooner or later, people are bound to catch on—

JOHNNY ANGEL. Is somebody after you, or is the other way around?

T-BIRD. I mean, when you stop breathin' and your lips turn blue—

JOHNNY ANGEL. For Christ's sake—we don't need the cash *that* bad! Whatever it is, it ain't worth it, man—

(From outside, we hear the sound of a Harley-Davidson, a screech of tires, and a heavy duty collision. JOHNNY ANGEL points toward the door.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. Hear that? Five seconds ago, *that* guy thought he had it made, too. Don'tcha get it?

T-BIRD. —this ain't what we call facin' reality, Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. TALK TO ME, MAN! I GOT THE BULLETS!

(The door opens. Enter VENUS.)

VENUS. Excuse me—

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Del Shannon, "Runaway".)* AS I WALK ALONG, I WONDER WHAT WENT WRONG...

(Stage lights come on full. All of 'em. The guys turn to her and rise almost automatic. They got good reason. This one's a pip. Not that MELODY ain't, but holy shit! She's about five-foot-two, with blonde hair that's got a little red in it sort of, and skin the color of half-and-half with maybe a peach thrown in. On the over-all, she makes Sandra Dee look like a boy. Right now she's dressed in a biker's outfit—leather pants, leather jacket, and a white t-shirt. There's a smear of grease across her face.)

VENUS. Does anybody have a three-quarter inch box end?

(Dead silence while Juke keeps playin' and the guys just stare at her. She frowns.)

VENUS. Hello? *(Pause.)* Donde esto un box end aqui?

(MELODY leans across the counter and indicates the frozen guys.)

MELODY. Say, that's a pretty neat trick. What do you do for an encore—juggle a banana with your feet?

VENUS. *(To MELODY.)* Listen, I don't suppose there's a garage around here, is there?

MELODY. What's the problem?

VENUS. I think my power train blew out.

MELODY. What make?

VENUS. Harley.

MELODY. You check the cylinders?

VENUS. Yeah. The only thing I found was a loose connecting rod—but *that* wouldn't do it.

(MELODY comes around the counter and leads VENUS to the door.)

MELODY. It could be the ignition. When was the last time you had somebody look at your rectifier?

VENUS. Six months ago.

MELODY. I'll bet that's it....

(They exit. Juke switches off, as JOHNNY ANGEL sits at the down left table and begins devotin' all of his attention to the lousy onion rings. The rest of 'em are all left starin' at an empty doorway. There is dead silence; finally, HOUND DOG turns to T-Bird.)

HOUND DOG. I think my dick just had a heart attack.

T-BIRD. Did she look familiar to you?

HOUND DOG. Yeah. Her and Miss October could of been twins if only she had brown hair on her—

T-BIRD. I could swear I've met her before.

HOUND DOG. You're not gonna use *that* old line, are you?

T-BIRD. It ain't a line.

HOUND DOG. Then what are you doing?

T-BIRD. *(Combin' his hair.)* What does it *look* like I'm doin'?

HOUND DOG. Reminiscing.

STREAKER. About Miss October—

HOUND DOG. *(Arm around STREAKER.)* All right—here's the dope. After she comes back in, she'll act like she doesn't see us by pretending she's looking for a cigarette. You follow so far? But she won't have any matches. That's when—

STREAKER. What if she doesn't smoke?

HOUND DOG. She smokes.

(JOHNNY ANGEL looks up.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. Listen to him. She smokes.

STREAKER. You know what *I* think?

(Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Jan and Dean.)* TWO GIRLS FOR EVERY BOY.....

HOUND DOG. *(To Juke.)* Lay off the kid. He can't help it.

(Juke shuts off.)

STREAKER. *(Indicatin' Juke.)* How come he only does that to me?

T-BIRD. C'mere.

(STREAKER does.)

T-BIRD. Down the street?

STREAKER. Yeah?

T-BIRD. There's a Woolworth's.

STREAKER. Right.

T-BIRD. They sell these little glass things called mirrors?

STREAKER. Uh-huh.

T-BIRD. Buy one. Look in it. If that ain't clear enough, I'll draw you a diagram.

STREAKER. *(Imitatin' Rocket J. Squirrel.)* "Hokey smoke, Bullwinkle."

T-BIRD. Call me babe.

(From outside, we hear VENUS and MELODY comin' back.)

VENUS' VOICE. I just don't understand—

(T-BIRD points to a table and addresses HOUND DOG and STREAKER.)

T-BIRD. All right—now, sit down and shut up—
 HOUND DOG. No way. That's what you pulled the last time—
 STREAKER. Yeah, we wound up with nothin'—
 HOUND DOG. —you didn't get out of bed for a week—
 STREAKER. —not fair—
 HOUND DOG. —always this way—

(JOHNNY ANGEL looks up.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. He said sit down and shut up.

(They sit.)

T-BIRD. That's better. Maybe you'll learn somethin' from a pro.

(He crosses downstage. STREAKER turns to HOUND DOG.)

STREAKER. Why does he always get to be the pro?

HOUND DOG. It comes with baldness.

(T-BIRD leans down by JOHNNY ANGEL and lowers his voice.)

T-BIRD. You gonna be okay?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Go get laid, T-Bird. I hate redheads anyway.

T-BIRD. Johnny, I don't like bringin' it up—but start thinkin' radiation. We don't got much of a choice here.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Ain't that what you said about the medical discharge?

T-BIRD. Go to hell.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Don't rush me.

(VENUS and MELODY re-enter.)

VENUS. —they told me they were brand new points! They even had them in a box!

MELODY. Look, I don't think it was the points—

VENUS. Of course it was the points. *You* saw them—

MELODY. Maybe if—

VENUS. Why else would it have stopped like that?

MELODY. Probably because—

VENUS. I mean, for God's sake, I just had the gas tank filled on— on— *(Pause.)* Oh. *(To MELODY.)* Is it still January?

MELODY. I'll call the garage.

(She starts to leave.)

VENUS. Melody? Thanks for the help.

MELODY. Right.

(She splits. VENUS turns and faces the room. The guys are all starin' at her tits, except for JOHNNY ANGEL, who's still makin' it with the onion rings. A second later, VENUS puts her bag on one of the counter stools and begins diggin' through it, lookin' for a cigarette. HOUND DOG turns to T-BIRD, smug. After she's pulled out a Winston, she looks at each guy at a time, then crosses up center and sits down next to Juke. She turns to him.)

VENUS. *(To Juke.)* You wouldn't happen to know where I could get a light around here, would you?

(She goes back to plowin' through her bag as Juke lights up.)

JUKE. *(Curtis Lee.)* PRETTY LITTLE ANGEL EYES, PRETTY LITTLE ANGEL EYES...

(At the down left table, JOHNNY ANGEL looks up from the onion rings, facin' front. He's got his chin in his hand and seems like he ain't payin' no attention to what's goin' on behind him. Real quiet, so nobody can hear, he begins mumblin' to himself.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(To himself.)* You shouldn't be smokin' those things.

(Upstage, VENUS turns to Juke.)

VENUS. *(To Juke.)* I know I shouldn't.

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(To himself.)* How comes you don't just kick 'em?

VENUS. *(To Juke.)* I've tried.

JOHNNY ANGEL. *(Again a self-mumble.)* A knockout like you oughtta take up a different hobby. Like me.

VENUS. *(Again to Juke.)* That's very kind of you.

(T-BIRD crosses upstage and addresses Juke.)

T-BIRD. All right, that's enough. *(Nothin' happens.)* I said cool it!

(Juke shuts off.)

VENUS. *(To Juke.)* Wait!

T-BIRD. Allow me to present myself—

VENUS. But I was in the middle of a conversation!

T-BIRD. *(Indicatin' Juke.)* You don't expect to get no help from that electronic junkpile, do ya?

VENUS. More than I'll get from *you*, you self-centered little prick.

T-BIRD. I think we're gettin' off on the wrong foot here—

(Downstage, HOUND DOG turns to STREAKER.)

HOUND DOG. —and he had to go to medical school to figure out *that one...*

(T-BIRD and VENUS.)

T-BIRD. Look, I couldn't help overhearin' your difficulty and wondered if I might be of some assistance.

VENUS. That depends. Who are you?

T-BIRD. They call me T-Bird—

VENUS. Why?

T-BIRD. Because that's my name.

VENUS. Didn't you have to agree to it first? I mean, what do you call your car—Jonathan?

T-BIRD. I don't think that's the issue here—

VENUS. Listen, I'm sorry. I've had an absolutely rotten day. They lost my Impala, they hid San Diego, and if I don't find a light, I'm going to have to kill somebody.

(T-BIRD pulls out a lighter, flicks it, and puts it in front of her.)

T-BIRD. Will this help?

(VENUS sticks the cigarette in her mouth and leans forward; T-Bird starts walkin' backwards toward the down right table, with VENUS followin' and tryin' to get the goddamned cigarette lit. Finally, they sit. Across the stage, HOUND DOG and STREAKER turn to one another, real provin'.)

HOUND DOG AND STREAKER *(Together.)* Smooth move, Ex-Lax.

(T-BIRD shoots them a dirty look, then leans in to VENUS, casin' her, as she takes a hit off the butt.)

VENUS. *(Inhalin'.)* Thank you.

T-BIRD. Don't mention it. So. What's in San Diego?

VENUS. Yes.

T-BIRD. Yes what?

VENUS. I've already got plans for dinner.

T-BIRD. Did I ask you that?

VENUS. You were going to. Six lines from now. Right after the one about how you hate to eat alone, and just before the monologue about your divorce.

(*A beat.*)

T-BIRD. What are the principal exports of Nicaragua?

VENUS. Tin and copper.

T-BIRD. (*Mumblin'.*) Shit. (*Turnin' to her.*) Who said I was divorced?

VENUS. Left hand. Third finger. *Something* used to be there.

T-BIRD. How do you know I didn't cut myself? How do you know I don't wear skinny Band-Aids?

VENUS. Suit yourself. I've *still* got plans for dinner.

T-BIRD. (*Risin'; wounded.*) You know—that *really hurts*.

(*STREAKER and HOUND DOG turn to each other.*)

STREAKER AND HOUND DOG. (*Together.*) Good play...

(*VENUS points to them and addresses T-Bird.*)

VENUS. Are they Siamese?

T-BIRD. (*Glarin'.*) No, they're mute.

(*STREAKER and HOUND DOG.*)

STREAKER. What's "mute"?

HOUND DOG. Shut up.

STREAKER. *You* shut up.

HOUND DOG. No, that's "mute".

T-BIRD. (*Blowin' up at them.*) What are you—identical cousins?!?

(*Juke lights up like he's gonna play the "Patty Duke" theme, but T-BIRD whirls on him first.*)

T-BIRD. Don't even *think* it!

(*Juke's lights go out. Venus watches all of this sorta awed, then turns to T-BIRD, worried.*)

VENUS. I don't get it. Is this a halfway house or something?

T-BIRD. You kiddin'? It's The Peanut Gang.

VENUS. Excuse me?

T-BIRD. The Peanut Gang. We're a multi-national organization. Like the USO.

VENUS. You *look* like the last four greasers in America.

(*An awkward pause.*)

T-BIRD. Five.

VENUS. What?

(*T-BIRD points to where MELODY was.*)

T-BIRD. Her.

VENUS. Aaah. (*Pointin' at JOHNNY ANGEL.*) What about that one?

T-BIRD. He don't like redheads.

VENUS. Who asked *you*?

T-BIRD. Is that any kinda way to talk? I'm only lookin' out for the well-bein' of a customer. I'm only tryin' to help. What do you think I'm up to anyway?

(*Juke lights up.*)

JUKE. (*Bobby Darin: "Mack the Knife".*) OH, THE SHARK BITES, WITH ITS TEETH, BABE...

(*T-BIRD glares at Juke then sits down fast.*)

T-BIRD. So! What's in San Diego!

VENUS. (*Inhalin'.*) God, I hate smoking. Don't you?

T-BIRD. Is it a job?

VENUS. Is what a job?

T-BIRD. Why you're lookin' for San Diego.

VENUS. There is no San Diego. There's only a highway that goes right into the goddamned ocean.

T-BIRD. (*Pointin'.*) San Diego's down that way.

VENUS. So is Brazil. Look, Stingray—

T-BIRD. T-Bird. Could I get you some coffee?

VENUS. We'll talk about it.

(*She begins plowin' through her purse, while HOUND DOG turns to STREAKER.*)

HOUND DOG. Hook shot. He's got her nailed. Women are all alike.

STREAKER. I know. My brother showed me postcards once.

HOUND DOG. Of naked girls?

STREAKER. Of San Diego.

HOUND DOG. Don't you have to go to work?

STREAKER. They're only bowling pins....

(*T-BIRD and VENUS. She's pullin' a sheet of paper outta her purse and puttin' on a thick pair of black, horn-rimmed glasses.*)

VENUS. I have these directions. There used to be a map in my glove compartment—

T-BIRD. Where is it?

VENUS. I don't know. I took it in to have the engine tuned, and now they can't find it.

T-BIRD. The map?

VENUS. The car. I would have reported it, except you can't find a cop in this damn city unless you're black.

(*HOUND DOG turns to STREAKER.*)

HOUND DOG. I never had that problem.

(*VENUS eyes the place again, adjustin' the glasses.*)

VENUS. Are you *sure* this isn't a halfway house?

T-BIRD. What kinda car was it?

VENUS. A pink and white Chevy. In Culver City. The Harley was in Long Beach. (*Indicatin' hitchhikin'.*) You know what that can do to your thumb?

(*HOUND DOG and STREAKER.*)

STREAKER. Didja hear that? A pink and white Chevy. It sounds just like the one *you* stole— WOULD YOU STOP KICKIN' ME?!?

HOUND DOG. (*Gritted teeth.*) Would you shut the hell up?! (*Mimickin'.*) "It sounds just like the one *you* stole." What's the matter with you....

(*VENUS and T-BIRD.*)

VENUS. Look, Fiat—

T-BIRD. T-Bird—

VENUS. Are you sure?

T-BIRD. Positive.

VENUS. If I take Route 5—

T-BIRD. That's a terrific perfume. Real sweet. (*Sniffin'.*) What do you call it?

VENUS. "Indifference". There's this road that's supposed to go off to the left, except it dead-ends at Camp Pendleton. They said if I drove through the gate one more time, they were going to have to draft me, you know? Only—

T-BIRD. *Jesus*, it's cold in here. Wouldja like my jacket?

(*VENUS puts down the paper and sighs.*)

VENUS. First it's my perfume, then it's cold. What are you going to tell me next—that you know me from somewhere?

T-BIRD. Now that you mention it—
 VENUS. (*Groanin'.*) Oh, my God.
 T-BIRD. I didn't catch your name.
 VENUS. There's a reason for that. Suppose I—
 T-BIRD. What do you do, anyway? I mean, besides lose things.
 VENUS. That's none of your damned business.
 T-BIRD. You're a model, right?
 VENUS. Yeah. Okay. I'm a model.
 T-BIRD. Have I seen you in anything?
 VENUS. "Popular Mechanics". Look—
 T-BIRD. T-Bird—
 VENUS. Why don't I just wait outside, okay?
 T-BIRD. You're not gonna get rid of me *that* quick. I'm very persistent.
 VENUS. So are stomach cramps—
 T-BIRD. It's one of my more endurable qualities—
 VENUS. Is that why they bounced you out of Hopkins?

(*She turns snow-white and claps a hand over her mouth.*)

T-BIRD. They didn't bounce—I walked. And another thing— (*A double-take.*) How did you know about Hopkins? Who the hell are you?
 VENUS. I—uh—I—
 T-BIRD. Wait a minute—*that's* why I recognized you. We were in pre-med together, right?
 VENUS. Right! Okay! Yes!
 T-BIRD. And you were gonna be a— a—
 VENUS. Nurse.
 T-BIRD. Cardiologist.
 VENUS. Both. I mean, I changed my major.
 T-BIRD. You graduate?
 VENUS. I don't think so.
 T-BIRD. Why?
 VENUS. I didn't like Buffalo—
 T-BIRD. Baltimore.

VENUS. Yes. (*Risin'.*) Well, I have to go—

(*T-BIRD's eyes get real narrow. He grabs her arm.*)

T-BIRD. What year was that?
 VENUS. What year was what?
 T-BIRD. Hopkins, baby.
 VENUS. It was—it was in the Fifties, wasn't it? *You* know—McCarthy? The Rosenbergs? Yeah. That's right. The Fifties. It was that thing that came after World War Two.
 T-BIRD. And how long have you been stuck on me?
 VENUS. *WHAT?!?!?*
 T-BIRD. You musta had it real bad to track me down like this.

(*She stares at him, awed.*)

VENUS. Are you a professional asshole, or are you just in training?

(*Lights up full. HOUND DOG turns to STREAKER.*)

HOUND DOG. Well, *I've* learned enough from the pros. How about you?
 STREAKER. Brother....

(*They rise as VENUS grabs her bag and heads for the door.*)

T-BIRD. What about the garage?
 VENUS. If the tow truck comes, why don't you lie down in front of it? Preferably while it's still moving.

(*HOUND DOG intercepts her.*)

HOUND DOG. Allow me to present myself—
 VENUS. Oh, my God. Who are *you*—Rambler?

HOUND DOG. They call me Dog. Hound Dog. *(Pause.)* I know Tai-Chi.

VENUS. Funny, so do I.

(She grabs his arm and gets him in a half-nelson.)

VENUS. What were you doing at 10:43 this morning?

HOUND DOG. It *wasn't me!*

VENUS. Then can I have my car back?

HOUND DOG. What car?

VENUS. The pink and white Chevy in the parking lot.

HOUND DOG. That was an accident! I swear to God!

VENUS. Aw, man—ain't it always?

(She turns to exit. STREAKER is standing in the doorway, shakin' like he just saw a ghost.)

VENUS. *(To STREAKER.)* Excuse me—

(He don't move.)

VENUS. Are you all right?

(He grabs onto the doorknob, swayin'.)

VENUS. *(To HOUND DOG.)* I think there's something wrong with your friend.

(STREAKER points to her face.)

STREAKER. Th— th— th—

(The others turn to the counter by habit to see if Melody just came in.)

T-BIRD. I don't get it.

STREAKER. Those gl-glasses. They're— They're—

VENUS. Oh, *these*. I forgot. They're your brother's. I was supposed to give them to you.

(She takes them off and hands them to STREAKER.)

T-BIRD. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Where did you get those?

VENUS. From Cricket. Where do you *think*?

T-BIRD. Yeah? When?

VENUS. On my way over here. What's it to you?

T-BIRD. NOW JUST A SECOND—

HOUND DOG. WHERE IS HE—

VENUS. Where is who?

T-BIRD. Don't play games, baby. This ain't Camp Pendleton we're discussin'—

(STREAKER turns around to face the rest of 'em. He's wearin' the specs.)

STREAKER. *(Timid.)* Hound Dog?

(The others see him and get real pale. T-BIRD whispers.)

T-BIRD. Holy shit...

JUKE. *(Wrappin' up Bobby Darin.)* LOOK OUT, OLD MACKIE IS BACK!

(Juke shuts off, and there's a crash from outside. MELODY enters from behind the counter, real agitated.)

MELODY. *(Pointin' out back.)* T-Bird, something funny's going on. I think—

(STREAKER faces her.)

STREAKER. M-M-Melody?

(She stops dead, turns white, then reaches for the counter—)

MELODY. Oh, my God....

(—and faints. T-BIRD grabs HOUND DOG and points to MELODY.)

T-BIRD. Get her outta here.

HOUND DOG. *(Pointin' to VENUS.)* How did she—

T-BIRD. —never mind—

STREAKER. —I don't—

(There's another crash from outside.)

T-BIRD. WHAT'S HAPPENIN'?

(HOUND DOG glances outside as he's draggin' MELODY off.)

HOUND DOG. T-Bird, they're startin' to dig up the back! What are we gonna do?

T-BIRD. Goddamnit! It ain't midnight!

(He nabs STREAKER and pushes him toward the exit behind the counter, where HOUND DOG has split with MELODY.)

STREAKER. *(Pointin' to VENUS.)* Cricket— I mean, *where—*

T-BIRD. *(To STREAKER.)* Stay away from her.

(He shoves STREAKER out the side door and turns to VENUS.)

T-BIRD. Lady, don't move. You got a couple of things to clear up first.

VENUS. About San Diego?

T-BIRD. NOT ABOUT SAN DIEGO! Question One: What the hell are you doin' here? Question Two: What have you done with my buddy? Question Three: —

VENUS. Question Three: What happens when an arterial heart clamp is put on the wrong valve?

(T-BIRD's face turns the color of paste.)

T-BIRD. *(Almost a whisper.)* What did you say?

VENUS. I said what happens when an arterial—

T-BIRD. I TRIED TO WARN 'EM! NOBODY WOULD LISTEN TO ME! IF—

(There's another offstage crash. T-BIRD looks wildly out back.)

T-BIRD. Jesus Christ!

(He races out the door. VENUS returns to the down right table and sits. She pulls another cigarette out of her bag and lights it with T-BIRD's lighter. JOHNNY ANGEL is polishin' off the last of the onion rings at the down left table, as Juke suddenly switches on.)

JUKE. *(The Crests.)* STEP BY STEP, I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU...

VENUS. *(Lightin' the cigarette.)* How've you been, Johnny?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Aw, you ain't talkin' to *me*, are you?

VENUS. Look, I don't blame you for being a little upset—

JOHNNY ANGEL. A LITTLE UPSET!?! You said you were just goin' out for cigarettes. That was eight years ago. Christ, baby—I wouldn't walk that far for a *Camel—*

VENUS. I can explain—

JOHNNY ANGEL. You bet your ass you can explain. You know somethin'? You never even bothered to say goodbye. Just a note on the goddamned pillow.

VENUS. I left you my number!

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah, I called that number. Know what I got?
A mortuary. Big joke.

VENUS. You must have made a mistake.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Not too fuckin' likely.

VENUS. Johnny—

JOHNNY ANGEL. You know, for eight years I been askin' myself what the hell I did wrong—

VENUS. You didn't do *anything* wrong!

JOHNNY ANGEL. You're goddamned right I didn't. I took you to the burger joint, we had fish and chips. Normal so far, right? I paid for it, you tipped the waiter. Your idea, so you ain't gonna hang me on that one. We went back to my place, we watched the Sullivan show. Nothin' particularly outta the ordinary there, either. Then we made it, and the next thing I knew—BOOM! The disappearin' act of 1956. (*Turnin' to her.*) Hey, Venus. If you didn't like Ed Sullivan, all you hadda do was change the channel.

VENUS. That isn't my name.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah? Well, you never got around to tellin' me that, either. Just a note. "I'll be back." You and Amelia Earhart.

VENUS. How are you feeling?

JOHNNY ANGEL. What?

VENUS. Do you still have the flu?

JOHNNY ANGEL. No, I got over it, thanks.

VENUS. I worry about you.

JOHNNY ANGEL. When? Every eight years?

VENUS. Look, I came back, didn't I?

JOHNNY ANGEL. So does Halley's Comet. Big fuckin' deal. What are you doin' here?

VENUS. I ran out of gas. I blew a point or whatever the hell they're called. Is that my fault?

JOHNNY ANGEL. And you just happened to do it in front of this place?

VENUS. So what? (*A glarin' aside to Juke.*) Johnny, it's not as if I planned this—

(They rise from their tables at opposite sides of the stage so that they're facin' one another while they're shoutin'. Slowly they begin movin' in. Step by step.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. You sure?

VENUS. Yes! No! Look, you bastard, I'm trying to say I'm sorry!

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah? Well, it's a little late for that!

VENUS. You know something? You were a pain in the ass in 1956, and you only got worse!

JOHNNY ANGEL. Look who's talkin'!

VENUS. (*Holdin' up a hand.*) I'm still wearing you're goddamned ring, aren't I?!

JOHNNY ANGEL. Why did you leave?

VENUS. Go to hell!

JOHNNY ANGEL. WHY DID YOU LEAVE?

VENUS. Because I— I—

JOHNNY ANGEL. My face, baby. It's up here.

VENUS. Johnny—

(He reaches down and grabs her arms, pullin' them around him so that their hands are on each of their asses. They're glued tight, man. So are their mouths, by the way.)

VENUS. (*Pullin' back.*) I—I have to go.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Where?

VENUS. San Diego.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Do I get a goodbye this time?

(A kiss. He pulls back and caresses her hand, fingerin' the ring and givin' it a tug. It don't budge.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. What did you put this on with—rubber cement?

VENUS. It'll never come off, Johnny.

(Another kiss.)

VENUS. Maybe I can stay a couple of hours.

JOHNNY ANGEL. Yeah. Why don'tcha?

VENUS. How do I find Route 5?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Put an ad in the paper.

(And another one.)

VENUS. Johnny?

JOHNNY ANGEL. Mmmmm?

VENUS. This wasn't supposed to happen.

JOHNNY ANGEL. I know.

(One more.)

JOHNNY ANGEL. By the way—

VENUS. What?

JOHNNY ANGEL. I'm dyin'.

VENUS. I know....

(They get lost in each other. Totally. Juke fades out with "Step by Step")

ACT ONE CURTAIN