The Price is Right

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Thesis Abstract

In 1983, one in six Canadians lived below the poverty line; by 1986, 20-40,000 of these people were homeless. According to the National Anti-Poverty Organization in Canada, the two issues emerging as the issues of the 1980's are homelessness and hunger (The Gazette, March 22, 1986).

One of the newest and fastest growing additions to this vagrant population is women; there are approximately 5000 homeless women in Montreal alone. "Many come from middle-class backgrounds. Some are women who grew up expecting to be wives and homemakers, and then, at age 45 to 60, found themselves separated or divorced, but without the ability to support themselves." (The Gazette, September 27, 1986).

The Price is Right is about one such woman. In one sense it is a tragedy about despair, the despair of suddenly finding oneself at the bottom of the ladder, with little means of moving up. It is above all else, however, a comedy of manners and values, and a play about survival, hope, and the 6/49.

Résumé de thèse

En 1983, un Canadien sur six vivait sous le seuil de pauvreté; en 1986, de 20 à 40 000 Canadiens étaient sans abri. Selon l'Organisation nationale anti-pauvreté du Canada, les deux grands problèmes des années 1980 sont les sans-abri et les gens qui ont faim (The Gazette, 22 mars 1986).

L'un des tout derniers groupes qui est venu s'ajouter avec une rapidité fulgurante à cette population sans résidence fixe sont les femmes; on compte environ 5 000 femmes sans abri à Montréal seulement. "Bon nombre d'entre elles viennent de la bourgeoisie. Certaines ont grandi dans l'espoir de se marier et d'élever des enfants et, à l'âge de 45 à 60 ans, se sont retrouvées séparées ou divorcées, incapables de subvenir à leurs propres besoins." (The Gazette, 27 septembre 1986).

The Price is Right est l'histoire d'une de ces femmes. Dans un sens, c'est une tragédie sur le désespoir, le désespoir de se retrouver subitement au bas de l'échelle avec pratiquement aucun moyen d'en gravir les échelons. C'est avant tout une comédie de moeurs et de valeurs et une pièce sur la survie, l'espoir et le 6/49.

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Introduction

On December 17, 1985, forty-one-year-old Drina Joubert froze to death in an abandoned truck in Toronto. A model and aspiring actress in her youth, somewhere along the line something went wrong, and Drina began to deteriorate. Over the years, she became chronically ill, both physically and mentally, as well as alcoholic. With the death of her mother in 1983, Drina, unable to fit in with society and now lacking any family support system, joined the ranks of one of our fastest growing vagrant populations, the homeless women, the misfits (Gazette 22 Mar. 1986).

The Price is Right concerns itself with a poor and eventually homeless woman who, like Drina and other women like her, does not fit into expected molds and is therefore considered deviant and worthless. According to Claudette Godley, Director of Chez Doris (a Montreal drop-in centre for homeless women), "homeless women bear an even greater social stigma than their male counterparts in that they are instinctively regarded as deviants undeserving of services."[1] In a later interview, she went on to contend that:

> Poor women on the streets are worse off than the men. There's more men and so there's more services, and also, society always invests in men because they

> are seen as the productive element of this society while as women, we are just reproductive . . . so not worth too much money.[2]

"We're society's garbage", says Francine (one homeless woman), and "like garbage, they litter the downtown core, forming an invisible ring of tragedy and horror stories, while offending the sensibilities of the better-off."[3]

Obviously, it is nothing new to shun the poor. What is new is the growing number of women in this situation. With the breakdown in North American society of extended families and kinship ties, fewer and fewer people want to take responsibility for our old women. It is easier to force the government to take care of them, even if inadequately--easier than having to be personally involved. It is estimated that there are now approximately 5000 homeless women in Montreal alone, and Montreal is no different from any other large city; the numbers are continuing to grow (Gazette 27 Sept. 1986).

There are a number of reasons why I decided to portray today's poor old women through the vehicle of theatre. First and foremost was the immediacy and vitality which theatre affords. Also, my hope was to bring one woman, her strengths and her foibles, to life, to understand better how one might become homeless, and how one might be treated if one were old, poor, and female. Furthermore, I felt it important for Odette to talk for herself, and thought this would best be done in person, on stage.

In that Odette is 'anyoldwoman', comedy appealed to me in its universality and the facility it afforded me to create a multi-dimensional character, who laughs, cries, and makes mistakes. As Kronenberger states, "comedy in the end is . . . a trenchant and consistent way of regarding life"[4]; my personal belief is that one must approach life with a sense of humour, and that much can be accomplished through the use of comedy. I therefore did not feel it necessary to use serious drama to deal with a serious topic, and couldn't agree with Kronenberger more when he propounds that ". . . where writers do show scruples, do maintain standards, no form can be more serious than comedy. Laughter, equally with tears, can provide a full release or catharsis."[5]

Within the sphere of comedy, it is difficult to pinpoint one specific genre which neatly buttonholes The Price is Right. It is more a blend of many different types of comedy: classical, absurd, farce, and comedy of situation and manners. Tremblay's plays have been described as absurd, realistic, naturalistic, theatrical, Brechtian, classical, and contemporary (Usmiani 34-36). I think these descriptions are applicable to The Price is Right, as well.

If anything, The Price is Right is more like classical comedy than true absurd, although, like Albee, I have borrowed from "the surrealism of the absurdist,"[6] while depending primarily on realism to reflect "the inequities and hypocrisies of man-made ills."[7] Like the plays of Tremblay and Brecht,

The Price is Right makes use of the chorus in order to reinforce particular beliefs or action. The opening chorus, a television set expounding the game show, evidences North America's need for economic success, as well as the aspect of control from outside: one is constantly betting against the 'wheel of fortune'. The chorus reinforces this external hope as providing Odette's spiritual sustenance, just as the food she is preparing provides her physical nourishment. Later on, another chorus, the bus passengers, depicts the disparate needs of society, its isolation, and lack of communication. The ending, too, is classical, with a typical parting speech, exodus, or marching-away song (Hadas 5). Although no marriage occurs on stage, the potential remains for a future resolution and consequent marriage.

Like the plays of Tremblay and Fenario, The Price is Right depicts a 'slice of life' pertaining to Quebecois society, and to a specific class of Montrealers in particular, their culture and identity, their problems, and their idols. It is hard to avoid politics in Quebec, and, true to life, The Price is Right is political in exposing the second class feeling so common to francophones of Odette's generation. Unlike her, Angelle represents the more positive, perhaps younger, francophones and their pride in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The constant bickering between Odette and Angelle over language is typical of the ongoing Quebec language dispute. Aside from the politics, the everyday

language used in The Price is Right, like that used by Tremblay, plays an important part in allowing the characters to "express themselves in such a way as to become believable and effective."[8] Perhaps, as Usmiani proposes, Tremblay represents the Quebecois theatre of liberation (4). If anything, The Price is Right represents a Comedy of Quebec Manners.

Of course, at the time of the creative writing, none of this was done on a conscious level. As Usmiani puts it, "Within the creative process, of course, the fusion of elements occurs on the level of the unconscious."[9] It was a challenge to look back once the play had been written, to dissect it and to say "This is what I have used", "This is what I have done", and "Why?".

My aim? I hope that people will like Odette. I also hope that they will realize that her situation is not unique. The play could have had a very happy, albeit simplistic ending, if Odette were not filled with the distrust common to the poor. Conversely, it could have ended with her incarceration and/or death. Instead, I decided to end it on a note of hope, which is all some people have.

What follows is an attempt, not to accept, but to understand the evolution of a society which would allow a woman to freeze to death in an urban western metropolis in 1986. In

order to do so, one must look at the dichotomy between the poor vs the rich, the old vs the young, and female vs male; in short, tabu vs mana.

T A B U

> But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.[10]

In theory, every member of society is supposed to develop and fit into the framework and values deemed appropriate by that society. As Fromm puts it, "Inasmuch as man has to work within a given society, his need for survival tends to make him accept the social conceptualizations and hence to repress that which he would be aware of had his consciousness been imprinted with different schemata."[11] Perhaps, as Smith suggests, the foundation of this is biological, whereby in ancient times, to be deviant more often than not meant to be a mutation, often malformed and unable to survive alone. This phenomenon would have posed a threat not only to the safety of the existing group, but to future generations as well, in its potential for genetically deformed progeny (69).

Although the survival of society as a whole no longer dictates it, the ongoing practice continues to be to oust the deviant, the different, and the abnormal, that is, any perceived threat to the natural, social order of things. This holds true throughout every sect and faction within society.

Howells' description of the higher religions as possessing an "exclusiveness in belief; a jealousy of their own doctrines and an intolerance of others, which they relentlessly seek to blot out,"[12] is appropriate for each of our closed circles of associations, be they racial, cultural, religious, etc. Each fears contamination through association, and each jealously guards its purity. The social good therefore continues to indicate uniformity within the unit and the adherence to the norm as the 'right' way. Hence the abhorrence of the outsider and the creation of tabu.

Tabu tends to "align itself with the social good,"[13] and therefore reinforces society's beliefs. It permits exclusion of the misfit and propagates the sect as an unvarying, homogeneous mass. Tabu is also a feeling that the time is out of joint (Howells 40). Being out of joint or out of time with the rest of the community, a tabu person cannot belong to it but must live outside of it, often against his or her will, and usually through elaborate exercises of expulsion, such as shunning, excommunication, etc. This ritual expulsion serves to reinforce the tabus which have been established by society: as pointed out by Harrison, while ritual expulsion of evil rids society of what is considered hostile, it also enhances that which is considered favorable (xvii). Sartre explains this duality and its relationship to the scapegoat very well in Anti-Semite and Jew:

> . . . many anti-Semites--the majority, perhaps . . . possess nothing. It is in opposing themselves to the Jew that they suddenly become conscious of being proprietors: in representing the Jew as a robber, they put themselves in the enviable position of people who could be robbed. Since the Jew wishes to take France from them, it follows that France must belong to them. Thus they have chosen anti-Semitism as a means of establishing their status as possessors.[14]
>
> By treating the Jew as an inferior and pernicious being, I affirm at the same time that I belong to the elite.[15]

So important is this need for a scapegoat, in fact, that:

> If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him.[16]
>
> Otherwise to whom would he be superior?[17]

Thus, this practice of exclusion not only reinforces the values of a particular group or society, it also serves to elevate the individual's status in comparison to that of the scapegoat.

For many centuries, Europe was provided with convenient scapegoats by way of lepers. However, with the void created by the significant decline in lepers between 1200-1400, society

needed to create a new scapegoat (Barchilon vi), and attention turned to the poor: "The old rites of excommunication were revived, but in the world of production and commerce."[18]

These rites of excommunication change from one era to another, according to the precepts and practices of a given society and time. During the Middle Ages, for example, vagabonds were ostracized by means of Ships of Fools: along with the insane, they were incarcerated on boats and dumped onto other cities (Foucault, Madness 3-37), the general idea presumably being to get rid of more than you took in. By the 1600's, the rites had changed somewhat, at least in Paris, where the poor, instead of being shipped off, were rounded up, branded, and driven from the city (Foucault, Madness 47). A hundred years later, the poor were still the misfits, who "live in the midst of society without being members of it", who waged "a veritable war on all citizens", and who were "in that state that one supposes existed before the establishment of civil society."[19]

It was while struggling with the problem of another group of tabu, that is, witches, that society coincidentally rid itself of this ongoing eyesore of the poor. From the Middle Ages through to the late seventeenth century, witches were hunted and persecuted as demons. With the emergence of scientific theory, however, it became more fashionable to consider them as insane rather than as devils incarnate, and with the evolvement of hospitals in the late 1600's, it became

practice to institutionalize them (Rosen 12-13). Thus, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were largely banished from sight, and social order was maintained without the necessity of witch hunts and trials. Although a somewhat uneasy solution, this practice was probably preferable to torture and death, and, as Rosen points out, was a sign of a more secure society better able to deal with the unknown and with its social anxieties (12).

With the establishment of the Hôpital Général, at last the inquisition was replaced by institutional psychiatry (Szasz 15). However, the Hôpital Général not only got rid of the insane. Its main focus was preventing "mendicancy and idleness as the source of all disorders"[20]:

> . . . the Hôpital Général took care of old people, people with venereal diseases, epileptics, and the mentally ill. Thus, in the course of time the general hospital combined the characteristics of a penal institution, an asylum, a workshop, and a hospital.[21]

In order to be considered mad, one had only to be "abandoned, destitute, poor, unwanted by parents or society."[22] Thus, to be poor was to be mad. Conveniently then, the poor and the insane, considered to be synonymous, could be shut away together, and society rescued from the visual burden of both witches and beggars, just as it had been rid of lepers earlier on.

Eventually, institutions like workhouses and houses of correction also arose to deal with the poor, and "All individuals who were defined as asocial or socially deviant were segregated by internment."[23] Through these means, even more people could be gotten rid of, and these melting pots of criminals, vagabonds, and the insane created "A separate socio-psychological lifespace . . . for those who removed themselves from or transgressed the moral order considered appropriate to their social position, occupation, or family relationship."[24] By isolating these people, contamination was avoided and ultimate control restored to society.

Today, the rituals have changed once again. The majority of North America's poor are not physically incarcerated. Rather, their separate space is created largely through bureaucratic means, that is, they are married to the social welfare system and its subsets: unemployment insurance, welfare payments, subsidized housing, etc. Although they are not physically shut away, the poor carry the stigma of welfare, and therefore remain largely identifiable, and, most importantly, avoidable. Shunning remains the common practice, and ostracism of the poor is as prevalent here and now as it was in Europe in the 1600's.

Foucault describes those on the Ships of Fools as being both passengers and prisoners (Madness 11). Similarly, our poor are both passengers and prisoners of society. On the one hand, all of the rituals of the social welfare system were

designed for and revolve around them, attributing to them a certain status and importance. Concurrently, they are unable to escape this same system and are destined to remain on the ship forever. Once one has passed the rite of embarkation, that is, the food outlet, the unemployment line, etc., one is generally on for good. In effect, these rites have succeeded in creating the poor as a delineated group, just as Sartre claims "it is the Christians who have created the Jew in putting an abrupt stop to his assimilation. . . ."[25]

Just as witches did not choose their roles but were assigned them (Szasz xx), and Jews "cannot choose not to be a Jew" but are "thrown into--to be abandoned to--the situation of a Jew,"[26] neither do the poor choose to be poor but are ascribed that role against their wills. Today's North American society is governed by an economic mass movement, where comfortable middle-class is the norm and wealth the ideal, and the tabu we have created is poverty. We have been brought up with the notion that if we don't work, we don't eat. In this "work culture,"[27] the non-contributor is the biggest threat to complacency. Those who do not produce products or services, earn money, and in turn, consume, are mutants, who threaten not only themselves but the very fabric of this capitalist society. In order to keep society pure, mutants, whether they be physical, psychological, or economic, must be eradicated.

What of our poor old women, the Drina Joubert's and the Odette's? In A History of Medical Psychology, Zilboorg referred to the "trend on the part of the lay and medical world to consider themselves as separate from and superior to the mentally sick", and to treat the mentally ill as the "step-children of life."[28] We can just as easily apply this term and our treatment to the poor person today, and to poor old women in particular: unfortunately, these Cinderellas lack fairy godmothers, and remain poor, old, and unwanted. If one were to establish a priority of tabu just among the group called the poor, surely the poor old women would rate the highest points. As Rosen points out, "For a long time, women, and especially old women, were undoubtedly among the awkward ones of the social group and occupied an equivocal position."[29] They have always competed with the feeble and insane for last place on the social ladder. Foucault describes the realm of politics, whereby "the condemned man represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king"[30]; in a society based on capitalism, the inverted figure of the wealthy and therefore successful man is the indigent. Similarly, there is the revered state of youth vs the abhorred burden of old age. Finally, the inverted figure of man, created in the image of God, is woman, too often portrayed as the wicked witch, the evil stepmother, the sharp-tongued mother-in-law, etc. Thus, to be a poor old woman, unable even to conceive a son who might raise her status, is to be at or very near the bottom of

society's hierarchy; in most societies in times of hardship, it is the old woman, no longer able to bear children or to contribute in a 'significant' manner, who is the first to be sacrificed.

Most accused of witchcraft were women, "miserable, beggarly old women,"[31] (In the Malleus Maleficarum, a medieval work on witchcraft written by two Dominican inquisitors, it is stated that most witches are women, since "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable,"[32] while men are more or less protected because Jesus the Saviour was a male (Szasz 8).) Carrying on the tradition, with the coming of workhouses and asylums in the enlightened 1700-1800's, the majority of those interned were old women.

Earlier on, I reviewed Smith's theory of the biological basis for exclusion. To carry this one step further, before the study of genetics and the role of 'X' and 'Y' chromosomes taught us otherwise, this ancient biological fear may have first and irrevocably established woman, as bearer of the child, as the source and perpetuator of all the evils and impurities of society. Although this would seem to be a throwback to ignorant times, this belief still remains to be overcome and resolved.

Even today, the majority of those in asylums are elderly, poor women. As pointed out by Chesler, "While women live longer than ever before, and longer than men, there is less and

less use, and literally no place, for them in the only place they "belong"--within the family."[33] It would seem therefore that the trend towards homeless old women which we have begun to notice only recently will continue to escalate, not through any means of their own, but because society needs its poor. As Foucault puts it, ". . . a people would be poor which had no paupers. Indigence becomes an indispensable element in the State. In it is concealed the secret but also the real life of a society. The poor constitute the basis and the glory of nations."[34]

Why have the poor succeeded in being the chosen scapegoats for so long? There are certain criteria necessary to being scapegoats which the poor, unlike most other groups, fulfill on an ongoing basis. According to Sartre, "professional evildoers" must be "bad by birth and without hope of change. . . men with whom the decent members of the community have no reciprocal relationship". Furthermore, "as Evil is negation, separation, disintegration, its natural representatives will be sought among the separated and separatists, among the unassimilable, the undesirable, the repressed, the rejected."[35] Certainly, the poor fulfill all of these requirements. Over and above this, however, they also possess the most important characteristic which enables them to be the 'perfect and perpetual' scapegoats: these

> products of disassimilation, castoffs: abandoned children, 'the poor,' bourgeois who have lost their status, 'lumpenproletariat', déclassés of all kinds, in short, all the wretched . . . cannot unite with any group since nobody wants them. . . . That is why, in general, we give them preference.[36]

They are and remain "weak and unattached."[37]

In large part, their segregation and subsequent isolation is accomplished through the very act of naming them. Sartre discusses the importance of 'words' and 'names', handy labels which one uses to categorize individuals or groups, such as 'homosexuals' (Saint Genet 17-41). Once individuals are labelled, they lose a part of themselves and their individuality, and immediately become associated with the characteristics assigned to that group. In effect, in being named as belonging to the group commonly referred to as 'the poor', 'the underprivileged', 'the less fortunate', etc., the individual takes on the stereotypical qualities assigned to that group, which can never be shaken off. They are labelled forever. Since society assigns shame and guilt to being poor, then it follows that those assigned the title feel shame and guilt. "Shame isolates,"[38] and so it is that we have created a self-perpetuating circle through shame and guilt, segregation and isolation, which, until it is broken, will

continue to assign to 'the poor' the role of scapegoats, those evil men "as necessary to good men as whores are to decent women."[39]

Foucault describes the importance of ritual in punishing the wrongdoer, by means of which "power is eclipsed and restored."[40] Just as the ceremony of public execution in the 1700's manifested the supremacy of the sovereign, so does today's treatment of the poor reaffirm the power of the state. In forcing the poor to wade through red tape and legalism in order to receive welfare payments that will allow them to subsist below the poverty line, in forcing them to submit to the humiliation of the 'Bo Bo Macouttes' at any time, in refusing to allow them the privacy which the middle and upper classes take for granted, in providing no choices or means of escape or betterment, the state is reaffirming the individual's lack of knowledge, power, and control in perpetuity. As Szasz points out, authorities forbid "efforts at self-determination", and fear a "narrowing of the gap between ruler and ruled."[41] Just as the "public execution did not re-establish justice" but "reactivated power" through the spectacle of "imbalance and excess", the rituals of the welfare system bring into play their own version of "dissymetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all powerful sovereign."[42] Society has decided that poverty is a crime and approaches it accordingly: what better way of re-establishing the rightful place than to subject the poor to the spectacle of welfare

lines and soup kitchens, without offering an alternative? Ultimately, therefore, control has been achieved, not through physical means, but through maintaining this continuum of despair. As Foucault theorized in Disciple and Punish, we have now moved on from the torture of the body to the torture of the soul.

> The silly man may buy a ticket
> Perhaps 'twill open reason's wicket.
> The lucky are accounted wise,
> And so they are -- in folly's eyes,
> Who nought but fortune deifies.[43]

In order to cope with and survive despair, there must exist a belief that there is a chance, however slight, at a better life. This life force is religious, not in the ecclesiastical sense, but in the spiritual sense of religious belief, as defined by Howells, as an "expansion of the whole world of reality", and an "imaginative improvement."[44] It is the sense that "there is more power in the universe than is present on the surface, and that such power may have a personal interest in you."[45]

Desmond Tutu describes vital theology as:

> the reflection upon the world, man and his activities through the Word of God . . . at its best when it becomes living theology by becoming relevant to the age and time and the men living in them. Theology therefore must change from epoch to epoch and even from place and time to place and time.[46]

As a reflection of North America's belief in the sanctity of economic success, Odette's living theology, or the religion that she lives by, is gambling, whether it be game shows,

lotteries, horse races, etc., and her icon is the 6/49 ticket. She knows full well that the odds are against her, but continues to buy lottery tickets nonetheless, with the hope that maybe one day she will be the chosen one. Indeed, all gambling is based on this hope of beating the odds, and being the chosen one. As Jean-Paul La Rue put it:

> It seems that since 1929 people have been trying through games of chance and lotteries to find an outlet for the urge to speculate that is one of the essential elements of human nature, and that present economic conditions do not allow them to satisfy it on the Stock Exchange or by investing capital.[47]

Those with the desire or need to sustain hope through gambling are blessed if living in Quebec, where gambling of one sort or another has always existed. Long before the arrival of Europeans, gambling was a popular pastime among the native people. Europeans then brought with them their own versions and reasons for gambling. Often, the basis was political: in the 1700's, much of the land in the Eastern Townships was 'allotted' (tickets being pulled from hats) to loyal British subjects. Especially in francophone and Catholic circles, gambling and lotteries in Quebec have also been associated with good works and hope: in the 1800's, Le Bazar, a newspaper specially created for the Montreal cathedral's lottery, editorialized:

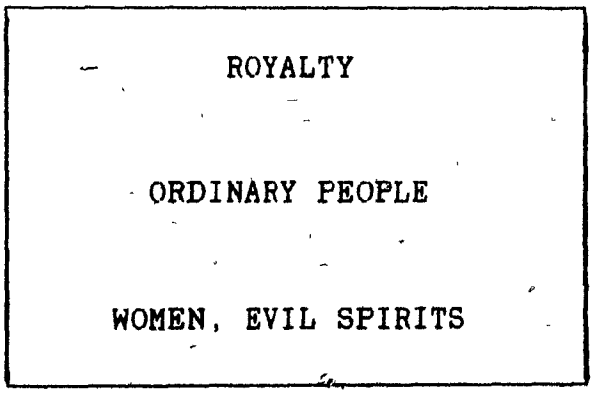
> It is characteristic of charity to be active and industrious. This is why we must not be astonished if, in keeping up with the changes time brings about in customs and usages, charity invents and adopts new means for filling its coffers, which are always so quickly emptied. (. . .) This is why bazaars were invented, and the lotteries, the sermons, the sales, the speeches and concerts, whose proceeds are devoted to charitable works.[48]

For people in Odette's situation, that is, those who believe themselves to be inferior, subservient, or second class, control of their lives is seen as coming from an external and higher force. They feel they are at the whim of landlords, the government, the welfare system, etc. Similarly, hope is seen as external and not as an internal, self-controlled happening.

For many, lotteries provide the only hope and means of escape, whether imaginary or real, and the only possibility of attaining mana, a force generally associated with power and, at its ultimate, a "close kinship with the gods."[49]

As Foucault implies in Discipline and Punish, there is a continuity of power relations throughout all levels of society. Therefore, each group within society possesses a certain amount of power over its peers and over those who fall even lower in the hierarchy. Although Odette has few of the material elements and techniques which he implies are necessary for the

body politic (Discipline 28), certainly she has more mana than the drunken woman, for example, and uses her power and control to either oust the drunk from the bench, or provide charitable benevolence in the form of food, according to her whim. Conversely, Odette must constantly be on guard against forces within her peer group that would threaten her status and territory, and from external forces that consider her (or her behaviour) tabu, and might therefore endanger her very freedom. As with most people, her life is an ongoing fight to maintain the status quo and to advance when possible. Although perhaps sufficient to maintain her status, however, Odette's limited power is certainly not enough to afford her the possibility of moving up from the bottom rung of the tabu/mana hierarchy (Howells 36):



In this battle for power and knowledge, it takes a strong force to break the tabu of being a poor, old, woman, and to allow for an upward change of status. Foucault believes that

power and knowledge imply one another (Discipline 27). I would add that power implies knowledge which in turn implies control and options.

In order to gain control and options over her status of tabu, Odette has to first obtain sufficient power. Moslems believe that a certain holy power (baraka) can be achieved through:

a) being pious, or

b) being not quite right in the head, or

c) by luck

(Howells 32).

Certainly Odette attains her own version of baraka:

a) She is pious in her steadfast belief and ritualistic participation in lotteries.

b) She is also not quite right in the head: by most standards used to judge what is 'normal', Odette would fail. By choosing to live on the streets rather than depending on her daughter or granddaughter, she is breaking the conventional rules of rationality. She is also breaking the edicts of her peer group by refusing to submit placidly to 'normal' female behaviour as her sexual role, age, and status would demand.

c) Eventually, she is also proven to be lucky by winning the 6/49.

In North American society, real power is associated with wealth, and there is little reverence for the ethereal or transcendental. Therefore, it is only with the attainment of

affluence that a change of status becomes truly viable for Odette, and that at last she has the opportunity to rise from 'WOMEN AND EVIL SPIRITS' to 'ORDINARY PEOPLE'; maybe even 'ROYALTY'. Her winnings, in bringing her up the socio-economic ladder, would bring her that much closer to God, whether that God be religious or economic, and would in turn create even more mana for her.

At last she is in a position to reap the benefits of gambling (See Appendix A), and for a brief moment, she plays the role of the happy winner, counting her money and her future purchases, and going through the conventional rituals. The joy of winning, however, is quickly overshadowed by distrust; this is fairly typical of someone who is powerless and has been "labeled as 'the other' in comparison to the socially powerful group."[50] Odette does not trust those around her, nor does she believe that good luck can really come her way. It is one thing to wish things were different. It is quite another thing to really and truly <u>believe</u> they can be. Nor does Odette feel she deserves to win: surely this must be a mistake? Just as she might ask "Why me?" if disaster had befallen her, her general distrust and lack of self-esteem lead her to think and feel "Why me?" when confronted with incredible fortune: there must be a catch. Finally, there is the manner in which she has won, that is, through someone else's kindness, that she finds unacceptable. For Odette, winning the 6/49 would be a

religious happening, a true miracle. A true miracle, however, should not come about through an intermediary, and hence is not real. Therefore, it must be a trick.

If in giving up the money Odette is a fool, it is only because she is very human. As Barchilon points out, folly is "part and parcel of the human condition,"[51] "so human that it has common roots with poetry and tragedy; it is revealed as much in the insane asylum as in the writings of a Cervantes or a Shakespeare, or in the deep psychological insights and cries of revolt of a Nietzsche."[52] What may at first glance appear to be folly, however, may in fact be prudence. Having newly gained some control over her life, Odette is reluctant to lose it. If this were a trick, she could be risking everything she had gained. The threat of incarceration is a real one for Odette, for a number of reasons. First of all, she is old, and

> Old people, especially if poor, occupy a position in our society most like that of women in medieval society. They can least protect themselves from invidious medical labeling; if unwanted, they are readily classified as suffering from "senile psychosis" or some other type of insanity, and confined in madhouses for the "care" and "treatment" of their "disease."[53]

Secondly, she is a woman who fails to behave in the appropriately feminine manner. Szasz points out that in the imagery of the middle ages, which is still with us today, "the

symbol of nobility is the knight-in-armor, and of depravity, the black witch;". Furthermore, "the knight, the symbol of good, is male; the witch, the symbol of evil, is female."[54] Odette rejects this stereotype when she rejects her knight (M. Laframboise) and refuses the role of the grateful female who needed his help. Although she has 'won' in the sense of not submitting to a sexual stereotype, this is 'abnormal' behaviour, which poses a serious threat to society and the way a woman 'should' behave; as Chesler notes, "Women are often psychiatrically incarcerated for rejecting their "femininity" as defined by those close to them--and are released or are considered as "improved" when they regain it."[55] Thirdly, Odette is poor, and according to Szasz,

> the typical American mental patient today is usually a poor person in trouble or accused of making trouble, who is declared mentally ill against his will,[56]

and just as

> witchcraft claimed its victims mainly from among certain classes, so does mental illness. The public madhouses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were full of society's misérables; the state mental hospitals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been full of poor and uneducated people.[57]

Odette's fear of being put away, therefore, is not unfounded. From the time that she makes the decision to leave, she will probably be viewed as a crazy old woman, and as someone who 'bears watching'.

In the end, it is Odette's continuing need for hope which takes over. For many years, Odette's spiritual sustenance came from her hope to win the lottery. It is the co-existence of this spiritual element along with the physical being which allows her and the rest of humanity to exist on a higher plane than that of pure survival. Smith points out that "The worst thing for hope is fulfillment."[58] If Odette were to win, her hope would then be gone; she would then have to find spiritual sustenance from within herself, something for which she is totally unprepared. This paradox is well explained by Smith, who contends that in order to have hope, you must also have fear and misery, and "From the gladiatorial games through Dante's Inferno to the televised prizefight and the holocaust industry, the tradition is uninterrupted and unequivocal."[59] To paraphrase Smith, once the fires of hell go out, so does the light. Perhaps one of the reasons behind the great success of lotteries is the slim chance of winning, which in turn leaves the hope forever alive.

This hope is as necessary to sustain the body spiritual as food is to the body natural. In The King's Two Bodies, Kantorowicz discusses the classical political theology of the King's Two Bodies, that of the body natural and the body

politic, as well as theories of the "persona mixta" in which "various capacities or strata concurred."[80] For the common person, truth lies somewhere between these two theories. There is a mix of the body natural, with all its imperfections, and the body spiritual, the ideal, the perfect. The body spiritual has the ability to raise one above the worries of the body natural. Although the physical person may live in despair, the spirit dwells in Utopia. It is the dream of riches vs the reality of poverty. It is hope vs despair.

As Fromm so aptly puts it, "When hope has gone life has ended, actually or potentially."[81] It does not matter if Odette's hope to win the 6/49 is what Fromm describes as passive non-hope (6). It is still spiritual sustenance. It is still a means of taking her outside of her dreary reality and imagining something better ahead. It serves her and many others like her as well as a belief in Heaven and the future rewards of the Hereafter serve a religious person. It is faith and it is life. Day to day, week to week, it sustains the spirit. If for that reason alone, for them the price is very right. It is a tithe they willingly pay.

HOPE & Co.

Grand State Lottery Office, 63, Chesnut Street, Philadelphia.

TENDER to the public their grateful thanks for the liberal patronage they have experienced in the former classes of the

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LOTTERY,

and respectfully inform them, the fourth class will commence in four weeks, and is highly popular, as every day gives a high prize of 20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 2,000 1,000 or 700 dollars. But as the term dollars are too familiar to convey an adequate idea of the value of money at present, we will form by *hieroglyphics* what solid wealth you can gain by a Ticket or Share.

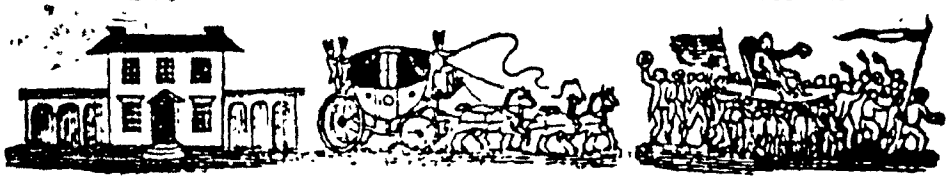
POPE SAYS,

Between the statues obelisks were placed,
And the learn'd walls with *hieroglyphics* graced.

HOPE SAYS,

BY A WHOLE TICKET YOU MAY

build ride in and become



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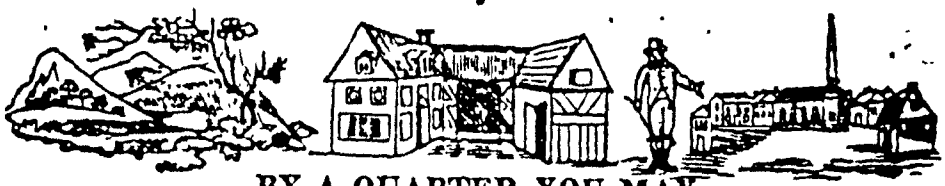

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become of the and after provide for those

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BY A SIXTEENTH YOU MAY

set up procure or advance in if in you may be

Hope and Company lottery advertisement, *ca.* 1817

(Insert, Fortune's Merry Wheel)

Footnotes

[1] Hubert Bauch, "In Montreal Women are Worse Off," Gazette [Montreal] 22 Mar. 1986, final ed.: B1.

[2] As It Is, prod. Marilyn Weston, CTV, CFCF, Montreal, 1 Feb. 1987.

[3] Lindalee Tracey, "Homeless Women: Life of Violence and Despair," Gazette [Montreal] 27 Sept. 1986, final ed.: A1, A4.

[4] Louis Kronenberger, ed., introduction, Cavalcade of Comedy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953) xi.

[5] Kronenberger xiii.

[6] Michael E. Rutenberg, Edward Albee: Playwright in Protest (New York: Avon Books, 1970) 63.

[7] Rutenberg 63.

[8] Renate Usmiani, Michel Tremblay, Studies in Canadian Literature 15 (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1982) 4.

[9] Usmiani 15.

[10] 1 Corinthians 5:11, qtd. in Carolyn Meyer, Amish People: Plain Living in a Complex World (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976) 53.

According to Meyer, the Apostle Paul's advice to the Corinthians is the basis of "Meidung", the practice of shunning.

[11] Erich Fromm, The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen, World Perspectives 38 (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 70.

[12] William Howells, The Heathens: Primitive Man and His Religions (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1948) 5.

[13] Howells 41.

[14] Jean-Paul Sartre, Anti-Semite and Jew, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948) 25.

[15] Sartre, Anti-Semite 27.

[16] Sartre, Anti-Semite 13.

[17] Sartre, Anti-Semite 28.

[18] Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard, Vintage ed. (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1973) 57.

[19] Le Trosne, 1764, 8, 50, 54, 61-2, qtd. in Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1977) 88.

[20] Foucault, Madness 47.

[21] George Rosen, Madness in Society: Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness, Phoenix ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 163.

[22] Thomas. S. Szasz, The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 14.

[23] Rosen 163.

[24] Rosen 163.

[25] Sartre, Anti-Semite 68.

[26] Sartre, Anti-Semite 89.

[27] Rosen 245.

[28] Gregory Zilboorg, in collaboration with George W. Henry, A History of Medical-Psychology (New York: W.W. Norton, 1941) 312.

[29] Rosen 13.

[30] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1977) 29.

[31] Girolamo Cardano, 1550, qtd. in Rosen 14.

[32] Jacob Sprenger, and Heinrich Krämer, Malleus Maleficarum, 47, qtd. in Szasz 8.

[33] Phyllis Chesler, Women & Madness (New York: Avon Books, 1973) 33.

[34] Foucault, Madness 230.

[35] Jean-Paul Sartre, Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1963) 30.

[36] Sartre, Saint Genet 31.

[37] Sartre, "Self-Portrait of the Good Citizen," Saint Genet 602.

[38] Sartre, Saint Genet 41.

[39] Sartre, Saint Genet 30.

[40] Foucault, Discipline 48.

[41] Szasz 89.

[42] Foucault, Discipline 49.

[43] St. Denis Le Cadet, "The Lottery, A Poem," Baltimore, 1815, 14, qtd. in John Samuel Ezell, Fortune's Merry Wheel: The Lottery in America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960) 29.

[44] Howells 23.

[45] Howells 22.

[46] The Right Reverend Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches, comp. Mothobi Mutloatse, ed. John Webster, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984) 76.

[47] Jean-Paul La Rue, "Les loteries," diss., Ecole des Haute Etudes Commerciales, Montréal, 1935, qtd. in Michel Labrosse, The Lottery: . . .From Jacques Cartier's Day to Modern Times: Sidelights on the History of Lotteries in Québec, trans. Alan Brown, (Québec: Editions internationales Alain Stanké, 1985) 108.

[48] Le Bazar [Montréal] 1886, qtd. in Labrosse 75.

[49] Howells 36.

[50] Violet Franks and Esther D. Rothblum, eds., The Stereotyping of Women: Its Effects on Mental Health, Springer Series, Focus on Women 5 (New York: Springer, 1983) 75.

[51] José Barchilon, introduction, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, by Michel Foucault, trans. Richard Howard, Vintage Books ed. (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1973) v.

[52] Barchilon vi.

[53] Szasz 106.

[54] Szasz 118.

[55] Chesler 94.

[56] Szasz xxiii.

[57] Szasz 98.

[58] Morton Smith, Hope and History, an Exploration, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen, World Perspectives 54 (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) 105.

[59] Smith 118.

[60] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) 43.

[61] Fromm 13.

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The Price is Right

by Linda Christensen

CHARACTERS

Odette Tanguay -- a woman in her late sixties

Angelle -- Odette's younger sister

Madeleine -- Odette's daughter

Susan -- Odette's granddaughter

Jules Laframboise -- an undertaker

Willie -- a small-time bookie

A Policemen

A Bus Driver

Bus Passengers:
Helen and Harriet -- two midle-aged women
Jim and Jane -- a middle-aged couple
A drunk
Miscellaneous other bus passengers

A drunken woman

Miscellaneous pedestrians

ACT ONE

Scene I

The action begins in the kitchen of a cold-water flat shared by Odette and Angelle. The kitchen, although old fashioned, is bright, cheerful, and clean. On the floor are several bowls for the cat. The kitchen also contains a TV set and many modern gadgets. On the wall is a phone. A door can be seen, which leads directly outside.

As the play opens, Odette is seen at the stove cooking pancakes while listening to a game show on TV. Offstage can be heard the sounds of an exercise show on another TV, accompanied by Angelle's periodic grunts.

Odette: The third door! The third door!

Contestant: Hmmm. . .I don't know. Oh, I wish I knew.

Odette: Well, I'm telling you. It's the third door.

Contestant: I'll pick the first door.

A collective groan is heard from the TV as the contestant picks the wrong door.

Odette: Stupid. I told you!

She turns the TV off, annoyed.

Odette: (Shouts) Angelle!

Angelle: What?

Odette: Food.

Angelle: What?

Odette: Come and eat. It's ready.

Angelle: (Breathless) Just a minute.

Odette: Your food's getting cold.

Angelle: Okay, okay. I just have to finish this cool down. . .so I don't get sore muscles.

Odette: I don't care. It's ready. If you don't come soon, that's too bad.

She flops the pancakes onto a plate and slams the plate onto the table.

The phone rings.

Odette: Yeah?

Oh, Susan it's you.

No, I'm just making Angelle's breakfast, then I have some knitting to finish before my TV show starts. Angelle asked me to make a cover for her bed, so I'm making it for Christmas instead of a sweater. She has so many sweaters anyway. Every year I make her two or three. So now she wants a blanket. Well, I don't care anyway. It's just as easy, so I. . .

What?

Of course you can come over. What do you think, eh? Are you hungry? Want to eat? I'll make you some spaghetti soup.

Are you sure? Why not?

Okay, then.

Okay, bye.

Odette hangs up. She starts making herself some pancakes when Angelle turns the TV off and comes

in, flushed from the exercise. Angelle is wearing brightly coloured leotards and tights, leg-warmers, a sweat band, and wrist bands. Her hair is in pincurls.

Angelle: Ah, crepes.

Odette: Pancakes. Aunt Jemima.

Angelle: Odette, you know I can only eat one. . .my figure, after all.

Pause. Angelle looks around.

Oh. . .don't we have any maple syrup?

Odette gets it for her. Angelle pours on a goodly amount.

Some butter. . .there. Is there coffee, Odette?

Odette: In the usual place, Angelle. Are you sure you live here?

Angelle: I need some cream today. . .energy.

Angelle pours an enormous amount into her coffee.

They must have done about fifty sit-ups today.

Odette: Crazy.

Angelle: It's not crazy, Odette. It's good for you.

Odette: Why? Look at me. I don't do exercise and I feel good.

Angelle looks at her.

Angelle: Well, I like to look good. Besides, if you want a man to look at you. . .

Odette: I don't want a man to look at me. I don't even like men.

Angelle: Well, I like men. Almost all men. Just ~~for~~ husbands, of course.

Pause.

Oh. . .where's the paper? I want to check the Companions.

She picks up the paper.

Odette: The Companions? Don't tell me this. Don't tell me now you're going to pick up men from the newspaper?

Angelle: There's some very nice men that write in here, Odette. I've been watching it for a while. You never know. . .

Angelle scans the paper.

Oh, oh, I got a good one. Listen:

"Handsome and charming young professional seeks outgoing and sports-minded woman with a view to marriage, preferably a non-smoker from 25 to 30."

Perfect! That's perfect for me, Odette.

Odette: Ha! Perfect? Angelle, he wants somebody young.

Angelle: Well, I'm young enough. So what if I'm not 25. Maybe he would appreciate somebody around 40 to take care of him. Anyway, it doesn't hurt to write.

Odette: Angelle, you're 63. Don't be so stupid.

Angelle: Why is it stupid to keep looking? You never know, Odette.

Odette: At your age? Don't be ridiculous.

Angelle: I'm not that old, Odette. Lots of people get married when they're 80, so 63 is not that old.

Odette: Well, I still think it's crazy. Besides, you never know what kind of guy this is. He could be a killer, you know. You have to be careful. There's always women disappearing or getting stabbed to death. Maybe it's him. How would you like to find yourself stuffed in a garbage bag or something? All cut up in little pieces. That would be nice, eh?

Angelle: It's that National Enquirer you read, Odette. It makes you so suspicious.

Odette: You know these things happen, Angelle. Why take a chance? Just for a husband? You won't catch me doing that. I'd rather have a cat than a husband, believe me.

Angelle: Why do you talk like that, Odette? I know Marcel wasn't perfect, but still.

Odette: Well, I like it like this. I have my TV, my cat, and my knitting, and nobody bugs me. It's better that way. I think you're going a bit nuts, Angelle, You never used to be so man crazy.

Angelle: It is not man crazy, Odette, to want a husband. I'm lonely. I like to be married.

And I don't care if I look ridiculous, either. That's what men expect in somebody my age anyway. Oh, I know that the younger people, they think different, they expect the woman to go to work just like the man, and to go to school and everything else, but a man my

age? He doesn't want somebody smart. He wants somebody not too smart, somebody who will look at him like a hero, and make him feel good. Somebody like me.

The doorbell rings.

Odette: Don't tell me that's Susan already.

Odette goes to the door..

Angelle: What? You didn't tell me anybody was coming over. Oh my God!

She runs out of the room.
Susan enters.

Susan: Hi, Grandma. Here, these are for you.

She hands her some flowers.

Odette: Susan, I told you before not to spend your money like that, especially if you're getting married next week.

Susan: It's nothing, Grandma. Besides, I like to buy you flowers.

She looks around.

Hey, where's Tinker? He usually comes to the door.

Odette: He's sleeping. He's such a lazy cat now. . .getting old like me, I guess. He's a good boy, though. . .no trouble. Better than most people I know.

Anyway, what do you want to eat? I bought these jelly rolls from Steinberg.

Susan: No, I--

Odette: You don't have to worry, Susan. They cook them right there now, you know. And it's clean. You should see it. All the women have to wear nets on their hair, and plastic gloves. It's really something. Here, try one.

Susan: I can't. I'm not hungry, Grandma. I just had a huge brunch at Dick's parents'. I'll just have some coffee.

Odette: Boy, nobody eats around here anymore. You're going to get sick, you'll see.

Pause.
Odette gets her a coffee.

There. You want half a jelly roll?

Susan: No. Why are you eating that stuff, anyway, when you cook so well yourself?

Odette: Oh, this is better than the stuff I cook, and it stays fresh for a long time. Besides, when I cook, half the time there's nobody here to eat it but me, and then it goes bad. You're always busy, and Angelle, she goes out all the time. Usually there's only me and Tinker.

Pause.

I guess that's why we're both so fat.

Susan: Where is Aunt Angelle?

Angelle swoops in. She is now wearing a flowing caftan, make-up, and a blond wig.

Angelle: Here I am.

They exchange greetings.

Susan: Aunt Angelle. Is that a new wig?

Angelle: Oh, you noticed. Yes, it's very new. I got it for your wedding, and I thought I better practice wearing it first. Anyway, never mind that, how's our baby bride? Are you nervous?

Susan: Well, I guess I--

Angelle: Oh, I remember when I got married the first time, I was so nervous. Of course, we were brought up in a convent, and so we weren't used to men--

Odette: I'm still not used to men.

Angelle: Not like nowadays. Of course, after the third husband, I got used to it. Still. . .it's different, being married. It takes a while to get used to someone. You'll be okay, though.

Susan: Oh, I think so. Look, I brought my dinner menus to show you. I just got them back from the printer. See. . .?

Odette: Let's see that.

Angelle: I want to see, too. I love weddings. Oh, look, Odette, they're beautiful. . .look at that writing, so professional.

Odette: (Points to the card.) It looks nice, but what kind of food is this, Susan? Deep fried Brie. . .I hope it's not that nouvelle cuisine I read about. I think the restaurants just want to save money. They cut down all the food, so you don't get enough to eat, and then they advertise everywhere that it's good for you.

Susan: No, no, there will be plenty of food. This is just a standard menu nowadays, nothing special, Grandma.

Odette: Nothing special? Then what is this. . .deep fried Brie?

Susan: Oh, you'll like it. It's Brie cheese, dipped in batter and deep fried. . .delicious.

Angelle: I think we had that at the Club once.

Odette: Nevermind the Club, Angelle.

Brie, Susan? You know, most people don't like funny cheese. Now, if you used American cheese. . .like Velveeta, that would be different. Especially if Dick has people coming from the States. But this French cheese, I don't know if people will go for that, Susan. Me, I'm not crazy about it.

Angelle: Odette, don't be like that. Nowadays, it's okay to be French, you know.

Odette: What are you talking about, Angelle?

Angelle: I'm saying I don't know why you're always so ashamed of being French, that's what! It's the fashion, now, being French. Vogue, Odette, vogue. Eh, Susan?

Susan: Well, I don't know about vogue, but I'm sure everybody will like the Brie. It's only cheese, after all, not a revolution.

Odette: (Sighs) Well, as long as you like it, I guess it's okay.

Angelle: It's okay with me.

Pause.

I don't have much of an appetite, anyway. I like to go to the church, and then to the party after. Oh, Susan! I have to show you my new dress for the wedding. Just a minute.

Angelle exits.

Odette: (Whispers) Susan, come here. Here, take this. It's not much, I know.

She hands Susan an envelope.

Susan: What's this?

Pause.
She opens the envelope.

Grandma? A hundred dollars? I don't want your money. Honestly, we don't need it. Here, why don't you keep it, and--

Odette: I don't want it. It's to spend on your honeymoon. I was reading just the other day, how expensive the food is in Hawaii, so this is just for a few meals, that's all.

Susan: But you're always giving me money, and I don't need it. You should keep it.

Odette: No. Don't argue, or I won't go to the wedding. That's that. And don't tell Angelle about it, either. I don't want her to say, "Oh, you gave Susan a hundred dollars for her wedding, but all you give me for Christmas is a comforter." This way, there's no argument, right?

Susan: Alright, but once I get married then you stop doing this, okay?

Angelle reenters, carrying a brightly coloured dress, full of flounces and frills, and a beautifully wrapped box.

She holds up the dress.

Angelle: Well, how do you like it?

Susan: It's just beautiful, Auntie. Don't you think so, Grandma?

Odette: It's okay. I prefer black, myself.

Angelle: And this is for you, and Dick too, of course. Quick, open it.

Susan: Oh, Auntie, what a beautiful box. I hate to ruin the paper.

As she opens it, Odette exits to get her gift for Susan. She returns with a large, bulky package in a Steinberg's bag, tied with string. Meanwhile, Susan has opened the box from Angelle, which contains a black negligée.

Susan: Wow! Look at this! Thank you, it's just beautiful.

Angelle: I hope you like it, Susan. I hope Dick will like it, too.

She smiles knowingly at Susan.

Odette: Angelle!

Here, Susan. I know it's not fancy.

Susan: Another gift?

She starts opening the package.

What could it be?

Odette: Don't get too excited, Susan.

Susan finishes opening the package, which contains a comforter.

Odette: Well, do you like it?

Susan: Grandma, you know I love everything you make.

Odette: This is different. I made it with the Knit Wit I bought. Remember, the one I saw on TV, and you just go around and around with the wool, so you make little flowers, and then they pop off the machine like magic?

Susan: I remember when you ordered that. So now you're doing Knit Wit.

Angelle: And she calls me nuts.

Odette: At least I do something useful with my time, Angelle. I don't spend it all mooning over men.

Susan: Thank you both for the presents. They're beautiful, and I love them.

Angelle: Oh, it's nothing, Susan. Well, I better put my dress away, before something spills on it. By the way, Susan, you better speak to Odette. You know, she still doesn't have a dress for the wedding.

Angelle exits with her dress.

Odette: Big mouth. You wouldn't believe I took care of her when she was a kid, eh? Boy, she's quick to squeal.

Susan: Grandma!

Odette: Let me tell you, Susan, you don't know everything that goes on here. If you ask me, I think Angelle is going crazy, ever since the last husband died.

Of course, I always thought she killed them, myself. You don't go through three husbands just like that, you know. Usually they last forever, no matter what you do.

Susan: Come on, Grandma, how can you say that?

Odette: It's true, Susan. Angelle is completely man crazy.

Susan: I'm sure she's not crazy--

Odette: She even joined one of those Single Clubs, Susan. Oh, yes, my sister, brought up in a convent, and she joins a Single Club. You don't know what it's like to live with her, Susan. You never know who she's going to bring home next, and of course I worry that she's going to bring home some kind of sickness or disease.

Susan: Oh. . .I'm sure everything will be alright.

Odette: Okay, Susan. Then you go to the morgue to identify her body when she gets murdered.

Susan: Well, Grandma, what can I say? You don't have to live with her if you don't want to, you know.

Odette: No, I know, but what can I do?

Susan: I don't know. Move out!

Odette: Susan! I can't do that. What would Angelle do? She needs me, after all.

Angelle reenters.

Angelle: So, is she going to get a new dress, or what?

Odette: I told you I will get a dress, Angelle. Stop nagging me all the time. Every day she's after me. You know I hate wearing a dress. If I wear a dress, then I have to wear a girdle, and I can't breathe.

Angelle: Well, if you did exercises, like I do.

Odette: Maybe that's what happened to your brain, Angelle, Lack of oxygen. Between your girdles and your wigs--

Susan: Your don't have to wear a girdle, Grandma. Just wear something loose, so you'll be comfortable.

Odette: Good. Then I'll be able to eat more. I still don't know about that Brie, though.

Angelle: Forget about the Brie, Odette. When are you going to get this dress?

Odette: Alright, alright, I'll go as soon as I have time.

Angelle: When?

Odette: Next month.

Pause.

Okay, okay, don't get hysterical, Angelle, you'll get wrinkles. I'll go tomorrow.

Angelle: Good, I'll go with you. We'll go to Place Dupuis.

Odette: Place Dupuis? Never! They're all French there. Why can't I just go to Kresge?

Susan: Grandma, you're not serious? Kresge's?

Angelle: Odette, this is your only granddaughter getting married, after all.

Odette: Okay, I give up. We'll go to Eaton. Tomorrow. But I'll tell you one thing, Angelle, we better go early. Tomorrow afternoon is Beat the Clock, and I don't want to miss it, just for a lousy dress. Understand?

Angelle: Okay, Odette, we'll go very early in the morning.

Susan: Good. Well, I have to go now, Grandma. You phone me tomorrow night and let me know what you bought, okay?

And thank you both very much for the gifts. And, Grandma, don't worry about the cheese, okay?

Odette: Okay, Susan. You be careful, now, driving alone. It's full of crazy people out there, you know.

Susan: I know. Murderers. I'll be careful.

They say their good-byes. Susan leaves.

Angelle: Oh, Odette, it's going to such a beautiful wedding.

Odette: Well, I wish I didn't have to go. I hate those things, and I hate to spend money on a dress I'll never wear again. Besides, I suppose she's going to be there.

Angelle: Who?

Odette: Madeleine, of course. Who do you think I'm talking about?

Angelle: Of course she'll be there, Odette. She Susan's mother, after all.

Odette: Some mother.

Pause.

I don't want to go.

Angelle: You know you have to go, Odette. Look, stop worrying about it, okay? If you don't want to talk to Madeleine, don't talk to her. Just ignore her.

Odette: It's pretty hard to ignore somebody at a wedding, Angelle.

Angelle: It's going to be a big wedding, and we won't even be sitting at the same table as her, Odette. You won't have to talk to her if you don't want to.

Odette: I suppose.

Angelle: I don't understand why you don't talk to her anyway, after all these years, Odette. If it was me--

Odette: Well it's not you, Angelle.

Angelle: Okay, okay.

Odette: Just drop it, okay?

Angelle: Okay, Odette. Anyway, I'm sure you'll have a good time once we get there.

Odette: Oh, well, we'll see, I guess.

Angelle: Nevermind the "we'll see", Odette. You're going. And tomorrow, we go shopping.

Odette: Yuck.

Angelle: You'll see. You'll be so happy after, when you have a new dress, and maybe some new shoes--

Odette: Shoes?

Angelle: And your hair! We'll make an appointment for your hair--

Odette: Forget it, Angelle.

Angelle: Oh, yes, Odette, we will make you so beautiful, that Madeleine won't even recognize you, and all the men will go after you.

Odette: Crazy. Completely crazy.

Angelle: Yes, I feel it. . .tomorrow begins the making of a new Odette Tanguay.

ACT I

Scene II

It is the next morning.

All action takes place on a bus. As the scene opens, Angelle and Odette are boarding the bus. Helen and Harriet are already on the bus, seated halfway down on a double seat. Miscellaneous others get on and off the bus at each stop.

Odette: (Boarding the bus.) I hate transferring. I don't know why you can't take the 105 all the way downtown like we used to. Now they make you walk a million miles--

Angelle: Where do you want to sit?

Odette: I don't care. It doesn't matter.

Angelle: Here, then. . .

Odette: No, I don't like sitting up front. You sit there.

Angelle sits up front on the bench, Odette further down on a seat for two. In order to converse, they must talk across an aisle. During the conversations that take place, although other people can overhear, generally there is no interaction, and the various conversations go on as separate entities.

Odette: What store do you want to go to first?

Angelle: I don't care.

Odette: You don't care? You're the one that was making such a big deal. . .

Angelle: (Embarrassed) Sh.

Helen: It's in the weather.

Harriet: I don't know, if you ask me. . .

Helen: It's the weather. It carries sickness. Take it from me. . .I know.

Harriet: Some people say it's the water. All the chemicals. Or maybe it's acid rain. Maybe we're letting the Americans kill us.

Odette: It doesn't matter anyway.

Angelle: What?

Odette: They never have anything that fits me anyway. It's always for young girls.

Angelle: Sh.

Bus Driver: (First in French, then English.) Claremont, Claremount.

A drunk gets on. There is general disgust and avoidance. He sits at the back of the bus.

Helen: The weather's not right. Too much rain. It carries germs, you know. You have to try not to breathe it.

Harriet: Maybe the Japanese are right, with their masks. Maybe they know something we don't know.

Helen: I'm sure germs can get through those masks, Harriet. They're only cotton, after all.

Harriet: Oh, speaking of germs, I visited Mabel in the hospital yesterday. That woman has been through so much. I feel sorry for her. You know, she said the pain from the gallstones was worse than labour. . .imagine.

Pause.
Other people get on and off the bus.

She bought a new living room set, you know. Got a good bargain.

The drunk belches loudly.
Everyone stares at him.

Odette: Men. In Westmount, too.

Bus Driver: Grosvenor, Grosvenor.

Jim and Jane get on, arguing.
They sit one behind the other on the single seats, Jim in front.
He stares straight ahead continually.

Jane: I didn't like that place. It gave me a bad feeling.

Jim: You have to think of the price.

Jane: Money! That's all you think of.

Jim: Somebody has to.

Jane: Some things are more important than money, you know.

Odette: Maybe we should start at Morgan.

Angelle: The Baie.

Odette: Morgan, the Baie, who cares? It's still the same store. You know what I mean anyway.

(To herself) Morgan, the Baie. What's the difference? They won't have my size anyway. Getting all dressed up for nothing. Peh. Throwing money away. For nothing.

Angelle glares at her.

Jane: I like the other place better.

Jim: A school's a school. Why does he have to go to a private school anyway? I never went to private school.

Jane: It's better for him. Don't you want him to be somebody? We only have one son. If we can pay for him to go to a private school, then it's our duty.

Helen: So how much did she pay?

Harriet: I think around a thousand.

Helen: Including tax?

Harriet: I don't know. I didn't think to ask.

Helen: Well it makes a heck of a difference, you know.

Odette: Think of all the cat food I could get for that money.

Angelle: You spend enough on those animals already. Sometimes I think every stray cat in N.D.G. comes to our house for food.

Odette: Somebody has to feed them, Angelle. People don't care. They just throw them out when they're tired of them. . .let them starve. . .let them freeze.

Pause.

I wish I had more money.

Bus Driver: Avenue Greene, Greene Avenue.

Jane: If we didn't have to support your mother, then we could afford any school we wanted.

Jim: So what do you expect me to do? Throw her out?

Helen: When did she have time to buy a new couch anyway? I thought she spent all her time in the hospital or working on charities.

Harriet: Well, I always thought she wouldn't get sick so much if she didn't spend all her time on those charities.

She's hardly ever home, you know.

Helen: Maybe that's the way she likes it. I know if I had to take care of my mother all the time, I'd stay away too. Thank God for nursing homes.

Bus Driver: Atwater, Atwater.

Angelle: Do you want to get off here and transfer, or take the Metro?

Odette: (Sighs) I don't care. Whatever you want.

Angelle: Well let's get off here, then.

She gets up.

Odette: Then we have to do all that walking in the Metro. I hate the Metro.

Angelle sits down again.

Angelle: Okay, forget it. We'll get off later. You're so difficult today, Odette.

Odette: Sh.

Angelle: Don't shush me, Odette.

Odette: Sh.

Angelle: Ach. I give up.

The bus driver stops the bus and gets off.

Odette: Gone for coffee and a cigarette, I suppose.

Angelle: It looks like it.

Odette: Boy, that's a nice life. If they're not on strike they hang around smoking. Then if you have to ask them a question, they beat you up and get away with it.

Jim: That's where my money goes, Jane. My taxes are paying him, while we sit around here and wait. Plus, I'll get docked half a day if I don't get back soon.

The drunk lurches off the bus.

Drunk: End of the line! End of the line!

A young man runs onto the bus. He rushes over to Angelle, and tries to steal her purse. There is a scuffle.

Angelle: Hey! Give me that!

Odette gets up to help Angelle. There is general noise and fighting between the three, as Odette hits him with her purse. Although there is a great deal of excited talking going on among the others, no one else gets up. During the scuffle, Angelle's wig is pulled off.

Angelle: (Screams, mortified.) My wig! You bastard!

She pushes him hard. In a panic, he pushes her back. She is thrown against a seat and hits her head. He runs off the bus.

Odette: Angelle, Angelle.

Pause.
She tries to revive Angelle, shakes her, etc.

Oh my God!

The bus driver returns with his coffee. The other passengers now crowd around.

Bus Driver: What is it? What's going on here?

Everyone but Angelle talks at once, explaining what happened. The bus driver kneels down, takes Angelle's pulse. Odette is standing transfixed, staring at blood on her hands.

Oh, shit! I think she's dead.

Odette: Angelle!

Helen: This is awful. I've never seen anything like this.

Harriet: My God, you can't even take the bus anymore. It's not safe. It's just not safe.

Helen: It could have been me.

Jane: You see that, Jim? You see what kids do nowadays, kids with no education? And you're worried about a few dollars.

Bus Driver: Nothing like this ever happened on my bus before. I don't know what to do. I hope they don't blame me.

Long pause.

I guess I'll get the police.

He gets off.

Jim: Great, just great, Jane. There goes a day's pay.

Helen: Omigod, Harriet! We're witnesses to a murder. That means we're involved. . . court. . .trial.

Jim: The hell with this. Let's go.

Jane: We can't just leave.

Jim: I said, let's go. There's nothing we can do, anyway. They're never going to catch the guy. No use sticking around. Come on.

They exit.

Harriet: What do you think, Helen?

Helen: Maybe we should stay.

Harriet: I'm afraid. If he finds out we're witnesses . . .he could come back and kill us, too.

Helen: (To Odette) I'm sorry. . .I hope you understand. We would stay if we could, but. . .

They exit.
Odette is now alone.

Pause.

Odette: Why did you fight, Angelle? Just because he pulled off your wig? Who cares? It's not important, Angelle.

Pause.

It wasn't even a good wig.

Long pause.
Odette slowly pulls herself together.

(Sighs) (To herself.) I guess I'll miss Beat The Clock for sure, now.

ACT TWO

Scene I

The kitchen, two days later.

Odette is on the phone. The TV is going, and a game show can be heard.

Odette: No, Susan. You don't have to come over.

Don't worry. Look, today the man from the funeral parlour is coming. I have to talk to him about the funeral. There's nothing for you to do.

I hope it won't be on your wedding day too, but what can I do?

What? Don't be crazy. If you cancel this wedding, then I won't go for sure. I don't know when the funeral is yet, anyway, so there's no use worrying ahead of time. Maybe it won't even be on Saturday.

Yeah, me too.

The doorbell rings.

Oh, oh, that's him. I have to go.

No. I told you. I don't need money.

Yeah, Yeah. I'll call you after.

Okay. Bye.

She hangs up.

Ach, Angelle, the trouble you give me. If it's not one thing, it's another.

She turns the TV off, opens the door.

Odette: M. Laframboise?

M. Laframboise: Yes. Mme. Tanguay?

Odette: Yes. Come in.

The undertaker comes in.

M. Laframboise: Mme. Tanguay, I am so sorry.

Odette: (Sighs) I know, I know.

M. Laframboise: I knew your sister personally, you know. I enjoyed her company often, at the Club.

Odette: I know. She talked about you, showed me your card. That's why I called you. She said you were very professional.

M. Laframboise: Angelle talked about me? Said I was very professional? I wonder. . .I don't suppose she ever told you of her . . .her feelings regarding me?

Odette: I don't remember that. I only remember she talked about your work.

M. Laframboise: Oh, yes. She was always so interested in my work, so concerned.

(Sighs) Oh, she was so special. . .so friendly and outgoing. Everyone at the club liked her so much.

Odette: I'm sure.

M. Laframboise: And she always looked so well. To die so suddenly, and so violently.

Odette: I know. We were going shopping, and she got killed. Just like that.

M. Laframboise: My God! The things that happen nowadays. I hope they caught this brutal killer, this, this. . .animal?

Odette: Of course not. Oh, the police keep calling, and asking questions and more questions, but they won't catch him. They never do.

M. Laframboise: A tragedy. A real tragedy.

Odette: Yes. We never did make it shopping.

M. Laframboise: Poor Angelle. Always so full of life.

Odette: (Sighs) Not anymore.

M. Laframboise: And she could tango, too. I don't mean just those turns and dips that people do, to pretend they know how to tango. No, Angelle could really tango.

Odette: She liked to dance. She was always taking lessons. . .to keep in shape. I told her it wouldn't do any good.

M. Laframboise: So, so sad.

Odette: She should have taken self defence, instead of dancing.

M. Laframboise: She brought so much joy to the world.

Pause.

I. . .I miss her already. She was my dance partner, you know. I don't think I'll ever have another partner like. . .Angelle. Oh my God! Angelle!

He breaks down.

Odette: M. Laframboise! Don't start, or I'll start too. We have business to do.

M. Laframboise: Yes, yes. You're right. We have to make all the arrangements. Oh, it must be very hard for you. Do you have anyone to help you?

Odette: No. But it doesn't matter. I prefer to do it alone. I know what she liked, anyway.

M. Laframboise: Yes, yes, of course. Who would know better than a sister? And I'm sure you want the very best for her, Mme. Tanguay.

Odette: Well, I don't know. . .

M. Laframboise: Sometimes, it's hard to know what's best. We'll do this together, Mme. Tanguay. For Angelle. Because she was the best.

Odette: She was okay, but I don't know. . .

M. Laframboise blows his nose, assumes his salesman attitude.

M. Laframboise: Now, then. If you'll just let me set up here, I can show you some slides of what we have to offer. Then, we'll be able to make the right choice. The best choice!

He starts setting up a slide projector.

Odette: Slides? Well, I. . .

M. Laframboise: It's no trouble at all, Mme. Tanguay. Now, if you will just sit over here, then we'll just go ahead.

I'll just get these lights.

The lights dim.

There, perfect.

He begins the slide presentation, which is also visible to the audience. Music can be heard faintly in the background.

M. Laframboise: Now, then, this is our park. . .the Roses of Heaven. Beautiful, isn't it? Every time someone is buried here, we plant a rose in their memory. You can see the many beautiful roses.

Odette: Very nice.

M. Laframboise: And, because you knew Angelle best, of course you would choose the type of rose she would have liked.

Odette: I don't think she liked roses. I know she liked. . .

M. Laframboise You see all the different types? Tea roses, climbers, shrubs. . .You name it, Mme. Tanguay, and that's what Angelle will have.

Odette: Can I cut the flowers myself?

M. Laframboise: Well. . .I don't see why not. After all, she was your sister. I'm sure she would want you to enjoy them, too.

Odette: Maybe the ones that smell good, then.

M. Laframboise: Perfect, Mme. Tanguay. I'm sure that would make Angelle very happy.

Odette: I don't know how happy she'll be, exactly. . .

M. Laframboise: Now then, because we are basically a crematorium, what we bury is the urn, and this can be buried anywhere in our park, for a variety of prices. Some people choose to bury it right in with the roses. . .You see those small, tasteful plaques? That's nice. Very nice.

Odette: Not much for the money, is it?

M. Laframboise: Others like to be near a bench, with people around. You can see the small name plate on the seat, just to the right there.

Odette: But somebody could sit right on her name. I wouldn't like that, if it was me. Some old man. . .

M. Laframboise: Or you could buy an ornament for the park, a small fountain, or perhaps a rock. There's a sample rock, with the plaque on top.

Odette: I see that.

M. Laframboise: Anyway, Mme. Tanguay, as you can see, we are very flexible. The possibilities are many. Angelle can be placed wherever you decide, from the beautiful rose garden. . .

Pause as the slide comes on.

right down to under the waste receptacle. Very unique.

Odette: That's a garbage can! I told her she would end up in the garbage if she wasn't careful.

M. Laframboise: And don't forget, Mme. Tanguay. There is also our lovely chapel. Those that don't particularly like the outdoors can be placed here, in the lobby.

Odette: So many choices. I don't know.

M. Laframboise: This is nothing, Mme. Tanguay. There is also a very large variety of urns to choose from. We have this very sophisticated style. . .what we like to call an evening urn, black, with a small diamond inset. . .

Pause.

Here's an idea for someone who was really into sports. . .

Pause. A slide of a baseball is shown.

Looks realistic, doesn't it?

You see, we have many, many styles to choose from. And, of course, you can always design your own urn, if you want.

Odette: No, I'm not much good for drawing.

M. Laframboise: Now, I'll just turn this off, and we can decide just what is best for poor Angelle.

The slide show is over. He turns the lights back on.

Odette is still sitting, stunned.

Odette: This is too complicated for me. In the old days we just put them in a box and buried them in the ground. Now it's worse than shopping for a dress.

M. Laframboise: Oh yes, we've made a number of changes in the funeral business. Many more varieties. Makes it much more interesting, and more personal.

He takes out several volumes of books from his briefcase.

This is everything we have in stock. Once you see something you like, I can go over the prices with you.

Odette: Just like a catalogue. What's the cheapest?

M. Laframboise: Well, starting at the front of the book, that would be the papier maché model. I don't know if that's really what you want for your sister, though. It's up to you, of course.

Odette looks up, talks to the ceiling.

Odette: Okay, Okay.

(To M. Laframboise) What's the next cheapest?

M. Laframboise: Well, the pressed wood is next, and then pressed wood with a veneer. You feel that is right for Angelle, Mme. Tanguay?

Odette gets up, has a silent argument, then returns.

Odette: Do you have anything red?

M. Laframboise: (Quickly flips to the back of the book.)

Wonderful, wonderful choice. Exactly right for Angelle. Look at this, Mme. Tanguay. Straight from Japan. Exquisite detail. Fine workmanship. Oh, Angelle would rest in peace, all right, in this urn.

Odette: Yes, at my expense. Still, it's better than if she haunts me every day because she doesn't like her urn, isn't it? How much?

M. Laframboise: Normally, I have to sell this for $3000, but because you are a senior citizen, living alone. . .$2500?

Odette: What? That's crazy. Nevermind, I'll use a tobacco tin and paint it red.

M. Laframboise: Mme. Tanguay, I know it is a lot of money, but this comes from Japan, so we have to charge more. Look, don't forget this includes everything. . .picking up the body. . .cremation. . .the ceremony. . .and then her ashes are stored in this beautiful vase forever.

Odette: It's still too much.

M. Laframboise: I'll tell you what. For this price, she can go right into the rose garden if you want. And of course, the free rose. It's usually extra to be in the garden, but, because I knew Angelle. . .

Pause.

Look, I will make it $2000 because it was Angelle. I can't go any lower without getting in trouble with the boss, Mme. Tanguay. As it is, this is cost. No profit to me at all, Mme. Tanguay. I don't want to profit by Angelle's death anyway. I don't think you can beat that price anywhere.

Odette: Okay, okay.

(Looks up) I hope this makes you happy.

(Back to M. Laframboise) Just a minute.

She leaves the room, returns in a moment with money.

There. Count it.

M. Laframboise: Cash! Mme. Tanguay, you shouldn't leave money lying around the house like this. You should put it in a bank.

Odette: What for? Anyway, it's gone now. Make sure you count it.

M. Laframboise starts to count it.

Angelle, she liked to play with money. . .always figuring it out, and putting it in this, and that . . .like a hobby. Of course, she had money coming in from all those dead husbands. Plus, she was so cheap.

Pause.

She kept it all for herself. Never even bought a can of cat food. Worried about losing it, I guess.

Pause.

Me, I don't have those worries. I have my pension and that's it. And now that the government taxes cat food, there's even less for me to worry about. Ah, well, that's the way, I guess.

M. Laframboise: $2000 exactly. And here's your receipt.

Odette: Good. I have to give this to Susan. She's my granddaughter, a lawyer.

M. Laframboise: Of course, I met her once.

Odette: She wants to try to get the funeral paid for by Angelle's insurance.

M. Laframboise: Oh, well. I'm glad she had insurance.

Odette: Well, not really. It all came from her dead husbands. It was only good when she was alive. Now it's finished.

M. Laframboise: But there must be something? Wasn't there a will, Mme. Tanguay?

Odette: Oh, yes, Angelle made a will, all right. And she left me everything. But she had nothing but the insurance, really. I guess she figured, just in case there was something left. . .

M. Laframboise: Mme. Tanguay. I don't want to take your last money. Maybe I can arrange some credit. . .

Odette: No thank you! I don't like to go in debt.

M. Laframboise: Well, then, I don't have much money, but perhaps you would allow me to contribute some towards Angelle's--

Odette: M. Laframboise! I don't want anything from you. Forget it.

M. Laframboise: Please. . .I. . .for Angelle. . .

Odette: No. I like to take care of it myself.

Pause.

Anyway, who knows. Maybe Susan can get some money from the insurance.

Pause.

Well, at least this business is finished.

M. Laframboise: Yes, and Mme. Tanguay, I think you made the right choice.

He gets up.

Now, don't worry about anything. It's all taken care of. We'll pick her up today, and. . .oh! When would you like the ceremony? We can have it tomorrow, if you like.

Odette: Saturday. It has to be on Saturday.

M. Laframboise: Saturday.

He writes it into his book.

Odette: (To herself) The ceremony. . .I guess I'll have to buy a new dress after all. Hummmph. Well, at least it'll be black.

M. Laframboise: Thank you Mme. Tanguay, and my sincerest condolences once again. I know we will all miss Angelle.

Odette: Yes, I know. Somehow, I still feel like she is still here, though.

M. Laframboise: I know. I guess I feel that too. Still, I will miss her at the Club.

Pause.

Do you dance like your sister, Mme. Tanguay?

Odette: Me? Never. I don't have time for that stuff.

Mr. Laframboise: Oh, well. I guess I will have to start looking for a new dance partner. There will never be another Angelle, though.

Well, Mme. Tanguay, good-bye until Saturday. And don't worry about anything.

He exits.

Odette: Well, I hope you're happy, Angelle. There goes my money. Just because your wig fell off. I told you, "be careful". And look what happens.

Pause.

Oh, boy. I don't know what I'm going to do now, Angelle.

I guess I'll have to move, sooner or later. I can't afford it all by myself. It's too big, anyway.

I don't know what I'll do by myself all the time. Go crazy, I guess. Like those old ladies on TV that always talk to themself.

Pause.

I don't want to be alone. I wish it was me and not Angelle.

Pause.

I don't know where I'll move. I'll have to look in the paper, I suppose. Maybe one room somewhere. . .I don't know. I hate to phone places. Angelle, she used to do all the phoning people all the time. She didn't mind that. I hate it.

And I suppose everybody's going to feel sorry for me, just like M. Laframboise. Treat me like a poor cousin. Probably worry that I'll sponge off them or something. Well, they won't have to. I'll just get a small place. . .I don't know where. . .as long as it's my own.

A knock on the door is heard.

Now what?

She opens the door, steps back.

Madeleine!

Madeleine: Hello, maman.

Odette: What are you doing here?

Madeleine: I heard about Aunt Angelle.

Pause.

I'm sorry, maman.

Odette: You're sorry?

Madeleine: Of course I am. I always liked Aunt Angelle. I want to pay my respects.

Odette: Boy, that's a good one!

Madeleine: I want to know when the funeral is.

Odette: Well, I have some bad news for you, Madeleine. The funeral is on Saturday.

Madeleine: But that's the same day as the wedding. Can't the funeral be on another day?

Odette: No. It's the only day I could get.

Madeleine: Well, maybe I can get it changed.

Odette: You?

Madeleine: I want to help, if I can.

Odette: After all these years?

Madeleine: Yes. I guess it's the least I can do. . .you know, help with the arrangements.

Odette: You have your nerve coming here after all that time and trying to take over, boss me around.

Madeleine: I'm not trying to take over. I only want to help, if you'll let me. I know I haven't been around, and I'm sorry, but now I'm here, and . . .

Odette: Forget it, Madeleine. Go back to your house in Westmount. The air is cleaner there.

Madeleine: Don't be like that, maman.

Odette: You don't belong here, Madeleine. You said so yourself. Anyway, I don't need you, or your help. Not after all this time.

Madeleine: I know you don't need me, but I still want to be here, and to help.

Odette: What's with all this help stuff? Why do you want to help so much, now that she's dead. Boy oh boy. Is that how you're

going to help me? Come around when I'm dead? Or is it just easier to stop being ashamed of people when they're dead? Maybe that's it. You never cared that much when she was alive.

Madeleine: If you could just listen to me for a minute--

Odette: Why should I?

Madeleine: Because you have never listened to me, that's why?

Odette: Oh, well, excuse me. . .

Madeleine: See, there you go. Over the years, I have tried, and tried to reach you--

Odette: Okay, here it comes. My fault again!

Madeleine: (Exasperated) You're right! You're right! Everything was all my fault. I admit it. I admitted it years ago, but you wouldn't listen. I thought, maybe, after all this time. . .

Pause.

I'm guilty! Okay? I was wrong! Okay? I was young, and I was ashamed of you, ashamed of where I came from. . .Angelle. . .everything. That was wrong. I know that. I knew that years ago. I wanted to make it up to you, to apologize, but you never let me.

Odette: You weren't too ashamed to let me bring up your only kid, so you could work and make money. . . so you could live in Westmount. I was good enough for that.

Madeleine: I was hoping that you had changed, that you could forget. . .

Odette: Why? You have nothing else to do with your life now? No other charities?

Madeleine: It's not like that. You're my mother.

Odette: Big deal! What does that get me?

Pause.

Go back to your big house, Madeleine.

Madeleine: No, let me. . .

Odette: Go on! Get out!

Madeleine: Maman, just for once, try to be reasonable.

Odette: Years ago, you told me to get out of your house. This is my house. . .get out!

Long pause.

Madeleine: (Heading towards the door) You know, you might need me, one day.

Odette: Madeleine, that day will never come. I will never need you, or anybody else. Do you hear me? Never. . . .never. Hear me? Never!

Long pause.

Madeleine: We'll see about that.

Madeleine leaves. Odette slams the door and bolts it, then leans against it.

Angelle! Why did you leave me? Why? I need you, Angelle.

What am I going to do, all alone?

Pause.

Tell me. . .what am I supposed to do?

ACT II

Scene II

The kitchen, several months later. It is dusk, the lighting is greyer, dimmer.

The kitchen now looks bare and somewhat dingy. All of the appliances are gone, and most of the furniture.

Two men are carrying out a bed.

Odette: Be careful. Don't scratch the wall. I don't want to be responsible.

The men ease the bed out. Odette starts sweeping, oblivious to the open door.

Pigs. Look at this. Now I have to stay on my head to clean the floor before I go. I suppose I'll get blamed for every scratch. Well, most of them were here when we moved in anyway, so it's not my fault.

And look at those marks. Angelle, she made them. They never go away.

Pause.

Yes you did, with your running shoes. Always doing your exercises in here! I told you they leave marks. Lucky you never did tap dancing or there would be holes in the floor too.

She finishes sweeping.

That's that. I'm not going to wash the floor. Let the new people do that. Why should I clean the floor for somebody else? If they're rich enough to live here, let them clean it.

Lucky people! I bet they didn t spend every day looking in the paper for a cheap place. I bet they didn t have to look at all those dumps full of bugs either. Well, that s life, I guess. The people with money get all the good places to live. Who cares where I live? I guess if I was a sponge I could live with Susan or even Madeleine if I was desperate.

I'll never be that desperate. I m telling you, Angelle, you're the lucky one.

Susan comes in the open door, goes up to Odette, who does not see her, and taps her on the shoulder. Odette screams.

Odette: Susan! Don't do that. You could give me a heart attack I thought it was Angelle

Susan: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to frighten you. You don't believe in ghosts, do you?

Odette: Of course not. Don't be ridiculous.

Susan looks around.

Susan: My God! What's happening? Where is everything?

Odette: I'm leaving.

Susan: What do you mean, you're leaving?

Odette: I got a notice from the landlord. He's making condominiums, so everybody got kicked out. I have to be out by today.

Susan: What? He can't just do that. It takes months. When did you get the notice?

Odette: I don't know. . .a few months ago.

Susan: You mean you've known for months? How come you didn't tell me?

Odette: What for? What could you do?

Susan: Well, I could have looked into it for you, made sure it was legal.

Odette: It doesn't matter, Susan It was too big here anyway, just for me. Besides, I couldn't afford it anymore.

Susan: Well then, at least I could have helped you find another place. . .or have helped you pack. . .lots of things.

Odette: There's nothing to pack, Susan.

Pause.

It's gone. I sold everything to a used furniture place.

Susan: I don't understand. Why get rid of everything? You still need your furniture.

Odette: No, I don't need it anymore. I can't carry it everywhere I go.

Susan: You're going to a furnished apartment? How come you made all these plans and never told me anything?

Odette: When did I see you to tell you?

Susan: I know I've been busy, but I phone.

Odette: I know, I know. Look, you're busy moving yourself. It's a big move, to Toronto.

Susan: If I knew you were moving, you could have moved to Toronto, too.

Odette: Ach, too big!

Susan: So where are you going then? Will you at least tell me where you're moving to? Maybe I can help you move, get settled.

Odette: I don't know.

Susan: You don't know?

Odette: No. I don't know.

Susan: But if you have to be out by today--

Odette: I know. It's a problem.

Susan: You don't have another apartment?

Odette: No. Not yet.

Susan: I don't understand this. What were you going to do?

Odette: I'm not sure. . .I'll go to a rooming house or something, I guess.

Susan: That's ridiculous. There's lots of places. I'm sure if we look, even now--

Odette: I looked. I looked everywhere. There's nothing I can afford Unless I want to live with roaches, and bed bugs.

Susan: Maybe someplace smaller, then.

Odette: Believe me, I looked. On the money I get, there's nothing decent.

Pause.

I don't know where I'm going to live. I can't find anything decent. It's all either dumps or condominiums.

Susan: Well, you have to live somewhere.

Odette: I know. I know. I'll just keep looking, every day.

Susan: Look, what about a room in a senior citizens' home, you know like the nice one on Sherbrooke street?

Odette: I went there. I can't afford it. The only ones I could afford are run by the city.

Susan: So?

Odette: So? So, they take almost your whole cheque every month, and for that you get a crummy little room. You have to eat all your meals with everybody else, just like a convent. I hate to sit with everybody when I eat. They always make you talk even if you don't feel like it. And nobody has their own kitchen. It's crummy. Probably got bugs too. At least the convent was clean.

You know what the worst is, though? For all that money, those places aren't even near stores.

Susan: You know, if it's just a question of money, then I'm going with you right now to find a nice apartment.

Odette: What are you talking about?

Susan: I'll pay your rent. Then you can afford something nice.

Odette: No. Forget it.

Susan: Look, if it will make you feel better, you pay part, and I'll pay part.

Odette: I don't want your money.

Susan: Why not? I want you to have a nice place.

Odette: Me too, but not with your money.

Susan: Just think, if you moved to Toronto, you could have a nice apartment near

me, then I could. . .

Odette: What? Visit every month, the way you do now? In a new city?

Susan: Grandma, if you want me to visit more often. . .I'll visit as often as you want me to.

Pause.

Why don't you come? I'm sure if we look, we'll find a nice place. You could stay at our house until--

Odette: Never. I don't like to depend on anybody. I want to be by myself.

Susan: But you can't just go off, with nowhere to live. What will you do?

Odette: I don't know. Hang around, I guess. Maybe downtown. At least it's not too cold.

Susan: Because it's spring. Wait 'til next winter. Then what?

Odette: Who knows? By then, maybe I'll be dead. Or maybe I'll win the 6/49.

Susan: Oh, grandma, don't talk like that. You're still young.

Odette: Young? Me? I'm an old bag. Who cares what happens to me?

Susan: I care. I don't want my grandmother living on the streets like a bum or a wino.

Odette: Wino? You've got your nerve. I don't even drink.

Anyway, I always wanted to live downtown. This way, I live downtown, with no landlord on my back.

Susan: I don't believe this! Look, I'll buy you a house, if that's what you want.

Odette: A house? Where are you going to get the money to buy me a house?

Susan: (Increasingly frustrated) I told you. I have money saved.

Odette: And I told you. I don't want your money. What do you think I am, some kind of sponge or something?

Pause.

Look, when I figure out what I'm doing, then I'll phone you.

Susan: You won't even have a phone. This is crazy.

Odette: It's not crazy. Think of the money I'll save all summer. Then, when winter comes, I'll be able to afford a decent flat if I want one.

Susan: You're just not making sense. And how do you think I would feel, knowing my grandmother was living on a bench somewhere?

Odette: Lots of people live on benches these days, Susan. Especially old women. A woman by herself can't live like a human being on the money they get from the pension.

Susan: But you're not by yourself. That's the difference. You have relatives. Me! I can give you the extra money.

Odette: I never took money from my kids, Susan. Never.

Pause.

It's not so bad. If I end up hanging around downtown, then at least I'll be able to go to Kresge every day. You know I like that.

Susan: I'm not happy.

Odette: Me either. But that's the way it is. Look, you may as well go now. I have to finish cleaning so I can leave. I'll phone you, maybe tomorrow, if I have time.

Susan: How about sharing a place? Or getting a bigger place, and taking in boarders? Or---

Odette: And live with strangers? Crooks and killers? Forget it, Susan. I'm not going to get killed, like Angelle.

Susan: Well I'm not leaving. I won't let you do this. You're just not acting like a sane adult.

Odette: What will you do about it? Put me away? Go ahead, if it will make you happy. I'll bet that would make your mother happy. Then she wouldn't have to take a chance on meeting me somewhere. Go on . . .go ahead.

Pause.

Susan: If you're going to keep this up, maybe I should. It's not normal. I think there's something wrong with you. Maybe you should be put somewhere where people will take care of you.

Odette: Are you saying I'm crazy?

Susan: I don't know what I'm saying.

Pause.

(Trying to reason with her) I know you're not crazy. I just don't want anything bad to happen to you.

Odette: You can't run my life, Susan.

Susan: I'm not trying to run your life. I just wish there was something I could do.

Odette: Well there's nothing to do. I'll tell you what. If I'm not happy, then you can pay for the most expensive apartment for me, okay?

Susan: Sure.

Pause.

I feel awful about this.

Odette: Stop it, okay. That's enough. I know what I want. I'm not a kid, you know.

Susan: I know.

Pause.

The phone rings. Odette answers it.

Odette: Probably the landlord, making sure I leave.

Yeah?

Oh, hi, Dick. No, she's still here. Just a minute.

Susan: Hello?

Okay, okay. I'm on my way. I know. I'm coming. Okay. Bye.

She hangs up.

Dick's waiting for me. We're moving this week end. That's what I came to tell you. It all happened so quickly. Our flight is this afternoon.

She gets up to leave, then sits down again.

I can stay, though. Why don't I send Dick on his own? He doesn't really need me, anyway. Why don't I do that?

Odette: No, go. I'll let you know where I am.

Susan: Well, I don't know. . .

She gets up to leave again, and then sits down again.

This is stupid. I can't leave like this.

Odette: Dick's waiting. He'll be mad.

Susan: I know. I don't believe this is happening. We've got to do something.

Odette: Like what? I tried everything. I looked everywhere. I was sick trying to find a place to live. Now I don't care anymore.

Pause.

I don't care anymore. I just want to die.

She sits, depressed.

Susan: Don't do this to me. I know how you feel. I know it's been hard, losing Angelle, and then having to move. But you can't just give up like this.

Pause.

I'm going to help you, and that's that!

Odette: What about Dick?

Susan: I don't know. I'll have to figure something out. I don't know.

The phone rings.

Oh, God. That's Dick.

The phone rings a few more times.

I'll get it.

Hello? I know. Yes. I'm sorry. What time is the flight again? Okay, look, I'm having a problem. You leave. I'll meet you at the airport. No. I promise. Okay. Bye.

She hangs up.

I don't believe this. I really don't believe this. What am I going to do?

Odette: Why don't you just leave?

(Sighs) If I'm lucky, I'll die before you hit Toronto.

Susan: Oh, stop it! Well. I have no choice. I'm going to get mummy.

Odette: What? Madeleine? Don't be crazy. I don't want to see her.

Susan: Too bad. Somebody has to do something.

Odette: What's she going to do?

Susan: Give her a chance.

Odette: Oh, sure. A chance to kill me, maybe.

Susan: Well, you're the one that wants to die, anyway.

Odette: Funny!

Susan: At this point there's just no choice. I'm going to pick her up. She'll have to take care of this, come up with something.

She writes her phone number down, gets ready to leave.

Okay. I'm just going to pick her up, and then I'm off. Here's my number in Toronto. Call me collect tonight to let me know what happened, okay?

Odette: Sure, sure.

Susan: And don't worry. You'll see, mummy will take care of everything. Bye bye, and phone tonight!

They embrace. Susan leaves.

Odette: "Mummy will take care of everything." Oh, boy. I'm sure "Mummy" will stick me in a home or something.

Well, that's not for me. Unh, unh.

Angelle, we better beat it before they get back. I'll phone Susan in a few days, just to tell her I'm still alive.

(Sighs) Yeah, I guess we may as well leave. What's the use to stay here anymore, anyway?

She gets ready to leave.

Where's my bag?

She opens a cupboard door, takes out a large bag.

And my purse?

She gets her purse from under the sink.

There. Now, Tinker.

She goes offstage.

Here, Tinker. That's a good boy.

She comes back into the room, with a cat carrier. She takes this, her bag, and her purse. She has one last look around.

Well. . .say good-bye, Tinker, Angelle.

She turns the light off, exits through the door. The click of the door lock is heard.

ACT THREE

Scene I

It is a month or so later.

Odette is sitting on a bench downtown. Occasional passersby are seen. She is surrounded by her winter clothes, boots, and bags. She is talking to Angelle.

Odette: I don't care if it's May. It's still too early to take off my boots.

Oh sure, sure, you know everything.

It's easy for you, Angelle, you're dead. You're not freezing all the time.

What do you mean, you have problems too? What problems could you have, Angelle? You don't have to sleep in flop houses full of roaches. . .or one of those women's places where they take all your stuff away and make you get washed with Lysol and sleep with drunks and drug addicts and "those" women.

I don't know what you're complaining about. You had a nice funeral, got your red urn. Believe me, it's easier being dead. Easier than living.

It is not my fault. You have your nerve. I'm not like you, Angelle, I don't go around getting married all the time just so I'll have money. No, I like to be independent.

Believe me, if I could work, I would. What could I do? Clean toilets? No thanks.

It wasn't so bad, years ago. Remember when I had that job, stuffing

envelopes for the Reader's Digest? Of course, it's all done by machines now. I guess people weren't good enough.

Then I tried making hats at home. You won't remember that. I think you had a new husband then. Anyway, I only lasted a few weeks. I was supposed to glue the feathers on the hats, but I was never good at it. Lousy feathers were everywhere. And the cheap glue they used. . .used to run down my arms. . .then the feathers would stick on my arms. . .what a mess.

Well, people don't wear feathers anymore, anyway. It's not like the old days, when people got dressed up to go out.

(Whispers) Look at that!

A punk couple walks by.

Sh! Don't say anything.

This is awful. I hope they don't come here.

Dirty hippies. Knock people on the head and steal their money. Well, they better not try anything on me.

Pause.
She looks across the street.

It must be almost time for that woman to walk her dog.

Pause.

People shouldn't have dogs downtown. Too many cars. . . pollution. . .garbage everywhere. . .

She jumps up.

There's the cat! Look, he's eating the food I put. Boy he's thin. Starving. Not fat like Tinker was.

Pause.

(Sighs) Poor Tinker.

Pause.

I had no choice, Angelle. What else could I do? A cat can't live on the street. People are too bad. And what would he do for food?

Pause.

You can't keep him in a cage all the time. He'd go crazy. Since when do you care, anyway? You never took care of him, or bothered with him. You never even bought one can of food. All you cared about was yourself, Angelle, so don't tell me what was best for my cat.

Pause

It was better to put him to sleep. At least I know he's not suffering. He's better off.

Pause.

There she is, with her dog. I'm sure she's a woman of the night.

Well, what other kind of woman gets up at 11:00 o'clock every day? No, No. Her clothes are too fancy for a waitress. Don't be so stupid.

A sleazy man arrives, sits on the bench beside Odette, taps her on the shoulder. She jumps, startled.

Odette: Oh, it's you. Why do you always sneak around like that?

Willie: I have to be careful, Mrs. T. Very careful.

Odette: Careful of what?

Willie: In my business, you have to have eyes everywhere. And I mean, everywhere. There's always somebody out to get you. Trying to move up the ladder, if you know what I mean. It's a risky business. Dangerous.

Odette: Don't start. I hope you're not bringing me trouble, you.

Willie: No, no, no. No trouble. Don't worry, I can take care of myself. I'm bringing you luck, Mrs. T., Lady Luck.

Odette: Why, did I win something?

Willie: Well, not yet. But you were close, very, very close.

Odette: Close. Big deal.

Willie: Don't be so negative. It creates bad vibes. You're due for a big win, Mrs. T. I feel it. A really big win.

Odette: Yeah? You think so?

Willie: Yeah, yeah. Positively, positively. No doubt about it. My vibes are never wrong. Never.

Odette: Well, it's about time. I'm sick of losing.

Willie: I have some good tips for you on tonight's race, Mrs. T. No, not good tips. Excellent tips. Excellent tips.

Odette: Like what?

Willie: (Lowers his voice) The big race is the 5th. The odds are against Blue Lightning, but I happen to know that he's a mudder, and it's going to rain tonight. Plus, the favorite, Four Leaf Clover, is just getting over a pulled muscle. Of course, they don't tell people, but I know. . .through my connections.

Odette: You're connections didn't do me much good so far, did they?

Willie: Luck, Mrs. T. Just luck. You have to wait your turn. But it's coming. You have to have faith.

Odette: Oh boy. Faith. Forget it.

Pause.

Okay, okay.

She reaches into her purse, which is tied around her neck, and pulls out a change purse.

Here. Ten bucks, like usual. Put it on that Lightning. I hope I'm not throwing more money away, like all the other times.

Willie: Perfect. Ten on the Lightning. Wise bet, Mrs. T. Wise bet.

He marks it down.

This might be it. This might be the big one for you. You may as well start planning what to do with all

that money, Mrs. T.

Odette: Ha! I can tell you right now what I would do! I would leave here so fast.

Susan arrives.

Susan: Grandma! Thank God. Thank God you called at last. Are you alright? I was so worried. One more day and I was calling the police.

Odette: Susan!

Willie makes a hasty departure.

Susan: Who's that?

Odette: That's just Willie. He's a bookmaker.

Susan: A bookmaker?

Odette: You know, a bet maker. A bookie.

Susan: I don't believe it! How would you know such a man?

Odette: From betting on the horses. What do you think?

She rummages around in one of her big bags.

Susan: I can't believe it. And I can't believe this. . .that you are really living here. . .like a bum. You took off. You just took off. How could you do that? Where do you stay? Where do you sleep at night?

Odette: Here.. Have a jelly doughnut. Strawberry.

Susan: No thanks, I. . .

Odette: Why not? Strawberry is your favorite. It's fresh. I picked it up only an hour ago, just for you. They don't make good doughnuts in Toronto.

Susan: I don't want a doughnut. I want to talk to you.

Odette: So talk and eat.

Susan: I'm on a diet.

Odette: Diet, diet. Angelle was always on a diet, and look what it got her. Here.

She thrusts the roll onto Susan.

Susan: Thanks.

Is this what you eat every day?

Odette: Sometimes. Sometimes I have a pogo, and half a french fry.

(Whispers) Never eat the bottom of the french fries. That's were all the bugs are, on the bottom. You have to be careful.

Susan: Well, If you moved in with us, you wouldn't have to be careful. We don't have bugs.

Odette: I know you don't have bugs. That's not the point.

Susan: So what's the point then?

Odette: What do you mean?

Susan: I mean, tell me again what the point is in living like this when you don't have to.

Odette: The point is, I like to be free. I don't like to depend on people, especially my kids. I told you.

Susan: You won't be "depending" on anybody.

I already told you, you can have your own place. Near me.

Odette: When I get fed up, I'll come visit for 2 or 3 days. . .take the train. I always like the train.

She rummages in her bag again, pulls out a sweater.

Here. Try this on.

Susan: Grandma! Another sweater?

Odette: Well, it's for your birthday.

Susan: No wonder your bags are so big, carrying all this stuff around.

Susan tries the sweater on.

Odette: That's nothing. Last week I bought myself a sleeping bag. Next time, I'll be ready. If I have to sleep in one of those places again, I'll use my own sleeping bag on the bed. That way, I won't catch anything. You never know who's been there before you, you know.

Susan: Why are you doing this? To torture me or something? What can I do to convince you that this is not normal? It's not right. This is stupid. I should have called a doctor or something. I should have called the police. This is all wrong.

Odette: You don't like the sweater?

Susan: I love the sweater. It's perfect. Thank you.

Odette: The colour? They didn't have much choice. There's no good wool stores, like there used to be.

Susan: The colour's fine. I love it. Thank you. That's not what I'm talking about, and you know it. It's this. (She sweeps her arm around the area.)

It would be different if you had no family, or if you were an alcoholic or drug addict or something. Then at least there might be an excuse. There is no excuse for you living like this. None

Odette: Oh, before I forget.

She digs into the purse.

Here. Better win some money.

Susan: A 6/49. You still buy these, eh?

Odette: Yeah. I know I won't win. Still, I get them just in case somebody makes a mistake and I win some money. I should win, for all the money I spend.

Susan: I know. I hope you win, grandma.

Odette: Well, I don't think so, but anyway.

Pause.

Susan: Grandma, we have to talk.

Odette: I'm talking. What do you want to talk about?

Susan: You know darn well. About this.

Odette: We already talked about this.

Susan: Well, I'm not finished.

Odette: You want another doughnut? I think I have another one here somewhere.

Susan: No, I don't want another doughnut. Stop fooling around, and listen. This can't go on. You've lived like this for a month now. You see what it's like. You can't tell me that you like living this way. Nobody would live like this if they didn't have to. And you don't have to.

Odette: I don't want to depend on nobody.

All my life I had to depend on people. I had to ask Marcel for every nickel. I never had my own money. Then when he died, Angelle, she moved in to split the rent. She knew I needed her money. She never said anything, but she knew. And I knew.

I used to worry that she would get married again and leave. I never thought that she would die, though. I thought that I would die first, and then I wouldn't have to worry

Susan: You don't have to worry. You have me. Let me take care of you.

Odette: No. You don't understand. I'm fed up of depending on people, of having to be nice when I don't feel in the mood. I had it all my life.

Susan: This will be different, you'll see.

Odette: No.

Susan: You won't even try? Just for a month?

Odette: No.

Susan: You don't give me much choice.

Odette: What?

Susan: Grandma, I came down with mummy. She's waiting for me at Murray's.

Odette: Oh, yeah? So?

Susan: She wants to talk to you.

Odette: What for?

Susan: She's worried about you.

Odette: Sure, sure.

Susan: She is. And she cares.

Odette: Bullshit!

Susan: Grandma!

Odette: You know how I feel about her.

Susan: She really does care, you know. She doesn't want anything bad to happen to you.

Odette: Then she better stay away. She only brings trouble, anyway.

Susan: But she's still your daughter.

Odette: My daughter? Oh, no she's not. You know she kicked me out of her house. . .told me she was ashamed of me. . . and "everything I represented". . .whatever that means. No, I wasn't good enough for her. After everything I did for her. If I'm not good enough to be her mother, then she's not my daughter.

Susan: That was a long time ago. Years ago.

Odette: I don't care if it was a long time ago. Nothing's changed.

Susan: But she's said she's sorry so many times. Stop being so stubborn.

Odette: Susan, are you taking her part now?

Susan: I'm not taking her part. I'm not taking any part. I just don't see why you won't give her another chance.

Odette: No.

Susan: At least see her for a minute. It won't hurt you.

Odette: Yes, it does hurt me to see her.

Susan: Just for five minutes, that's all. Okay?

Pause.

Please? Five minutes, and then I won't bug you anymore.

Odette: Achh! Okay, five minutes.

Susan: Okay, I'll tell her. She'll be so happy. She really wants to see you. Even for a few minutes. And grandma, thanks for the sweater and the ticket. I'll come again as soon as I can. Think about what I said, okay?

Odette: Okay, okay, I'll think.

Susan leaves to get Madeleine.

Odette: If it's not one thing, it's another. Now it's Madeleine. Oh, well, may as well get it over with, I guess.

I wonder what she wants? Boy, Angelle, you took the easy way out, that's for sure.

Odette takes her knitting out, starts knitting. Madeleine enters.

Madeleine: Hello, maman.

Odette: Hello, Madeleine.

Madeleine: How are you keeping?

Odette: What do you think, Madeleine?

Madeleine: Well, I don't know. Susan tells me you're okay, but you still refuse to let her help you.

Odette: That's right. I don't want her help. Yours either.

Madeleine: I know.

Pause.

I just wanted to see you, maman. . . see how you were.

Pause.

I wish I could do something.

Odette: You did enough, Madeleine.

Madeleine: I was thinking that maybe we could start over. That maybe I could make it up to you.

Odette does not answer, keeps knitting.

I was hoping we could talk. . . without fighting.

Odette: I'm not the one that fights Madeleine. I'm not the one that kicked you out of my house. I did everything for you, raised your kid, bought your food and clothes when you had no money--

Madeleine: I know. I know everything you did for me. That's why I was hoping that, well, maybe now I could help you--

Odette: Wait a minute! Don't start butting in, Madeleine.

Madeleine: I'm not butting in. I'm trying to help you. Won't you let me help you?

Odette: What for? So I'll be nice to you, and you won't feel guilty anymore? So I can say "Thank you, Madeleine", and "I'm so grateful for your help, Madeleine"? I'll die first.

Madeleine: You're not being fair...

Odette: (Getting louder) Fair? Don't tell me what's fair.

Madeleine: Just listen to me for a change. Give me a chance.

Odette: You had your chance. You had everything. You didn't even come when your own father died. Leave me alone.

Madeleine: No I won't leave you alone. You're my mother. How do you think I feel about my mother living on the streets like a bum? I have money. I could take care of you.

Odette: I don't want your money. I want you to leave me alone, that's what I want. I want you to go away!

By this time, a crowd has gathered.

Madeleine: No. I won't go away. I'm not leaving you alone.

Odette: Then I'll leave. Is that what you want? You want my bench? Well, have it, then.

Odette gets up.

Madeleine: Stop running away and listen to me for a change. You need help.

Odette: Not your help, Madeleine.

Madeleine: You know what I think? I think

there's something wrong with you, that you would choose to live like this instead of like a normal human being.

Odette: What's normal anymore?

Madeleine: Not this!

Odette: If this isn't normal enough for you, then why don't you go back to Westmount, where everybody is normal?

Madeleine: You never quit, do you? You refuse to listen to me, even when I'm trying to help.

Odette: Oh, go help somebody else.

Madeleine: No. I told you. I'm not leaving here without you. It's obvious you need help.

Odette: Go away! Leave me alone. I don't want your help. I don't even want to see your face anymore.

Madeleine: You know what? I think that maybe it's time you were put away or something. For your own good.

Odette: Oh yeah? Who's going to put me away, Madeleine? You?

Madeleine: If I have to. It's obvious you can't take care of yourself anymore. Look at yourself. Look at how you are living.

Pause.

You're doing this to punish me, aren't you? After all these years, all the times I tried to apologize, to make it up to you, you will never forget, never forgive me. It's like something is stuck in your mind that you can't get rid of. That's right. . .and all this is just for me, isn't it? You're hoping you'll die here so I'll feel

guilty forever, right? But it's not going to work, because I'm going to do something about it. Somebody has to do something.

Odette: That somebody is going to be me. . . I'm going to do something, all right. I'm going to get away from you, that's what.

Madeleine: Oh, no you're not. Not this time.

Odette starts to leave. Madeleine grabs her arm and won't let go. They fight. Meanwhile, a crowd has collected around them. Finally, a policeman arrives and breaks it up.

Odette: Let go of me!

Madeleine: No. Not this time. You're coming with me.

Odette: Oh, yeah? That's what you think!

Policeman: Stop that. Break it up.

Odette: It's her. Always after me. Tell her to leave me alone.

Madeleine: I want to talk to her: Make her listen.

Policeman: Both of you, cut it out. I don't want fighting on my street. . .disturbing the peace.

Odette: She's disturbing the peace, alright. Ask these people.

Policeman: (To the crowd) Beat it. Come on, move along.

(To Odette) I've been watching you, hanging around here. I don't want any trouble, understand. Any more trouble and I bring you in.

Odette: Me? I didn't do anything. I was just sitting here, and--

Policeman: Nevermind. You're a vagrant. That's enough for me.

Why don't you just move along?

(To Madeleine) And you, go home.

Odette: (Stunned) Okay, okay.

Madeleine: I want her put away. She needs help.

Policeman: (Exasperated) Lady, get a court order or something.

Odette: Nevermind, I'm going.

She picks up her bags.

So you won again, eh, Madeleine? You don't even want me to have a lousy bench. Are you happy now? Are you? Here. Take it, Madeleine. It's all yours.

Odette leaves.
Everyone else slowly exits, excluding Madeleine.

Madeleine: Maman.

(To the policeman, who is exiting) I only want to help her, that's all. I only want what's best for her. . .she doesn't know what's good for her.

Pause.

(To herself) Why does it always go wrong?

Madeleine slowly sits on the bench.

(Puzzled) I'm just trying to help her, that's all.

ACT III

Scene II

It is evening, two months later.

The scene is the bench downtown. Odette's appearance is deteriorating, her clothing more rundown and dirty, her hair unkempt, etc. Obviously, this life is telling on her. She is weaker physically, having developed a chronic cough, and mentally, which is evidenced by her increasing paranoia and the tendency for her thoughts to wander. Her actions throughout this scene are slower and heavier, a sign of her growing fatigue.

There is a drunk, another bag lady, sitting on Odette's bench. Odette approaches slowly, carrying her bags, a box from Dunkin' Donuts and coffee.

Odette: Hey! Get out! That's my bench. Every day now it's the same thing. I leave for two minutes, and you take my bench. Go on, beat it.

Odette pulls her off by the arm.

If it's not you, it's some old man who's after me.

Pause.

Come on, come on. Why do you have to hang around here anyway? Why don't you get your own bench?

There follows a grotesque struggle over the bench, the movements appearing to be almost

a parody of ballet. There is nothing glamourous about it. Finally, Odette wins, and the drunk staggers over to a back wall, and sits on the sidewalk, leaning against the wall.

She sits and listens to Odette throughout the scene. Odette sits on the bench.

That's all I have, is this lousy bench, and somebody is always trying to take it away. Even Madeleine. Well, I don't care. It's my bench, and that's that. It's not much, that's for sure. Just a lousy bench, that's all. Live all my life, and all I have at the end is a bench. What's the use?

Odette starts to fix her coffee, takes a drink. She opens the box and starts eating a doughnut, licking her fingers.

(To Angelle) Okay, okay. Stop bugging me.

She takes another doughnut out, gives it to the drunk.

Here. I don't want you to die near my bench. I already have enough trouble with my sister.

(To Angelle) Happy now?

It costs me more to feed these bums. . .

You know I'm trying to save some money from my pension. I have to get out of here. I can't take it anymore. I hate it!

She digs around in one of her bags, pulls out a bank book.

Let's see. . .five hundred dollars. It's not much. Still, if I could save another couple of hundred by the fall, then I could get a decent place, at least for the winter. I don't care if it's a basement, as long as there's no bugs, and it's hot.

Pause.

There she is!

Odette goes through her bag, pulls out a pair of cheap binoculars.

Look at that. It's another man. Ha! What did I tell you, eh? Waitress. Ha! The only thing she serves is men. . .And business must be good. That's a new coat. Mink.

Watch the light go on now.

There. See? Achh. She always pulls the blind down.

Spoils all my fun.

Odette puts the binoculars away, finishes her doughnut.

She sits silently for a while.

Well, I suppose if she's making so much money she'll move soon.

Everybody leaves as soon as they have money. Soon I'll be the only one left. Well, me and her. (Points to the drunk.) If she doesn't die first.

Pause.

I have to get out of here.

Pause.

What's going to happen to me? Maybe I shouldn't worry so much about the winter. Maybe I won't even live another winter. Who knows? Why should I, anyway, the way things are going?

Once she leaves (Looking across the street) and once she dies (Nodding at the drunk), then I won't know anybody here.

Except Willie, but he just wants my money. Everybody is after my money. Maybe that's why they want to put me away, so they can get my money. And do experiments.

Pause.

Yeah, I have to move for sure. Before the cold.

Susan enters.

Susan: Hi. I'm glad I found you.

Odette: Susan? What are you doing here? It's not the end of the month. And how come you're out alone at night? It's not safe.

Susan: Well, I had to make a special trip here anyway, and besides, I wanted to see you.

Odette: At night? Well, nevermind. I was going to phone you anyway, to let you know. I'm moving soon.

Susan: That's good, but nevermind that right now. I have to talk to you about a few things.

Odette: You've been after me to move for months. Then the minute I tell you I'm going to move, you don't want to hear about it. What's going on? What's wrong?

Susan: Nothing's wrong. Of course I want to hear about your move. Believe me, nothing makes me happier. But I have something to tell you first.

Odette: Oh, boy. I don't like the way that sounds. The last time you wanted to talk to me you forced me to see Madeleine, and I almost got put in a crazy house, or jail. I hope it's not Madeleine, Susan. If it is you can go back to Toronto right now:

Susan: This has nothing to do with Madeleine. It has to do with Angelle.

Odette: Angelle? What has she done now? I know she's always after me, but I thought I was the only one.

Susan: Angelle is after you? What do you mean?

Odette: She's always bugging me about something.

Susan: You mean you talk to Angelle?

Odette: Not really. You know you could never talk to Angelle. Mostly she does all the talking.

Susan: What does she say?

Odette: What did Angelle ever say? Why did you cremate me in my old blue dress, when I just bought a new dress for Susan's wedding? Why do we have to stay here? Why can't we move? Why don't you find a man? The same old stuff.

Susan: Oh.

Pause

Do you answer her?

Odette: You know darn well that if I ignore her, she gets hysterical. . .starts screaming. And it's worse now, because she's so bored.

Susan: I guess so.

Anyway, don't you want to know what I came all the way here to tell you?

Odette: No.

Susan: Come on. Don't be like that.

Odette: (Sighs) Okay. What do you want to tell me?

Susan: Remember M. Laframboise? From the funeral parlour? He came to Toronto last week to see me.

Odette: All the way to Toronto? It must be very bad. What did he want?

Susan: He wanted to know about you.

Odette: Me? What for?

Susan: I don't know. He wouldn't say. He just said he wants to see you, and it's important.

Odette: Good-bye my five hundred dollars.

Susan: What five hundred dollars?

Odette: That's what I'm trying to tell you. I've been saving money, just like I told you. As soon as I have enough, good-bye bench. Now, if this Laframboise is after more money, I may as well kill myself and get it over with.

Susan: No, I'm sure he's not after your five hundred dollars. I don't think he would come all the way to Toronto, just for that.

Odette: What do you mean? Five hundred dollars is five hundred dollars, you know.

Susan: I know that, but I'm sure he's not after your money.

Odette: He probably needs more money for another rose bush or something. Angelle, did you kill that rose bush? Shit.

Susan: Grandma!

Odette: Well, the minute I have money, some man wants to take it away.

Susan: You don't know that, Grandma.

Odette: Oh yes. I know men.

I hope you didn't tell him where I am?

Susan: Well. . .he said it was important.

Odette: Is that yes or no?

Susan: I told him to meet me here tonight.

Odette: Good-bye. I'm leaving. Susan, you are always bringing bad news with you. I'm leaving, and next time I won't tell you where I am, either. If it's not Madeleine, it's a money grabbing man.

M. Laframboise enters.

Oh no. . .I'm too late.

M. Laframboise: Mme. Tanguay. I'm so happy I found you at last. You're looking very. . .well.

Odette: Oh, sure. How much is it going to cost me?

M. Laframboise: Cost you? What do you mean?

Odette: Did the rose bush die? Is that why you're here? For more money?

M. Laframboise: No, no. You don't understand. I have some wonderful, wonderful news for you.

Odette: Oh, boy. That means it's going to cost me a lot. What is it? You want to sell me shares in plots or something?

Susan: Grandma, listen to him.

Odette: Sh. Okay, okay, what is it?

M. Laframboise: It's Angelle. It's Angelle and the Tango.

Odette: She's been after you too?

M. Laframboise: Angelle is always with me. . .always in my heart. Whenever I hear our song--

Odette: Yeah, so?

Susan: Grandma. . .

Odette: Sh.

M. Laframboise: Well, at the last meeting Angelle attended before. . .before she was brutally, savagely murdered. . . stripped of all dignity. . .never again to dance, to laugh, to love, to--

Odette: M. Laframboise, please! Control yourself.

M. Laframboise: I'm sorry. I know. It's been almost a year. I should have gotten over her by now. But she was so special.

Odette and Susan: Yes, M. Laframboise.

M. Laframboise: Well, the week before she was removed from my life forever, the Tango group decided to invest in Lotomatique for a year. We used to joke, Angelle and I, that we would open a Tango Studio when we won. Of course, that was before . . .

Anyway, guess what, Mme. Tanguay? Guess what?

Odette and Susan: What?

M. Laframboise: We won. We won the 6/49 months ago. We guessed the numbers! $960,000 dollars, Mme. Tanguay.

Odette: Good for you. I'm happy for you.

M. Laframboise: No, no, you don't understand, Mme. Tanguay. You inherit Angelle's part. $80,000. You won $80,000, Mme. Tanguay.

Odette: Odette.

M. Laframboise: Odette.

Odette: M. Laframboise! Is this true?

M. Laframboise: Jules.

Odette: Jules.

Jules: Of course it's true. I wouldn't look all over the city for you, go to Toronto, and come to this district at night if it wasn't true. . .Odette.

Susan: It really is true. I went over all the papers again. Angelle left everything to you. It's yours, Grandma.

Odette: So you knew all about this? Boy, people are sneaky.

(She whispers to Susan) Are you sure this isn't a trick to get my five hundred dollars?

Susan: Positive.

Odette: Cripes, $80,000? That's almost $100,000.

Pause.

Maybe for once, Angelle was right. She always said you were honest. Of course I didn't believe her.

Jules: (Sighs) Angelle. I still miss her. You know, I never did get another dance partner, even after a year.

Susan: Do you realize, you are rich? Rich!.

Odette: (To the drunk) Hear that? I'm rich. Rich.

What will I do with all that money? It's too much, really. I can't think that big. $80,000. That buys a lot of TV's. Maybe even a house. A small one, of course.

Is this true? When do I get the money?

Prove it.

Jules: It's true. It's really true.

Susan: You can leave here. Forever. Right now.

Odette: Now? I don't know. Where will I go? I can't just leave, just like that. Besides, I have my cat to feed.

Susan: You can stay with us, just until the paperwork is all finished, you know, in case I need you to sign something.

Odette: Stay with you? Well, maybe I should, to make sure the papers go okay. But I can't leave my cat. He needs me.

Susan: We'll come back tomorrow and pick him up, bring him home. How's that?

Jules: I love cats, too, Odette.

Odette: You do? Most men don't care too much for cats.

Jules: I have always loved cats. Maybe, one day, you could come over to see my Caesar. He's twelve, you know. A Seal-Point Himalayan. Beautiful animal. Beautiful.

I hope I can see you again after this. You know, just for a visit. We can talk about Angelle. . .how we feel..I hope, some day, you'll return to Montreal?

Odette: Of course. Toronto is not for me. Too big. Too many bums.

Pause.

A Himalayan, eh? I had a Siamese once. Oh, he was a killer, a real killer. Used to-

Susan: Well, what do you say? Lets go!

Susan picks up Odette's bags. All three begin to walk off. Odette stops, looks around.

Odette: Just a minute. I have to get organized, say good-bye.

Susan: Okay, wait here, I'll get the car.

Jules: Please, allow me.

Susan and Jules exit.

Odette: (To the audience) I don't trust them for a minute! They must be crazy, if they think I will go with them. Hah. What a story, eh? $80,000: Oh, Boy. Why should I win $80,000? I never won anything in my life.

And Susan expects me to believe that we'll come back tomorrow for the cat? Sure, sure. Susan never really liked cats. . .just like her mother. No, I don't believe them.

It's all a trick. Probably Madeleine is behind it. And now Susan is on her side too. They're all against me.

Even him.

I'm not stupid. If I won money, why didn't they give it to me right there?

Probably want to drive me straight to a crazy house or something. Who knows? Maybe they need old people for experiments.

Well, they won't catch me, so easy, just like that. I'm going to change district. Maybe Lafontaine Park. It's nice there. Very French though, but still. They won't find me for a long time. Probably be dead by then anyway.

It's a shame. I like this bench.

I don't care. I'm going to buy my own 6/49. None of this trick stuff. Then, if I win, maybe I'll come back and buy this bench for good.

(To the drunk) You. Take this bench when I'm gone, eh? Before anybody else gets it. You have to be fast.

Well, I guess we better beat it, Angelle, before they come with the wagon. Now they took my bag, I'll have to buy a new blanket, I guess. That bugs me.

Oh, well. We'll buy a ticket on the way. It's up to eight million, you know. If it's that big, I should have a chance to win a few cents, at least.

I don't know. I feel lucky! It's about time, eh, Angelle?

Odette exits.