

Are You Lookin'?

by Murray Mednick

Are You Lookin'? was first presented at Theatre Genesis, New York in 1973, under the playwright's direction, with Josh Cavastani playing Mickey and Kathleen Cramer as Kay.

In 1976, the play was produced at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco, under the direction of Robert Woodruff, with John Nesci playing Mickey.

In 1978, the play was produced at the Gene Dynarski Theatre in Los Angeles, under the direction of Darrell Larson, with the following cast:

Mickey: Ed Harris

Kay: Helen Shaver

Pewee: Anthony Gourdine

Robert: Kevin O'Brien

The Venusian: René Assa

The Man On Bench was added in a subsequent draft.

Characters

Mickey Musician, 28.

Kay Actress, 26.

Pee-wee Black man, early 30s

The Stranger *An extraterrestrial derelict*

Man On Bench Robert, 20s, a friend of Kay's

1. In the Dark

In darkness, a silence, then the voices of MICKEY and KAY, stoned.

Kay I don't know what you mean. What you were saying before. About history.

Mickey I was talking about the past. I mean, history is the stuff of the past, right?

Kay Okay.

Mickey Well, the past is infinite. (*A silence*) There's always another point backward. In time.

Kay There is?

Mickey But it is also true that the past does not exist.

Kay The past does not exist.

Mickey No, it's a paradox. Because we can never know what happened then. We'd have to have been there.

Kay Is that true?

Mickey I think so. To really know what happened, you'd have to have been there. We only know what happens. And even then...

Kay What happens?

Mickey I don't know. This happens.

Kay This happens?

Mickey Yeah. This happens, that's all.

Kay Oh, then what we do is, we make a picture.

Mickey A picture?

Kay A picture of what happened. History.

Mickey Oh, yeah. *(Pause)* I don't know what that would be, though. Exactly. The picture changes.

Kay Does that mean it doesn't exist?

Mickey What?

Kay The past.

Mickey I don't know. It depends.

Kay On what?

Mickey On what you mean.

Kay History.

Mickey It exists insofar as it is studied. We study it, so it exists.

Kay It?

Mickey History.

Kay No, the studying is what exists. *(A silence)*

Mickey More than that which is being studied, yes—namely, the past.

Kay You mean, “I study” is more real than “I studied?”

Mickey Maybe. It's doing something. It's an activity.

Kay *(After a pause)* Oh, I see.

Mickey I mean, the history book exists. And what exists in the book are pages of words.

Kay The words exist.

Mickey Yes. And put together in an orderly way, they make a kind of picture, with ideas.

Kay Ideas.

Mickey Well, yeah.

Kay Ideas exist?

Mickey Ideas exist.

Kay In the world.

Mickey In the world.

Kay Give me an example.

Mickey Progress. *(Laughs)*

Kay A picture in the mind. I'm trying to see that. *(A silence)*

Mickey It is a matter of opinion, in the long run, what may have really happened. *(Pause)* Based on an accumulation of facts.

Kay Facts?

Mickey Yes.

Kay Facts exist?

Mickey Well, the written records of the time. *(Pause)* The archeological remains. *(Pause)* And so on. *(Pause)* Yes, these exist. They help to make a hypothesis for what may have happened in the past, relative to...

Kay Uh-huh.

Mickey Relative to the context.

Kay The context of the book?

Mickey Yes, the context and the premises of the book.

Kay In the mind of the author. *(Silence)*

Mickey The book exists. It does exist. For a while, anyway.

Kay I know it does.

Mickey And then it becomes something else. It fades away into something else.

Kay So?

Mickey So, it no longer exists. Not as a book, it doesn't.

Kay What about geology? You know, Darwin made up all that stuff about the Pleistocene and Eocene and the ape scene and all.

Mickey He did?

Kay Yes, and none of it is true. Boy, that sure pisses me off.

Mickey Amazing. It comes down to how you decide to divide

up the time. There's the premise—the division of time.
In reality, time is infinite, and relative. *(Pause)* To space.
(Pause) The relations of time and space are infinite.

Kay I thought you said “intimate.”

Mickey Yeah, ha, ha.

Kay It's so big, so vast. I look back into the past, and gales
blow, dinosaurs are born and die, the oceans shift.

Mickey Wow—carbon 14!

Kay Carbon 14?

Mickey Fantastic. What they can do is find out how old a rock is.
Or a clay pot or something like that. Bones and shit. By
virtue of an analysis of its atomic structure. As if the rock
were dying, as a rock.

Kay Too much, the life and death of a rock. I'm interested in
the galaxies, man. There's hundreds of millions of galaxies
out there! Can you dig that?

Mickey See, before the rock was a rock, it was something else. Same
thing with the galaxies, Kay. *(Pause)* If you accelerate mass,
you get...you can transform matter into energy. *(Pause)*
Magic. *(Pause)* Something to do with velocity and time. The
speed of light. Changes. *(Pause)*

Kay Wait a minute—how about making energy into matter?

Mickey Yeah—the Black Hole.

Kay What?

Mickey Close your eyes.

Kay Huh? Okay...

Mickey What do you see?

Kay I don't know.

Mickey You see the infinite.

Kay Oh, the infinite. Looks like a black hole to me.

Mickey Yes, right. (*A silence*)

Kay Is that what you were trying to say before? About the smallest particle?

Mickey I guess so. There is no smallest particle. If you know the smallest you'd know the biggest. It's like the beginning and the end.

Kay Is that religious?

Mickey It's physics, baby.

Kay Yeah, right. Physics.

Mickey They'll never find the absolute tiniest unit in the universe, because there's always one tinier. And so on, and so on.

Kay But there's got to be some practical use for the whole thing. For the search to continue, I mean. Science.

Mickey Of course. The discovery and harnessing of natural forces.

Kay What?

Mickey Nothing. I got a chill. The shit is wearing off already.

Kay Yeah, funny how the stars turn cold like that, icy. They were looking warm and friendly there for a while.

Mickey Not any more. It's BLACK and FREEZING out there.

Kay Do you remember, when we were talking earlier?

Mickey Yes?

Kay And I told you about this fear of mine?

Mickey Yes.

Kay Well, I've been thinking it over. And it isn't that you have to go, or that I must go, or that I'm going someplace I dislike, or someplace I might be afraid of. When you're gone, I wait for you, and that's what I'm doing, and it passes, it's all right. And when I'm away, I do what I have to do, and that too passes, and it's all right.

Mickey What is it, then?

Kay I'm not sure. It'd be a word only, maybe the wrong one.
It's a difficult job, to discover what it is. It's so vague, like
a substance in the mind, the feeling of dread.

*A silence, then a full-color MAP of the moon, close up,
comes into focus.*

Mickey Look.

Kay Yes.

They say the words clearly and slowly, in a monotone.

Mickey The Sea of Showers.

Kay The Sea of Showers.

Mickey The Sea of Serenity.

Kay The Sea of Serenity.

Mickey Aristarchus.

Kay Aristarchus.

Mickey Ocean of Storms.

Kay Ocean of Storms.

Mickey The Sea of Vapors.

Kay The Sea of Vapors.

Mickey The Sea of Tranquility.

Kay The Sea of Tranquility.

Mickey The Sea of Fertility.

Kay The Sea of Fertility.

Mickey The Sea of Moisture.

Kay The Sea of Moisture.

Mickey Sea of Clouds.

Kay Sea of Clouds.

A silence; the IMAGE fades.

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2. In the John

A small bathroom, set center stage, well lit. The rest of the stage area is empty and dark. Toilet, tub, cabinet/mirror. Blue-and-white-tiled entrance is through the front, downstage. KAY is sitting on the closed toilet, thinking a bit before preparing to leave. A moment, then MICKEY appears left, crosses, and enters the bathroom.

Mickey I don't know what's wrong. It didn't affect me at all. I feel exactly the same.

Kay You need another shot.

Mickey There's no flash. I'd like to get a flash, at least. It's supposed to be pure crystal.

Kay I know.

Mickey What the fuck—I don't like speed to begin with—at least there oughta be a—

Kay Take it easy. Be glad we got that junk to come down with. I am.

Mickey Yeah? How much we got?

Kay Enough.

Mickey *(Contemplating himself in the mirror)* It's a strange thing, the body. You're stuck in it. Stinking meat on aging bones. It's a regular fucking sewer.

Kay You're so beautiful, Mick.

Mickey Filthy pipes, infected blood. (*Coming to*) Oh, thank you, Babe. Thanks. (*She becomes sad*) You don't mind doing this, do you? (*No reply*) If you don't want to, I can do it myself.

Kay No, please. I want to.

Mickey Okay. (*Cupping her chin*) Give us a smile then, will ya?

She smiles.

I know you like it—otherwise I'd hit myself.

She frowns.

Come on, it's no big thing who hits me—

She smiles.

That's it. Wonderful. Where would I be without you? I'd be lost.

Kay Really?

Mickey Yeah, I'd just freak out one day and start screaming and running up and down the street talking to myself.

Kay No, you wouldn't. You'd find something. Someone.
(*Producing a vial of white powder*) How's that?

Mickey Fine. (*Into the mirror*) I was hoping for something blissful. Orgasmic. Ecstatic. I was hoping to wake up. I feel so tired. And I slept all day today.

Kay Sit down. (*She rises*)

Mickey (*He sits*) You're really something, you know? I wanted to get into a low-down, funky, hungry, drawn-out sex binge with you.

Kay But it wasn't the right time.

Mickey It was a couple of hours ago, wasn't it? What happened then?

Kay I could feel that you just wanted to get off on something. It wasn't me you wanted.

Mickey Yeah, it was. I wanted you, I wanted to get off, too. It's the same thing.

Kay Okay. I was too tense, then. I don't know why. I'm sorry.

Mickey No, no, don't be sorry. Really. Who the hell knows what was going on two hours ago? Forget it. *(Pause)* I love you.

Kay *(Embracing him)* You do? You do?

Mickey Yeah, I do. Of course, I love you.

Kay You'll keep me with you?

Mickey Yeah, I'll keep you with me. What the hell do you think?

Kay I guess I worry.

Mickey Don't worry, Babe.

Kay I'll be anything you want me to be. I'll do anything you want me to.

Mickey Yeah? Well, give me my goddamn shot then, will you, and I'll keep you with me forever.

Kay *(Laughing, kissing him)* Coming right up, sir! *(She pours the white stuff into a huge, fire-blackened spoon)*

Mickey Shit, it's cold in here. And I feel hungry all of a sudden. Can't understand it. Hungry...and tired, Babe. Tired.

Kay I know. I know how you feel.

Mickey You do?

Kay Yes. *(Pause as she drops the cotton)* We haven't been taking care of ourselves as well as we could, Mick...we don't take our vitamins...or eat properly. There...where's the needle?

He points into the cabinet.

And there's a terrible draft, you know?

Mickey Yes. Maybe we been travelling around too much.
(Watching her) You're not having any?

Kay No.

Mickey Why not?

Kay I don't like speed. Ugh. *(Shivers)* It makes me dizzy and sick to my stomach, and I have to be up early tomorrow.

Mickey What for?

Kay I have to do my Christmas shopping.

Mickey Christmas shopping.

Kay Right. Now, if you get me the outfit, I'll give you a shot.

Mickey I sharpened the point.

Kay Good, maybe it won't hurt so much.

Mickey I hope not. It's in the cabinet.

She opens the cabinet and produces a syringe about five times the standard size. He looks at his badly scarred arms.

My veins, my veins...they're so sore.

He watches her fill the syringe with a green substance from the huge, fire-blackened spoon.

It's a hairy feeling walking around with these punctured veins.

Kay I'll bet. *(She attaches the needle, puts it down, takes off her belt)*

Mickey I'm just trying to get into the bloodstream, Babe, get into the bloodstream and effect a change.

Kay Yes. All right, Honey. Which arm?

Mickey *(Looking)* Which one...this one. *(The left)* We just shot the other one, didn't we?

Kay *(Ties him off)* Yes, I think so.

Mickey They're receding, Babe, running away, almost gone, they don't like it...little blue rivers changing course, Babe, dropping inward.

Kay I don't blame them.

Mickey Well, let's get it before it disappears. I need a hit.

Kay I see it. Flex your arm, it's got to come up more.

He does so.

More.

He does so.

Mickey That hurts. Cool it, that's as far as it'll go.

Kay All right, keep your arm straight. *(Takes the syringe)*

Mickey Give us a smile, Babe.

Kay *(Smiling sweetly)* I get the creeps sometimes.

Mickey You love it, though. You love the ritual of it, don't ya?

Kay Yes, Baby.

Mickey Come on, then.

She taps the vein.

That's it, that's it. No, further down. Try it a little further down, okay?

She does.

That's it.

It takes a while for the point to penetrate—he grimaces, clenches his teeth, hisses.

Kay It's in. *(They look)* Should I shoot it?

Mickey *(In pain)* Shoot it! Shoot it!

Kay *(Doing so)* Let go!

He lets go of the tie. She withdraws the needle with difficulty. MICKEY almost screams.

There... (Looks into his face. Helps wipe the blood off his arm)

Mickey It was a hit, wasn't it? It was a hit.

Kay I hope so. *(Takes water into the syringe; it turns red)*
Sure looks that way. *(Sprays the bloodied water all over the blue tile)*

Mickey Yeah, wow, I think it is, I think it's a hit. *(He appears suddenly animated and his manner of speech accelerates steadily)*
Oh, yeah, Babe. Right on it. Thanks. Thanks a lot. You're too much. You're beautiful. Ah. Yes. Yes, that's it. I know what it is, Babe—it's not anger, it's not just ANGER, Babe—you hear?—it's a question of despair, it's a kind of DESPAIR... based on a... a VISION, yes... of reality, the CONDITION, you know what I mean? I do get angry, Babe—I know that—I get angry—but it isn't at anybody in particular—maybe one time it was, but not any more, not any more—I don't remember, really—it's the whole fucking thing, Babe!

Kay The species.

Mickey Yeah, right, that's it—the species! The bird's eye view—the wormy, creepy-crawly crust of earth—worms with big teeth! That's why I have doubts, Babe, about political solutions.

Kay You do?

Mickey Sure, I do. Because it's the whole fucking thing—the species, whatever you want to call it, something inside us, given, like a tumor or something, it's screwed up...it'll go wrong no matter what...I don't know...it's a real problem, Babe, because I can see both sides of it...like, I think Mao was a beautiful guy and all, he was a VISIONARY, you know what I mean? A SAINT—he definitely had the best idea of all, which was the idea of hard work and brotherhood and justice and human progress...but I just don't know if the vision is applicable to the human condition, if we could ever make it work.

Kay *(Finishing up in the bathroom)* Uh-huh. *(Goes to the door and steps out)* I'll be right back, Mickey. *(Goes off into the darkness, left)*

Mickey Okay. *(Takes down his pants, prepares to relax and take a crap. Lights a cigarette)* Ah. Yes...I'll be walking up and down the room twiddling my chin and I'll be taking a piss every five minutes. And once in a while I'll get hung up on an ice floe, and I'll float so cool on the lovely blue gulf-stream, south...through the Panama Canal into the blue Pacific...yes...riding a dolphin like a feeling on a heartbeat, goin' fast...yes...man on the moon and moon germs and the magical penumbra of my mind. Ah. Thump, thump. Take it easy, heart. Easy does it, shiftin' into third, barroom... Damn, I felt a stab of hunger there, I'm hungry again. Can't stop now, I'm off into the wild blue yonder heh, heh.

Ah. Funny thing about sex, what it does to sex. I do not want to in the immediate present, however, I feel cold. I feel like a hollow tin tube. *(Coughs)* And my throat is getting rusty. Too much smoking. *(Stops. The sound of RUNNING WATER, off)* Amazing, but this is it. The pinnacle, the Twentieth Century. The top. The can't be beat. The zenith.

Kay

(Off) Are you through in there?

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3. Casablanca

Scene: a coffee table and chairs, center left. Deep right a sink and a commode. A flickering TV stage center—it is playing the movie Casablanca. KAY and MICKEY sit at an angle facing away from the audience so that they can watch the television and each other. The sound is low. A long wait as they watch the movie. MICKEY makes a smiling grotesquerie.

Kay

What is that?

Mickey freezes, exaggerating the mask, and makes an absurd sound.

What?

He continues.

Goddamn it, Mickey!

Mickey Nothing.
Kay WHAT?
Mickey (*Mockingly foolish*) NOTHING.
Kay Go to hell.

A long, bitter silence.

Mickey I was just thinking...how precious these moments are we share together, Kay.
Kay Where the HELL are you coming from?
Mickey I went downtown today, to get my medication...and all I could see was bums and dope fiends, dope fiends and bums... (*Acting out*) “You lookin’?” Downcast old ladies hunting for bargains...depressed cops...kids begging...
“Hey, can you gimme 26 cents so I can—”

She watches the TV as if not listening.

Kay (*Speaking of Bergman*) She’s too much, she’s too fucking much. (*A silence*)
Mickey In ten years, I’ll be forty.
Kay (*Reproachfully*) Oh, Mickey.
Mickey Are you listening, or not? (*She mockingly attends him*)
People are talking to themselves in the john...perverts showing little girls their crusty dicks...drunken old retired sailors attacking boys on basketball courts...(*Illustrating*)
Suicide lunges...
Kay Suicide lunges?
Mickey Yeah! Just looking for trouble, right? Trouble and a filthy orgasm someplace dark...ready for anything...fight ya to

the death or suck ya off...it's a bitter ending...lonely old sonsabitches.

Kay I don't feel the least bit sorry for 'em.

Mickey There's a war going on, Kay. It's a goddamed war going on out there.

Kay Where the hell have you been?

Mickey *(Ignoring her)* Murder up 26 percent. Rapes at an all-time high. Murder, rape, prostitution and dope...violence, sodomy and pollution...I never seen anything like it before in my life! *(Laughs)*

Kay I'm watching this right now, if you don't mind.

Mickey Sex and murder, they go together.

Kay *(Watching the TV)* Wow, did you see that?

Mickey No...what?

Kay They're going to arrest Laszlo!

Mickey Huh?

Kay See that car? They're going into Rick's! It's the Fascists!

Mickey What happened to Sidney Greenstreet?

Kay *(Annoyed)* Oh!

A silence. They watch. The commercial comes on.

Shit.

Mickey I would like to get me one of them new Mercury Comets, though.

Kay I'd like a bottle of some expensive shampoo, for my hair—
(Fiddles with her hair) It's goddamned filthy!

They watch the TV in silence a moment.

Mickey We've lost it, Kay. We ain't tied into things no more.
It's a sickness, Kay. We've gone too far.

Kay What do you mean?

Mickey There has to be a balance, Kay, between the pollution of things and the glory. The beautiful and the diseased.

Kay Jesus!

Mickey We've upset the balance. We've gone too far. Too gross, too ugly. Too much, too selfish, too many.

Kay *(Responding to Bogart)* Oh, beautiful!

A silence. Then MICKEY gets up, goes to the sink, runs cold water over his head, washes, brushes his teeth, returns.

Mickey Boy that felt good! *(He looks affectionately at KAY)*
How ya doin'? *(No reply)* You look so fine!

She shifts uncomfortably.

I think your hair is lovely, Kay.

Kay It is not.

Mickey *(Undaunted)* I think it is.

He approaches, leans over, and tries to kiss her. She turns away. He is undeterred.

You look so sweet to me.

Kay Cut it out.

Mickey *(Squeezing her leg)* It's nice...

Kay *(Annoyed)* Come on...

Mickey It is...*(He ignores her and squeezes the other leg)*

Kay Mickey...!
Mickey (*Grabbing a breast*) I like it.
Kay Well, I don't!

He freezes, prolonging their shame, which further infuriates her, but she makes a great effort to control herself.

All of a sudden you act like you're in heat or something.

He doesn't move.

What is it? What do you want? (*Gently*) Don't play with me, Mick.

He returns to his chair, wounded and pitiful.

Mickey Okay.
Kay (*Singing*) Nobody loves me, everybody hates me, I'm gonna eat some worms...
Mickey Forget it, Kay.
Kay I'm sorry, Mick...I just...I don't know...
Mickey Forget it. (*A seething silence*) I ain't going out there no more. I'm through with it. I can't stand it. I ain't going out there ANY FUCKING MORE.
Kay Good.
Mickey It's not worth it. It's degrading. They'll cut your throat for a dollar. Thank God they don't know I'm white.
Kay (*Slight snicker*) How do you know they don't?
Mickey (*Exploding*) I AIN'T GOING OUT THERE AGAIN. I'M NEVER GONNA COP FOR YOU AGAIN.

Kay Don't blame me, Buster.

Mickey They're dogs. They're nigger dogs. It's humiliating. To be at the mercy of dogs. Like an animal. FOR JUNK.

Kay Race don't have nothing to do with it.

Mickey Did I say race? *(Screaming)* YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT? YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW? CAN'T I TALK STRAIGHT TO YOU? IT'S A QUESTION OF STYLE. NOT RACE. UNDERSTAND? THE WORD NIGGER IS A QUESTION OF STYLE. IT'S A DIFFERENT THING.

Kay Oh.

Mickey You wouldn't know. You don't go out there. You don't have to deal with it.

Kay There are plenty of places to cop. You picked your own scene.

Mickey *(Subsiding, after a pause)* You're right. I did. Why? Why?

Kay I don't know. Maybe you're identified with the poor and the downtrodden.

Mickey Well, that's it. I'm through with it. I can't do it no more.

For a moment the sound of another COMMERCIAL rises painfully. KAY relents and goes to him.

Kay It's all right. Don't do it. *(Caressing him)* I'm glad. I don't want you to.

Mickey I'm not. That's it, Babe.

Kay I'm so glad. *(Bursting suddenly into tears)* I'm glad. Oh, Mickey! I hate it. Let's put it down! Let's do it!

Mickey *(Consoling her now)* We will. I swear we will, Babe. We will. We will. We will.

They get quiet. Finally she leaves his embrace and goes back to her chair. They watch the television—more COMMER-

CIALS, the banality of which should be absolutely horrible now—and quickly grow restless.

Kay *(Speaking of an Alka-Seltzer commercial)* My God.

Mickey Comes the revolution, they'll be shot. Tortured and shot.

Kay They give you no rest! Every minute they want you to be taking something! They treat us like worms, Mickey. Worms!

Mickey I know. *(A pause as they watch)*

Kay *(Giggling hysterically)* The quick relief of neuritis and neuralgia. *(Pause)*

Mickey *(Blurting)* You want to use up the rest of the dope?

Kay *(After a pause)* Yeah, I do.

They brighten up considerably. MICKEY, wielding a fly swatter, goes after flies with zest and abandon.

Mickey I got one! That makes eight I killed today. The rest are disguised, or clinging to the ceiling.

Kay They're smart little fuckers.

Mickey They're on the run. Death is all around them. They can smell the corpses of their fellows and friends.

Kay *(Enticingly)* Come here. *(He hesitates)* I just want to talk to you.

Mickey What about?

Kay Don't you want to talk to me? Don't you like me?

Mickey *(Facetious)* No. *(Pause)* Yeah, sure I do. I like you a lot. *(Pause)* You know that. *(Pause)* Come on, let's get off. Then we'll talk, okay?

Kay Promise?

Mickey Yes.

Kay *(Eagerly)* Let's go.

They cross to the bathroom, where MICKEY assembles the imaginary paraphernalia, preparing a fix. KAY watches him closely from the toilet seat.

Mickey This is it, Kay. We got to stop after this. I just can't make that shit on the street anymore. It isn't worth it, you know what I mean? It isn't worth getting cut up, or killed, or time in the joint, you know what I mean? It's exciting, sure, when everything is everything and you're on your way to the cooker...

Kay *(Angrily)* What are you doing?

Mickey Huh?

Kay That's too much, Mickey!

Mickey No it isn't. I measured it.

Kay Put some back!

Mickey I measured it, Kay. It's equal!

Kay You do this to me every time! You cheat!

Mickey I do not! You were sitting right there!

Kay You cheat! You ALWAYS have more than me, ALWAYS!

Mickey *(Placatingly)* You'll see. Just wait, I'll bet you.

Kay You're just a cheap, lying, sneaky sonofabitch, Mickey!

Mickey Come on, tie me off will you?

Kay I better have the same amount as you in there, Mickey; or I'm through. This is the last time.

Mickey It will be. I swear. *(Frantic)* Come on, Kay. Please.

She belligerently starts to tie him off, then explodes and grabs the tie and the outfit away from him.

Kay I'm going first! I'LL measure it!

Mickey *(Rattled)* All right...okay, then put the shit back into the cooker and measure it.

Kay What's the matter, Mickey? Huh? You know you have more than me, don't you? You rat bastard. Don't you?

Mickey No, I don't.

Kay THEN WHY SHOULD I PUT ANY BACK, GODDAMN YOU!

Mickey I just think you ought to do what you say you're going to do, that's all.

Kay *(Furiously)* Okay, man.

She squeezes the stuff back into the cooker and re-measures.

Mickey You must be kidding.

Kay What? What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

Mickey I'm doing just like you do, Kay.

She squirts a bit back into the cooker, then ties off angrily. The process is painful and bloody—she has trouble making a hit.

Kay There. Thank God.

A pause. She feels a slight rush, puts on a disappointed look. Hands the outfit back to MICKEY.

Mickey Thank you. *(He cleans the hypo...prepares his fix)*

Kay How come you don't say anything? Because you got more than me, you sonofabitch. Every fucking time. You do it every fucking time.

He fixes in a hurry. Waits. Nothing, or very little, happens.

You feel it? *(A silence)*

Mickey *(Bitterly)* No. Nothing.

Kay Come on, you got all of it, didn't ya?

Mickey Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Kay Not even a buzz?

Mickey Yeah. I don't know. That sonofabitch. That treacherous piece of shit. I could kill him, I swear.

Kay Not a buzz even, eh?

Mickey *(In a rage)* I'll kill him.

Kay You got any more money?

Mickey Are you kidding? That's it.

Kay That's it, huh?

Mickey That's it.

Kay Shit.

Mickey Oh, God!

Kay What're you crying about? At least you didn't have less than half of nothing.

Mickey Get off it, will you.

Kay I will not.

Mickey *(Frenzied)* Okay, don't then.

Kay What are you doing?

Mickey I'm going.

Kay What for? Where are you gonna go?

He loses control, hauls off and belts her across the face.

Starts wild-eyed for the door. Blackout.

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4. In the Cold

A few moments of blackness, then a CHRISTMAS TREE lit up with a string of blue lights comes on upstage right. It flashes on and off throughout. A half dozen flashes, then KAY enters left and proceeds to light some candles on a white stool down left. The candles and the tree provide the only lights. KAY is wearing a beautiful orange fur coat. MICKEY is revealed in a white wicker chair, slightly upstage from the stool. He is all bundled up in blankets, etc., unshaven, hair long and wild, wearing dark sunglasses.

Kay Hi. How are ya?

Mickey *(Speaks in a strange, high-pitched monotone)* You get anything?

Kay How do you feel?

Mickey I'm cold. It's freezing in here.

Kay I know. There's no heat coming up.

Mickey I can't move.

Kay Well, it's worse outside, believe me.

Mickey What did you get? Did you get anything?

Kay No, nothing. I couldn't...*(A dead silence)* I hate it out there. I couldn't do it. And especially in this weather. *(Another surly silence)* I just can't hang around in the street, Mickey! I'd get killed! I don't know those guys.

Mickey Forget it. Don't go anymore.

Kay I tried, Mickey...I'll try again, if you want me to.

Mickey No, don't. *(Withdraws angrily)*

Kay All right. You're not feeling any better?

Mickey It's my heart. My heart hurts.

Kay Take a deep breath.

Mickey Yeah, I do that anyway. It happens by itself. *(Takes several deep breaths)*

Kay Okay. I was only trying to help.

Mickey It's the Harpies. They're eating out my heart and my liver. The pain is here, right here under the rib cage, here.

Kay The Harpies, eh?

Mickey Yes, the Harpies. The Harpies are a bunch of spacey chicks from a doll's audience, with jagged blue masks, black eyes, and large yellow teeth.

Kay Where are they?

Mickey They're quite sentient now, in this room, in a bright light.

Kay Sentient?

Mickey I mean, visible. Can't you see them?

Kay No, I can't. I do feel for you though, Honey. I know how it hurts.

Mickey Do you? It's the white light of the Buddhists, the one that passeth understanding. *(A silence)*

Kay God, how I hate it down there on the street.

Mickey If my liver wasn't being torn away and eaten alive, blood three inches deep in this room, you'd think I was getting closer to becoming enlightened. Enlightenment is the obliteration of the self. They can have my stupid liver. *(Pause)* Some warrior I am, hunting my own sick death. Invisible Harpies. Stuck in a chair. *(A silence)*

Kay *(Desperately)* Would you like something to eat?

Mickey No, I wouldn't. Are you kidding me? How could I EAT anything? *(Pause)* I wanted to be a warrior, a fighter. ...

Kay How about some tea?

Mickey Yeah, awright...

Kay And an orange?

Mickey Yes, an orange. *(She goes off)* In quarters, please.

A silence. He tries to move about in his chair. Moves his head from side to side. Gives up, becomes rigid. Seems to be regarding the audience from behind the shades. His eyes turn on faintly...PINK. KAY returns with an orange in quarters and a cup of tea.

Kay *(Cheerfully)* Here you are!

Mickey Thank you.

A silence. He continues to regard the audience. His eyes are still faint, pink dots. KAY impulsively kisses him on the mouth.

Kay Merry Christmas, Darling.

Mickey *(Stonily)* Merry Christmas to you, too, Sweetheart.

A silence. He eats a quarter of the orange. Kay sits on the floor at his feet.

I love it when the wind blows. When it swoops in on you and stands you up inside out and makes you move like you're going someplace. Blowing the snow around, like a frozen mist...that raw feeling of cold force coming against you, telling you that you're alive and trying to get warm, get warm...

Kay I know what you mean, Honey. I just can't get used to it. It's twenty degrees out there and it's murderous on top of that. Where I come from it's warm all the time. I mean,

people are crazy anyway, but when they insist on being insane killers even in this unholy freezing weather, I can't take it. I don't even have the clothes for it, you know? Mickey? We've got to move, Mickey! This is an ice age, I can feel it. I don't want to become like one of them frozen dead in a glacier...ice moving down on us... Mickey...?

Mickey I remember it well. The cold and the snow and the sheer fun of it—sleighriding, snowball fights, ice skating and all. I was the first one up, you know, when I was a kid, the first one—right there ahead of everybody, ready to get out and do things. I don't know what happened to me. ...I have a lot of nice memories you know, more than you'd think...

Kay I know you do, Mick. ...*(No reply)* I'm not surprised. I can see you when you were a little boy, running around and stuff. I'll bet you were real cute, huh?

Mickey *(Rasping)* Yeah, real cute. *(A silence)*

Kay Can I get you something else?

Mickey No, nothing. Thank you.

He stares. A silence. Then, as if approaching from a distance, we hear MUSIC: Big Brother and the Holding Company's "A Piece of My Heart." KAY gets up, goes to the window, right, looks out. The sound gets louder; a moment; she closes the window, the music fades.

Kay Wow, that was a group of carolers, Baby, singing in the street...and they were all black people!

Mickey Weird. *(A silence)*

Kay *(Eagerly)* Did you ever hear Little Stevie Wonder? A twelve-year-old kid, man. He ate Ray Charles up one time, in the Cow Palace, San Francisco. Years ago.

Mickey Yeah. He's a lot older now.

Kay Very hip.

Mickey Very.

Kay The good old days.

She rises aimlessly. He reaches for her but misses, his attention still riveted toward the audience.

Mickey Jesus, I wish they'd give us some goddamned fucking heat. Check out the radiators, will you? *(She goes into the dark, left. Radiator sounds)* Maybe they're clogged or something.

Kay *(Returning)* No, they seem okay. I think the furnace is broken.

Mickey God. *(By now his EYES are glowing a bright pink.)*
Radiators. *(Strident)* Radiators.

Kay Drink some of the tea. It'll warm you up.

Mickey There's something I have been trying to express. For years now I've been trying to express it.

Kay About radiators?

Mickey Yes! Radiators! Machines! Bodies!

Kay Go ahead and express it, then.

Mickey Listen to me, will you?

Kay I am listening to you.

Mickey It starts with the heart, with the heartbeat. Call it a feeling, only it isn't exactly a feeling. Wait, if it is a feeling, it is not sayable, not in words—it—*(Stops, as if atrophied)*

Kay Go on, go on. I'm listening.

MICKEY'S voice has risen in pitch and his eyes are now flashing on and off in unison with the Christmas tree.

Mickey It's in the heart, the heart. Between the beats. Under the beats. When you hold your breath. Something like drowning. No, emptiness. Nothing, a hopeless nothing. Not to be thought, not a thought. A feeling, a feeling of space. Dread?... You can't fuck around with it...it holds you up, like an invisible wire, through the flesh...freezing you...in space, empty space, empty space. Around the heart, the heartbeat... the heart...

Kay Breathe. Breathe in and out. Take a big, deep breath. In and out. In and out.

Mickey No, I can't do that. (*Panicking*) I can't do that!

Kay Just breathe.

Mickey If I THINK about it, it gets worse!

Kay Lie down, then. Lie down!

Mickey No, I can't lie down.

Kay Okay, then don't think about it. Just breathe easily, in and out, and don't think about it.

Mickey That's what I'm doing. I'm sitting here breathing and trying not to think about it.

Kay Good! Good, now what about your music? Do you want to play some music?

Mickey (*Smiling madly*) Yeah, I feel more normal now.

Kay Thank God. Do you want your horn? (*No answer*) How does your heart feel now? Mickey?

Mickey Stopped. It's stopped.

Kay Stopped?

Mickey (*Rasping*) Stopped cold.

Kay Huh? What do you mean?

MICKEY'S CHAIR begins rolling very slowly down the incline of the stage toward the audience.

Mickey Something has sprung loose, Kay! My heart is flowing now! *(Pause)* I feel a whole lot better, Kay. I feel fantastic!

Kay Please eat your orange. Drink some tea, at least. Please.

We notice the CHAIR moving now. Accompanied by the SOUND of rusty wheels and pulleys, as his EYES FLASH ON AND OFF in synch with the Christmas tree.

Mickey Don't bother me! I have no time!

Kay Oh, God!

Mickey *(Frantic)* Put out the light, will you? Put out the light!

Kay Oh, my God!

Mickey Put it out! Put it out!

Kay *(In tears)* All right, all right! *(Blows out the candles)*

Mickey *(Loud, rasping, hysterical)* YEAH! GOOD! ALLELUJAH! GET ME MY HORN! QUICK! I FEEL POWERFUL! I FEEL INSPIRED! I FEEL LIKE A GOD!

KAY stifles a scream and rushes away. The tree LIGHTS go out. MICKEY'S eyes continue to flash. The SOUND of rusty pulleys and wheels builds to a crescendo—a moment, then a tremendous metallic crash...the eyes go out. DARKNESS.

*

5. On the Street

PEEWEE, a young black addict, and MICKEY. The stage is bare.

Peewee Hey, Mickey. How are you, man?

Mickey All right. What's happening?

Peewee Out on the prairie, Mick. Out on the prairie.

Mickey Yeah.

Peewee You lookin'?

Mickey Uh...yeah...but it's cool. You know. I could let it pass on by, you know.

Peewee That's good. Right on. Yeah, I'm going into the hospital next week myself.

Mickey You are? What for?

Peewee I'm gonna kick it, man. I'm gonna go through the change.

Mickey Good. Glad to hear it.

Peewee Twelve days. I'll be in there twelve days. Beth Israel.

Mickey How about your teeth? You going to get your teeth fixed?

Peewee No, fuck my teeth. I'll do that later, man, once I get it all together. I'm going to make me some money.

Mickey You better take care of your teeth.

Peewee They ain't bothering me lately. It's all them sweets. When I get the bread, man, I'll BUY me some teeth. *(Dances, laughs; they slap hands)*

Mickey Nothing like your own teeth, Peewee. Once they gone, they gone.

Peewee I know that. You think I don't know that?

Mickey I wish I had all my teeth. You need a lot of money to get teeth put in.

Peewee Well I'm gonna get me what I need. I got a lot going for

me, man. I ain't one of these jive niggers out here.

Mickey I know you're not.

Peewee I don't pull none of that low shit, brother. Passing dummies, taking people off. And I don't let myself get sloppy. I keep my respect.

Mickey I know.

Peewee You can trust me. *(A silence)* Can't you?

Mickey Yeah, Peewee.

Peewee I plan to get straight with you, too, Mick. I'm going to be righteous with you, brother. You wait and see.

Mickey Okay.

Peewee Maybe you don't believe me, Mick, but you been real nice with me and I'm not the kind of dude which takes advantage of a friend. You dig where I'm coming from?

Mickey Yeah, sure. What happens in the hospital?

Peewee They detoxify you. It's the methadone treatment. Then if you don't make it they put you in the program. What I'm going to do, see, is I'm going to clean up. I'm going to stop taking that methadone, because it's dope, it's dope. And it's worse than smack, you know that, it gets into your bones. Not me, I'm afraid of that shit man, but I'll still be in the program, so I'll sell it and straighten myself out. Do some coke, drink a little, everything'll be everything. You understand what I'm trying to say?

Mickey We'll see what happens, Peewee.

Peewee You're not still down on me, are you?

Mickey What can I tell you, man?

Peewee *(Fake outrage)* Don't tell me nothin', man. Nothin'! You sure it was ME your old lady said had took her off? *(No reply)* Because I ain't even SEEN your old lady.

Mickey Come on, Peewee. She knows damn well who you are, man.

Peewee At NIGHT, man? In the DARK?

Mickey Yeah, Peewee. (*Disgusted*) Forget it, man.

Peewee All I know is, you shouldn't be judging peoples guilty without no proof. You know me, Mick. I wouldn't do that shit.

Mickey The whole fucking scene sucks, Peewee. It ain't just you. People acting like fucking animals, man.

Peewee I know what you trying to say, Mick. These niggers out here, they ain't got no pride, man. No pride, no morals, no respect. I don't know what it's coming to, when folks start burning their friends.

Mickey (*Sad*) I gotta stop this shit, man.

Peewee You and me both, Babe. I ain't going to be doing this much longer. I'm going to put it down, man.

Mickey (*Dubiously*) Yeah. (*A silence*)

Peewee You're not sick are you?

Mickey A little. It's just starting to come on.

Peewee What time did you last get off?

Mickey This morning.

Peewee Yeah, I know what you mean. Ain't had nothin' myself, since last night. My damn wife comes visiting with the kid—you know my son Michael, don't you?

Mickey Groovy kid.

Peewee He's beautiful, I'm telling you. He's something else, that kid. Wasn't for him I'd have nothing, Mickey. He's the light of my life, he's my heart.

Mickey I know it. You're really into that kid. Too bad you can't get together with your family.

Peewee Don't think I don't know what you're talking 'bout, Mick, but it ain't easy. I been trying.

Suspicious look from MICKEY.

Peewee I have, man! Me and her was like daytime lovers, bro, we never had enough of one another, man, it was something. She put up with a lot from me, Mick.

Mickey I understand that, Peewee.

Peewee I fucked up, and I admit it, I fucked it up good. The more she hassled me about stuff, the worse I got. It was some kinda—I dunno—some kinda craziness, man, you know? You're an educated cat, you know what I'm talking about.

Mickey Education ain't got nothing to do with it.

Peewee Man, I wish I had me some. I KNOW things'd been a lot brighter for me, because I ain't no fast nigger who don't want to amount to nothing. I ain't no pile of shit in the morgue, man. Least ways, I'd make something of myself, Mickey, if I had me a CHANCE. I'd like to go to college, man, and learn how to be an architect. Yeah, that's what I'd like to be, an architect. Right on, man, building me a project of my OWN.

Dances, laughs, slapping of palms.

Mickey Too much. A project named for Peewee. The PEEWEE PROJECT.

More dancing and laughter.

Peewee Anyway, my ma and her's in the bedroom watching Flip, and I'm playing with Michael, and they find my wallet, which was in that blue suede jacket of mine.

Mickey Poor Peewee. They took all your dope and all your money.

Peewee How'd you know? I musta told you, huh?

Mickey Yeah, you told me.

Peewee I been out all night, man, trying to scrounge me up a taste. Can you believe it? I had twenty dollars and six bags! My wife throws the stuff away and my mother takes the twenty dollars!

Mickey *(Aside)* A likely story.

Peewee I had to beat her, Babe. I give her a black eye and I tells her to get.

Mickey I thought you wanted to be back together with your family.

Peewee I do! But you got to have your respect! Ain't no use in being home if you ain't got your dignity and your respect. Not me, Jack, when I get ready to deal with my family, I want it to be together. I got to deal with my family, I wants it to be together. I got to feel proud like a black man should! You're a white boy. You don't necessarily know what I'm talking about, do you?

Mickey I think I do.

Peewee Yeah, you're all right. You're straight up with me, Mick. You're all right!

Dances, slapping of hands.

Mickey Thanks a lot.

Peewee Most of the niggers out here, man, they just lookin' to beat a white boy ever chance they get. They got no sense. I ain't like that. To me a man's a man, and you're a stand-up dude, Mick. I don't go for them Black Panthers or nothing, man.

Mickey Why not?

Peewee Cause they're crazy! Walkin' around with rifles, man, who they think they kidding? Ain't nobody digs 'em, man, they bring the pigs down on us, give us a bad name, act like a bunch a commies.

Mickey You ought to find out more about them. I think they're outasight people.

Peewee Oh, what you talkin' 'bout? I know what's happening!

MICKEY shrugs, gives up.

Ah, it's all bullshit, ain't it, Mick?

Mickey Where is everybody?

Peewee There's nothing out here, man, nothing for the money.

Mickey Yeah, but there's nobody on the street. It's weird.

Peewee It's hot, the avenue is HOT. People are being wiped out.

Mickey Every time I come down here you say the same thing. "It's hot! Hot."

Peewee I got no reason to put you on. See for your own self.

Mickey Yeah, looks very quiet...I can't hang here much longer.

Peewee Well, come on, if you're lookin'. I know where there's something nice.

Mickey Where? Where is it?

Peewee You don't know the dude.

Mickey No, I'll just go on...

Peewee It's a SMOKER, Mick! I swear it. I had some myself last night. I only hope he's still holding, 'cause there ain't nothin' that good here, man. The dude is a friend of mine.

Mickey Yeah? I don't know, Peewee.

Peewee What's the matter? You're lookin', aren't you?

Mickey Yeah, I'm looking. I told you I wasn't feeling good.

Peewee Then let's get it ON, man!

Mickey Just hold it, will you? *(He looks around anxiously)*

Peewee There ain't nobody out here, man. I'm tellin' you!

Mickey Isn't that Uptown Joe across the street?

Peewee Where?

Mickey Coming out of the project. *(Pointing)* There!

Peewee No, that ain't him.

Mickey You sure?

Peewee Yeah, that ain't Uptown. He don't walk like Uptown.

Mickey *(Hesitating.)* Shit...

Peewee He ain't got nothin' anyway, man. Doesn't make no sense to hang out here for Uptown. Even if he does come out, you know his stuff ain't been up to standard.

MICKEY mumbles and turns his back, scanning the opposite direction.

You're sure acting spooky.

PEEWEE steps away and appears interested in something down the block. A long silence.

Mickey *(Desperate)* You got any money, Peewee?

Peewee Shit, I had some money I'd been on my way to the cooker a long time ago!

Mickey Figures.

Peewee I take you to the man, you give me a bag, right? You always gimme a bag.

Mickey Yeah, but I can't keep doing it.

Peewee Come on, Mick. The last time, I swear to God.

Mickey I can't.

Peewee *(Pleading)* Come on, Mick. You can do it, man.

Mickey I can't, Peewee. I'm sorry.

Peewee *(After a silence)* Listen, I got five dollars. Just gimme a dollar, will you? Okay?

Mickey *(As if he hasn't understood)* What's that?

Peewee Just gimme a dollar so I can get me one.

Mickey Well, where is this guy? I don't want to go too far.

Peewee He's right around the corner on 4th Street.

Mickey You sure it's there? I don't want to go through any badass changes man.

Peewee I was out there myself earlier, man! That's why I want to get back before he runs out!

Mickey How do you know he's home?

Peewee Where else is he gonna be? What's the matter with you, Mickey?

Mickey *(Thinks, submits)* Okay.

Peewee Let's go!

They start walking toward the audience, PEEWEE excitedly, MICKEY resigned.

Man, I sure hope he's still got that same stuff I had before! It's a smoker, Jim! *(Conspiratorial)* I shot two bags! Two! You KNOW I got a five or six bag jonesie!

Mickey *(Enthusiastic)* The shit's really good, huh?

Peewee Man, I shot them two bags up just figurin' to get the nut off, you know what I mean? And I went DOWN, my good man, I was DOWN for the COUNT. They had to pour me outta that crib and walk me home, Jim, 'cause I could not stand UP.

Mickey *(Eagerly)* No shit? That's good, Peewee, I appreciate it.

Peewee *(Stopping)* How many'd you say you wanted?

Mickey Uh...three.

Peewee You sure you don't want no more? Like you ought to get as many as you can, you dig where I'm comin' from?

Mickey Uh...yeah. No, I just want three. *(Pause)* Maybe four.

They continue offstage, entering the audience; stop.

This the building? *(Frightened)* This it, Peewee?

Peewee Come on.

He maneuvers MICKEY, who is clearly scared, in front of him, and follows close behind as they go further up the aisle. After a few steps, PEEWEE throws his left arm around MICKEY'S neck, holding his head tightly by the chin, and, all in the same smooth motion, clicks open a small switch-blade, pressing the point against MICKEY'S throat.

Okay, gimme the money, Mick.

Mickey Hey, Peewee? What are you doing? What are you doing?

Peewee *(Tightening his grip)* Just gimme the money and I won't hurt you.

Mickey Hey, come on, Peewee! Please! What are you doing? Turn me loose, will you?

Peewee *(Drawing blood)* Gimme the money. All of it.

Mickey *(Starting to cry)* I ain't got any money Peewee! I ain't got any money! Come on, Peewee! What the fuck are you DOING?

PEEWEE cuts a bit deeper, MICKEY yells.

Oh! SHIT!

Peewee Gimme the money. *(Blood is spilling over his hand)* Blood is pouring all over me you sonofabitch!

Throws MICKEY away from him, but holds the knife ready a few inches from MICKEY'S chest. They look at each other, MICKEY, pitiful, "how could you do this to me" and PEEWEE "gimme the money."

I'm uptight. I'm not fucking with you much longer.

Mickey Okay, man. *(Hands PEEWEE a handful of money and makes a reproachful face)*

Peewee *(Counting)* That's the way it is, Mick. I'm sorry. Is this all you got?

Mick *(Bitterly)* It's all I have, Peewee.

Peewee You sure? Turn out your pockets.

Mickey *(Outraged)* I gave you all my goddamned money, Peewee!

Peewee Turn 'em out.

MICKEY does so, trying to maintain his dignity, and produces a surreptitious ten dollar bill.

(Taking it) Okay, now go on down the hall and don't turn around.

MICKEY hesitates.

Go on, start walking.

MICKEY *walks away up the aisle as the lights DIM OUT.*

*

6. Are you lookin'?

Scene, a lower east side kitchen. KAY is sitting at the table holding her head in her hands. A moment, then MICKEY enters. KAY'S guitar lies near her against the table.

Mickey Hi!

Kay Hello.

Mickey Whatsamatter?

Kay Nothing.

Mickey You were crying. *(A silence)* Why?

Kay I don't know.

Mickey Why were you crying?

Kay No reason.

Mickey What happened? Where were you?

Kay I went to the poetry reading.

Mickey I was there. Didn't you see me?

Kay It was embarrassing.

Mickey Yeah, I was there.

Kay It was unbelievable, man. It was death...and Gregory—

Mickey Everybody acting so pious.

Kay —It really made me upset.

Mickey Is that why you were crying?

Kay Wasted, washed up drunk. *(Mimicking)* "Allen, Allen, right, Allen?"

Mickey Pathetic.

Kay Were you there? Did you see?

Mickey Well, part of it.

Kay Like a dried out piece of old cake, man.

Mickey It was boring.

Kay People listening to that sorry motherfucker, methadone fat hanging all over him, teeth falling out.

Mickey What do you mean?

Kay Sallow and fleshy as a rotten banana.

Mickey What are you trying to say?

Kay Shit, man.

Mickey You mean me? *(She starts picking on her guitar)* You don't mean me, do you?

Kay *(Sings) O sump mother, she's sump fine.
She likes the hard stuff, won't touch wine,
Ain't nobody match the way she works her pump,
Make all the little boys in the factory jump—*

Mickey I ain't him. Me and him don't have nothin' to do with each other.

Kay *(Sings) O sump mother you sure sump fine,
If that pump break down, you gotta use mine—
Sump mama's no dummy the way she use her head.
Workin' nine to five, don't hafta leave her bed—*

Mickey I'm going to a gymnasium, soon's I get the money I'm getting off this shit. I ain't no methadone addict. *(Gets down and starts doing pushups)*

Kay *(Sings) Sump mother what's the secret of your success?
"Ain't no secret boy, it's all over my dress."
O sump mother, she's sump fine,
She likes the hard stuff, won't touch wine.*

Mickey *(Collapsing)* In the meantime, I'm gonna work out...
play some ball...go swimming...take a sauna...

Kay I was talking about Gregory Lifeboat, not you.

Mickey You were, eh?

Kay I'm sick of the poetry con, man. You could throw up
from it. Sloppy lifestyle. Discredited ideas.

Mickey But that's not my scene, Kay.

Kay Sanctimonious, sentimental assholes. People eat that shit
up. Pretentious bastard.

Mickey Who?

Kay All of 'em! Little faggot egos climbing over one another to
get to "Allen"...goddamn panty-waisted audience going
ga-ga...and all those liberal cliches, man! How can you
stand it?

Mickey It's got nothing to do with me!

Kay Methadone lush freaks, you seen one, you seen 'em all.

Mickey Everybody on methadone I suppose is an alcoholic too, right?

Kay Well, what did you expect? They'll do anything to get off,
anything! They're junkie juicers, man!

Mickey It ain't true, Kay.

Kay It ain't?

Mickey No, it ain't. Besides, it's better than being out on the street
and geezing in hallways.

Kay Shit, I'd rather be a junkie any day.

Mickey No, you wouldn't.

Kay Yeah, I would! Look at you—you're fat suddenly, you're out
of shape, you got chubby gills, and a big ass, and a swollen
liver, you oversleep and you're groggy all day, and you're
always sucking on a bottle or a candy bar! *(A silence)*
Well, aintcha?

Mickey I'm gonna detox, babe. I told you I was.

Kay And you don't make love anymore. You ain't even interested.

Mickey That's a temporary side effect, Kay.

Kay What good are you? *(A silence)*

Mickey What do you want?

Kay What do I want?

Mickey Yeah. What are you hitting on me for?

Kay Nothing.

Mickey What?

Kay Nothing, I told you!

Mickey Come on, Kay.

Kay *(Shouting)* I don't know! Something! Anything!

Mickey *(Subdued)* Okay.

Kay Okay, WHAT? Don't you FEEL anything? You're fucking narcotized, man, that's what's wrong with you. You don't even get bored.

Mickey Yeah? Well, it's better than being a lousy dope fiend, sneaking around with sores on my arms, feeling ashamed of myself, throwing up in taxi cabs. At least I feel like a person again. I can look people in the eye...and I don't have to spend all my time on the street trying to score.

Kay All right, Mickey.

Mickey What do you mean?

Kay *(Screaming)* I mean ALL RIGHT. *(A silence, she quiets herself)* Really, Mick, forget I said anything.

Mickey I just ain't ready yet, Kay. I've come a long way, I really have...only I can't take a chance right now.

Kay Right.

Mickey I don't like it anymore than you do. I feel fat, and groggy. And constipated.

Kay Ha!

Mickey I'm outta shape. And I ain't got my freedom yet—that hurts. And my health ain't together.

Kay Nope. *(Sings) You ain't no high roller if you can't handle the dice—*

Mickey I'm hip to myself, Kay. I am—I won't be a free man 'til I can make it on my own again.

Kay *(Sings) If you ain't got the engine, baby, don't ride me down the pike—*

Mickey I got to be patient, Kay. I'll do it when it'll be just another sickness, you know what I mean?

Kay *(Sings) Don't crease my fender, honey, don't hang onto my side. Don't set me up with money, baby, if your motor has died! Ha!*

Mickey When I won't be thinking about going out for a fix no more to get well.

Kay What did you say?

Mickey Forget it, Kay.

Kay No, seriously, Mick. I didn't hear you.

Mickey Nothing.

Kay Hey, Robert, what's happening?

Sighs. An agonized silence. ROBERT enters. KAY jumps up.

Robert Uh, nothing much. How you doing, Mickey?

Mickey Awright. How're you?

Robert Good. I was just passing by, thought I'd see how you all was feeling.

Mickey Fine. Doing real fine.

Robert That's good.

Mickey Yeah.

Kay How's the family?

Robert *(Depressed)* Okay, I guess.

Kay Anything wrong?

Robert No, no, everybody's all right. You know...

Kay What?

Robert Nothing. Everything's groovy.

Kay Well that's good. *(A silence)*

Robert You still on the thing, Mick?

Mickey What? You mean the stuff, the methadone?

Robert Yeah.

Mickey Yeah, sure. Sure I am.

Robert *(Unconvincing)* That's good.

Mickey Yeah... *(A pause)* So, what are you into, Robert?

Robert *(Working it up)* Oh, I been writing a great piece, man. Fantastic. It's subtle, you know. There's three black guys, and there's a couple of white revolutionaries, you know. And they get together on Mt. Rushmore, you know. And there's a gang rape, and a murder, some weird shit, man, you know. It creeps up on you, you know. It has a powerful impact.

Mickey Sounds terrific.

Kay Very interesting.

Robert Yeah, it is. It's interesting.

Mickey Uh-huh. *(An awkward silence)*

Robert Uh, you seen Peewee lately, have ya?

Mickey Nope. *(Silence)*

Robert Yeah, well, I was just wondering.

Mickey Why?

Robert *(Defensive)* No special reason, man. I was just wondering if you saw him.

Mickey Why, you looking?
Robert Well, yeah, I just wanted to pick up a few, man.
Mickey Yeah...I guess he's out there, Robert. I haven't seen him myself, but I'm sure he's out there. Doing his thing.
(Laughs derisively) If he hasn't been popped or something, you know, iced.
Kay You know Robert can't go out there and cop by himself, Mickey.
Mickey So?
Robert That's okay.
Mickey I ain't gonna cop for him.
Robert Forget it, man. I wouldn't want you to. I don't blame you.
Mickey I don't want nothing to do with that shit, or Peewee neither.
Robert It's cool, Mick. Really. *(Gets ready to leave)*
Kay *(To ROBERT)* How many were you gonna get?
Robert *(Checking MICKEY)* Uh, just a couple. Three or four...
Kay How much money you got?
Robert I don't know. Twenty, twenty-five dollars maybe.

Heavy silence. MICKEY is staring hard at KAY.

Mickey What the fuck you doing, Kay?
Kay *(Ignoring him)* Why don't you and me split a half load then, Robert?
Robert *(Watching MICKEY)* Uh, I don't know, Kay.
Kay I'll help you score, man. I can get it.
Mickey *(Pleading)* Kay...?
Kay *(Defiant)* What, man? *(To ROBERT)* I got my own connection.
Mickey You know *what*, Kay.

Kay I do what I want, man. It's my money and I'll do what I want with it.

Mickey Do whatever the fuck you want to do, Kay. You go get yourself some dope, but don't come back here with it.

Kay *(To ROBERT)* You ready to go?

Robert *(Hesitating)* Hey, Mickey...

Mickey *(Hostile)* What?

Robert *(Wormy)* Listen, I ain't doing nothing. I didn't mean to, you know...

Mickey *(Contemptuous)* Fuck it, man.

Kay Let's go, Robert.

Kay and ROBERT start to leave.

Robert I'll see you, man...

No response. MICKEY turns away.

Kay Come on, Robert.

ROBERT exits ahead of her, she turns to look back at MICKEY, then follows excitedly, calling after ROBERT down the hall. DIM OUT.

*

7. The Venusian

Scene, a subway station platform. MICKEY enters, talking to himself.

Mickey Billions of young, giant stars...cooking...we're on the spiral edge, fighting the cold...our small, dying sun. *(Stops)* The relations of time and space are intimate. *(Takes a step or two, stops)* Farther than we can see is the beginning of time. On the other side...the universe expands, and contracts... *(Breathing in and out)* expands, and contracts...Right...deja vu!...a feeling in the heart...Far away on the most distant star, my past is coming to meet me. *(Laughs)* The sensation of having been this way before...right here...this...*(Closes his eyes and concentrates with all his might)* It's gone. *(Looks around)* It's the sense of Fate...a feeling in the heart, full of consequence...of time...time passing. Sad, a moment choking with blunders, wrong things said...broken promises...lies...delusions...desperate moves...lunges...loudness...drunkenness...paranoia... *(Moves on, disgusted)* If I could just get OUT THERE! Get it going fast enough—beyond the speed of light—burning like the sun—exploding and falling inward—deep, deep, diving downward into the BLACK HOLE...

Stops, crouches into a ball, concentrating his energy as if trying to wrench himself into another dimension, collapses onto the floor from the effort, and a pause.

Space travel. *(Laughs, rises, walks quickly across the darkened area offstage left, from where we hear him shouting)*

I SAID I'M TRYING TO GET TO VENUS. IS THIS THE STATION FOR THE VENUSIAN SPACESHIP? *(Pause)* IS THERE A LAW AGAINST IT OR SOMETHING? LEMME ALONE.

He comes flying back on stage as if thrown. LIGHTS come up, revealing a subway bench up center with a beat-up black man on it, hidden under his coat, his worldly goods scattered around him, obviously in desperate shape.

Fucking fascist assholes. *(Observes MAN ON BENCH)* That's some act he's got there. *(Crosses, a spasm from the MAN ON BENCH)* Let's see... he comes to the station, he buys a token, he puts the token in the turnstile, walks down the stairs...

Another spasm on the bench, MICKEY approaches, looks closely.

What we have here is a state of terminal self-hate and humiliation. *(Walks back downstage)* A drug-addled idiot. *(Looks for the train)* They get on, the doors close...they get on, the doors close...

The subway train—SOUND—approaches and passes by—a flash of light—and a weird-looking STRANGER is standing down left.

Stranger How do you like that? Went right by us!
Mickey A Venusian!
Stranger *(Startled)* Don't say things like that, kid.

Mickey I've seen you guys around before, but I never met one.
Stranger Uh-huh. Well, that's nice.
Mickey My name's Mickey. *(Shaking hands)* How are ya?
Stranger It's cold down here.

A spasm from the bench.

Mickey He's dying.
Stranger I can tell.
Mickey I think he pissed in his pants.
Stranger Yes. That was ill-advised, wasn't it?
Mickey *(Laughing)* You talk funny.
Stranger We have different kinds of heads on Venus.
Mickey *(Watching him)* Yeah. You breathe air, the same as us?
Stranger No. Nitrous oxide, actually. *(A silence)*
Mickey I figured it was something like that.

Spasm from the bench.

You think we should do something?
Stranger Like what?
Mickey I don't know.
Stranger No. Leave him be.
Mickey He's scary. What's it like on Venus?
Stranger *(Considering)* Warm. Real warm.
Mickey Yeah. Sure wish I could go there.
Stranger Me, too. I'm sick of this cold. I'm tired and cold all the time. *(Thinking)* It's the wind, see? We ain't got the human defenses against the wind...also, any little exertion, and we get tired, very tired.

Mickey That's too bad.

Stranger I know. And I'm sick of waiting for this godforsaken train. You understand what I'm saying?

Mickey Yeah, sure. There was one, but it didn't stop.

Stranger I know that. *(Pause)* You got someplace to go? Warm? Warm, and nice, and cozy? Eh?

Mickey Uh, no. Isn't there something you can do? I mean, while you're on this planet, to get warm?

Stranger One thing, amigo. Just one.

Mickey What's that?

Stranger Now, remember the quarter-pieces you could get up in Harlem for a hundred bucks? Enough dope for a week... guaranteed count...scrambled, of course...the .38 snubby... warm, nice...

Mickey *(In a reverie)* Yeah, riding up the East Side Highway in my Mustang V-8, pocketful of money...

Stranger Tying off...heroin bubbling, hissing in the cooker...fill the dropper, get the vein, blood popping up...the warm rush...

Mickey *(Doubling up)* Ow! Cut it out!

Stranger Speedballing is what I dig the most...first that shock of pure pleasure across the top of your brain and into your chest, from the coke, then the warm wave of smack coming up underneath it...you lay back and you ride it...up into the head... mmmmmm...nice...

Mickey Stop that!

Spasm from the bench.

Stranger Hey, check him out.

Mickey What?

Stranger Check him out, maybe he's holding.

Mickey No, he don't have nothin'.

Stranger Come on.

Mickey You want to? Okay...

They approach the bench. MICKEY examines the man's pockets.

Jesus, he stinks... *(Recoiling)* Shit, he's already been cleaned out. He don't have a fucking thing.

Stranger All right, it was just an idea. Forget it.

Mickey I will. *(Looking him over as they come back downstage)*

Hey, why don't you go back where you came from?

Stranger *(Laughing)* I can't.

Mickey Why not?

Stranger It's my metabolism. See, it's been altered. No way back, no way. Whole biology's changed. I couldn't make it there anymore. It's a one-way street for guys like us.

Mickey It's too late now, huh?

Stranger Yup. Later for that, amigo. Wish I was in the jungle. In Asia. Where it's warm. Little yellow boys on motor scooters with vials of brown Asian junk. Shit is practically pure.

Mickey *(Blurting)* You got some pure?

Stranger No, no, no. I was just riffing, son.

Mickey You shouldn't do that.

Stranger You can't beat a man from Venus when it comes to wishing for warm. No, no. *(Laughs)* Junkies. Blah, blah, blah, you heard one story, you heard them all.

Mickey Ain't it the truth, though? *(Suddenly abstracted)*
Same heads.

Stranger Heads?

Mickey The flyboys...the P.O.W.'s. Same heads when they came down from the sky as when they went up...the flyboys, the good guys.

Stranger Junkies...they're repulsive. No sense of honor. No shame, no remorse. Stone killers, everyone of 'em.

Mickey Heroes when they went up, heroes when they came down.

Stranger (*Shivering*) Hey, we got to get it on...make some dummies...take somebody off, anything...come on, kid.

Mickey Yeah...burn somebody...dummies?...with what?

Stranger What difference does it make? Borax...rat poison...what's the diff? Come on.

Mickey Huh? No...I don't want to...You got a knife?

Rumble of train approaching, etc. BLACKOUT and a FLASH OF LIGHT. THE VENUSIAN is gone. A spasm from the bench. MICKEY whirls around, sees the man's wasted face.

Man On Bench You lookin'? (*Lurches to his feet*) Are you lookin'?

The MAN lunges forward—MICKEY recoils in horror, rushes off—MAN falls dead, LIGHTS go dim—MICKEY reappears.

Mickey (*Freaked, as if talking to someone close by*) Keep going... get it on...through the ether. (*Breathes in and out*) Oxygen... photosynthesis...green plants...polluted...earth's crust...in the flat ring of galaxy, far from the center...where it's cold... (*Stops*) He was a greaser, a monkey. He oiled the machines, the moving parts. Got the rockets up, the planes flying. Little yellow boys with brown Asian junk riding motor scooters. They had dead little pink eyes. I have some-

thing good, something nice. A smoker. *(Pause)* Mickey's gonna get something. If he says he's gonna do it, he'll do it. Be home soon. Ah, the Sea of Serenity. *(Pause)* Wow, he thought he was black for a while, he was hanging black. You listening?...Boiling, bubbling heroin hissing in the cooker...get the vein...the blood jumps...the warm rush... *(Bends over with a cramp)* Gimme your dope, Mick. Gimme your dope and all your money. *(Like a young black man)* I know what's happening. I'm gonna get my shit together... do you know what that is? It's political GRACE...gonna put some ice on my balls and get to some of my own people....Battle ain't even half started...lines still being drawn up. Time, time speeded up. The speed of flight. It was intimate. *(To his invisible friend)* Let me tell you about genetics. There are an INFINITE number of possibilities, but it only happens ONE way...over and over again, ONE WAY.... The creation of LIFE, step by step. in the stream of things. In time. Stress. *(Pause)* But why the poppy? Why that funny flower? *(Pause)* I scored 37 points in one game, best night I ever had. I was 19 years old. Annapolis, Maryland...with this guy, Mickey, a friend of mine...*(illustrating)* I was shooting one-handers, jumpers around the key! They come up to you, and you go around them, swish! *(Near the exit now, sees "SOMEONE" off-stage)* Hey, come 'ere!... How you doin'? You lookin'?

BLACKOUT.

The End