

DANCEHALLS

- une comédie surréalisme française -

by

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—CHEBUTYKIN, Guröv (28)

... Impresario in *Le Café Royalé*, a tattered, nearly deserted tourist-trap dancehall he owns at Malfi on the Black Sea. One-time prodigy in tenor sax and voice at the Université de Paris, *Le Étoile Tilsitt* and at the city opera house in Leningrad. Down on his luck and 'holed up' in his scant digs, he cherishes memories of bygone, halcyon days, however adorned these may be and revels, like Gatsby, in the promise he finds in the past. Not to be looked upon with disdain as he seeks to rise into the light. A man given to exhortations, he appears at times to be addressing the audience *à la Tom* in 'The Glass Menagerie.'

—NICOLÉ, Léticia (16)

... In protecting her dignity, this young woman finds moments of lightness that amount to little else.

—CHEBUTYKIN, Thaedeus (29)

... Roams the tourist beaches of the world after a term in divinity school and several seasons in summer stock in hopes of shedding light on life's great perplexities while entertaining himself and others. Like Pechorin in 'A Hero of our Time,' has an 'irresistible need to confess' in which he revels in a vast oeuvre of 'past sins' that, daily, he struggles to get rid of.

—OSKICH, Oski (32)

... frequents the late-night beach.

—ALEKSEYEVICH, Arkina (28)

... The diva in 'Annette of Baulinghaus,' known to both Guröv and Thaedeus in earlier, more festive times.

FOREGROUND, a sea that goes on forever; CENTER, a beach; REAR, *Le Café Royalé*. Expressionist Surrealism. Late 1940s.

- SCENES -

- SCENE 1: EVENING
- SCENE 2: THE NEXT EVENING
- SCENE 3: ABOUT EIGHT
- SCENE 4: TOWARDS MIDNIGHT
- SCENE 5: AFTER MIDNIGHT

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'Solstice comes from the Latin (sol, sun; sistit, stands). For several days before and after each solstice, the sun appears to stand still in the sky—that is, its noontime elevation does not seem to change.'

—Infoplease

'Revenge should have no bounds.'

—Claudius

'If it's Surrealism, it's a bit loose, right—?'

—Anon.

'Plays should be amusing.'

—Eric Bentley

Dancehall (Le Café Royalé) owner Guröv often reminisces about a former girlfriend (Arkina Alekseyevich) while Léticia Nicolé, his waitress/hostess/present girlfriend, is weary of her near-indentured status and wants to leave, yet she waits, waits, waits ...

When his wayward brother Thaedeus comes home with visions of returning the tourist beach to its once-pristine state, Guröv does not become aware of a complicity between his brother and Léticia.

On a night of summer solstice as Guröv, Thaedeus and Léticia gather like moths to a flame with hopes of resolving differences, tensions flare up.

Once viable in the era of the big bands and nightly fashionable dancing, Le Café Royalé becomes a metaphor for those who struggle, blind in despair leavened only by occasional moments of joy.

The playwright spent a year in Saint-Pryvé-Saint-Mesmin/Loiret near Café de la Mairie, a bar/restaurant/dancehall for summer tourists where he met its waitress/hostess Jeanette Ponsard *et. al.* as this play's inspiration.

As with Le Café Royalé, Café de la Mairie no longer exists; Jeanette lives in Orléans. This play is about the vicissitudes of human frailty and insouciant authority. 'So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.' —F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'The Great Gatsby.'

SCENE ONE: EVENING

GURÖV struts into Le Café Royalé wearing a shiny black tuxedo, white shirt, red bow tie, black patent leather slip-ons. Takes up his mandolin and sits near a window that faces the blue-black sea. Looks across the water as though looking for something dear to him, perhaps his life. LÉTICIA comes strolling along in yellow shorts and a white low-cut tank top. Once in a while he turns to watch. She stops to pick a few flowers. SOUNDS of an automobile that stops. OSKI, a short paunchy obese man in brown knickers, white shirt and a bowler appears, wandering here and there like a mole eating chocolates from a paper bag as from a beach-side shop.

OSKI

(Smiles, sings brightly-:)

Heart of me
Heart of you
All's the same
If you are true ...

If you are true
Heart of mine
All's the same
If you are true ...

(Beat.)

... You're some looker!

LÉTICIA

(Smiles, twists hips, shimmies.)

—I wanted to be in the movies. In case you want to know.

OSKI

... You have ... a boyfriend—?

LÉTICIA

—It's Guröv Chebutykin who owns the dancehall, Le Café Royalé.

(Motions with her head.)

LÉTICIA (CONT'D)

He brought me here and I thought he'd let me sing. It's fine to sing in the band of who you love! He's the Prince of Malfi!

OSKI

(Small laugh.)

... The Prince of Malfi—?

LÉTICIA

It's him all right! He's thinking always of Arkina Alekseyevich, a diva who disappeared years ago after an explosion in his stupid dancehall! Yet in his dreams at night he dreams she's still alive ...

OSKI

(Looks at the flowers she carries.)

—Pretty flowers!

LÉTICIA

On summer evenings a nice girl needs someone to hold her ...

OSKI

You're ... a bride-in-waiting—?

LÉTICIA

(Lifts the flowers to show.)

It's marsh marigolds.

OSKI

It's cowslips from any old swamp.

LÉTICIA

—I picked 'em myself.

OSKI

It's hot these summers.

LÉTICIA

You have to make do.

OSKI

Maybe so ...

LÉTICIA

It's when I get headaches.

OSKI

Try aspirins!

LÉTICIA

I was born a long ways from here ... 16 years ago.

OSKI

... Huh—? ... 16—

LÉTICIA

Cross my heart, hope to die.

OSKI

... 16, you say—? —It's a nice age. It's said I'm quite good ...

LÉTICIA

(Makes a face.)

—There's people everywhere with troubles, like me ...

OSKI

... What's your ... name—?

LÉTICIA

Léticia, it's from my mother. Yes, it's hot these summers. You have a first-aid kit with aspirins in your car—? On this beach, nothing's open.

OSKI

I don't want your money. Stay here.

LÉTICIA

There's always somebody good in the world who looks after others. You trust strangers when there's nobody else. I have 5 rubles. You been ... away from home much?

OSKI

Lots of times, sure as I'm Oski Oskich from Odessa.

LÉTICIA

... Odessa—? I been away all my life.

(Offers him a ruble note from
a pocket.)

OSKI

Keep your money.

(Goes off, returns with a bottle.)

LÉTICIA

(Takes it, pays him.)

—In life without paying, you get nothing. It's how it's been.

OSKI

It's one way to put it, Léticia.

LÉTICIA

(Opens bottle; a few tablets
drop into her palm.)

—These isn't aspirins. They're green. I been allergic to pills, Oski Oskich.

OSKI

My brother gets 'em for me. He's Aho in Odessa and he's allergic too, so these is okay.

LÉTICIA

(Laughs.)

... Aho in ... Odessa—

OSKI

These pills is better. Whatever bothers you is soon gone.

(Looking about.)

The dancehall's gone bust, I guess.

LÉTICIA

(Swallows some tablets.)

I guess I never get to sing in Le Café Royalé.

OSKI

You're looking for love—?

LÉTICIA

(Sits on the sand, lists to one side.)

—It's ... come to us—?

OSKI

Things looking up. I could start out fresh—like some new young kid.

LÉTICIA

... Some young kid—

OSKI

None's perfect. Yet if none's perfect, then all is flawed—some more, some less. 'Cept those of us having the mark of the Cross.

LÉTICIA

—You suppose we could make a go of it—?

OSKI

... Us—?

LÉTICIA

You and me, together—?

OSKI

Life's hard ...

LÉTICIA

You sure—?

OSKI

Some day I will put fine words in a song. My brother Aho who has many babies will help me. In Kharkov he was the magistrate.

LÉTICIA

—I'm ... suddenly sleepy.

OSKI

Life isn't so much fun. When the deacon was found hanging in St. Anne's rectory at the Festival Of Seven Sisters, they sent Aho to Odessa where our father's the magistrate. In the evenings my brother drinks San Rotua Red to watch the sun go down over the purple hills of the city. It's so much beauty he sometimes cries.

LÉTICIA

(Wails.)

... Oh, God—

OSKI

Our hearts have many songs ... as 2 live easily as 1 in the vast underside of Joyce's indifferent dome, even if life passes away, a phantom where no one has been ...

LÉTICIA

... A phantom—?

OSKI

In the world's unfilled space is seldom a smile, the touch of someone's hand. Say words of love and you won't be ever alone.

LÉTICIA

(Softly.)

I'm awake these lonely nights. It's years I been waiting. Waiting for Guröv.

—Oh, God, Oski Oskich— Right now, this very minute, it's you that's ... in my heart—

In life I never want to be alone, not a minute. There's a favor I'm needing. Seen anyone lonesome ... with people around?

OSKI

Not that I recall. You could make me happy. Let's us go off, you and me, to a place that's better.

LÉTICIA

In dancehalls there's others, everyone having a good cry for all the bad things ever happen. I'm going to die, I can't stand it, don't leave me. There's—one thing—a very small thing. Right now, I'm nobody's good-hearted woman.

OSKI

Tell me—but maybe hurry?

LÉTICIA

Don't know if I should—or I shouldn't. I've never asked much. In Odessa with plenty dancehalls you could find me a little place to sing, maybe on the back street. We could see each other and talk, find us a nice beach somewheres. It's I in you and you in me. Come here, hold my hand, sit close 'cause I need someone for a little while. It's years of waiting.

OSKI

—Oh, sure ...

LÉTICIA

The whole world's a dancehall. You go in and have you a couple and up in the lights is someone singing the sad songs, it's enough to make you cry.

LÉTICIA (CONT'D)

In Odessa there's a cemetery I been to, the Garden of Pink Roses. Across the cemetery's the Silver Palace, a dancehall. Towards morning, there's sometimes stragglers passed out in the cemetery.

(SCREEN IMAGE: An Audi, silver wheels.)

OSKI

The Palace is where I'm going in my new car. I got it from a girl singer with nice curly hair who didn't need it no more, not even for one more day!

LÉTICIA

I may be dumb but I know cars. —I'm suddenly, dizzy. Oh, God—

OSKI

There's music at the Palace. It's where all the young girls go. Yet why I am sad, now in my best clothes? In life, why should anyone ever be sad?

LÉTICIA

—They shouldn't. It's you and me that's hot for each other.

OSKI

Afterwards we'll go to the Garden of Pink Roses. There's a path under the trees ... to the cemetery. —I'll hold your hand; you won't be afraid.

(They hurry off.)

LÉTICIA (O.S.)

(Sings brightly-:)

Heart of me
Heart of you
All's the same
If you are true ...

OSKI (O.S.)

... Look now ... into the far hills rising ...

LÉTICIA (O.S.)

—Rising—? Rising now—!! GOD, OH GOD—

(Moments pass.)

OSKI

—Say something, Aimée! SAY SOMETHING, PLEASE—?

(SOUNDS of a car engine accelerating wildly and tires spinning in the loose sand. AIMÉE reappears, walks dizzily.)

LÉTICIA

(Wails.)

... Men, it's them that makes me sad ...

(LIGHTS come up in Le Café Royalé. GURÖV rises, takes his mandolin and mounts the bandstand, preens like a marionette with bandy legs, loose and stringy. LÉTICIA enters, sits at a table. MUSIC: Soft refrains like those often heard in a Paris bistro. SCREEN IMAGE: A few TOURISTS, strays, enter; some go to the back, are seen slow dancing.)

GURÖV

(With emotion; to the TOURISTS.)

—My name is Guröv ... and I'll tell you about myself ...

(The TOURISTS snicker.)

... In the 1940s as a prodigal in voice and tenor sax at Université de Paris and Le Étoile Tilsitt, I met a rising young diva, Arkina Alekseyevich where together we sang *Porgi amor* from *Le nozze di Figaro* to huge adoring audiences ...

(MUSIC: “*Porgi amor* from *Le nozze di Figaro*”)

GURÖV (CONT'D)

... Oh, God! How awesome and bountiful life seemed to be!

... saddened when she left to go with a light-opera company as the diva in 'Annette of Baulinghaus' in the south of France ...

... I stayed on, spending lonely evenings along the Left Bank —'La Rive Gauche" playing heavenly riffs on my tenor sax under the awesome aura of star-lit skies to hordes of wandering late-night romancers to survive until the draft for the military caught up with me ...

... helping me through this was my good fortune in finding Léticia, a cheeky 13-year-old at the time who remains, even now some 3 years later, unceasingly valiant and steadfast, an aspiring singer in her own right ...

(Waves to LÉTICIA who stands,
smiles, sits down.)

... after the war I met Arkina in Leningrad, where together we sang *Porgi amor* at the city opera house and our friendship blossomed until she moved on ...

... with my war injuries becoming more of a problem and the demise of the big bands, my post-war career in tenor sax was failing ...

... so I came here to open this place as Le Café Royalé, a dancehall for summer tourists ...

... last summer in a rush of bemused anticipation and heady bravura, I invited Arkina to visit on a star-lit night of summer solstice ...

... most unfortunately, late at night an explosion of unknown origin devastated the dancehall. Afterwards, she was nowhere to be found ...

.... she'd disappeared, with no news, ever. Thaedeus, my wayward brother, was likely involved but nothing was ever proven ...

(To LÉTICIA.)

... Hey, doll ... ? It's time for my show.

LÉTICIA

(To the TOURISTS.)

—It's time for him to sing. A big hunk of pussy cat!

GURÖV

(In a high lilting falsetto.)

... Who—?

(The TOURISTS snicker.)

LÉTICIA

It's you they're wanting, Guröv. It's time!

GURÖV

(Strums, sings-:)

Tell me, oh tell me
Oh tell me please do ...

LÉTICIA

Sing to 'em, big stud. You've come a long ways!

(Beat.)

—Here he is, ladies and gentlemen, onstage right now. Nobody's better on these, the finest shores ever, singing the sad songs better'n everybody. On these, the sandy shores of the finest sky-blue waters. He's my best friend so I know. Tear your heart out, ladies and gentlemen, whoever you are. WOW-EEE! He sings the sad songs, it's enough to make you cry. IT'S ... GURÖV, THE PRINCE OF MALFI—

GURÖV

(Strums, sings-:)

Tell me, oh tell me
My heart tell me true,
I'm lonely tonight
Just thinking of you ...

(The TOURISTS snicker.)

LÉTICIA

It's some big splash you're making!

GURÖV

I can't give up, Léticia. I love audiences ...

(Goes over to one side, flips a switch. The LIGHTS go down. Takes his mandolin, goes out onto the beach. She joins him; they sit on the sand overlooking the aura of the darkened sea; wind flows in from across the water.)

LÉTICIA

(Nuzzles him.)

Love me, Guröv—?

GURÖV

I love audiences ...

LÉTICIA

(Looks off.)

—In dancehalls the music's not much, it's people needing people. They order vodka or a beer and sit around, thinking of things from long ago. They light a cigarette, talk to a stranger, wanting to be close, having somebody. It's people who been waiting, like you, like me. In joints here, everywhere, it's the same. It's people who been to places like Hawaii, Munich, Paris. C'mon, Big Daddy—

GURÖV

(Strums, sings-:)

Tell me you love me
Tell me you care ...

LÉTICIA

In Leningrad you played 'Old Buttermilk Skies' and 'Cab Driver' with encores and people crying. The next night only half as many came—but you played your heart out. By week's end the crowds pooped—'cause they wanted no more sadness. Laughing and fun is what they needed. In life we should be happy for what's coming up, not what's gone by.

GURÖV

I need a chance.

LÉTICIA

That was ago, past. You're no different ...

GURÖV

A man needs to find out who he is—

LÉTICIA

—Oh, God. There was so few in there. Now e might have a minute to ourselves.

GURÖV

Tomorrow's late-night show will be like Leningrad.

LÉTICIA

(With a hug.)

... Love me ... even a little—?

GURÖV

I do but words to express it are difficult. I've walked the beaches of the world listening to music, far away. Closing my eyes I imagine myself in Athens, Algiers, Rome.

LÉTICIA

... You're a ... romantic—?

GURÖV

I've wanted to be in distant places, becoming free if only I would decide. I don't know what's important, what I want to do, where I want to live. In the evenings after the shows, I'm lost. I write as well as anyone, I'm at it till dawn. I'm like an actor in my own play, not knowing where the actor stops and I begin. Time becomes meaningless, everything stays the same and yet I can't decide ...

LÉTICIA

... Decide ... what—?

GURÖV

Why, the rest of my life. It deserves thought. I must get ready. There's reading to do, ideas for tomorrow night's show.

LÉTICIA

Oh, God— You've had ideas for a long time ...

GURÖV

Cutting records in Leningrad was just that, cutting records. Recordings with one take. No mixers, electronics.

LÉTICIA

The music was Second World War. People needed this and loved it. They cried and sang 'When The Lights Go On Again' when you played. They wouldn't let you leave.

GURÖV

How well I remember ...

LÉTICIA

My singing career lasted only a week. It was 2 nights for a few rubles in Leningrad. From my debut, to this lofty place I come—

GURÖV

You were just starting!

LÉTICIA

You need a new beginning, Guröv. In here there's never more than a few tourists, strays. In Leningrad, I'd never go in places with so few people.

GURÖV

They'll come in droves. The future begins.

LÉTICIA

I've tried to leave before, but couldn't.

GURÖV

Tomorrow night's late show will be great. Reporters will come. Something big's coming, I feel it.

LÉTICIA

I came up from your audience and never get to sing.

GURÖV

(Looks off, as though not listening.)

—How I loved the late-night crowds at the Chaucer. I treasured the gigs. The days of the big bands were about over. Look what it has gotten us!

LÉTICIA

I've wondered about it sometimes.

GURÖV

I went ahead, always following my dream ...

LÉTICIA

Tourists don't come any more for the old songs. When it's the end of something, people get friendly. With you it's like the old days—a record that keeps on playing.

GURÖV

You might be a star. We'll see ...

LÉTICIA

I just been your waitress, Guröv ...

GURÖV

Hostess, you mean.

LÉTICIA

—I never seen you lightened up. Léticia's pretty good. For a long time I've waited for you to say things.

GURÖV

... In Paris and later in Leningrad, I was a sax prodigy, the best ... I've loved you, this I know ...

... there's bravery when I talk to people at the shows but that's where it ends ...

... I wasn't brave long ago the night Arkina went missing and I wasn't brave in the army. The military is what got me and now I'm never sure of myself ...

... my work's become my life and you're right, my work's been me. Doctors said I'd never get better until I became new but didn't say how ...

... in life we need to make ourselves better; it's up to us, you and me, on the beach late at night To the doctors I said music was my life, that I need to make something of it ...

... these years I haven't been living. It's the music in me that's lived and when I think of music gone from my life there's nothing ...

LÉTICIA

... Your life amounts to just music, plain and simple? Some notes on paper is all—? You're totally unconscious, Guröv ...

... here in this life there's nothing for me. Think of this wasted time and how I love you, yet never getting into those rooms you been living in ...

... you say it's music this, music that. Every night I been looking into those windows of yours, watching your light that's on till morning ...

... never once would you come out onto the beach—'cause your life's been music, only music. It's nothing more, nothing less—and not a minute for me—

GURÖV

(Long moment.)

... Getting shot in wars, you sometimes end up ... *only part of what you once were* ...

LÉTICIA

... So—that's it—

GURÖV

I'm afraid it is, yes—

LÉTICIA

Then music isn't the reason you'd not come near me? You could come out and sit by me in the moonlight ...

GURÖV

It'll be like Leningrad again, Léticia. I need a chance.

LÉTICIA

I wouldn't care where you might of been shot—one place or other. Stay here forever, sing your old songs. You have what you deserve. It's no use.

GURÖV

I love things I've always wanted, needed. Here, for us, will be more.

LÉTICIA

From school days, I recall-: from land to land; and in my breast spring wakens too; And my regret becomes an April violet; And buds and blossoms like the rest ...

GURÖV

... In the army I watched early flights of eagles at dawn in the skies with water sloshing into our landing craft as I swam in the icy river ...

... with waves sucking one way and then the other and mortar shells landing near me in enough light to make the noon sun seem dim ...

... in the hospital for a month in the hospital with malaria, I thought of spring and becoming new ...

... music had taken my girl away, a late-night explosion in my very own dancehall so there was no more girl to talk to ...

... all Arkina ever wanted was to sing and nothing could take her mind away ...

... I think of her always, my new star in heaven to whom I called one star-filled moonlit evening-:

(Strums, sings-:)

Star light, star bright ...
I wonder where you are
Tonight ...

(MUSIC: "Porgi amor from *Le nozze di Figaro*")

—Last night I had dreams, dreams and more dreams. Arkina was singing *Porgi Amor* on the night train! It seemed so real, I'm sure it was—

LÉTICIA

... 'Round here, there's no trains ...

GURÖV

—for tomorrow night's festival, there could be. Arkina might be on it!

(Wheezes, eyes go shut, sinks to the floor. On hands and knees, she gives him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation; he stirs, rests back, appears to sleep.)

LÉTICIA

You should see a doctor about these spells. Something bad might be happening, I can feel it! Something really bad, for you, for me! And while you're at it, tell some doctor you're a bit wacky, thinking Arkina's alive! Have you rested today—?

(Sings softly-:)

Sweet and rest
Sweet and low,
Winds of the Western Sea ...

(Strolls off along the water's edge. GODOV rises and goes back into the dancehall, disappears. She watches as THAEDEUS comes ambling along and goes into in the dark shadows of the dancehall where he can't be seen from the inside. Wears a long-billed 'pointy' cap, pants cut short at the knees, high-top boots. Opens his backpack, takes out a lute, sits on the beach.)

THAEDEUS

(Smiles to show his teeth,
strums, sings-:)

Sunday morning sunshine
Lying there down in th' dew,
Birdie singing in th' tree
Looking down at me an' you ...

Sunday morning sunshine
Lying there down in th' dew,
Never knew it'd be so fine
Having a birdie up there too ...

LÉTICIA

(Huge smile, with a hug.)

—You been out traveling the highways a long time, Sweet Thaedeus, hardly ever coming home.

THAEDEUS

(Strums, as for background.)

—I seen highways an' byways, it's all I care 'bout. They call me th' travelin' man ... 'cause there isn't a place that keeps him down ... not even here, on this fine beach where I was born—

LÉTICIA

(Nuzzles him.)

—It's not so ...

THAEDEUS

I'm proud to be T. Thaedeus Chebutykin, member of th' Church of Living Water where I was once't a deacon.

(Beat.)

It's a place for me—'cause God's heart's for th' lost.

LÉTICIA

Whatever's the 'T' stand for—?

THAEDEUS

Trouble!

(They laugh; he takes a pinch of snuff
that spills.)

THAEDEUS (CONT'D)

I been lucky in life, same as my daddy. Th' worl's for th' good people but
not for me.

(Farts.)

LÉTICIA

(Wails.)

—You should be in some hoosegow—

THAEDEUS

Oh, th' cradle's falling all right ...

LÉTICIA

—You're nuts, crazy. Worse than I ever seen! Once on this very beach, you
tried giving me a noogie. Your brother Guröv was watching from inside Le
Café Royalé. The whole next month he was mad!

THAEDEUS

(Gulps from a flask.)

In life it's hard to jus' take care of my own. I drink beer an' vodka ... an'
sleep like a fuzzy-cheek baby.

LÉTICIA

... Fuzzy-cheek baby— Sweet Thaedeus, you sure—?

THAEDEUS

(Makes a face.)

... Tuity, fruity ...

LÉTICIA

Any dreams I ever had left me in Paris 3 years ago. I was only 13 when us girls from the Little Sisters of the Poor was swimming in the Seine. On the beach I seen Guröv, sitting half asleep and sucking on a bottle like it was a nipple, there by hisself—like a baby, blubbering. When motioned me over I already knew what he was thinking— 'cept I didn't know how much he'd had ...

THAEDEUS

Oh, coochy-coo! People said you was cheeky ...

LÉTICIA

(Pushes him.)

My head's not clear so I sometimes make mistakes. At the license office, the clerk thought Guröv was my father. The next day when his draft notice came, he spaced out, thinking he was to die. Not saying a word, he left and took sick in a hospital. I didn't see him for a year till I heard he was in Leningrad with Arkina at the opera house ...

THAEDEUS

If we relied on people for good works, we'd wait forever!

LÉTICIA

I ran to the station but in Leningrad, Guröv had left me a note saying we wasn't married 'cause I wasn't old enough but I seen our license in the clerk's office.

At the opera house they sang *Porgi amor* from *Le nozze di Figaro*. When she left suddenly, he sank into depression and his career failed so he come here to open this place as Le Café Royalé.

Me, I rode the train all day and came in asking to sing, but ended up its waitress. It's 3 years I been here—and I'm crazy, crazy, crazy. —It's on account of men— Late in the evenings, he plays recordings of *Porgi amor*, till dawn—

THAEDEUS

(Looking off, as though not listening.)

Th' Promise Lan' has seen it's best days an' needs a new start. It needs to go back out to sea, sent away.

THAEDEUS (CONT'D)

Daddy never found a place for a new 'lluvial hole. On his deathbed he asked me to dig one—'cause in his lifetime he couldn't.

I seen a book from th' USA once't—'God's Little Acre.' It's 'bout lan' with nothing on it 'cept a hole, dug by a man name of Ty Ty.

Daddy had hisself a hole he was proud of—but it was only a plain one.

Ever' night I dream of a hole that's 'lluvial. Coming home to th' place of my birth, there isn't a mother any more. It was nothing I set; I could of proved it ...

LÉTICIA

Set—? *Oh God, Sweet Thaedeus—*

THAEDEUS

It's me who has th' mark of sin for something not my fault, getting put in th' army. Arkina was left by Guröv in a place she wasn't to be. Nobody knows how much I loved that girl too. Deep in my heart she was mine. Late at night, Le Café Royalé should of been empty, th' people gone. It was—'cept for Arkina brought by Guröv. He's th' one needing to forgive—

LÉTICIA

—Men, they're all the same ...

THAEDEUS

Don't keep bothering me!

LÉTICIA

With men, it's nothing you can do. It's lies, lies and more lies. I'm awake these lonely nights. It's years I been waiting. Waiting for Guröv! —*Oh, God, Sweet Thaedeus! —Right now, this very minute, it's you that's ... in my heart—*

THAEDEUS

(Mugs, puckers.)

—Huh? Come closer, Léticia.

LÉTICIA

—No ... 'cause if I did, I'd end up in your lap, out here in the open ...

THAEDEUS

Wimmen has a heart of gold. Does Guröv know I'm campin' here in th' dancehall shadows where I can't be seen from inside?

LÉTICIA

He hardly knows anything. There's things I need to say. Morning, noon and night, Guröv thinks about Arkina. Me, I know about love—'cause in my dreams at night, Le Café Royalé holds me back, like a prison.

In my dreams at night, Guröv's nice to me, like the way he was when I first come here, as fine a man ever was. In my dreams I was happy, crying all night in his arms. With so much love, it's like lights coming on.

It's his jail I'm in. Some day when his prison's gone in my life, no one will be taking advantage of me. I dream sometimes of this beach with no dancehall on it—

THAEDEUS

—You're th' one saying it, Léticia. Bah!

(Finds a small fold-up shovel in his backpack and goes over, goes to dig in the loose sand near the dancehall foundation.)

To find a 'lluvial hole you dig down 'bout 30 feet to where th' water's swirling an' rushing, pleasant as a nice waterfalls. If you find th' 'xact spot—you'll hear th' nicest swirling sounds ever. Near th' dancehall's a good place to dig as any—

(Sets his shovel down, finds a can of gas in his backpack; lights a camp fire.)

LÉTICIA

—You're nuts, Sweet Thaeus! You should have a plain campfire, not something huge and stinky like a swamp smouldering. And you think nothing of it—

THAEDEUS

(Small laugh.)

I like burning, fires. It's nice, with plenty smoke.

LÉTICIA

As a kid I'd set off a few firecrackers but only itty-bitty ones. On nights of summer solstice, the sky lights up—bright as day. I get excited every year. —*Whatever's ... burning?*

THAEDEUS

Huh—?

LÉTICIA

—Oh, oh ... pew.

THAEDEUS

... It's nothing.

LÉTICIA

—I see it; it's a dead rabbit in the some clutter near your fire! You harm animals—like some atheist or weirdo—?

THAEDEUS

Beaches belong to people—an' people do what they like. Fools know it.

LÉTICIA

It's like you're 2 different people, nice at times, but sometimes mean and crude. Sweet Thaeus, there's penalties for smelling up the beach. Don't you read signs—?

THAEDEUS

Read, schmead, peed ...

LÉTICIA

Be decent.

THAEDEUS

Don't be at my throat. I'm jus' a wayfaring man in th' walk of life. 'Cause Guröv isn't welcoming me, I'm not staying 'round here long.

LÉTICIA

You always have such a guilty look.

THAEDEUS

If you're police, show your badge. Otherwise, keep still.

LÉTICIA

Your can of gas for starting fires shouldn't be close. Things will blow to Kingdom Come.

(Moves the gas can away.)

THAEDEUS

Th' can's empty—so it don't matter.

LÉTICIA

Empty cans has fumes that blow you to kingdom come. I suppose you found the rabbit on the road, claiming a horse maybe tromped on it.

THAEDEUS

Th' rabbit prob'ly jus' died.

LÉTICIA

You might of clubbed it—for fun.

THAEDEUS

Remember not th' sins of my youth. It's in Deuteronomy!

LÉTICIA

It's a long time since you been a youth. Hey, what's by your feet? Is that ... blood—?

THAEDEUS

Well, look at that.

LÉTICIA

You a heathen, Sweet Thaedeus—?

THAEDEUS

(Grips her about the neck.)

You talking ... 'bout me? I could crush you in a second. Want more?

LÉTICIA

(Struggles, gets free.)

Beast!

THAEDEUS

At times you're cute—with a nice pair a' pipes.

LÉTICIA

Stupid!

THAEDEUS

Sometimes spicy—

LÉTICIA

Let's bury the rabbit.

THAEDEUS

BAH—

LÉTICIA

If you didn't bludgeon the rabbit, say so once and for all.

THAEDEUS

Say so, say so, say so!

LÉTICIA

soon you'll be howling at the moon. Damn you, Sweet Thaedeus, let's dig the rabbit under and forget it—

THAEDEUS

I'm one that'd never harm a living thing.

LÉTICIA

A minute ago you squashed my neck. Let's dig it under 'cause it smells. You never burn hair with people around.

THAEDEUS

Ever'one's innocent till prove guilty.

LÉTICIA

You're goofier every minute.

THAEDEUS

I'm a man with a clean heart who's looking for th' good life.

LÉTICIA

(Goes over, gets his shovel.)

Don't you 'clean heart' me. That innocent rabbit suffered!

THAEDEUS

Fine ...

LÉTICIA

(Drops the shovel, gasps.)

—Hey, the rabbit moved, it's alive. *Damn you!*

THAEDEUS

I didn't know, I swear.

LÉTICIA

—God in heaven, help us.

THAEDEUS

It was moving only a little. I'll cross my heart if you want.

LÉTICIA

—I can't stand any more of this. I CAN'T.

(An eerie sound, almost human, rises;
the rabbit jerks, stiffens.)

THAEDEUS

It couldn't of been alive—it wasn't breathing.

LÉTICIA

(Wails.)

—Stop this talking. STOP—

THAEDEUS

How's a person to know a animal wasn't dead?

LÉTICIA

—Help, I'm throwing up.

THAEDEUS

(Looking skyward.)

—Oh God, if you'd sent your Word, it wouldn't of happen. How's one to know th' rabbit was alive? Sure as I'm here, I didn't know an' you're my witness.

LÉTICIA

Be careful the way you talk about God. He's hardly ever pleased with things people do. Life's precious but you don't care, I see it in your eyes. You're a ... snake in the grass.

THAEDEUS

Snakes move their tails till sundown when dying. Rabbits maybe like that too—for all I know.

LÉTICIA

It's lies, more lies, one after another like a train going clackety-clack. With you there's no caboose, no end to things.

THAEDEUS

You're a woman in need an' I've figured what it is. Hah—

LÉTICIA

From you it's all crap. I don't know what you're thinking, honest to God. I know the type snakes is ... an' that's you—'cause I seen plenty. I may be dumb—but I know snakes.

THAEDEUS

You're getting th' sparkle now! Wimmen, they can't fool me, never have, never will. First they sparkle, then ... percolate.

LÉTICIA

Is everything always funny, funny, funny—?

THAEDEUS

Bad things happen to good people sometimes ...

LÉTICIA

Oh, God— Nothing's ever over. On this beach it's just the 2 of us, man and woman. Maybe a few sparks, is all.

THAEDEUS

Forget th' rabbit ...

LÉTICIA

—Please, no more talk of snakes and rabbits. On nice summer evenings no one should be alone. It's men like you don't care. It's why I'm always out on the beach, looking ...

THAEDEUS

(Turns away, digs.)

Wimmen ...

(LÉTICIA runs off.)

SCENE DIMS OUT

-About David and the play ...

Served in the US Army, shot during training; served overseas, awarded the National Defense Service Medal. BBA and MA, U of M. Editor of BUSINESS BREVITIES. Assistant to Vice President for Health Sciences, U of M. Post-Master's study in MIS, the writing program and a year of East European Studies: Chekhov, Lermontov, Turgenev, Gogol, *et. al.*

"My Father's Home of Light," Harbinger No. 1, Vol. 1, Minneapolis, MN, Fall 1978; "Ambrosia Road," (Scene from One-Act) at W3 Poetheatre, April 5-6, 1984; and "What I Want To Know," (poetry) at W3 Poetheatre at Minneapolis College of Art Design, September 7, 1984. Scriptwriting (Winter 2003) with playwright John Olive at the Loft Literary Center.

Staged reading in March 2006 of this play/version-1 (Waiting for Godov) in Minneapolis at the Playwrights Center. Reading in June of 2011 of a Scene from version-2 (Waiting for Godov) at the Walker Art Center's Open Field's 'The Play's The Thing.' Special appreciation to the Playwrights Center as this version of the play took on greater life in the summer of 2014 as a dramaturg project.

