

ROUTE ONE SOUTH

A Play in Two Acts

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CHARACTERS

ANDREA

White female. Early thirties. A topless dancer.

RENALDO

Black male. Early thirties. Former driver for a drug kingpin.

BELLE

Black Female. Early forties. Drug kingpins' moll.

TYNAN

White male. Twenties. Andrea's ex-boyfriend.

BUNNY

White male. Forties. Tynan's brother. Ex-convict.

THE PLACE

Edge of the Macon, Georgia city limits.

THE TIME

Summer, 1999

ACT ONE

(The front door is unlocked, then pushed open. Renaldo enters with his gun drawn. He flicks on a light, looks around the sitting room of Andrea's house, then calls for her)

RENALDO

C'mon.

(Andrea enters)

ANDREA

Could you check the whole house? I'd appreciate it.

(He exits to search the house. After a moment, he returns)

RENALDO

Nobody here but us.

(She sets her bag down. Renaldo shuts the door and puts away his gun)

ANDREA

Wanna beer?

RENALDO

Sure.

(She exits. He looks around, taking the room in as he sits. Andrea returns with a beer, which she hands to him. He cracks it and drinks)

ANDREA

Maybe you're right – it might not be smart to leave just yet.

RENALDO

Especially since I just started this beer.

ANDREA

Okay. You can stay over but, like I said . . . I'd like it if you'd sleep out here on the couch.

(Silence. Renaldo is staring at her)

What?

RENALDO

What kind of man do you take me for?

ANDREA

You seem like a good man, Renaldo. If not, you wouldn't have bought me dinner or saw me home.

RENALDO

Though I could just drop protocol and break down your bedroom door . . .

ANDREA

Look, I'm already scared crazy of one man, and . . . You're not gonna make me sleep with you, are you?

(Silence)

RENALDO

If he comes through the door, what then?

ANDREA

I hadn't thought of it –

RENALDO

Of what? What to do?

ANDREA

I don't know, if . . . if you'd just keep him away from me. That's all. And I'll make breakfast in the morning, okay? I'll get some sheets. And a blanket.

(She starts to exit, then stops)

By the way – that's a nice car. Is it new?

RENALDO

Yep. 1999.

ANDREA

Sweet.

(Silence)

I'll . . . bring a pillow, too.

(She exits)

(Lights rise on Belle in DS limbo. She steps up to Renaldo, touches his face, then kisses him passionately. After a few beats, she breaks the kiss)

BELLE

I dreamt about you the other night.

RENALDO

Better get me out of your head and let Omar darken those dreams.

BELLE

That's the problem: a woman can dream only of what she wants . . . or what scares her. In the dream, I saw you at what looked like the edge of the world, at a place where a road runs off . . . where nobody wants to go or know about . . . waiting on somebody.

RENALDO

Death?

BELLE

No, baby. A woman. A *live* woman. You were sitting and waiting for her to run to you. To keep her from falling off –

RENALDO

Into what?

BELLE

Come to think of it, I didn't stay 'sleep long enough to see.

By the way – that detective came back. Like he said he would.

RENALDO

What did you tell him?

BELLE

I didn't tell him nothin'. He came alone this time . . . wantin' to know where you were. Nobody else, just you. And, like I said, I told him nothing. And that I won't keep tabs on nobody. It was enough sometimes for me to keep up with myself.

He won't buying it, though. He got in my face with this evil look, then drew back and slapped me. Hard enough to make my eyes light up.

RENALDO

Belle, just pack up and go somewhere. Ain't no law says you got to sit and wait on Omar.

BELLE

I ain't got nowhere else t' go, Ren. Besides, he ain't got but a year of his sentence left –

RENALDO

Look – just do me a favor – do yourself a favor and leave that house.

BELLE

Why? . . . What did you do . . . ?

RENALDO

I'm not saying shit. Just . . . get yourself together and leave his house. Please.

(He exits. Fade on Belle and the scene)

(Lights rise. It's late morning. The phone rings. Andrea enters and picks up)

ANDREA

Hello? . . . What is it, Tynan? . . . What did I tell you the other day? . . . No. And I'd advise against it . . .

(Renaldo enters, a bath towel around his middle. He's just had a shower)

. . . 'Cause I've got a restraining order . . . Yes, for two weeks now I've – What did you say? . . . Oh, fuck you in the nose, asshole!

(She hangs up)

RENALDO

A restraining order?

ANDREA

I know it's not much, but . . . whatever helps.

RENALDO

You bitches kill me.

ANDREA

I beg your pardon?

RENALDO

Girl, don't you know a restraining order ain't nothing but a piece of paper? Some shit-paper, at that. And the man ain't lived who was ever stopped by a goddamn restraining order.

ANDREA

What am I supposed to do?

RENALDO

Let him know you're serious, especially when he was already told to get in the wind.

ANDREA

And how would I define serious?

(He scoffs)

No, Renaldo – fill me in, please.

RENALDO

If it was me, I'd step out of the dark night, jam some steel in his face and promise – not threaten, but promise to take him out!

ANDREA

You mean kill him?

RENALDO

In so many words, yeah.

ANDREA

Well, I'm sorry, but it's not in me to do that.

RENALDO

What? Protect yourself?

ANDREA

No – kill anybody.

RENALDO

It ain't no big thing, if it's done right.

ANDREA

You better not!

RENALDO

I thought you wanted protection?

ANDREA

I do –

RENALDO

Then, what I'm saying is that I can provide just that.

ANDREA

What exactly did you do in San Diego?

RENALDO

I left San Diego.

ANDREA

Before you left.

RENALDO

That's my business.

ANDREA

But this is my house.

RENALDO

So should I cut?

ANDREA

Listen . . . if anything happens to that bastard, I'm the one who everybody around here will put it on. Besides, he's got a brother named Bunny –

RENALDO

Bunny?

ANDREA

Yes! He's an ex-con. What's more, when he was nineteen, there's talk that he killed his mother – his own mother! And his stepfather, too. It's just that nobody

could prove it. Not even the police. And you can bet your skin if Tynan winds up dead, or missing, Bunny won't let up until he kills me, too.

I do need your help, just not in that way.

RENALDO

Fuck this.

ANDREA

What's wrong?

RENALDO

I changed my mind. Now that I'm thinking on it, why should I put myself in harms way of a bullseye some punk slapped on your ass?

ANDREA

But I thought . . .

RENALDO

I did! But not only am I having second thoughts, I'm starting to wonder what I'll get for being so good and black.

ANDREA

What? Do you want to *fuck me*? Do you need, what – incentive? Something to make you feel like you're not getting played?

(He laughs)

What's funny?

RENALDO

Not a damn thing. Except me. Matter fact, I'm the funniest goddamn thing in the house.

ANDREA

Renaldo . . .

RENALDO

And I'm a fool for saying it, but . . . don't worry about it. It's cool. We're good.

ANDREA

We're good?

RENALDO

Yeah.

ANDREA

Are you sure? 'Cause if –

RENALDO

I don't talk out my ass, Andrea. *We're good!* Now, I got business in Atlanta tomorrow night. Which means I got to cut outta here by tomorrow afternoon, if you can catch what I'm saying.

ANDREA

Fine, but I'd like to ask for your help until then, if it's still available. And after that, I reckon I'll have to figure else something out.

Thanks for helping me.

(He acknowledges)

Now do me a favor: put some clothes on.

RENALDO

This bother you?

ANDREA

Yes, it does.

(He takes up his underwear. Andrea starts to exit)

RENALDO

Where you goin'?

ANDREA

To let you get dressed.

RENALDO

I can put my clothes on just as well with . . .

ANDREA

AND to make breakfast.

(She exits to the kitchen. Renaldo gets dressed)

RENALDO

I'm surprised to see you so "inhibited" with the way you danced for me last night.

ANDREA

There's a time to be inhibited, there's a time to be uninhibited, and then there's a time to get paid to be uninhibited.

RENALDO

So, how much you want right now to be –

ANDREA

Now's the time, though, to get dressed and decent for breakfast.

RENALDO

Been dancing long?

ANDREA

A little over a year.

RENALDO

In this piss-ass town?

ANDREA

For your information, Macon happens to be a city. And though I would like to go up to Atlanta and see what's there, before she died, my mother left me the house. Which means it's paid for and in my name.

RENALDO

Sweet!

(She returns with a cup of coffee, finding him dressed)

ANDREA

When I'm on my feet a little better, maybe I'll go.

(She hands him the coffee)

Your breakfast will be ready in a while.

RENALDO

Lookin' towards Atlanta, huh?

ANDREA

Yep. They've got some good clubs up there. I've gotta girlfriend who's been dancing at a nice place for a month. And her take in one night is equal to what I get in a week.

RENALDO

I got business in Atlanta tomorrow night.

ANDREA

You told me.

RENALDO

Wanna go?

ANDREA

I've got to work.

RENALDO

Take the night off.

ANDREA

I can't.

RENALDO

One night?

ANDREA

Not even one. The phone bill's due. And I'm already behind on the –

(Silence)

RENALDO

What is it . . . ?

(She gestures to keep quiet, then goes to the window and peeks through a parted curtain)

Is it him?

ANDREA

Yes, but he drove off. How long will you be in Atlanta?

RENALDO

A whole day. Maybe. Me and Slone might spend the night up there.

ANDREA

You're going with Slone?

(He nods)

I need a favor: I know it's a lot to ask, but would – would you come back here for a while? When you're done in Atlanta? It could be like a – Oh, I don't know – like a little vacation, I guess.

RENALDO

Vacation?

ANDREA

Yeah. It's not like there's a job to get back to, or anything – I mean . . . What I'm saying is that . . .

RENALDO

For how long?

ANDREA

I don't know.

RENALDO

Maybe you need to think about hiring somebody.

ANDREA

Are you kidding?

RENALDO

Well, how long you gon need me to stay?

ANDREA

Like I said, I don't know. A . . . a day, or two. Maybe.

RENALDO

And that's it? A couple of days?

(Silence)

This punk's got you spooked good, don't he?

(Silence. He steps toward her and kisses her cheek)

If it's for a couple of days . . . I'll think about it. Meantime, I'll go ahead and get Slone to pick me up from here tomorrow night. And while I cruise back to his place to get my shit, here –

(He hands her his gun)

Hold on to this. And stick it in the punk's face if he shows up. What's the matter?

ANDREA

Nothing – well, I . . . I tried to put off bringing a gun in the house –

RENALDO

Life and the world just caught up with you, though. Now, here.

(She takes the gun)

I'll have my breakfast when I get back.

(He exits. Fade on Andrea, still holding the gun)

(Belle appears)

BELLE

You were never good at cleaning behind yourself, Ren. If I didn't know better, I'd swear there'd be somebody to wipe your ass for being too slick and proud to wipe it yourself.

And if you were planning on stealing from Omar you might've had the decency to leave something for me. If you had, I'd take your advice and blow. Where in the hell am I supposed to do? With no money?

It didn't take long to get wise to it, either: before you left, as usual, you forgot to close the basement door. Many times, you and Omar'd steal there to drink, play dominoes, or talk shit. Many times. And with Omar not around to holler at you to shut that door, I figured I'd step down and grab me a peek. When I did, I saw the corner trap door open, with a lone hundred-dollar bill sticking out from the inside of that dark hole, like a drop of spit hanging from the side of somebody's mouth.

I knew Omar'd kept a stash somewhere. He just never trusted me enough to let me in on the whereabouts of it.

Omar was my niggah. He made love to me on a regular basis. Took care of me. And treated me right – most of the time, that is. But, Ren, you knew him better than I could ever have hoped. The way he'd sit and talk to you, like some long-gone son. Oh, he'd talk at me when he got in the mood for it. Just never in the

same way as you.

And he wouldn't believe me if I were to tell him who took off with his scratch. In fact, when word gets out that all the money's gone, I'll be the first one he'll suspect. And before his feet find the front door, he'll send somebody here to smoke me.

I wish you well, though, baby. I really do. Only, I wouldn't find my way back to San Diego anytime soon, if I was you. If it should come about that I'm the first to see you walking these streets . . . I'll kill you.

(Fade on Belle)

(Lights rise on Andrea, who is lying on her sofa.
Tynan appears outside the screen door,
unbeknownst to her)

TYNAN

That new boyfriend of yours sure drives a mean ride.

(Startled, she rises and sees him)

ANDREA

Get away from here!

TYNAN

Is it new? It looks like a '98.

ANDREA

It's a '99 . . .

TYNAN

But it looks like a –

ANDREA

Get off my porch!

TYNAN

Hold it a minute! We need to talk.

ANDREA

No. Now get on before I call the sheriff.

TYNAN

I wouldn't.

I will! NOW GO!

ANDREA

Can't we talk first?

TYNAN

(She gets the pistol from under a sofa cushion and aims it at him)

See this?

ANDREA

Where'd you get that?

TYNAN

Do you see it?

ANDREA

Yes. But, where'd you –

TYNAN

(She cocks the hammer)

I only want to talk, Andrea!

ANDREA

What?

TYNAN

I need that money back.

ANDREA

I haven't got it.

TYNAN

You're lying.

ANDREA

I haven't got it, Tynan.

TYNAN

What about all that tip money? You got some saved, right?

ANDREA

No. I've got to eat and pay bills. You know that.

TYNAN

Well, when am I gonna –

ANDREA

I don't know.

TYNAN

Or, maybe, you don't care . . .

ANDREA

Tynan!

TYNAN

Hold on – listen! I got a plan, an idea. Come with me –

ANDREA

No!

TYNAN

Wait a second . . .

ANDREA

I'm not going back with you –

TYNAN

And I'm not asking you to go back. Not there, at least. I want you to go with me to Jacksonville.

ANDREA

Jacksonville? . . . What – Florida?

TYNAN

Yes. Florida.

ANDREA

Why would I want to go to Jacksonville?

TYNAN

It's because of my uncle. See, he's got this piece of property just outside the city limits and . . .

ANDREA
Tynan – no!

TYNAN
There’s a life for us down there –

ANDREA
And I don’t want it.

TYNAN
Why not?

ANDREA
I’ve got my reasons.

TYNAN
What? All of a sudden did your ass get too high for the likes of me?

ANDREA
Look, you sonofabitch –

TYNAN
Stop it! Quit callin’ me that – and I mean it! Now, I want another chance, another shot. Come to Jacksonville with me, and I’ll forget about the money you owe.

ANDREA
What?

TYNAN
I’m extending a favor. But you need to get your shit together and come on while I’m still smilin’ about it.

(She aims the pistol at him and moves closer to the door)

ANDREA
Get away from my door.

TYNAN
Or, what? You’ll shoot me?

ANDREA
Deader than a cut pig.

(He hesitates, then leaves. Andrea stands and watches him go. Fade out)

(Lights rise on Renaldo and Belle)

BELLE

Got any cigarettes left?

RENALDO

Yeah, but I can go and get a pack if –

BELLE

I'll just take one of yours for now.

(He gives her a cigarette, then lights it)

Why don't you come sit beside me?

RENALDO

I better not.

BELLE

You scared of me?

RENALDO

No.

BELLE

Scared of Omar?

RENALDO

No, but I do respect him.

(She laughs)

BELLE

Baby, I only asked you to take a seat beside me. That's all.

(He sits)

Do you think about him?

RENALDO

Omar? Sure. And you?

BELLE

I still love him. But like the women in so many of those old, sad songs, I'm lonely.

RENALDO

He's getting out soon.

BELLE

That doesn't leave us with a lot of time, does it?

(He rises. She pulls him back down)

I do think about him, Ren.

RENALDO

In the same way as Pookie?

BELLE

Pookie?

RENALDO

It seemed to me that, even while Omar walked among us, you had a wild eye set on –

BELLE

Pookie?

RENALDO

I'm only saying what it looked like.

BELLE

Are you shittin' me?

RENALDO

You telling me it won't true?

BELLE

Pookie didn't have enough between his legs to wet his sheets at night . . . !

RENALDO

And how would you know that?

BELLE

Baby, all I know . . . all I need to know . . . is what I want now.

(She kisses him)

RENALDO

Belle, like I said, I got a lot of respect for Omar.

BELLE

Which means ain't nothin' to be afraid of.

RENALDO

I ain't afraid of nobody.

BELLE

Then, so what if he finds out.

RENALDO

About what? Nothing happened.

(She kisses and embraces him)

Belle . . . Omar will kill us –

BELLE

LET HIM! If he wants to smoke me on account of this, let the muthafucker do it. Just let me get what I want now. For once in my good for nothin' life let me have something I want now.

(She kisses him again. Finally, he breaks down and reciprocates)

RENALDO

I'm a fool.

BELLE

Stop worrying about it.

RENALDO

No – I'm saying I thought you were a good woman.

BELLE

Ain't no such thing as a good woman.

RENALDO

Not even your mama?

BELLE

Especially my mama. That ol' bitch won't shit!

RENALDO

You somethin', Belle.

BELLE

And there's always gon be *somethin'* here for you . . .

(They kiss and embrace passionately. Andrea enters. Renaldo releases himself from Belle. Fade on Belle as lights rise in Andrea's house)

ANDREA

. . . At least I didn't let him in.

RENALDO

You talked to him through the screen door, though, right? Like I said, I could very easily take care of this thing.

ANDREA

It would be wrong.

RENALDO

Wrong? Damn! Next thing you'll say is that it ain't Christian.

ANDREA

I work in a titty bar, for goodness sake.

RENALDO

So? As a matter of fact, I knew a chick who was a stone Christian – went to church every Sunday. But, during the week, I'll be damned if she won't plantin' long money – not just dancing, but stripping, too.

ANDREA

Well, a Christian is something I'm a far cry from. Mama was a Christian, but I never took to it.

RENALDO

Anyway, what do you want me to do when he comes back? Kiss him?

ANDREA

No, just talk to him, scare him away, but don't hurt him.

RENALDO

Aw'ight, Miss Andrea. You're calling it.

ANDREA

And while I'm thinking about it – what business *do* you and Slone have in Atlanta?

RENALDO

Nothing to be bothered with.

ANDREA

Is it illegal?

RENALDO

Quit trying to pick through me.

ANDREA

I wasn't trying to . . .

RENALDO

Good. And as far as this little *vacation* goes –

ANDREA

We need to talk about that.

RENALDO

Oh?

ANDREA

Well . . . yes. See –

(He stops her)

RENALDO

It depends, Miss Andrea. My length of stay depends on whether or not there's anything here to hold my interest.

ANDREA

Are you saying it's gonna cost me?

RENALDO

And let me ask: if one of them moon-eyed bastards who go to this club where you get paid to shake your ass and show your titties asked that, what would you tell him?

ANDREA

Go to hell!

RENALDO

I rest my –

ANDREA

In fact, y' know what? Get the hell out!

(No response)

I don't need you. Or this. So, go!

RENALDO

This – what's his name? Tynan? . . . Yeah, Tynan. What's he all about?

ANDREA

Didn't you hear me?

RENALDO

Who pissed who off first?

ANDREA

What?

RENALDO

I mean, did you just let him whoop your ass and, over time, get tired of it?

ANDREA

What are you talking about? . . .

RENALDO

I'm trying to get to the *hows* and the *whys* and the *what thens* on this chump getting you so damned spooked.

ANDREA

I . . . Okay, I lived with him. Well . . . before that, I knew him for a while. At the time, I was ass-deep in debt. I had a job at a store – it was making me crazy. He'd come in. Talk to me. I got to liking him a little – we got to liking each other. We went out . . .

(Silence)

RENALDO

Keep going.

ANDREA

He took sympathy on me once and . . . he lent me some money.

RENALDO

Oh, yeah? How much?

ANDREA

Does it matter?

RENALDO

It always matters. Now how much?

ANDREA

No.

RENALDO

No? . . .

ANDREA

I won't do it – I won't take money from a man again . . .

RENALDO

Who said I was giving it?

ANDREA

But I thought –

RENALDO

That's your problem. How much do you owe him?

ANDREA

Why?

RENALDO

Maybe I want to see if your country ass can be bought. Now how much is the cocksucker on you for?

ANDREA

You'll help me?

RENALDO

Maybe.

ANDREA

Well, so there's no bad feelings, and so I won't give the wrong idea because –

RENALDO

You'll pay me back when you get a chance, right?

ANDREA

I'll try . . .

RENALDO

What if I gave it to you?

ANDREA

You'll give it to me?

RENALDO

I didn't say that – I said *what if I did?*

ANDREA

I'm not sure.

RENALDO

Yes, you are.

(He stands before her and looks into her eyes, then suddenly grasps her shoulders and kisses her deeply. After a moment, he releases her)

That won't so bad, was it?

(He kisses her again)

Was Tynan the last man who kissed you?

Yes. ANDREA

Was he good? RENALDO

He's young. ANDREA

But was he good? RENALDO

I said he's young – ANDREA

(They kiss again)

You'll give me the money? . . .

(Another kiss)

. . . And you'll come back here? . . . After Atlanta?

(Another sudden kiss)

RENALDO

You ask too many damn questions.

ANDREA

I'm scared.

RENALDO

Of who? Him, or me?

ANDREA

I don't want to be afraid of you.

RENALDO

Good.

(He breaks from her, then unbuckles his belt and undoes his pants)

ANDREA

What's this?

RENALDO

What do it look like?

(His pants drop to the floor. All is still. She vacillates, looks into his eyes. Then, slow fade as she kneels before him)

(Lights rise on Belle in limbo)

BELLE

I watched Omar kill Pookie on a Sunday afternoon on our back porch. I'd gotten tired of him eyeing me like I won't nothin' but a leg of red meat. Pookie wanted me. And, knowing that, I had to say something to Omar just for my own safety. If he'd been the one to catch Pookie ogling me, he would've thought I'd encouraged it. And he'd make me pay.

And I was convinced Omar'd kill him when I told him of it. That day, through the bedroom window, I saw him step up and plug a knife so far up Pookie's belly that – I swear – I heard it pop.

I think now it would have served me better if he'd lived, just to keep satisfying myself in having a man kill hisself over me.

(Fade on Belle)

(Lights rise on Bunny and Tynan)

BUNNY

You're gonna do somethin' stupid if you don't go on and get past that woman.

TYNAN

That's my problem – I'm stupid.

BUNNY

If it's so bad you can always cook up a way to get back at the little house whore.

TYNAN

How do you mean?

BUNNY

Find a way to get even.

Get even? TYNAN

Yeah. *Do 'er!* BUNNY

Are you serious? TYNAN

I ain't grinnin'. BUNNY

I'd go to jail, Bunny. Or, worse. TYNAN

Maybe. But at the very least you'd rest good from closin' the case on 'er. BUNNY

I can't kill anybody. TYNAN

Want me to do it? BUNNY

Let her alone. TYNAN

What I'm offering is a favor. BUNNY

And I'm saying to take that goddamn favor and put it up your ass. TYNAN

Hold that tone with me, son. BUNNY

What's more, I sure as shit ain't your damn – TYNAN

(He hits Tynan, knocking him down)

Don't forget who you're talkin' to. BUNNY

TYNAN

Nothin' but my good-for-shit brother . . .

BUNNY

Who's older 'n you are and –

TYNAN

Sneeze it out of your ass, Bunny!

BUNNY

Want some more of this hand? Huh?

(Bunny helps his brother up)

Fucks me up to see you all broke to hell, son. Over nothin'.

(Tynan pulls away from him)

TYNAN

Like I give goddamn.

BUNNY

So, go on and live like some sick dog. Put a bullet in your head over that wench and see if I weep even a minute.

(Silence)

TYNAN

Hey, Bunny? You could . . . y' know, help me get back at her. Not kill her, but . . . See, I gotta get the two grand she owes me.

BUNNY

You think she has it?

TYNAN

Yeah. Well, she says she doesn't.

BUNNY

You ever think, maybe, she's sittin' on it for spite?

TYNAN

I don't know. Well . . . come to think of it, she ain't the spiteful kind.

BUNNY

They're all spiteful, son. You fuck 'em and, if you're luck's good, you get to fuck 'em again. Next thing y' know, before you got time to wipe off your dick – they're feedin' you shit. And if you ain't eatin' it, they get spiteful. Nothin's left then but to leave 'em, or, if they push you to the wall . . .

(He gestures by pointing out, simulating the aiming and firing of a gun)

TYNAN

You're not still saying I oughta kill her?

BUNNY

No – I think you ought to dance in the moonlight with her and eat Cracker Jacks – what the fuck's in your head, boy?

TYNAN

I can't kill anybody, Bunny!

BUNNY

Let me do it –

(Tynan begins to respond)

I'm head of the household. And I got to do whatever it takes to protect this household. Besides, I've been up that same river in the same canoe a few times m'self.

TYNAN

Alright, but . . . let me talk to her first.

(Fade on Bunny and Tynan)

(Lights rise on Andrea and Renaldo)

ANDREA

Why do I get the feeling you're running from something?

RENALDO

Did I hit it too fast last night?

(She laughs, then kisses him)

ANDREA

So, what do you and Slone have planned?

RENALDO

I'd rather not say.

ANDREA

But I think I've got a right to know.

RENALDO

In other words, since you finally came around and put out, I'm supposed to let you run through my business –

ANDREA

What are you afraid of?

RENALDO

This ain't about me being scared.

ANDREA

Isn't it?

RENALDO

You know what you're getting into?

ANDREA

I think I'm already in it.

RENALDO

And, if you dig that hole any deeper, you might pull up something that'll scare the shit out of you.

ANDREA

It might.

(Silence)

RENALDO

This chump Tynan won't stop pushing until you push back. And I ain't referring to no restraining order. I'm talking about him getting the nerve to bust in here one night when you're back there tucked in your warm bed . . .

ANDREA

It's crossed my mind.

RENALDO

Then think seriously about getting the hell outta here or finding a way to take him out. Kill the muthafucker or keep getting abused.

And you're right – this business we got in Atlanta ain't exactly what you'd put in Forbes Magazine.

(He takes up a black duffle bag and opens it. The bag is filled with money)

ANDREA

Where'd that come from?

RENALDO

The trunk of the car. I didn't wanna leave it out there, so . . .

(Silence)

Go ahead. Touch it.

(She does so)

You still want to hear the story?

(She nods)

Alright. The plan is to go to Atlanta and make a deal. Something that's gon move me and Slone on the right side of the fast track and let us live and stay well even after we've gotten old, then croaked. See, me and Slone go back. We've been tight since before I was driving – it's what I did in San Diego. I drove for . . . a businessman.

ANDREA

What sort of –

RENALDO

A businessman. Anyway, he . . . well, he had to take off for a while.

ANDREA

Is he in jail?

RENALDO

I'll put it this way – he ain't sunnin' and funnin' in Cancun. Anyway, I cut with his stash – five hundred grand.

And, with his money, I knew I'd locked the door on the west coast. I remembered Slone. What brought me out here was when he told me about a hook he had in Atlanta. Only thing is that Sloan got busted four years ago in Mississippi by Five-O undercover. And he tells me he ain't traveling all that way with all this goddamn scratch to get it put up his ass again. We'll go down with it, though. Just not with the scratch. Not yet.

ANDREA

You want to leave it here?

RENALDO

Of course not, baby. Me and Slone got something cooked up already. We'll leave the money, not here, but somewhere while we ride to Atlanta and check this deal. If it's what we want, we'll make . . . an arrangement.

Don't worry. It's all in hand.

(He kisses her)

Now why don't you go in the kitchen and fix me something to take on the road?

(Yet another kiss, and she exits. Assured that she is gone, he looks around the room. His eyes fix suddenly upon a small credenza. He opens it, then takes a folded plastic bag from his pocket. He snaps the bag open, stuffs the money from the duffle bag inside, ties it shut, places it deep inside the credenza and closes the door. Again, he searches until his eyes focus on three sofa pillows, which he stuffs into the duffle bag, then closes. Andrea re-enters with bagged sandwiches)

I'd leave the money at Slone's, but he's living with some bitch who I wouldn't trust to watch herself.

(A car horn is heard)

That's him. So, what about it? You cool with this?

ANDREA

If you sell dope, you sell dope –

RENALDO

It ain't dope. This thing involves something a little more . . . higher end. If you can catch what I'm saying.

ANDREA

Higher end . . . ?

RENALDO

And still something that needs to be kept on the downlow.

ANDREA

Well . . . I'm not crazy about it, but . . . I'm not exactly a southern debutante, either.

RENALDO

Hold on to that piece. And why don't I go ahead and leave the car here, out front. So that bastard'll think I'm still around?

ANDREA

Yeah.

(Andrea watches him leave. Fade out)

(Light rises on Belle as she enters in limbo)

BELLE

I think you've always had plans for that money.

(Lights rise on Renaldo)

RENALDO

When are you getting out of here?

BELLE

I've stopped thinking about going anywhere.

RENALDO

Well, take care of yourself –

BELLE

As long as Omar is alive you got trouble.

RENALDO

So?

BELLE

After he gets me, it won't take long for him to put the rest of it together.

RENALDO

I'm not gon punk out and run.

BELLE

You can't 'front Omar.

RENALDO

Fuck him, Belle! When the time comes, if I have to, I'll . . . I'll deal with it.

BELLE

If you're smart, go somewhere and lay low for a little bit. Matter fact, go find Doc. He's still living at the same place in Jersey.

RENALDO

You've been keeping up with Doc for all these years –

BELLE

Baby, I mean it. If the shit gets heavy, find Doc. And tell him I said it'd be cool to squat with him for a while.

(Fade as Renaldo exits)

(Very early morning, still dark. Andrea returns home from the club. As she enters and flicks on a light, Tynan suddenly steps behind her and pushes her down)

TYNAN

I reckon he thought he'd fool my ass by leaving his car out front.

(He shuts the door. She crawls away from him, then stands)

ANDREA

But, let me guess: you watched him go, right?

TYNAN

Maybe. Anyway, I think this'd be a good time for us to talk.

ANDREA

I've got nothing to say.

TYNAN

Then I'll say my piece.

ANDREA

As long as you're gone after it's said.

TYNAN

Fair enough: are you willing to give me another chance?

ANDREA

I'd rather cut off my head.

TYNAN

Is that a no?

ANDREA

Figure it out.

TYNAN

Andrea . . . what did I do that was so bad? That any other man in this two-pony town hasn't done? That that pimped out boyfriend who's pokin' you won't up and do one day?

ANDREA

All men don't kick the shit out of their women.

TYNAN

Horseshit! More'n you'd think –

ANDREA

I've still got that gun.

TYNAN

How come I don't see you with it?

(She takes up the phone and begins dialing)

What're you doing?

ANDREA

I'm calling the sheriff . . .

(He suddenly slaps the phone from her hand)

Leave me alone, Tynan!

TYNAN

You scared?

ANDREA

N - No.

TYNAN

Look, I'm sorry. Okay? I'll . . . I'll do better – I know better now.

ANDREA

Please . . .

TYNAN

I promise.

ANDREA

. . . Go home –

TYNAN

NO! Now quit telling me to leave!

ANDREA

Alright, but you're not getting anything here but a long and shitty night.

TYNAN

So, you're not going to Jacksonville with me? We could have a nice life down there.

ANDREA

And I've said I won't go with you to the front door!

TYNAN

Then, where's my money? Where's my two grand?

ANDREA
Tynan –

TYNAN
Give up the money and I'm gone.

ANDREA
Do you mean it?

TYNAN
If you settle up and hand over the two thousand, I'll let you be.

ANDREA
I'll get it.

TYNAN
When?

ANDREA
In a couple of days.

TYNAN
Why not now?

ANDREA
I haven't got it now.

TYNAN
Who's gonna give it to you? That pimp?

ANDREA
He's not a pimp!

TYNAN
He's gonna give you two grand?

ANDREA
It's what he told me. I'll get it when he gets back.

TYNAN
Where'd he go? And what if he doesn't –

ANDREA

He'll be back.

TYNAN

But, what if he doesn't? What if a tree falls on him, or . . .

ANDREA

You have to leave!

TYNAN

Andrea, I've got a right to –

ANDREA

NOW!

TYNAN

What about that shoe box?

(She is perplexed)

When we were living together, I watched you – more than a few times – slip money in some old shoe box you tried to hide . . .

ANDREA

The box is long gone. And the money in it, too.

TYNAN

Don't shit me – you good for nothin' cunt!

ANDREA

GET OUT!

(He pushes her. She pushes him back. He slaps her. She frantically reaches beneath a sofa cushion and finds the gun. She brings it out and motions to aim it at him when he snatches it from her hand)

TYNAN

Learn how to use this damn thing, or you might end up hurting your silly self.

ANDREA

Go now, or I swear –

(He grabs her neck)

TYNAN

What – WHAT?

(She struggles)

You wanna know what my brother said? He said the only way to deal with you was to –

ANDREA

Kill me?

TYNAN

Has he been talkin to you?

ANDREA

I know him. Like I know your pathetic ass.

(He points the gun at her. After a moment, he releases her, then moves toward the door. He stops suddenly and waits)

What?

TYNAN

I suppose a goodnight kiss is out of the question?

ANDREA

I'd rather kiss a rabid ape!

TYNAN

How 'bout a kind word, then?

ANDREA

How 'bout two? – FUCK OFF!

(With this, he strikes her on the side of the head with the gun. She stumbles and is dazed)

TYNAN

If this is how you want it . . .

(He pushes her onto the sofa, holds her down, then begins tearing off her clothes. Still dazed, she resists as best as she can. It is not enough, however, to stop the assault)

(Blackout. End Act One)

ACT TWO

(Lights rise on Belle)

BELLE

Like the sad song that goes – *Can't get you out of my head* . . . or something in the way of that, I can't seem to rub you from my sight, Ren. I still see you with a woman, carrying her this time. And she looked half dead, like she was about to cough up her last breath.

(Fade on Belle. Lights rise on Renaldo sitting at a table in a topless bar. Music pulsates. Andrea enters clad in thong panties, skimpy top, high heels, et al)

ANDREA

Want a table dance?

RENALDO

What do I get for this?

(He hands her a twenty. She takes it)

ANDREA

A dance.

RENALDO

That's all? How 'bout a little –

ANDREA

Conversation?

RENALDO

Alright.

(She removes her top and begins dancing slowly and sensuously around him)

ANDREA

You're not from around here, are you?

RENALDO

Nope. California. San Diego.

(She continues dancing)

Slow tonight.

ANDREA

During this time of the week, yeah. It's always slow.

RENALDO

You able to make it?

ANDREA

I do okay.

RENALDO

Though, you'd like to do better.

ANDREA

What are you proposing?

RENALDO

I ain't doing nothing but talking, baby.

ANDREA

Well, if you want me to keep dancing –

RENALDO

What?

ANDREA

Let's not get personal, okay?

(She dances. He hands her another twenty. She takes it and slips it into her panty strap)

Thanks.

(She sits on his lap and grinds sinuously)

RENALDO

Ain't this illegal?

ANDREA

Yeah, but nobody around here gives a shit.

(She rises, dances)

RENALDO

Can I ask you something?

ANDREA

As long as it's nothing personal.

RENALDO

You like what you do?

ANDREA

Sometimes.

RENALDO

Ever do anything else?

ANDREA

Of course.

RENALDO

Married?

ANDREA

Never.

RENALDO

Gotta man?

ANDREA

What's it to you?

RENALDO

Oh . . . maybe I'd like to know who split first.

(She stops dancing)

What's wrong?

ANDREA

Dance is over.

RENALDO
Wait a minute . . .

ANDREA
No, really – we're done.

(He rises)

RENALDO
I don't think so.

ANDREA
Am I gonna have to call Slone?

RENALDO
I know Slone. Besides, what's he supposed to do? Slap me?

ANDREA
No, but he'll throw your ass out if you don't behave.

RENALDO
Really?

ANDREA
I'm gone –

RENALDO
Hold it.

(He pulls out two one hundred-dollar bills)

Spend some time with me.

ANDREA
This isn't that kind of place.

RENALDO
Then, sit and talk for a little bit.

ANDREA
We're not paid to talk.

RENALDO

So, dance.

ANDREA

I'm tired. And it's almost time to close.

RENALDO

Then, why ain't you moving?

(She takes the money)

ANDREA

Can I ask you something first?

RENALDO

Go ahead, but I can tell you the answer is no – I'm not a pimp. Now, siddown.

(She slips back into her top. They sit)

What's your name?

ANDREA

Listen, I'm not sure about this – I mean, I hope you're not thinking I'm a . . .

RENALDO

Alright – give the money back. C'mon –

ANDREA

What would you like to talk about?

RENALDO

What's your name?

ANDREA

Andrea.

RENALDO

I'm Renaldo.

ANDREA

Hi.

(Someone has caught her eye. And Renaldo soon

notices her sudden look of apprehension)

RENALDO

What's the matter?

ANDREA

Nothing.

RENALDO

Tell me – what's a good place to go and eat around here?

ANDREA

At this hour?

RENALDO

Yeah. What's still open?

ANDREA

Well, Blythe's Diner is open 24/7.

RENALDO

How far?

ANDREA

About a mile. East.

RENALDO

You hungry?

ANDREA

What?

RENALDO

Wanna go and get something to eat with me?

ANDREA

No.

RENALDO

My treat.

ANDREA

Thanks, but no.

RENALDO

I might need somebody to show me how to get to this . . .

(Again, he notices the apprehensive expression as she looks around)

Hey! Who the hell're you looking for?

ANDREA

No one.

RENALDO

Your ol' man after you?

ANDREA

Excuse me?

RENALDO

Your man – you're runnin' from him, ain't you?

ANDREA

I don't think that's any of . . .

RENALDO

I ask 'cause maybe I can watch your back.

(He shows her his concealed gun)

ANDREA

You don't know me.

RENALDO

A little bit. You went ahead and told me your name.

ANDREA

And what does that make us? Bum chums?

RENALDO

Close enough.

ANDREA

Listen, it's almost time to close. And I really ought to . . .

(He catches her eye again)

RENALDO

What? Is that him? That chump?

ANDREA

He's no chump, he . . . Okay. Could – could you walk out with me?

RENALDO

Sure you ain't hungry?

ANDREA

Yeah, alright. Just . . . keep him away.

(He takes her hand and kisses it)

And, please, don't get any ideas about this.

RENALDO

Girl, I can't help but get ideas – I'm sittin' in a titty bar. Now, go on. Get changed and let's cut outta here.

(She exits. He stands and looks threateningly in the direction of the unseen Tynan. Fade out)

(Lights rise in Andrea's house. Tynan is pacing, drinking a beer)

TYNAN

You think you're smart, don't you? Runnin' around makin' me look like some kind of idiot. Just like Bunny said – you're trying to spite me! Now, ain't that right? Lying slut!

(He sets down the beer and begins tearing through the sitting room – pushing aside objects, furniture, etc)

I'm gonna find that goddamn money. And when I do, when I finally see that my brother was right, I'm gonna kick your ass through the floor! You listening to me? SLUT!

(He focuses on the credenza and looks inside. He finds the plastic bag, then forces it open. To his

surprise, he sees the money. For a moment he is aghast. Then, as he re-ties the bag, Andrea enters in a bathrobe. There is a prominent bruise on the left side of her face. She and Tynan stare at one another as he holds up the bag)

Is this how you want it?

ANDREA

What . . . ?

TYNAN

Is this how you want it? . . .

ANDREA

Want what? And what is that?

(He steps closer toward her)

TYNAN

You really don't know? Alright: it's something to fix your ass good. That's what it is.

(He exits. She then notices the state of the room and begins to restore order.

With everything back in place, she sits. Belle enters)

BELLE

They say every dog has his day.

ANDREA

But they never stop with one.

BELLE

They take them all.

ANDREA

And we allow it.

BELLE

I saw a woman shoot a dog once.

ANDREA
You sure it was a dog?

BELLE
It had four legs.

ANDREA
They do, too.

BELLE
Ever seen the devil?

ANDREA
I don't think so.

BELLE
What about that no-good boy who raped you?

ANDREA
Tynan's no devil.

BELLE
He sure put on like one.

ANDREA
He's . . . he's so young, though.

BELLE
Yet, still of enough wit to know how to work evil over a woman . . .

(Andrea weeps)

ANDREA
Oh, God!

BELLE
Calling on God won't help nothing.

ANDREA
You're right. In fact, God probably watched the whole thing.

BELLE
And enjoyed Himself, too.

(Fade on Belle. Andrea stops crying. Renaldo enters, tense and on edge)

RENALDO

Five-O been here?

(Silence)

The police! The cops! Have they been here?

ANDREA

Why would the . . . No, nobody's been here.

(Relieved, he sits)

RENALDO

A goddamn set up.

ANDREA

Did you say something?

RENALDO

The hook in Atlanta Slone put together? I'll be pissed if the muthafucker didn't have five-o with him. And damn if Slone didn't peep him the minute we drove up on him. I swear, I don't know what kind of inside dope he's got, but I'm damn sure glad we was rolling together.

(He moves closer and kisses her face. She is unresponsive)

What's wrong with your face?

ANDREA

I fell.

RENALDO

Fell?

ANDREA

Yes. Off the stage. While I was dancing.

RENALDO

You fell off the stage –

ANDREA
Yes!

RENALDO
How long ago did he leave?

ANDREA
What?

RENALDO
Don't "what" me, answer the question – was he here, or not?

ANDREA
Who gives a shit if he was?

RENALDO
He hit you!

ANDREA
So? Everybody gets hit. Haven't you?

(He rises)

Where are you going?

RENALDO
What do you care?

ANDREA
And what's that supposed to mean?

RENALDO
He's been in your house. Ergo, you still want his ass.

ANDREA
Why would you think that?

RENALDO
Maybe it's 'cause I was born with a head on my shoulders and not my dick. And, for all I know, you might've fucked him after he invited himself over.

ANDREA
Goddamn you, Renaldo! GO TO HELL!

(She notices that he is opening the credenza)

What are you doing?

(He sees that the bag is missing)

RENALDO

Where is it?

ANDREA

What?

RENALDO

Bitch quit “whatin” me! Where’s the money?

ANDREA

Money?

RENALDO

Andrea . . . I’m serious. Quit playing.

ANDREA

I’m not. Why would I –

RENALDO

GODDAMMIT! . . . Alright – I’m gon go ahead and attempt – and I mean *attempt* – to be civilized about this shit. And while I’m trying to do that, I’d appreciate it if, while I’m talking, you’d show me some common . . . whatever, and stop lying.

ANDREA

About what?

RENALDO

Where did you put the money?

ANDREA

You left it here?

RENALDO

Where is it, Andrea?

ANDREA

After you said . . .

RENALDO

Shut the fuck up and tell me where you put the money!

ANDREA

Renaldo, I didn't even know it was –

(He brings up his hand to strike her. She recoils)

I SWEAR ON MY DEAD MOTHER! I NEVER KNEW IT WAS HERE! I
SWEAR IT!

(Slowly, they begin to realize –)

RENALDO

Muthafucker!

ANDREA

Oh, my Lord! It was in a plastic bag, wasn't it?

RENALDO

Did you see him take it?

ANDREA

No, well . . . yes, I did – I think. I . . . I went back to the bedroom, though. I was
taking a shower –

RENALDO

A shower?

ANDREA

Wait – no, I'd gone back to the bedroom, and it came to me that I . . . I might need
a shower . . .

RENALDO

A shower? . . . You *did* fuck him.

ANDREA

I never meant to – I mean . . .

RENALDO

And you were in on this shit, too!

ANDREA

I wasn't in on anything, Renaldo! I swear to you – I swear on my life. I came home from the club – Tynan pushed his way in – he hit me over the head – I fell on the couch, I think, and he – my clothes were tearing and – Before he left, he was holding a . . . a plastic bag and he said he – he was gonna fix me. From the back, I heard him say something about two grand. I wanted him to go. He wouldn't. He hit me, and . . .

(She breaks down)

RENALDO

What did he do?

ANDREA

Oh, Jesus! I'm not gonna spell it any bigger!

RENALDO

Tell me where to find him. Where does he stay?

ANDREA

No! Not for that money – screw that money!

RENALDO

Come again?

ANDREA

I want him dead. If I tell you where to get him, I want you to go and stomp on his fucking balls!

RENALDO

Okay! I just think it'd be smart to get the money first, right?

(She embraces him. He comforts her)

Where is he?

(The phone rings. They glance at one another.
After a moment, Andrea picks up)

ANDREA

Hello? . . . What? . . . How d' you think, asshole –

(Renaldo touches her shoulder and gestures “no”)

I'm – I'm sorry . . . I said I'm sorry . . . Okay, you're right, I – . . . What about Bunny? . . . No. He hasn't. Why would he? . . . You want to what?

(Renaldo whispers in her ear. She shakes her head again and again, refusing. Finally, after much effort, he persuades her to go along)

Hello? Yes – alright. Okay. If that's what you want to do . . . Sure.

(She glances at Renaldo)

What? . . . Well, yes, but he – he left right away, though . . . That's right. He got in his car and – and left . . . I wouldn't know. Something about the cops being after him, I guess . . . *What money?* . . .

(Again, she glances at him. He gestures “no”)

. . . He never said anything to me about any money . . . I said he didn't . . . You stop it! Quit calling me that! I told you he didn't . . . Alright, then. I'll see you in a little bit.

(She hangs up)

He wants to come over to say he's sorry.

RENALDO

I'll pull the car around back –

ANDREA

NO! Take it further down the road. If I know that weasel, he'll park in back so he won't get caught violating that restraining order.

RENALDO

Okay.

(He starts to exit. She stops him)

ANDREA

When you find out where the money is, I you want to step aside . . . give me the gun . . . and let me kill him.

(Renaldo acknowledges and exits. Lights fade)

(Lights rise back in Andrea's house. She is seated on the sofa, smoking. There is a knock. As she rises to answer, Tynan bursts in with a drawn gun)

TYNAN

Is he gone? Gone for sure? I mean . . . I mean – You better not be yanking my dick, 'cause if you are –

ANDREA

He's gone!

TYNAN

For good, right?

ANDREA

As far as I know.

TYNAN

And he's, for sure, running from the cops?

ANDREA

Aren't they all? Now, come sit down. Let's talk.

(She sits. Tynan is standing, the gun still drawn)

What?

TYNAN

Do you think I'm dumb? . . . WELL!?

ANDREA

Put away the gun and sit down. Please.

(Slowly, he brings it down)

TYNAN

What changed your mind?

ANDREA

You . . . you wanting to say you're sorry.

(After a few beats, he slips the gun under his belt strap and sits)

TYNAN

Yeah, I – I wanna apologize. I . . . I didn't want to hit you. And you know it, right? . . . Right?

(She nods)

Good. By the way, he was using you. See, he was stashing his –

(Suddenly, he is uneasy)

Come on. Let's go.

ANDREA

Go?

TYNAN

Yes.

ANDREA

But –

TYNAN

Get some things packed and let's get away from here.

ANDREA

Why?

TYNAN

You'll get hurt.

ANDREA

By who?

(Renaldo enters. Tynan senses another presence. He turns and sees him, then turns back to Andrea)

TYNAN

You stinking SLUT!

(Renaldo hits him, knocking him to the floor. Renaldo then pulls his gun)

RENALDO

Let me tell you how we gon play this –

(He hands the gun to Andrea)

Hold this on him.

(She takes the gun and aims it at Tynan as Renaldo forces him into a chair. He pulls the gun from Tynan's waist, then slips it behind him, tucking it under his belt. He pulls off Tynan's belt and uses it to bind his wrists from behind)

We're getting ready to play this like a movie I saw – I must have seen it ten, twenty times – I can't get enough of it. Now, halfway into this movie, there's a part where some muthafucker who may, or may not know something about some diamonds is tied to a chair. And another muthafucker who's older is standing over him, asking if it's safe, you know? . . . *"Is it safe?"* . . . *"Is it safe?"* . . . like he's got to work a head game to crack the dudes skull 'cause he's playing it like he's ignorant, like he knows nothing, like – yeah! Playing it off like some dumb-ass cracker hayseed like you –

TYNAN

Mister, I don't claim to know . . .

RENALDO

And when the old muthafucker hits a wall with the head games, he resorts to other methods in order to get the shit out of him. Like, he starts working on his teeth. See, he takes this little-ass drill and starts cutting holes in the boys teeth –

TYNAN

What do you want from me, man?

RENALDO

Where's the money?

TYNAN

What money?

RENALDO

See, that was stupid.

TYNAN

How?

RENALDO

Boy, the quickest way to get on my bad side is to play me like I'm a fool.

TYNAN

I haven't known you long enough to –

RENALDO

The money – Where is it?

TYNAN

Where's what?

(Renaldo slaps him)

RENALDO

Quit fuckin' with me!

TYNAN

Alright.

RENALDO

What – alright?

TYNAN

I ain't got it.

RENALDO

Come again?

TYNAN

I'm telling you, man – I ain't got that money.

RENALDO

You know where it is, though, right?

TYNAN

No, I swear –

(Renaldo slaps him again)

RENALDO
You ain't shit to me.

TYNAN
I know.

RENALDO
Damn right, you know it. And see this woman? The woman you had the punk-ass
gall to fuck when she didn't want to?

ANDREA
This woman you raped!

TYNAN
Horseshit! You wanted it –

(Renaldo hits him harder)

RENALDO
Say what, now?

TYNAN
I'm sorry.

RENALDO
Tell it to her.

TYNAN
Andrea . . . I'm sorry.

ANDREA
Go to hell! Both of you!

RENALDO
Something wrong?

ANDREA
What's with this – "I'm sorry"?

RENALDO
What do you want him to say?

ANDREA

I want him begging for his life!

RENALDO

Cool –

TYNAN

WAIT! NO – Wait a minute.

RENALDO

Yes?

TYNAN

The money . . . I know where it is.

RENALDO

Good boy – GOOD BOY! See, I knew –

(Andrea shoots Tynan)

What the –

(Renaldo grabs the gun from her)

You bitch.

ANDREA

He had it coming.

RENALDO

You dumb bitch!

ANDREA

He raped me, Renaldo!

TYNAN

I reckon I won't be gettin' that two grand back now.

ANDREA

I reckon not, asshole!

RENALDO

Wait a minute – EVERYBODY STOP! Hold it! You muthafucker – your ass

better not die –

TYNAN

Or, what?

RENALDO

SHIT!

(Tynan, in mortal pain, is laughing)

ANDREA

What's funny?

TYNAN

Nothin'. Except . . . I did get to steal one last piece of pussy from you.

ANDREA

You'll weep in hell for it, too.

TYNAN

Sure, I will. But you know what else? Right before I do . . . just before I take that last dive . . . I'll see your mama. And I'll have a story to tell!

(He laughs again, then convulses and is still)

RENALDO

Satisfied?

ANDREA

Not really. I wish I'd stomped on his balls first.

RENALDO

Jesus Christ . . .

ANDREA

The sonofabitch raped me!

RENALDO

FUCK THAT! How in the Sam-black-muthafucking-hell am I supposed to get that money?

ANDREA

It's not my problem.

What did you say?

RENALDO

I . . . no, I . . . I didn't –

ANDREA

(The sound of a car pulling into the yard is heard, then an engine stopping. A car door opens, then is closed. Soon after, there is a knock)

Who is it? Who's there?

(She glimpses through a parted curtain)

It's Bunny – you better hide him.

(Renaldo pulls Tynan's body offstage, not noticing the belt loosening, then falling from Tynan's wrists and onto the floor)

What do you want, Bunny?

BUNNY

We need to talk.

ANDREA

I don't feel up to talking.

BUNNY

It won't take long.

ANDREA

Go on, Bunny. Go away.

(Renaldo re-enters with gun drawn)

BUNNY

You got comp'ny?

ANDREA

What's it to you?

BUNNY

I want to talk.

ANDREA
And I said I'm not feeling up to talking.

BUNNY
Andrea?

ANDREA
WHAT?

BUNNY
You gon let me in?

ANDREA
No! Now, go on before I call the sheriff.

BUNNY
C'mon, Andrea . . .

ANDREA
Get the hell on, Bunny!

(Silence. Again, she peeks through the curtain)

He's going.

(Renaldo sets down the pistol)

RENALDO
What did he want?

ANDREA
How should I know –

(Bunny kicks in the door, his shotgun drawn.
Renaldo immediately attempts a reach for the
pistol)

BUNNY
Uh uh! I wouldn't make that move, bro'.

(Renaldo withdraws his hand)

That's a good boy. Now, sit your black ass down.

(Renaldo sits. Bunny enters, shuts the door, then takes the pistol and slips it under his belt. There is a line of rope coiled around Bunny's shoulder)

ANDREA

What do you want?

BUNNY

I want to talk.

ANDREA

And what in weeping Mary's name would I have to say?

(Silence. Bunny sits, removes the rope from his shoulder, and sets it down, then extends his hand to Renaldo)

BUNNY

I don't b'lieve we've met. They call me Bunny.

(Not responding, Bunny draws back his hand)

A little slow on manners 'round here, ain't we?

(Bunny notices the bruise on Andrea's face)

And it looks like you went ahead and got to 'er before I could –

ANDREA

What do you want?

BUNNY

I hear you're from out west - *where it's the best*, ain't that so?

RENALDO

You talking to me?

BUNNY

I'm tryin' to. Let's see. I was in California once. Years ago. Doin' time, actually.

RENALDO

For what? Bootlegging?

BUNNY

You blue coats kill me. Ain't never had it right 'bout us. Y' see, these days, we southerners are . . .

RENALDO

Why're you still talking to me?

BUNNY

Oh, I'm sorry. I reckon I can't help m'self. I see somebody, I start talkin'. Like I was saying – I'm a southerner. And we are, by nature, a hospitable people, y' know?

California, huh? What part? Oakland? L.A.? And what's your business out here? You some kinda big time dope peddler, lookin' to –

ANDREA

You've never seen him before. How can . . .

BUNNY

If that's so, tell me: is it true? 'Bout you dope dealers? Like in the movies?

RENALDO

I wouldn't know. I don't sell dope.

BUNNY

Aw, come on now! All a man needs is to give somethin' like y'self a good once over and see nothin' but a –

ANDREA

BUNNY!

BUNNY

Yes, sugah?

ANDREA

For the last time – why is your peckerwood ass in my house?

BUNNY

Alright: I happen to be a man in need.

ANDREA

Of what?

A donation.

BUNNY

Donation?

ANDREA

BUNNY

Quit playin' it dumb, y' little house whore. Where is it?

(Andrea and Renaldo glance at one another)

There's half a million dollars in here somewhere. And I aim to have all of it donated to me. Well?

RENALDO

You need to go further than here, man. To the goddamn United Way, or someplace. 'Cause we ain't got shit to donate here except a long night.

BUNNY

Tell me somethin', bro': how many *muthafuckers* you ever kill?

RENALDO

I've seen men killed.

BUNNY

But did you ever –

ANDREA

There's no money here. I swear on my . . .

BUNNY

Shut up. Now, I asked you a question, mister – you ever kill anybody? Huh? Shit! You street niggers've been killin' since you was shittin' yellow. Hell, I'd bet some of you'd kill your own blood just to . . .

ANDREA

I won't have this kind of talk in my house –

BUNNY

I said shut up! Now, there's money in this house. Five hundred thousand dollars. And I will bring on the judgement if I don't leave here with it! Now anybody wanna be the first to speak up? Or am I gonna have to torture one of you within a quarter inch of the goddamn grave!

ANDREA

Did Tynan say anything to you?

BUNNY

He said he saw “Super Fly” over there flash a sack full of money.

RENALDO

You believe that?

BUNNY

I b’lieve you’d trot your slick dressin’ self down here to show up us white trash – yeah, I believe it.

RENALDO

I see why they put your cracker ass in jail.

BUNNY

Watch that mouth, son.

RENALDO

After I watch you drop and toot this black stick.

ANDREA

Don’t play with him, Renaldo!

RENALDO

Who’s playing? Fuck this shit-eatin’ peckerwood! If he wants to shoot my black ass, why hold the muthafucker back? Let him resolve this shit.

BUNNY

After I get them five hundred G’s.

RENALDO

Which will be after you let me poke your mama.

ANDREA

Renaldo – STOP! . . .

BUNNY

I thought I told you to SHUT UP! Besides, black boy don’t bother me. I never thought my mama was much, anyhow.

When m’ daddy died, y’ know what that excuse for a female did? She went and ran off with Louie Ortiz – Andrea knew ‘im. Nothin’ but a lowdown Mex! It

was bad enough that she had the indecency to court the sonofabitch, but she had to add quinine to injury AND MARRY 'IM!

(He spits derisively)

Say what you want about the ol' woman, son. The way I figure, she ain't but a plug or two down from this bag of titty bar trash here.

ANDREA

I won't be disrespected in my –

(Bunny slaps her)

BUNNY

How 'bout it? Is that enough to keep you from flappin' that yap? HUH?

(He notices Renaldo looking at him)

Got a problem with somethin', boy?

ANDREA

We don't have any money here.

BUNNY

Want some more of this hand?

RENALDO

The money's gone. That punk-ass brother of yours took it.

ANDREA

It's the truth. He's been coming here to get me to go back with him. And to give him his two grand.

(Bunny is listening)

He lent me two thousand dollars. He wanted it back. I didn't have it. He didn't believe me. So, he tore the place up looking for it and found the . . . the money.

BUNNY

And how long've you –

RENALDO

We just got around to it. Before you got here.

BUNNY

Let me see if I got this straight: I'm to believe that my baby brother –

RENALDO

Bullshitted your redneck ass.

BUNNY

Look, nigger –

RENALDO

I'll be all the niggah in the world, but you still ain't got that paper, do you?

(Silence. Bunny takes up the phone, dials, waits, then leaves a message)

BUNNY

Tynan. It's your brother. Call me. You lyin' asshole. It's important. I'm at your ex-girlfriends house.

(He's about to hang up, then adds to the message)

And, for your information, I ain't pokin' her. Yet.

(As he hangs up, Andrea reacts)

Oh, cool yer heals, woman. I would not lower myself for such.

(He laughs, then sits)

Well, nothin' to do but either sit and wait for 'im to show his young ass or wait for 'im to call.

Got anything to drink in that kitchen?

(With attitude, she exits into the kitchen)

And if he knows what's good for 'im he'll show, too. One way, or another. Or I'll imprint the sole of my shoe on the side of his face. When I catch up to him, that is.

(She returns with a beer, which she hands to him)

Thanks, hon'.

(He cracks the beer and drinks)

By the way, what was you plannin' on doin' with all that money? Make some big dope deal?

RENALDO

Like I said, I don't mess with dope.

BUNNY

Then what?

RENALDO

Buy stock.

(Bunny looks at Andrea, then laughs – stopping suddenly)

BUNNY

You know what? I'd bet my horse, if I had one, that you was – in point of fact – fixin' to score some big time dope deal with that money, now ain't that right?

RENALDO

Will you get it through your rock-head that I ain't dealing no damn dope.

BUNNY

What? Too above all your other black dope dealing brothers?

RENALDO

One could say that. The truth is I'm a purveyor of high-end merchandise.

BUNNY

Such as?

RENALDO

It would be outside your purview. Trust me.

BUNNY

It might come as a surprise, but I ain't as dumb as I look.

RENALDO

Okay, I'll test your ignorance.

BUNNY

Shoot.

RENALDO

Gym candy? Stackers? *Juice*?

BUNNY

Steroids.

RENALDO

Well, goddamn! I am impressed.

BUNNY

Don't shit me. *Steroids*?

RENALDO

Y' see, white man, the world is a big place. Populated by an array of motherfuckers. A lot of them black, like me. And not all of them dealers in shit.

BUNNY

Well, ain't this a knock in the head. You boys have the wherewithal to aim high, f' sure! To aim for something big. I'll be smacked in the face with a horseshoe!

RENALDO

Mind boggling, ain't it?

BUNNY

I'll say that! In fact . . . now that I recall, I saw that Slone character ridin' toward this way a night, or so ago. Who I hear pulled time for somethin' involving contraband over in Mississippi 'bout three, four years back. The one the sheriff's got his good eye on. And the same "brotha" who's as well-oiled and slick as you. And I'll also wager that that five hundred grand plays right into this latest scheme, too. Now am I right?

(Renaldo laughs again)

I say something funny?

RENALDO

I been sitting here listening to you pop your lips a mile a second about five hundred thousand - five hundred thousand - shit! I'll be amazed - good and fuckin' amazed - if you can make yourself count to five, let alone five hundred thousand.

Of course, with all that genetic inbreeding you country muthafuckers got goin' on, I know you ain't *directly* responsible for your ignorance. Not really. In fact, the shit's got to make you wonder: did your daddy fuck your mama to get you here, or did he fuck your grandma?

(Anger flashes briefly across Bunny's face. After a moment, he settles and laughs)

BUNNY

You must think a whole lot of yourself.

RENALDO

Enough to know shit when I see it looking up at me.

BUNNY

Let's see you look up at this –

(Bunny rises and aims the gun at Renaldo. Andrea screams, then shudders. Renaldo holds a steely gaze upon him. A few seconds elapse, and Bunny lowers the gun)

Better yet, let's go.

ANDREA

Where're you taking him?

BUNNY

We're goin' to Tynan's place, to sit and wait for 'im to show hisself. And when he does – if he can't tell me where he put the money, and if I find you've been pullin' my pud, mister, I will not hesitate in blowlin' what few nigger brains you got all over them fine clothes you got on. Now, get up.

(Renaldo rises)

Let's go.

(They move toward the front door. Bunny stops)

Hold on – wait . . .

(He sees Tynan's belt on the floor, picks it up, then reads the engraving. He looks leeringly

at Andrea)

I see you and baby brother made time to conduct some business.

(He chuckles and tosses the belt on the floor. He takes the rope and hands it to Renaldo)

Here – tie ‘er hands behind her. I said tie her to something – GO ON!

(Renaldo takes the rope, looks around, then gently places Andrea in a chair and begins tying her body to it)

Now, tie ‘er wrists behind her and pull tight. I want it to hurt. DO IT!

(He does so. Andrea screams)

I know it ain’t none too comfortable, honey, but it’s for your own safe keeping.

ANDREA

Go to hell, you rotten asshole!

BUNNY

Is that the worst you can say to me –

(She spits in his face. Bunny goes behind the chair, pulling the rope even tighter)

ANDREA

AAAGGGGHHHHH! RENALDO!!

BUNNY

Black boy can’t help you.

(He now moves behind Renaldo, holding the gun)

We’ll be back in a little bit, sugah. Or, at least, I know I’ll be back. Keep it hot for me, hear?

(They leave)

ANDREA

GODDAMN YOU, BUNNY! I HOPE YOU CHOKE TO DEATH AND DIE!

FUCKING DIE! YOU PECKERWOOD ASSHOLE! FUCK YOU! *FUCK YOU!*
 Oh, Lord, please . . . please!

(Belle enters)

BELLE

Wha' cha calling on the Lord for?

ANDREA

It's what mama used to do.

BELLE

Was she a God's woman?

ANDREA

She . . . she was a missionary. She loved church work. She loved to pray for those
 . . . who were lost.

BELLE

Did she pray for you?

ANDREA

Yes. Before she died, she even left me this house – Route One South. It's on
 Route One, south of the railroad track, just outside the city limits. The farthest
 south you can go on this road before it ends.

BELLE

How far before it ends?

ANDREA

'Bout a mile, or so down. Then, it stops. When you get there, nothing to see but
 trees and brush, junked cars and trash, old tires –

BELLE

The edge of the world.

(Tynan enters, bloodied)

And look who I saw there, sitting over the edge and about to fall off. Waiting on
 you.

ANDREA

He's got no reason to wait.

(Belle takes Tynan in her arms)

Mama knew how he'd treated me. Before she died, she made me promise to leave him and stay in this house. She'd give it all to me if I made that promise.

BELLE

He was so young, though, wasn't he?

ANDREA

That was the problem – he was a boy.

(Belle kisses him and sends him off)

BELLE

Somebody will be merciful to him.

ANDREA

I wish someone'd be merciful to me right now.

BELLE

There is one who died and will always be merciful . . .

ANDREA

Oh, please!

BELLE

I speak of your mother.

ANDREA

Mama?

BELLE

I see her among these walls.

ANDREA

Mama's here?

BELLE

She is. Now, why can't you pray to her instead of –

ANDREA

I'm ashamed.

BELLE

You won't be ashamed to call on –

ANDREA

Renaldo! Please – come back . . .

(Belle takes up Renaldo's pistol and steps DS. Fade on Andrea)

BELLE

Ren? I sent a letter. With blood on it. My own. No words. Won't be nothing left for me to say. All I could bring myself to do was leave a few drops of blood on a letter. That way, you'll know if it should come out as to what you did, it never came from me.

(With the gun, Belle shoots herself. Sudden blackout on Belle. Lights up on Andrea, having heard a gunshot)

ANDREA

Renaldo! RENALDO!

(He enters with the bag of money and Bunny's rifle)

RENALDO

All I needed was an opportunity.

(He shows her the money, then sets it down and begins untying her)

We waited two hours. I had to sit and listen to that cracker talk shit for two hours.

(Untied, she embraces him)

He finally got to the point where he couldn't take no more, I guess. So, we went in. The whole time, he held the gun and made me poke through that house like I was his nigger. Or his dog. What he didn't know was my mind was running and looking for an opportunity. And when I found it, I pulled that country canon from out of his mitt, I turned it on him and –

ANDREA

I heard a gunshot.

RENALDO

It was me.

ANDREA

What were you shooting at? . . .

RENALDO

Tynan. I saw him crawling from under the house –

ANDREA

Oh, God!

RENALDO

It's all good, baby. He'd just made it to his truck. I came up behind him and turned him over with my foot and saw the bag on the floorboard. He looked at me and laughed. He said, "How'd it go in there with Bunny?"

(He kisses her)

Now we got to go.

ANDREA

Go?

RENALDO

I want you to come with me. See this?

(He refers to the money)

When the shit with Slone went bad, it got me to thinking: I got a partner in Jersey. He used to be a pimp, he's a ol' cat. Anyway, we can lay under with him. After that, I make my connection with these two white dudes I'm tight with further up the coast –

ANDREA

Where?

RENALDO

See, this is my start. Fuck dope! Baby *this* is the next big thing. The money is already here! I'll live good. And you . . . you can be my woman.

ANDREA

I can't. I'm afraid to leave.

RENALDO

Andrea . . .

ANDREA

NO! It . . . it wouldn't be right.

RENALDO

You wanna sit up here and go to jail over this shit? After what these crackers did to you?

ANDREA

But mama . . . my mother's house . . .

RENALDO

Your mama's dead.

ANDREA

You – you'll take care of me?

RENALDO

You're my woman, ain't you?

(They embrace and kiss)

I went ahead and pulled the car up. Now go get your shit together.

(She exits. Renaldo then exits through the front door, then returns dragging Tynan's body inside. Belle enters)

BELLE

I could arrange it so Omar will never get out.

(He pulls the body offstage)

Alive, that is.

(Renaldo returns)

RENALDO

You're talking about having somebody smoke him?

BELLE

I'd do it for you.

RENALDO

Leave him alone.

BELLE

Your days will be numbered when they turn him loose from prison and he finds out you've crossed him.

RENALDO

And I'll be a man and deal with him to his face.

BELLE

Just like a man.

RENALDO

Omar wouldn't want it any other way.

BELLE

I love you, Ren.

(Fade on Belle. Andrea re-enters, changed and with packed bags)

RENALDO

Like I said, we'll sit tight in Jersey. Give this shit time to roll over and –

ANDREA

Thank you.

(They kiss, then exit. Belle re-enters and stands at the closed screen door, watching them. We hear car doors open and shut, then an engine which starts and fades into the distance. Lights come down slowly with Belle looking off into the night)

(End of Play)

