

# "BETWEEN THE LINES"

A Deconstructed Farce  
In 2 Acts

BY LUCY AVERY BROOKE

Writer's Guild of America East  
#1307590

Contact:  
LUCY AVERY BROOKE  
185 WEST END AVE. 23NP  
NY NY 10023  
917-359-9522

### CHARACTER LIST AND NOTES-

PLEASE NOTE: All of the characters, except for MAUDE and the WRITER, are slightly heightened in keeping with the 1950's film style. The basic premise is that the characters act like actors might in a rehearsal situation, only these are characters from the writer's imagination. As the play progresses, the worlds merge and imagined characters take on a realer hue. Also, in spite of everyone's individual moments, this is an ensemble piece and must remain so.

The Writer(Benjamin) - Human, honest, nerdy, intelligent if not wise, earnest in his desires if not always successful. He is frustrated by the question that frustrates most of us- Why won't the world go my way?

June- The epitome of the perfect leading lady. She is sure that justice wins in the end and that she is Justice. She relies on the comforts of her role, ignoring the still silent voice that longs for more.

Maude-The useful plot device. She is real, independent, and out of place in this stylized fantasy. She is too quirky to be considered as other than a character part and too real to be a cliché.

Vera- The gossip. She is the dry, sarcastic commentator who loves telling tales and throwing a monkey wrench in the works. Life is an observational sport for her but underneath her caustic facade, she's never really dared to play the game.

Cynthia- The innocent one, hopeful, upbeat, high energy, eager to please. She is begging to be noticed, struggling to make things right but never sure she has.

Tallulah- The villainess. All ego, a toddler with tits. She wants what she wants when she wants it. She is a tramp with dreams of glory as blind to her true desires as she is beautiful.

The Duchess- The Deus Ex Machina, Muse emeritus, a Diva past her prime, used to the spotlight, unused to the sidelines but wise enough to find a way to make it work.

Lou Anne- The salt of the earth. She's a pioneer woman used to fixing things and finding a little gold for herself when the writer isn't looking.

Jason/The waiter/stagehand/Cody- Jason's a bully. The waiter is an actor looking for a break. The stagehand doesn't care. He's a union man. Cody is beefcake but honest beefcake.

TIME: EARLY 1950's SETTING: writer's imaged NYC and Reno Ranch

THE SET-Except for the office Cubicle, the set is a projection of the writer's imagination. ACT ONE office cubicle open to the audience. Stage- furnishings and the illusion of place for each scene. ACT TWO more solid- 2 sets -Motel corridor and 3 practical doors. 2 on SL 1 SR. The Dude ranch- barn SR with practical barn door and loft window, Hay pile, Porch with rocker and practical door. The ranch should have a sign or the projection of a sign, clearly readable. Saying "LONELY STAR DUDE RANCH MAKING DIVORCE A PLEASURE SINCE 1929" separate line" NO MEN ALLOWED".

BETWEEN THE LINES  
A DECONSTRUCTED FARCE IN TWO ACTS

ACT 1 SCENE 1 THE HAPPY SCENE

*The lights rise on the WRITER. He sits at a desk in a small cubicle above the stage. It's the type of cubicle given to the night shift worker bees of a large law firm. The outline of a desktop monitor frames him. The rest of the office is not visible. His world is this cubicle. There is a Helium Balloon with Happy Birthday floating above his desk. He stares out through the monitor frame as if there was a universe beyond it.*

THE DUCHESS V/O

One of the nice things about working on the night shift is that no one bothers you... almost. When there's a brief, you type it. When there's not, you can type your dreams. You may be small potatoes at Jablonski, Ritterhouse, and O'Neill. You may be invisible to most of the human race. But on the page, you can be God... Almost.

WRITER

(As he types) LIGHTS UP ON a plush New York apartment. The time: Early 1950's. The style in keeping with the home of Jim, a Broadway director, and JUNE, his ex-Broadway singing sensation wife.

*We see a laser dot land on the Writer's balloon. It pops. He jumps his head out of range of the light*

WRITER

(Rising and looking off stage) Stop it! Jason! You're going to burn someone's eye out with that thing. (sits again)

JASON

(With frat boy sarcasm) How's that romance novel coming?

WRITER

It's a pastiche.

JASON

A what?

WRITER

A play.(goes back to typing)IDIOT. Shit! delete! Act one, scene one Draft 33. The Happy Scene". JUNE the ex-broadway - No, no! Said that. Delete, delete, delete. June, the faithful wife, and Maude, the faithful friend, are seated looking through an album of old photos.

*The WRITER continues to type but the sound fades as the lights dim on his cubical and rise on the scene he is writing.*

NOTE: JUNE & the other characters act in the slightly heightened style of an early 1950s women's film. MAUDE and THE WRITER remains natural.

*JUNE and MAUDE sit on a sofa, looking at a photo album. JUNE has an air of brittle brightness Cheerful in spite of whatever is bothering her. MAUDE's distracted.*

JUNE

Oh. Maude, Maude, Maude. Memories, Sweet Memories. How many years has it been since that dreadful Greek chorus in Pittsburgh?

*Maude turns to say something-*

No, no. Don't tell me.

Oh look Max, when he had hair. He asked me the other day if I missed my days in the theatre. Well...noooo... not really. Don't get me wrong, adulation's nice every now and again but I don't think men really understand the true needs of a woman. Hearth and Home and well (takes sip of her martini)other things. Plenty of other things like Jim , Jim, dear sweet Jim. He hasn't changed a bit has he? Not one iota in all these years. How does he do that?

*MAUDE turns-*

No, don't tell me. Oh, and there's me with Reginald Bumbry in the seltzer scene from,"Gay Paree". I always thought I looked best when I was slightly wet. That's where I meet Jim, dear, sweet Jim.

Look there's our honeymoon in Acapulco. All those high cliffs and all those dark young boys flinging themselves into the sea. There was one young diver named Paco who was quite taken with me, but Jim was my life, Jim is my life. Every day is a pleasure. Every hour a joy. Every moment a symphony. Every second a...a...a-

MAUDE

(An aside) Agony?

*Everything stops as JUNE give her a stony stare.*

JUNE

What?

MAUDE

An Agony, June. It is. Every hours a joy. Every moment a symphony!(Looks up at the control booth, slightly under her breath) This sucks!

JUNE

(Quietly, discreetly) That's not your line.

MAUDE

It should have been. Where is he? What's he doing?

JUNE

Jim?

MAUDE

NO! The WRITER!(Waves at the fourth wall, at the writer) How many drafts has it been, huh? 33? Here we are in the same damned happy Scene.

JUNE

Maude, Shhh!

MAUDE

What?Why? What's he going to do? Write me out? Fine. I can't just sit here for 33 drafts and watch him ruin what could be a very interesting story. I see so many possibilities. I keep pointing them out. I've tried all the normal lines of communication. Impulse, whim, sub conscious chatter. I can't get a word in edgewise. He's not listening.(To unseen writer.) ARE YOU!?

WRITER V/O

(Sounding like the voice of God) I am now!  
(NOTE: only MAUDE can hear him.)

MAUDE

Well, good, finally!

JUNE

Good what?

MAUDE

He's listening.

JUNE

It's a conversation?

MAUDE

Not really, but I've got his attention.

JUNE/WRITER V/O

I don't think this is a good idea, Maude. I think if you just get back to the lines all this will work itself out quite nicely.

MAUDE

(suspicious having noticed the echo) For who?

WRITER V/O

Whom.

JUNE

Me. I am the leading lady.

MAUDE

And who am I? No, no don't tell me. A convenient plot device.

JUNE/WRITER V/O

Exactly. You're the faithful friend and as the faithful friend-

MAUDE

(to writer) STOP it! (to June) He's feeding you lines June.

JUNE (CONFUSED)

That's what he's supposed to do.

MAUDE

(to Writer) You know, I can hear you, right? June, have you noticed a certain echo in your head?

JUNE

I think it's the martinis.

MAUDE

No. It's him.

JUNE

Well, that's a relief. I thought he was only speaking to you. I am the leading lady after all. He should be speaking to me.

MAUDE

He's not speaking to you, June. He's speaking for you.

WRITER V/O

What's the different! I'm the writer!! Shut up and say the lines!

*MAUDE zips her lip with a smile. There is an uncomfortable silence.*

JUNE

(June takes charge) Dear me, Jim's awfully late this evening. I wonder what's keeping him? It must be his new star, Tallulah Delightly. They say she's quite a handful.

MAUDE

(to Writer) You see that's it!

JUNE/WRITER V/O

What?!

MAUDE

"Tallulah Delightly?" Who names a character that? It's so obvious.

WRITER V/O

It's Descriptive!

JUNE

I think it's a stage name. Can We-(points at the album)

MAUDE

June as your friend, I think I should warn you-

JUNE

(shocked) That's Vera's line. She'd rip your teeth out if she knew.

WRITER V/O

This is the Happy scene! There are no warnings in the happy scene!

MAUDE

Why not?



JUNE  
Why not what?...

WRITER V/O  
Because then it wouldn't be the happy scene. It would be the warning scene which you can't have first off because then someone comes in late to the show and says, "What have I missed?", and someone else says-

Are you still chatting with-

Nothing.

MAUDE

JUNE  
NOTHING WHAT!?

WRITER V/O  
Exactly! Which is why this is the happy scene. Leave the structure to me okay?

Maude are you listening?

MAUDE  
(to June)Yes, Shhhh! (to Writer) It's a cliché!

It's a pastiche!

WRITER V/O

Same thing!

MAUDE

WRITER V/O  
It is not!

JUNE  
ENOUGH!

Not right now June!

MAUDE

JUNE  
Yes, right now! You have totally destroyed the happy scene and for what!?

MAUDE  
For us. for the play, for the writer.

What about my lines?!

JUNE

MAUDE  
They're not yours June. They're his. We are very good characters, June.

JUNE  
Do you think so? Who do you think they're going to get to play me?

MAUDE

I don't know June, that's not our job. Our job as characters is to be who we are. That is the real problem with writers, getting them to listen to who we really are.

WRITER V/O

I am listening. But this is not a play about voices in my head. You're a useful plot device! I am the writer. Be useful. You can be replaced. I can't.

MAUDE

Don't try to bully me! You are! You're being a bully and it doesn't become you.

JUNE

Is he saying something bad about me?

MAUDE

No. June, you are a very good character. If I disappear, don't you let him talk you into anything stupid.(To Writer) okay. Go ahead. Let me go. I've been kicked out of better scripts than this one. (She waits to be written out)

JUNE

(June rises, desperate to fill the void) Where's Jim? He's awfully late this evening. A Broadway director's lot is not a happy one. He's been having problems with Tallulah Delightly. They say she's quite a handful.

MAUDE

(Still waiting, quietly) You already said that.

JUNE

I know. It's the only line I can think of. I'm trying my best, Maude. This is my Happy Scene not yours. You should be ashamed of yourself. You're suppose to be the faithful friend. Now sit down and look at the album. I've got something to say to the writer.

*MAUDE sits feeling resigned and rebellious.*

(In Anger) You're not letting her get away with this are you?!?! I'm your leading lady! You're not sticking me alone in the happy scene with a totally dysfunctional faithful friend?!!

*Door bell rings.*

JUNE

Thank you.

WRITER V/O

No. Thank you.

*JUNE remains oblivious as-*

*STAGEHAND wheels out a small dolly on which a cardboard cutout of an elegantly dressed man is frozen in position. STAGEHAND exits.*

JUNE

(JUNE looks at Maude triumphantly) It's Jim! Darling, you're home.

MAUDE

(Quiet, rebellious aside) And stiff as ever.

WRITER V/O

CUT IT OUT MAUDE! STOP IT NOW! I'm not getting rid of you whenever you say so. I'm getting rid of you when I say so.

JUNE

(to the cardboard) So how's that Tallulah Delightly working out? I bet you need a cocktail.

MAUDE

Me too.

*MAUDE gives the audience a look of impending doom*

*LIGHTS TO BLACK*

ACT 1 SCENE 2 (THE LAST ONE TO KNOW SCENE)

*A RESTAURANT. Vera has already started her tirade before the lights rise.*

VERA

I oughta rip your teeth out!!!

*LINE CONTINUES AS LIGHTS RISE*

VERA ( CONTINUED)

What did you think you were doing? I'm the gossip, not you! I'm the one who gets to tell everyone's nasty little secrets, not you. You're the faithful friend. You're supposed to keep everyone's nasty little secrets.

*VERA and MAUDE sit at a table. There are several martini glasses in front of them. Maude has the same look on her face that she did at the end of the last scene. She is clearly debating her options.*

NOTE: Again Only Maude can hear the Writer's voice.

MAUDE

Vera, I thought you said we should stick to the lines.

VERA

No. I said I was going to make sure my lines got said by me.

MAUDE

I didn't even mention Jim's affair. Besides, it's not about the affair. It's about truth.

VERA

Who's truth? Yours or the writers? Most characters are content to say the lines as they were written.

*WAITER enters with a tray of martinis  
VERA takes one.*

Thank God!

MAUDE

I guess I'm not most characters. Don't you ever want something more than being a useful plot device?

VERA

Yeah, I want to keep my major plot twists!

MAUDE

Drink you're martini, Vera. Your secret's safe with me.

*WAITER leans in to offer cocktail to  
MAUDE. VERA takes it.*

VERA

Is my scene safe with you?

*WAITER starts to get another MAUDE  
waves him off.*

MAUDE

( To waiter)No, I think I need to be sober for this.

*CYNTHIA enters*

CYNTHIA

Hello, Vera. Hello Maude. Am I too late?

MAUDE

Yes.

No.

VERA

CYNTHIA

I am sorry, Maude. I really am, but I've never been able to figure out the amount of time it takes to get from Grand Central to the west side. There's train time and taxi time, of course, but then there's-

MAUDE

I wasn't talking about lunch, Cynthia.

VERA

She was talking about the plot line.

CYNTHIA

(Looks at her strangely) The what?

VERA

Maude's in one of her deviant moods.

CYNTHIA

No.

VERA

She tried to steal my thunder. She tried to nip a major plot twist, My major plot twist, right in the bud.

CYNTHIA

(Shocked) No!

VERA

During the Happy Scene.

CYNTHIA

No! Really Maude.(Turns to Vera) I didn't know there were any major plot twists in the happy scene. I thought it was just... "the happy scene".

VERA

Count on Maude to try something different.

MAUDE  
I was trying to help.

VERA  
She was trying to steal my lines.

MAUDE  
I was merely stating the obvious.

CYNTHIA  
What's obvious?

VERA  
The plot line.

MAUDE  
It's not just that-

CYNTHIA  
Can we get back to the regular lines. I think if we just go back to the regular lines-

MAUDE  
It's been mentioned. And I'm trying. I really am, but Vera won't let it go. MY plot Twist, MY scene. Who cares?

VERA  
I CARE!

CYNTHIA  
Which plot twist?

MAUDE  
You know- in the arms-

VERA  
MY secret! (Glares at Maude) Back to the lines!

CYNTHIA  
(Going back to the lines) Are you coming to June's party on Saturday? I hear it's going to be the highlight of the season.

VERA  
Wouldn't miss it for the world. I think there's going to be fireworks.

CYNTHIA

Fireworks in a New York apartment?

VERA

Wait til you see.

*Long pause. VERA and CYNTHIA turn to MAUDE*

CYNTHIA

Maude?

MAUDE

What?

CYNTHIA

You have a line.

MAUDE

(Sighs, looks out at writer) Couldn't Cynthia say it?

CYNTHIA

Who's she talking to?

VERA

The writer. She's going to be written out any time now. Mark my words in two seconds you're going to turn around and there'll be a completely different character in that chair.

CYNTHIA

She's talking to Thee writer? I didn't think that was allowed, not on the page.

VERA

It's not. (She glares at Maude) Don't push your luck, Maude. If you say one word before-

MAUDE

Before what? The proper cue? The proper crisis? The proper climax? Who cares?

VERA

The writer cares.

MAUDE

No, he doesn't. If he did he'd be in on this conversation. Trust me.

VERA

(a slow taunt) Go ahead Maude. Try something new. Try something different. I dare you!

MAUDE

I did. It didn't work. He's just ignoring me now, same as usual.

CYNTHIA

What's this all about? June's going to be here any minute. Don't you think we should get back to the lines?

MAUDE

Why Cynthia? It's not like they're leading us anywhere, anywhere interesting. The wandering husband. The wounded wife. The best we can hope for is the vicarious thrill of June and Jim patching it up after a quick affair and a quick trip to Reno.

CYNTHIA

Reno? June's going to Reno? Already?

VERA

No, not yet!(To unseen writer) Do me a favor write her out!

WRITER V/O

I'M TRYING!!!

*CYNTHIA turns as if she were entering for the first time.*

CYNTHIA

Hello Vera. Hello Maude. Am I late? I am sorry, I really am, but I've never been able to figure out the amount of time it takes to get from Grand Central to the West Side. There's train time and taxi time, of course, but then there's-

VERA

Let's skip the apologies Cynthia, we're way behind schedule as it is.

*Note: Every time CYNTHIA says, "Vera says", VERA tries to say her line but is cut off by CYNTHIA. WAITER will enter and exit with martinis.*

CYNTHIA

Alright- I apologize. Waiter enters with another martini Vera says, "Thank God." Gossip, Gossip, gossip. Drinks, Vera grabs waiter and says, "Martini". then- Gossip, gossip, gossip.

*WAITER enters double time with tray*

Waiter comes back with another martini says,



WAITER

Would you like to order now?

CYNTHIA

I say, "No we're waiting for a friend".

*WAITER exits double time.*

Maude says, "Where's June?" Vera says-

VERA

(Stops Cynthia) Cynthia let me say at least one of my lines! Speaking of June, have you heard about the Eazee-Sleep Motel? Well, I just happened to be in the neighborhood and there was Jim, June's Jim, bold as brass with-

CYNTHIA

What were you doing at the Eazee-Sleep Motel? I always stay at the Dorset, when I'm in town. It's much nicer.

VERA

That's not your line.

CYNTHIA

Yes, it is.

VERA

That line was cut.

CYNTHIA

Oh, yes. Well, everything's gotten so confused.

VERA

Can we please get back to the script before this whole thing turns into one giant improvisation?!

CYNTHIA

I'm trying to but Maude has thrown the whole thing off.

*JUNE enters in time to hear the previous line.*

MAUDE

I haven't said a word for at least 12 lines.

JUNE

Thrown what off?

CYNTHIA

Oh, June! Thank God you're here. Vera and Maude have been having the most awful row about the plot line.

VERA

She told me what happened to the Happy scene. I was shocked and appalled.

JUNE

That's alright. I managed to recover quite nicely.

CYNTHIA

Well I haven't! I kept asking them to get back to the script, but when we finally did it was too late and you were about to arrive so we had to skip a bunch of lines. I couldn't remember which lines had been cut and which lines hadn't. First draft, second draft, 32nd? Who knows? Have we gotten to the part about Jim being caught with Tallulah Delightly or?-

*JUNE freezes in shock*

VERA

Cynthia!!

CYNTHIA

What?

JUNE

Tallulah Delightly?

CYNTHIA

Yes, you know that line " in the arms of Tallulah Delightly", ...."At the Eazee Sleep Motel"?... Was that cut?

OTHERS

No.

CYNTHIA

Was that mine?

OTHERS

No.

VERA

IT. WAS. MINE!

*JUNE starts to move in dramatic fits and*

*start around the set as she seeks comfort but everyone is preoccupied. Vera is Glaring at Cynthia. Cynthia is staring guiltily at the floor and Maude is staring at the Audience, and the writer.*

JUNE

I'm fine.(no response) No really. I'm fine. It's just that I'm-

CYNTHIA

(looks up) Confused? Me too.

JUNE

We had a love that was Fine and pure and true.

VERA

Except for the nights he spent at the Eazee sleep motel.

MAUDE

(Drily) What a nice thing to say.

JUNE

I'm fine.

VERA

(to Maude) Grow up would you!  
All men are Scum!

JUNE

It's alright. It's okay. I'm fine. I'll survive.

MAUDE

He was cardboard, June

JUNE

I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. I am the leading lady after all.

CYNTHIA

It's nobody's fault

VERA

You stole my line!

JUNE

Tragedy is my forte.

MAUDE

She meant the cardboard.

JUNE

Happy endings my revenge. I'm really...  
I'm really fine.

CYNTHIA

You don't look fine. You look green, not really green green, sort of a pasty puce.

JUNE

Don't worry about me please. I'm sure I'll be just fine. We'll all be just fine. If we can just get back to the happy scene. It'll all work out just fine. Just fine, I'm fine. I'll be just finnnnn-

*JUNE breaks down in to copious sobs*

*and is carried out by VERA and CYNTHIA. The WAITER reenters with a check and hands it to MAUDE. MAUDE stares at it as the LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.*

ACT ONE SCENE 3 TALLULAH DELIGHTLY'S DRESSING ROOM.

*TALLULAH sits at her dressing table touching up her make-up There is a knock on the door.*

Enter.	TALLULAH
Cynthia Go!	WRITER V/O
Miss Delightly?	CYNTHIA
Yes?	TALLULAH
Uhhh....Do you have any plans to change the lines in this scene?	CYNTHIA
(pause) No. Are you in this scene?	TALLULAH
Me? Oh...no. There's been an awful row about the plot line. I'm just checking for a friend.	CYNTHIA
Thank you Cynthia.	WRITER
	<i>CYNTHIA Exits</i>
	<i>Another knock</i>
Yeah?	TALLULAH

*JUNE enters as TALLULAH sits facing the mirror,  
Unsure JUNE looks up at the control booth.*

JUNE

Line?

*With an open handed questioning look.  
No answer. She decides to ad lib. In the  
style of noble perseverance.*

JUNE

Alright. I uh... I uh... Are you Tallulah Delightly?

TALLULAH

Yes!

JUNE

Well, I'm June Judson. Mrs. June Judson. Mrs. Jim Jun-uhhh, Jim's wife.

TALLULAH

(With dry sarcasm) Jim, Married? What a wonderful surprise!

JUNE

Yes, you see, that's what I came to talk to you about.

TALLULAH

Well, well, well, How quaint, how civilized, how socially acceptable of you.

JUNE

You know, don't you? You know, I know don't you?

TALLULAH

I know a lot of things. So what?

JUNE

Well, then don't you think you'd better just give it up. I mean Jim, give Jim up. I'm not about to let him go. You won't get away with it. Not with my husband. Not with Jim. He's not like all the rest. He's-

TALLULAH

Just a man, like all the rest. And you're just a woman. But I'm not. I am TALLULAH. Men melt at the mere mention of my name, Whimper at a whiff of my perfume. They grovel at a gesture, they-

JUNE

I'm not just a woman either.

TALLULAH

Really?

JUNE

I'm a Broadway singing sensation.

TALLULAH

A what?

JUNE

Well, I was a Broadway singing sensation. Now, I'm...I'mm...I'm an archetype. I'm the symbol of everything good and decent in the American wife.

TALLULAH

I'm the symbol of everything fun and nasty in the American sex symbol. Gee I wonder who's going to win?

JUNE

I am.(With a note of pity in her voice) Don't you realize that Honesty and decency always win in the end?

TALLULAH

Not tonight they don't. You ain't no archetype. You're a stereotype.

JUNE(WHISPERS)

We're getting away from the script.

*Tallulah keeps smiling.*

You said you wouldn't change the lines.

TALLULAH

I lied.

JUNE/WRITER V/O

You're not suppose to lie. Well, you're a villain, I suppose you can lie but... You're not supposed to change the lines. What's happening!?

TALLULAH

What do you think, I'm stupid or something? You think I didn't hear about your friend's little improvisations? Why should I follow the rules if they don't? I'm Tallulah. I'm not your run of the mill vixen. I'm TALLULAH, the biggest bitch on Broadway. I could have any man I want, any boy, anything.

(MORE)

TALLULAH (cont'd)

I could have your pet schnauzer if I wanted. And maybe I will. From now on the plot lines up for grabs, Pollyanna.

JUNE

But you can't just change things around to suit you.

TALLULAH

Why not?

JUNE

You're the villain.

TALLULAH

Well it looks like things are changing don't it. Maybe I'm the leading lady now. Yeah ,that's it. "Tallulah" The story of a street urchin, who claws her- who climbs her way to the top struggling to find her one true love, struggling against the intolerance and bigotry of quote, Proper, unquote society. Yes, that's it. A story for the bitch in all of us.

JUNE

No, you can't! You can't do this!!! It's not the way it works!!

TALLULAH

What do you know about it? You've never adlibbed in your life. All your lines have been laid out for you on a silver platter. Broadway singing sensation. HA! Not any more. You're washed up, I tell ya. A housewife has-been. Go wallow in your days of glory. They're gone, Gone, GONE! Where's your High C now Honey?!!

*June rises with a look of righteous anger and steely determination and looks out for the writer's line with desperation*

WRITER

SHIT! I don't know!

*JUNE takes a breath & let's go with a series of high notes that push TALLULAH against the wall rising to a high note that knocks TALLULAH unconscious with it's power. TALLULAH crumples to the floor. JUNE is a little taken aback by what she has done and is unsure of what to do next. She realizes she is alone onstage, looks about for a moment considering and then-*

Uhm -Blackout?!

JUNE

*JUNE exits hurriedly.*

BLACKOUT

ACT 1 SCENE 4 THE GOOD COUNSEL SCENE

WRITER V/O

No.

*LIGHTS UP Still the dressing room*

*June is back standing over the body. She looks confused by the lights. Something is wrong.*

Blackout!

JUNE

*BLACKOUT*

No!

WRITER V/O

*LIGHT UP AGAIN.*

*JUNE is still there.*

(More desperately)Blackout!

JUNE

*BLACKOUT*

*LIGHTS UP AGAIN*

*JUNE is seated this time. She looks down at Tallulah's unconscious body. She looks around helplessly for a long time, finally looking out towards where the writer should be.*



JUNE

(As if trying to get the attention of a bad waiter) Excuse me.(No answer)Excuse me!(No answer) (June takes a slow breath in and a slow breath out again. She shuts her eyes and repeats the mantra)- I am the leading lady. I am the leading lady. I am the leading lady. Where in God's name is the Writer?!

WRITER V/O

I'M THINKING!Oh God. WHERE'S MAUDE?-

JUNE

(Slight pause as she waits for an answer) Nothing.

*She starts to Exit.*

WRITER V/O

(God Voice)JUNE STOPS. JUNE SITS. JUNE THINKS.

*JUNE does but doesn't know why. She looks nervously down at the body.*

JUNE

(She tries again) Hello? Helloooo? Helloooo?

WRITER V/O

Maude enters stage left.( pause) Maude!?(pause) NOW!!!!

*MAUDE peeks out from behind the curtain*

WRITER V/O

ON stage NOW!.

*MAUDE slinks in reluctantly.*

JUNE

Well, well, well fancy meeting you here.

MAUDE

It wasn't my idea.

JUNE

Well, it certainly wasn't mine.

*JUNE points down at the prone  
TALLULAH*

Look what you've done.

MAUDE

I didn't do it. You did. I'm very impressed! I really am. It's high time you used that High "c" for something besides applause.

JUNE

Well, I'm not. I'm ashamed, Maude, utterly ashamed. It's totally contrary to my character description. I don't know what got into me. Yes, I do. You did! If you hadn't started changing things. What did you want?

MAUDE

I don't know. This isn't right for me and I don't know why. Don't you ever-(looks at her) Nevermind. I'm sorry June. Soon enough you'll be back to your happy ending.

JUNE

Not anymore I won't. Tallulah wants it. She's going to claw her way to the top of quote proper unquote society searching for her one true love.

*TALLULAH starts to come to. JUNE hits her with another high note. TALLULAH crumples again.*

MAUDE

I think you've got a good head start on her. (looks at the body)

JUNE

I can't hold her down with high notes forever. Jim's supposed to be mine. Or was supposed to be or will be. I'm not sure anymore. The writer hasn't fed me a line in ages. I don't know what I'm doing!!! All I'm sure of is it's time for the good counsel scene.(with desperation) Do you have any?

MAUDE

Not really. Should we be doing this with... the body?

JUNE

I've tried changing the scene. It's not working. Blackout!

*BLACKOUT*

*LIGHTS RISE ON THE SAME SCENE*

JUNE

See! It's not working. It doesn't work. I don't know why. What is the writer doing Maude? Why can't I hear him? Why doesn't he hear me?

MAUDE

Writer's block.(to unseen writer) It's alright. He'll write me out and replace me with someone more "faithful". Funny thing is, I thought I was being faithful. I thought I was helping.

JUNE

Who?

MAUDE

You. him. For 33 drafts you have been shackled to philandering cardboard. It's high time you moved on-

JUNE

He's not cardboard, Maude! Well, he is a bit stiff but...

MAUDE

Yes, he is. That's what puzzles me.

JUNE

Jim?

MAUDE

No the writer. He imagines such wonderful women but when it came to a man. He fell totally flat. It's as if he was trying to match you up with an image rather than a real man. It's sad really. I think He could tell a great story with just us women, but he's not listening.

JUNE

I'm worried about my happy ending Maude. Is that selfish?

MAUDE

Probably. But hopefully you'll end up with something better than cardboard. Don't worry June. You'll survive. I wish you the best. I do, I really do.

*MAUDE turns to go*

JUNE

Wait! Where's my good counsel!?

MAUDE

Would you listen?

JUNE

I don't have many options, do I?

MAUDE

Alright, okay, here it is. Stop worrying about the proper plot line, stop waiting for someone else to write your lines. You're the leading lady. There should be no limit to what you can do.

*June's eyes edge out towards the invisible writer*

Don't look at him. Don't look at me. Look at yourself. You're whatever the hell you want to be. Throw away all those leading lady cliches he's been feeding you. Throw away the pity, the plot, the script. Show them the June that no one knows. That would be a real inspiration, a real plot twist.

JUNE

Yes, Yes, it would be but-(she hesitates then stops herself)But ...No... I have to be in Reno by the 2nd Act, then there's my scene of quiet regret, the powder room scene, the finale, and last but not least my happy ending.

MAUDE

What about a happy now?

JUNE

I don't think that's possible. (looks at body) Not with Tallulah in the room.

MAUDE

Wait.

*MAUDE exits and enters with a dolly and JIM'S CARDBOARD CUTOUT. She props it up against the dresser.*

*JUNE looks at Jim. Her hand starts to reach for him, but she draws it back.*

*MAUDE is still struggling with the body.*

You have to help, June!

*They roll TALLULAH on to the dolly. MAUDE shoves Jim into JUNE'S hands and wheels the Dolly off stage.*

*June stares at Jim while Maude wheels Tallulah out.*

WRITER V/O/JUNE

(GOD tone)Okay that's enough! YOU CAN'T JUST HAND HIM TO ME?

*MAUDE comes back in*

MAUDE

Why not?

*JUNE tosses him to the floor.*

JUNE

I'm off to Reno. I've got too much baggage as it is.

*JUNE exits.*

WRITER V/O

That's why not!

*BLACKOUT*

ACT 1 SCENE 5

*A small spot appears on MAUDE.*

*The setting is now a blank stage.*

MAUDE

(She looks out thru the darkness) Hello? (long pause)

*We hear someone bumping into things in the dark.*

WRITER

AHHH! JESSS...

*We hear a loud thud as something falls.*

Damn!.....AaaaaaAh, Alright, okay. LIGHTS UP!

*Lights up on the WRITER and Maude. The dresser and chair have been kicked aside. Jim is flat on the floor. WRITER and MAUDE stare at each other for a long awkward moment.*

WRITER

(wondering how to start) HI, okay...I. uhm... I want, I want to talk to you about this whole thing.

MAUDE

(in a low tone) What are you doing?

WRITER

I'm the writer.

MAUDE

I know, we've spoken. I mean what are you doing here. Shouldn't you be writing this... out there? (She points to the audience)

WRITER

I'm trying something more direct.

MAUDE

Well. That's...unusual. I'm guessing you want to write me out?

WRITER

You don't simply write a character out! You have to figure out a way to replace them and whatever plot points they were responsible for. I don't want to toss the whole script out. I want to...I want.....

MAUDE

Show me your tongue.

WRITER

What?

MAUDE

Show me your tongue.

*The WRITER does hesitantly.*

All the way. Okay, yeah. Writer's block.

WRITER

It is not writer's block. It's you.

MAUDE

No. Well, maybe but, you're stuck in a rut, clinging to the old ideas you thought were brilliant but aren't, and the new ones you don't understand and don't trust. You don't trust me. You don't trust yourself. It's all there on your tongue. It was bound to happen. You started out venting and... What happened?... bad relationship? Yeah, well, you're a man writing a play about 7 women. It's pretty obvious.

WRITER

Oh come on! It's my play! I can write about anything I want. I want to write about women. I like women... some women, I do. I love women. I don't understand them, but I like to imagine I could.(stops) What does my tongue have to do with this?

MAUDE

Nothing (she smiles) everything. You're stuck in your imagination, metaphors abound. It's so obvious really.

WRITER

What!?

MAUDE

That you don't understand me or us or even your own imagination.

WRITER

I created you!

MAUDE

You can create a child. It doesn't mean you'll understand them.

WRITER

I understand my imagination. I've lived in it most of my life. So don't try to confuse me with metaphors.

MAUDE

I'm not trying to confuse you. I'm trying to show you the possibilities-

WRITER

I'm the writer. You're the fantasy. I get to pick the possibilities not you.

MAUDE

But you're not picking them. You're ignoring them. And, by the way, I am not a fantasy.

WRITER

That's for sure. A fantasy would be Buxom Swedish girls in a sauna. You're supposed to be a convenient plot device.

MAUDE

(With dry sarcasm)Oh thank you. Let's just imagine something here. Let's imagine, this isn't a fantasy, a daydream that you can just walk away from. Let's imagine you're really on the page. If that were to be the case, it would be a whole new world with new rules.

(MORE)

MAUDE (cont'd)

We may be invisible, ephemeral creatures in your world, but in our world we're much, much more. We're inspirations. You don't mess with inspiration, not in this world.

WRITER

Yeah, sure, fine. You're not going to con me into doing things your way. I am the writer. This is my story. I get to write you any way I want. Why are you doing this, Maude? You were supposed to be faithful. What's happened to that inspiration?

MAUDE

Well, What exactly did you want when you wrote me?

WRITER

I told you, I need a character I could depend on, who sees things clearly, logically who can explain-

MAUDE

What? Why June's philandering husband is cardboard?

WRITER

He's not cardboard. He's cool,... understated. Geeeeez!, It's my script, you're my character. Look, I don't want to argue with you. You either let me write this or I write you out.

MAUDE

Oh please, stop threatening me with banishment and then asking me to come back and solve your problems.

*MAUDE heads off stage*

WRITER

It was one scene! I couldn't find anyone else. I needed your help and even then you don't listen!

*MAUDE peeks out from off stage.*

MAUDE

Why? Why should I listen to you if you won't listen to me?

WRITER

I HAVE! What do you think I've been doing for the past few scenes!( Trying to be polite) I'm sorry if I offended you in any way, but, I have been very tolerant. I've let all of you, all of you wander around doing your own thing for several scenes. It was very interesting. It was... interesting. But we're not getting anywhere.



MAUDE

(MAUDE leans back in) I got Jim back.

WRITER

No, you didn't. You just shoved him at her. That's not a happy ending.

*MAUDE enters again*

MAUDE

What do you want? I don't think you know.

WRITER

I want you to stop jumping into my head and changing things around.

MAUDE

That's what inspiration does!

WRITER

Look let's be honest here. This is an entertainment. That's all. Something to keep me awake at 3 o'clock in the morning when there's no work and nothing creative in my life. It's no great treatise on the meaning of life or the meaning of women, it's just an entertainment.

MAUDE

(surprised)I thought-

WRITER

What?

MAUDE

(disappointed) I thought-

WRITER

I'm sorry. Sorry to disappoint you. Sorry I'm not Ibsen or Shaw or Shakespeare. I'm a legal temp . My job is not to write great plays. My job is to type out words specifically designed to confuse the hell out everyone but lawyers. This is my escape. I wanted to get away for a while.

MAUDE

And here you are.

WRITER

Yeah.(To himself) Here I am. (Long pause as they look uncomfortable) This is stupid. This is a stupid conversation. I'm arguing with my own imagination about what I'm allowed to imagine. I'm going home. (Heads for the Fourth wall)

MAUDE

What?! You just called me back and now you're leaving? Just when we got to the good part. You came all the way here to fix things and now you're going all the way back there with nothing to show for it? That's stupid!

WRITER

God, you are annoying. Do you know what it's like to hear you? Every draft I wrote I could feel you mumbling in the background of my subconscious and now this. I don't know who you are but you're not the character I wrote.

MAUDE

Oh, yeah? Well...You haven't written me out. What's that about?

WRITER

Remind me when I get back out there. (He looks out but doesn't leave)

MAUDE

(She looks out as well) What's it like?

WRITER

What?

MAUDE

You know, out there, off the page.

WRITER

Do you like cubicles?

MAUDE

What?

WRITER

Not your scene.

MAUDE

How do you know?

WRITER

You're the faithful friend and faithful friends don't survive out there, even ones as contrary as m-(corrects himself) as you.

MAUDE

Come on what's out there?

*MAUDE wanders to the edge of the*

*stage. She take a moment to look at the wall.*

WRITER

I told you. A cubicle. Nothing. A wall. A fourth wall. Either way, you can't get through. It was surprisingly difficult for me and I'm the writer.

MAUDE

How did you?

WRITER

I've got a very potent imagination. (MAUDE closes her eyes and moves her hand through the air across the divide.)

WRITER

What are you doing?

MAUDE

Just testing.

WRITER

Okay, maybe a hand.

*(MAUDE puts a foot through)*

Maude, Stop it. You're a character. It's not going to work you know. Even if you do get out there, you're just-

MAUDE

A convenient plot device. I know.

WRITER

No. A figment, a fantasy, a whim of the mind. Even inspiration is not tangible out there. It's invisible. You're invisible. Out there you're a ghost.

*MAUDE walks through into the audience and disappears up the aisle.*

Maude! Maude?!

*THE WRITER goes to stops her and finds a wall.  
He Bangs on it.*

Come on, Maude! Hey! Damn it! Maude! I can't- Maude?!

*Tries to get through varies ways but to no avail. Finally, he bounces back onto his butt and looks up in confusion.*

MAAAAAAUDE!!!.....MAUDE!?

*WRITER keeps calling his voice fading as  
the lights fade.*

*END ACT ONE*

ACT 2 SCENE 1 (RENO)

*AS the LIGHTS rise the WRITER is curled up exhausted against a pile of hay. WE are now in Reno, 1940's. We see a sign hanging in front of a Reno ranch front porch. " LONELY STAR DUDE RANCH. MAKING DIVORCE A PLEASURE SINCE 1929".*

*CYNTHIA enters from the Porch door and wakes him up.*

WRITER

WAAAAA?..Ha.What?(Takes a slow look around)Where am I?

CYNTHIA

Reno.(She points to the sign) Sorry but, this is June's scene of quiet regret. Are you not supposed to be here?

WRITER

No...Yes. I'm the writer.

CYNTHIA

Oh, yes, I forgot about you. But June's-

WRITER

Forget June. Go find Maude. She started this.

CYNTHIA

Started what?

WRITER

Cynthia exits in search of Maude.(Points towards the Fourth wall)

CYNTHIA

Oh. Alright.

*CYNTHIA start towards the 4th wall stops confused and exits through the barn SR.*

WRITER (TO SELF)

Reno!!?

*THE DUCHESS enters with a book from the porch door.*

DUCHESS

A man?! My Goodness! And quite solid. How interesting. Except You're not supposed to be here, are you? Things have gotten so topsy turvy lately. We heard about the first act. Have we?.. Nevermind (Calls out)-Lou-Anne There's a man in the scene!

WRITER

I'm not technically, well I am a man but-

LOU-ANNE V/O

Cody Perkins, You are an off-stage character! Get yourself back behind the scenes before I tan your hide!

WRITER

Where's Maude?

DUCHESS

Not here yet. And you're...(realizes) Oh, oh yes, I see you are definitely not supposed to be here. Completely against literary protocols.

*LOU ANNE enters from behind the house with a shot gun. She's surprised to see the writer.*

LOU ANNE

Who the hell is this? You're not Cody (aims the gun) Hold it right there.

DUCHESS

(Realizes) It's alright, Lou Anne. I know him. He's the writer, right?

LOU ANNE

He is not. I know the rider. His name's Cody. Cute as a button, dumb as a post. That ain't you. Your an Angry Husband ain't ya? Bessie here (Cocks the trigger) she hates angry husbands.

WRITER

I'm not even married. And that's not loaded. Where's Maude?

LOU ANNE

(Checks her gun starts taking bullets from her pockets)I coulda sworn.

DUCHESS

No, no, Lou Anne, we may need him. (Looks at the writer) What are you doing here? .

WRITER

Writer's block (He goes to the fourth wall and shows her)

DUCHESS

Oh, dear, well, that's a bit of a mess.(To writer) When did this happen?

WRITER

Act One. When Maude left. She walked right through that wall.

DUCHESS

My Goodness? Fascinating!

WRITER

What kind of character does that?

DUCHESS

A very unusual one.

LOU ANNE

Who are you again? And don't tell me the rider. Cody is strictly an off stage character. Come on Duchess! I thought you were guarding the place . You can't just let any hobo you take a fancy to wander onto the page.

DUCHESS

He's not Cody, Lou Anne!

LOU ANNE

I know that. I just said that.

DUCHESS

He's the Writer, The bard, the teller of tales. And I'm afraid he has insinuated himself into the plot.(To writer) Way beyond the limits of your literary license. What possessed you? And here of all places. This is no place for a man. There hasn't been a man here since-

LOU-ANNE

1929. Like the sign says.

DUCHESS

Well there's Cody, but he's exposition.

LOU ANNE

That doesn't count.

DUCHESS

No, it doesn't. There is a precedent though.

LOU-ANNE

He's a man, Duchess. You know my rules.

DUCHESS

I'm speaking about literary rules. Lou-Anne. Of course you have to go back to the Greeks, and even then it's not quite the same as this. (To the Writer) You know I do have experience in these things. Vast experience. I have taken many a young writer under my wing.

LOU ANNE

Stay away from her Mister. She's had five husbands. She's an addict. And stay away from here.

WRITER

I can't. I'm stuck.

*He tries again to push through the 4th wall but to no avail.*

DUCHESS

Completely fascinating. Show me your tongue.

WRITER

I told you, It's writer's Block.

DUCHESS

Yes, I thought as much. (Meditatively) But here, on the page. Oooh, that is an interesting conundrum.

LOU ANNE

Well, figure something out, Duchess. June's coming here any minute for her scene of quiet regret.

DUCHESS

Surely June would be amenable to a small adjustment in the Scene of Quiet regret.-

LOU ANNE

Ha! It might be regret, but it's not going to be quiet.

WRITER

Look! I'm stuck here. So unless you've got some brilliant ideas for getting me through that wall and back to New York City I am in this scene.



LOU ANNE

Oh, well...if you go through the barn and take a right at the pig sty you'll be back in New York city as quick as we can say, "set change".

*The WRITER looks confused.*

DUCHESS

Theatrical short cut, but I think -

WRITER

Great. Good. I'm off.

*THE WRITER exits through the barn.*

*BLACKOUT*

ACT 2 SCENE 2 EAZEE SLEEP MOTEL

*The corridor of the Eazee Sleep Motel.  
THE WRITER enters through a door SL He  
looks around confused.*

*We hear a long high pitched note then a  
thud. Another door opens. Waiter enters.*

WRITER

What is this place?

WAITER

Eazee Sleep Motel.

WRITER

New York City?

WAITER

Yeah.

WRITER

Damn! (To waiter)I want the real New York.

WAITER

You get what you pay for Bud. I got an order for some Romanian Brandy. You want to give me your room number?

(Waves him away)No. WRITER

*WAITER exits down corridor.*

*VERA exits the same door where the scream came from looking oddly disheveled.*

Vera? WRITER

You're in the wrong scene, Mister. VERA

*VERA exits through the opposite door. WRITER knocks.*

VERA?! WRITER

*VERA reopened the door.*

Where's my waiter? VERA

Getting Romanian Brandy. WRITER

Good, we'll need it. Who are you? VERA

I'm the writer. What scene is this? WRITER

MINE! Geess!You're showing up know? Where the hell were you? VERA

I had Writer's block! WRITER

Well, get over it! This whole damned piece is sinking like the Titanic. Tallulah was supposed to be in a coma. She's not because Cynthia, who's supposed to be in Reno is not. She's looking for Maude. VERA

WRITER

Tallulah is in a coma.

VERA

Cynthia woke her up and brought her here. Don't worry I managed a b flat. June's high notes have staying power. Mine do not. Why do you think I need that Brandy?

WRITER

Dammit! Cynthia!

VERA

Nevermind Cynthia!

*CYNTHIA leans in from another door*

CYNTHIA

Yes?

WRITER

Have you found Maude?

CYNTHIA

Oh, No.I searched the whole play. She's not at the Ranch, the apartment, the powder room, the restaurant, the dressing room. This was my last hope.

WRITER

Did you look out there? (points to audience)

CYNTHIA

There's a wall!

WRITER

Not for Maude.

VERA

You wrote her out?

WRITER

No, she wrote herself out, right through-

*WRITER points and hits the wall.*

Oww!

CYNTHIA

I found Tallulah, does that help?

WRITER

No.

VERA

She's looking for her one true love you know.

WRITER

Yes.

VERA

(looks at writer) You're probably it.

WRITER

Where Jim?

CYNTHIA

Still in the dressing room. He's not a very mobile character. But then I suppose you know that.

WRITER

Look, He's not an action kind of guy. He's more a thinking kind of guy. He's-

VERA AND CYNTHIA

Cardboard?

CYNTHIA

Tallulah was very upset when she found out, but she was very nice to me. You wouldn't think the biggest bitch on Broadway would be nice, but she was. We talked about what bastards men are. Well, she talked about what bastards men are. I just nodded.

WRITER

And?

CYNTHIA

Then she started talking about how just once she'd like to meet a real man, a man with some depth. And Vera told me that-

VERA AND CYNTHIA

If you want a real man, go to the Eazee-Sleep motel.

CYNTHIA

I thought it might help-

VERA

It didn't.(To writer) She started for the waiter. My waiter! Do you believe that?

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry I didn't know he was your waiter. I thought he was thee waiter.

VERA

She's not getting my waiter, Cynthia! It's massage Wednesday! What in the world were you thinking?

CYNTHIA

I had to promise her something.

VERA

No matter. I promised her something too.

*WAITER enters with bottle starts for the door.*

VERA

No. No. Let Cynthia do it. It's safer.

*WAITER hands CYNTHIA the bottle and VERA hands him a big tip. HE exits back down the corridor.*

CYNTHIA

Why me?

VERA

You started it.

CYNTHIA

She's going to be very upset if I don't bring the waiter. I promised.(Looks at the Writer then Vera) Why can't he do it?

WRITER

NO!!! I'm the..Writer!

VERA

You can't give Tallulah the Writer, Cynthia. It'd be like giving Hitler a country.

CYNTHIA

I was trying to help. ( Looks at bottle) What is that?

VERA  
Romanian Brandy.

*WRITER looks at VERA's Negligee, pulls a bow off it and leaves bow on bottle by the door then knocks.*

CYNTHIA  
Do you want me to -?

WRITER  
No! Come on! Before she gets to the door! COME ON!

*As WRITER ushers CYNTHIA AND VERA back through the ranch door A light appears on MAUDE in the area of the writer's cubicle. She looks down at them as-*

*LIGHTS FADE*

ACT 2 SCENE 3 JUNE'S SCENE OF QUIET  
REGRET

*LIGHTS UP back in Reno. LOU-ANNE and the DUCHESS are on the porch WRITER, CYNTHIA and VERA sneak in from the barn door. CYNTHIA is looking forlorn WRITER is looking annoyed.*

LOU ANNE  
How was New York?

WRITER  
Not like I remember it. Can Tallulah get through that way?

LOU ANNE  
Which way?

WRITER  
Eazee Sleep Motel. Room 414.

DUCHESS  
Well I know about it, but then I've been married 5 times.

VERA

Then it's a good bet Tallulah knows about it.

WRITER

(to Lou-Ann) Damn! I didn't want that New York (points toward the barn) I wanted that New York (points toward the audience.)

LOU ANNE

You should have said something.(looks at Cynthia who is still upset) What'd you do to the little lady?

WRITER

Nothing!

*LOU ANNE raises her gun.*

I asked her to find Maude. She found Tallulah.

LOU-ANNE

(Sees VERA)You Tallulah? Nice Negligee.

VERA

Thanks. No, I'm Vera. No time to change. You have a powder room here?

LOU ANNE

Through that door.

VERA

Good.(hopefully) Is there a bar?

*LOU ANNE nods. VERA takes CYNTHIA toward the house.*

WRITER

Hey! Where are you going? We've got a problem. (glares at Cynthia) A problem not of my own making!

VERA

You're the writer. You fix it.

*Vera and Cynthia exit through the door.*

LOU ANNE

What's the matter with Cynthia? (Lifts up her gun and points)

WRITER

Okay Great! Blame me! It's my fault. I don't know why, but I've become a victim of my own imagination. Right now I'm imagining Tallulah out of her coma and trying to steal the show.

DUCHESS

If that the way you want to go with it-

WRITER

No! Don't you see?! She doesn't want Jim anymore. She wants me!! Sooner or later she's going to come out here and Ravage me and there's not a Damned thing I can do about it!!

LOU ANNE

(To Duchess)I thought men liked sex?

DUCHESS

Usually, but mostly they like control.

WRITER

So do women. I haven't had control of this play since I started it. And as much as you think I might enjoy being ravaged by my own private sex symbol. I don't ...it's not-(Stops to figure out why he doesn't)She's the Villain. She's the biggest bitch on Broadway. I've got hunch she's really high maintenance It's all very well when I'm out there typing words into a computer, but down here on the page everything's so... potent. You need training for someone like that.

DUCHESS

I could train you. A few master classes or as I like to say Mistress classes and-

WRITER

No! I need to think. I need to figure things out!!! I need-

LOU ANNE

Duchess, he's right. As much as I hate to admit it. We don't have time to educate him. We've got June coming and who knows when Tallulah might pop up. We need a plan.

WRITER

This is serious. She's not just going after me! She's going after the show, my show!Your show!

DUCHESS

Tallulah!? She can't steal this show. It takes Timing. Talent and-(looks at Lou Anne)



LOU ANNE

Gumption.

DUCHESS

That too. She's just a villainess. This is comedy. She could never win.

WRITER

What if she becomes the leading lady?

DUCHESS

Don't let her. I told you she's not built to steal the show.

LOU ANNE

Now if she was a character part like the Duchess and me it'd be a whole different rodeo.

DUCHESS

Give us a few good punch line, we can steal the show from any leading lady you care to name.

WRITER

Including Tallulah?

*DUCHESS and LOU-ANNE look at each other knowingly.*

DUCHESS

No contest.

LOU ANNE

Piece of cake.

WRITER

How?

DUCHESS

No problem.(With a deceptively soothing smile) You just give Lou-Anne and I a few minutes to figure things out, while you entertain June.

LOU ANNE

Don't you fuss. We'll be back in a wink. What were you looking for?

WRITER

A Happy Ending. Something to weave the frayed edges of the plot into a surprising yet subtle denouement.

LOU-ANNE V/O

It's a deal. We take care of the plot. You take care of June.

DUCHESS

I should warn you. She's been very leading lady lately. If you know what I mean.

LOU ANNE

Jes smile and nod. You'll do fine.

*DUCHESS AND LOU-ANNE exit quickly.*

*JUNE enters She is very involved in her own drama. The WRITER watches fascinated but is hesitant to intervene. JUNE looks up finally noticing him.*

WRITER

Sorry, I uhhh-

JUNE

Excuse me?

WRITER

(Guiltily) I'm uhh. I'm uuhhm. I'm sorry about all this, I mean Tallulah, and everything. I did try-

JUNE

(He looks vaguely familiar) Jim? Is it you? You've changed.

WRITER

No, no. I'm not Jim, I'm-

JUNE

Don't Jim. You think you could hide from me in jeans and a fat suit?

WRITER

I'm not fat! I'm three dimensional.

JUNE

(with innocent venom) It's alright. I'm not going to kill you. I probably could and no one would mind. Nobody knows you're here and well there's all that lovely desert out there.

WRITER

June, I-(Not sure whether he should explain or take control) I'm the writer. I'm here to help.

JUNE

(Looks him up and down) Oh yes, the rider. I've heard about you. Cody is it?

WRITER

No, Cody is-

*JUNE raises a cautionary finger.*

JUNE

I'm not finished. Look, can I be frank with you?

WRITER

Sure.

JUNE

This is my scene of quiet regret. It's been quite a struggle getting here. What with the writer's block and all my baggage. Maybe the writer thought you were a good substitute for Maude. Maybe he thought he could just shove in a new man and everything would be hunky dory. It's not.

WRITER

Yeah, uhhh-

JUNE

You're not what I need. I think it best you go tend to your four footed friends in the barn and leave me to emote alone, alright?

WRITER

Just let me explain.

JUNE

No. I'm grateful, but I've been dealing with interruptions for the entire show. And I am the leading lady after all! I do deserve a little stage time to myself. My scenes have been shrinking down to absolutely nothing. Maude's being a beast about something and disappeared and I'm left, rejected and alone. I do not wish to be pitied. I only ask for a few quiet moments alone, left to find some solace, alone in the barren wasteland that is my heart, sifting the shattered remnants of the plot-

WRITER

Could we not have a monologue right now?

JUNE

Excuse me? This is my scene not yours, and until the stupid writer starts writing again-

WRITER

I AM the stupid writer. W-R-I-T-E-R. And I don't want a monologue here!

JUNE

No, you're not! I know the writer. The writer is cool and sophisticated just like Jim.

WRITER

No he's not. He's me!

JUNE

(This revelation makes her pause for a second time but doesn't abate her mood) Oh! Well, then that's fine. That's JUST FINE! WHAT ABOUT MY SCENE OF QUIET REGRET!!!!???

You come waltzing into my reality. Not a word in my direction. You cut my scenes. And now you totally ignore my desperate attempts to do a major scene. A scene which defines the true inner needs of a cruelly wronged woman, who has done nothing, nothing but try to salvage some sort of happy ending from the ruins of the script.

*THE WRITER confronted with JUNE's frustration tries to break through the fourth wall several times and fails ending up on the floor.*

What are you doing down there?

WRITER

Surrendering.

JUNE

You can't surrender. I need you. This whole plot lines been terribly upsetting. First Maude starts rebelling right in the middle of the happy scene. And now Tallulah's threatening to steal my happy ending. I'm the leading lady for God's sake! No happy ending. No Jim, no writer, no scene, no nothing! What am I without my accoutrements?

WRITER

(Exasperated and angry) You're YOU!

JUNE

(Desperately honest) It's not enough!! Without the lines, without my veneer of total sophistication I'm nothing.

WRITER

(Weary but empathetic) Oh, come on June. You're a leading lady, an independent woman. Think for yourself.

JUNE

I can't, I can't!! I can't do it! Not without the lines!!!-

WRITER

Of course you can! Who knocked out Tallulah?

JUNE

I did, but I was in a very bad mood at the time-

WRITER

But don't you see? That took guts! And now I think of it. I think you like that independence, don't you? You could have gotten Jim back in the third scene, but you didn't take him, did you?

JUNE

It would have made a very short play.

WRITER

And a very unhappy ending for you and all of us. What do you want June? What do you dream of?

JUNE

(hesitates) You'll laugh.

WRITER

No.

JUNE

I've... well, I've, I've always...I want to be an archetype. One of those mythical models that everyone thinks of as the epitome of virginity or sex or whatever.

WRITER

You are you know.

JUNE

Which? Virginity or Sex?

WRITER

Neither. You're the epitome of June.

JUNE

There is no epitome of June.

WRITER

There is now.

JUNE

Now? You mean me? My own epitome? Of course!(With a realness she hasn't had before) Why didn't I think of that? I'm not just June the character. I'm the symbol of independence. The liberated woman, noble and free. Unfettered from the mold of habits and hurts. A new woman, a true woman. Not defined by you, but defined by me. A model of self sufficiency. I feel like the burden of social stereotypes has been lifted from my shoulders. I feel so real all of a sudden. Like I could simply walk off the page.

*JUNE looking through the fourth wall and smiling at the crowd.*

Hello. (She pauses in thought)

WRITER

Who are you talking to?

JUNE

How interesting.

*JUNE turns back to him*

WRITER

What?

JUNE

It seems so odd. This was supposed to be my scene of quiet regret but I don't feel any regret.(pause) Thank you. Thank you very much. You've been so helpful. (She looks at him oddly)Who are you again?

WRITER

The writer.

JUNE

Oh, yes, you told me. It's just, I don't feel very written anymore. It was very nice of you to visit. And I'm extremely grateful for the happy ending. I have to admit I was beginning to despair. (Heads towards the audience.) Well, scene said. I must be off to explore and enlighten the universe.

WRITER

No, June you can't -

*JUNE stops and turns*

There's a wall.

JUNE

(Quick laugh) I'm an archetype. I can do anything. We're above these petty character limitations. We wander where whimsy woos us. Have a nice play.

*JUNE exits into the audience. WRITER goes to follow her. He comes up against the 4th wall. It still won't let him go.*

ACT 2 SCENE 4 WRITER MAKEOVER

*LOU-ANNE and THE DUCHESS ENTER with CYNTHIA AND VERA at their heels. (Costume change for Vera and possibly Cynthia)*

LOU-ANN

We've done it!

VERA

It's going to be fun to watch.

CYNTHIA

I'm not so sure. It sounds messy to me.

DUCHESS

Where's June?

WRITER

Uhhhh. She's become an archetype?

VERA

A what?

WRITER

An archetype. You know one of those mythical models-

DUCHESS

We know. And where is she?

WRITER

(He points towards the audience) She went off to explore and enlighten the universe.

*The WOMEN look at him*

I couldn't stop her!

But she's the leading lady.  
DUCHESS

You lost the leading lady?  
LOU ANNE

Who's brilliant idea was that?  
VERA

It was June's. It's... it's what she wanted.  
WRITER

And you jes let her have it?  
LOU ANNE

It was her happy ending. I know it sounds crazy but it was the right thing to do. You don't know what it's like to be able to do that, to give some one their true happy ending.  
WRITER

Yes, I do. It was a fine and noble gesture. Not every writer would have been so bold, so generous. Though I should point out, you have lost two characters so far.  
DUCHESS

Kinda kills our cat fight idea, don't it?  
LOU ANNE

Archetypes are a force of nature Lou-Anne. They wander where whimsy woos them.  
DUCHESS

Sorry, I was just trying to listen. Maude said-  
WRITER

What about Tallulah?  
LOU ANNE

We could find her her one true love.  
CYNTHIA

Tallulah's one true love is Tallulah.  
VERA



LOU ANNE

Nonsense. I bet that Gal's just a wild mustang begging to be tamed. I gotta a slip and a whip gambit I used in my vaudeville days that might-

WRITER

I don't think slips and whips will solve our problem.

LOU ANNE

You ain't never seen me with a slip and a whip.

DUCHESS

Right now, what we need is a man. No more cardboard. We need a real man this time.

*The DUCHESS turns to look for a long moment at him.*

Do you think...? I know this is asking a lot but- What about Cody?( Looks at Lou-Anne) Does he have any depth?

LOU-ANNE

Not really.

*During the following dialogue CYNTHIA is circled behind the writer, subtly point towards him.*

WRITER

I know, I'm no good at writing men. Women are the ones that fascinate me.

VERA

We've noticed.

*Finally WOMEN turn to look at him*

WRITER

(He looks at them)NOOOooooo!No.I already said No!

VERA

Do you think he can handle it?

WRITER

No.I told you that!

DUCHESS

Trust me I'm a professional. (To writer) It's time you faced your inner demons.

WRITER

I don't want to face my inner demons! I want to go home.

DUCHESS

You should have thought about that before you walked onto the page. Cynthia, Vera, there's a small carpet bag. Where is it, Lou Anne?

LOU-ANNE

Behind the bar.

*CYNTHIA and VERA exit to the bar.*

WRITER

What are you doing?

DUCHESS

We're going to weave the frayed edges of the plot into a surprising yet subtle denouement. Well, maybe not so subtle but...Come on girls! We have a job to do.

*CYNTHIA and VERA enter with the bag.*

*Everyone begins to surround the writer until he disappears behind a huddle of bodies.*

WRITER

No don't!... What the hell!?! Stop that!!

*Various articles of clothing fly out of the huddle.*

DUCHESS

Calm down! You're safe with us.

WRITER

You're not Tallulah.

LOU ANNE

It's gonna be fun.

DUCHESS

She's your character.

WRITER

Imagination and reality are two different things.

*WE HEAR noise coming from the barn  
the WRITER keeps complaining in various  
ways throughout the action*

DUCHESS

Not always. If you're the writer I think you are you'll have no problems at all.

*The huddle breaks apart to reveal the  
WRITER as Cody in full cowboy regalia*

DUCHESS

Well, that should do it. Say Hi to Cody, girls. Tallulah's one true love.

WRITER

I'm not the answer. She's not the answer!

DUCHESS

Then write one! Come on girls our work is done.

ACT 2 SCENE 5 TALLULAH'S ONE TRUE LOVE

*The WOMEN exit*

WRITER

(a quiet, desperate scream ) Maude!

*WRITER hides on the edge of the stage.  
TALLULAH enters from the barn. She's drunk on  
Romanian brandy.*

TALLULAH

This is the strangest hotel room I've ever been in. And I have been in some strange hotel rooms. (Reads the sign) No Men Allowed !?  
VERRRRRAAAA!!! Where's my waiter? Where's my- ( She sees him)

WRITER

(Under his breath)Shit.

TALLULAH

(Immediately turns) Who you?

WRITER

A useful plot device.

TALLULAH

You look like a man.

WRITER

I am..technically I am but, I'm not... available...I'm an off stage character.

TALLULAH

So what are you doing on stage?

WRITER

Some times I come onto the page and fix things.

TALLULAH

What happened to my waiter?

WRITER

Set change. If you take a right at the pig sty. I'm sure you'll find him.

TALLULAH

You know you remind me of some one I used to date.(She moves in close and grabs him examining him.) Are you cardboard?

WRITER

No.

TALLULAH

You wanna play horsy?

WRITER

(Baulking at her breath) No.You want a mint?

TALLULAH

No. You wanna have sex?

*TALLULAH starts to unbuckle HIS belt*

WRITER

NO! Tallulah, stop it! You're Drunk.

TALLULAH

That's okay. I'm a professional. I can do it under any conditions you care to name.It's Kinda my job.I'm Tallulah. Men melt at the mere mention of my name, they whimper at a whiff of my perfume. They grovel at a gesture-(he's not groveling) Are you? (She waves her hand this way that way)

WRITER

No, I'm just polite. Sure your don't want that mint?

TALLULAH

(Re considers) Okay. Why not.

*TALLULAH stops takes the mint, swigging it  
down with her Brandy*

You want some brandy? It's Ru-mem-mem min.. it's Ru-may-me. It's foreign.It's really good. It's like schnapps with a slap.You want a slap?

WRITER

No, thanks. You want some coffee?

TALLULAH

Yeah, okay, why not. It's been a long play.

WRITER

Yeah, it has.

*SHE wilts into the pile of hay*

*WRITER goes to pour her some coffee.*

You wanna know something? A secret? Just between me and you. Sex symboling is not all it's cracked up to be. All those men lining up at my door, all those presents, all that Lust. It's so one sided.

WRITER

Really? What do you want?

TALLULAH

I'm not sure. Usually I ask for more, but more's gotten kinda less lately.

WRITER

More what?

TALLULAH

I don't know, money, men, Stuff? Lately I've been trying to find my one true love. I've gone through several. My last one true love turned out to be cardboard. This whole sex symbol gig is really not working out for me. What is it about people these days? Men want to have sex and women want to put me in a coma.

*WRITER turns to look at her.*

You know I woke up from a coma the other day. There was this woman there. She wasn't there for me. She was looking for some other woman. But we got to talking.

(MORE)

TALLULAH (cont'd)

Talking about everything. Well, mostly me and men, cause that's my life. But for the first time I was having a nice conversation with a woman. Why does no one ever wanna have a friendly conversation? Is it because I'm a bitch? Why? Why do I always have to be a bitch? Why can't I be the leading lady? People talk to leading ladies all the time.

WRITER

You don't want to be a leading lady.

TALLULAH

Why not?

WRITER

(Considers) It's not just about conversation. You have to be a certain type of woman. You have to have certain traits.

TALLULAH

I'm a sex symbol. What more do you need?

WRITER

Honesty? You know, even when people don't want to hear it.

TALLULAH

That's me. That's me exactly!

WRITER

Brains, courage, charm, wit, wisdom, inspiration-

TALLULAH

Okay, maybe one of those. I just want a happy ending that all. I just want some one to talk to. LIKE YOU!! You talk to me!!! You could be my happy ending! Come on what's your name again, Cal, Clint, Chuck, Chase?

WRITER

Look, I'm not your happy ending. I'm not even a cowboy. I'm the writer, I've got other things to do.

TALLULAH

The WHAT? The real writer, the writer writer? My Writer?

WRITER

Yes, yours and -

TALLULAH

NO. NO "AND". Just MINNNEEEEE!!!!

*TALLULAH jumps on his lap and starts wrapping him to the porch post with a convenient rope .*

TALLULAH  
MY STORY!!! MY WRITER!!! I want a big happy ending, a novelty number, a dress with lots of sequins, a pet schnauzer, can you get them house broken? (She stuffs his handkerchief in his mouth) And you! Your gonna marry me and we're gonna talk, we can have sex too but mostly we're gonna talk!

WRITER  
Hey, NO! Tallulah NO! STOP! HEY You can't! .....Don't!! Tallulah!!!... Tallulah Listen!!!.... Tallulah?

*MAUDE enters from the barn*

Hello.

MAUDE

TALLULAH  
(Rise in Attack dog mode) HEY!! We're having a scene here!

Muddd?!

WRITER

You know her?!-

TALLULAH

*WRITER tries to rise.*  
SIT! STAY!(To Maude) HE'S MY WRITER! MYYYY writer!

MAUDE  
Yes, of course.(With a gracious smile) You're the leading lady aren't you?

(Suspicious) Yeah?

MAUDE  
I'm your faithful friend. I'm here to help you get that happy ending.(In a confidential whisper) Remember? The story of a street urchin, who claws her-

Climbs-

TALLULAH

MAUDE  
Climbs her way to the top, searching for that one true love.

TALLULAH  
Yeah. What about it?

MAUDE  
He's not it.

WRITER  
FA FOMIFF!

TALLULAH  
He's all I got. He's a man. I'm a sex symbol. I don't work without a man!

MAUDE  
Have you tried women?

*WE hear a sharp crack off stage. LOU ANNE enters. She is dressed in Vera's negligee and carrying a black whip.*

Lou-Anne Tallulah. Tallulah Lou-Anne.

LOU ANNE  
(to Tallulah) I hear you like to play horsey, little lady.

TALLULAH  
(awestruck, intimidated) Maybe.

LOU ANNE  
Have you ever ridden the High Chaparral with a thousand pounds of horse flesh between your thighs?

*TALLULAH is intrigued.*

TALLULAH  
No.

LOU-ANNE  
Have you ever known the thrill of unleashed desires mingled with the firm hand of discipline?

TALLULAH  
No.

LOU-ANNE  
Do you like your chili spicy?



TALLULAH

Yeah.

*LOU-ANNE cracks the whip again.*

LOU-ANNE

Well, come on Gal! Reno's a calling! And so am I!

*TALLULAH gives up the writer with a glance and moves toward LOU-ANNE with the look of a sudden and willing convert.*

TALLULAH

Nice negligee.

LOU ANNE

It was a gift from a friend. I usually wear something sleeveless. Keeps the arms freer in case things get frisky.

*TALLULAH and LOU-ANNE exit through the Bar.*

ACT 2 SCENE 6 REUNION

*MAUDE ungags and unties him.*

WRITER

You're back.

MAUDE

Yes.

WRITER

You know about June?

MAUDE

We talked.

WRITER

It's what she wanted. Still, I lost my leading lady. What kind of writer does that?!

MAUDE

You didn't lose her. You let her go. That's a totally different thing. It's exactly what a good writer does. It's the perfect story, surprising, honest.

(MORE)

MAUDE (cont'd)

The story of a woman who breaks the bonds of social norms and finds her true happy ending in a new world.

WRITER

You?

MAUDE

No. June. You could have left when she did.

WRITER

I can't! I'm stuck behind this GOD DAMNED WALL!!!

MAUDE

Oh please! It's imaginary. Look!(MAUDE slips her hand through the wall and back with ease.)

WRITER

Maybe for you!

*HIS fingers hit hard on the 4th wall*

OHwww! Ow! Ow! Ow! I think I broke something.

MAUDE

(Maude examines his hand) It is sort of red. ( She touches it)

WRITER

Ahw!

MAUDE

(She wraps his fist with the handkerchief) You're very solid for a character. You know that don't you?

WRITER

I'm not a character. Oh Hell! Maybe I am, I don't know anymore.

MAUDE

No, you're right. You're solid. You should be out there. It doesn't make sense. What did the Duchess say?

WRITER

She said I should face my inner demons.

MAUDE

You have. Except maybe this.

*MAUDE moves her hand through the wall and tries to get the WRITER to do the same but he jerks away.*

Why does it work for me and not you?

WRITER

Writer's block?

MAUDE

You don't have writer's block, not any more. Who let June be who she was? Who took the time to listen to a drunk sex symbol? Who let himself been seen on the page in that outfit? Honesty, empathy, courage, that's what it takes to be a writer.

WRITER

And stupidity. She tied me up!

MAUDE

If you risk it all for your story, your characters, you are worthy of rescue. Tallulah didn't tie you up because you were a temp. It's because you're a writer. That's why I came back. You have to start believing it. You've got to go out there and write this.

WRITER

There's a wall.

MAUDE

No, there's a way. I know it. You'll find it.

WRITER

But you're my Muse, Maude. You are. I know it. You can find it!

*The WRITER looks at her waiting for the answer.*

MAUDE

( Sadly) I am not your Muse. I'm a just a figment. And until you go out there and write this-

WRITER

(Realizes) They didn't see you out there did they? Did they see you, out there?

MAUDE

No. Don't look smug. It was worth it. Have you ever seen the curl of a wave? -

WRITER

Yes I've seen a wave-

MAUDE

-The way it rustles like a thick whisper as it twirls-

MAUDE CONTINUED

-inside itself, like mad clouds of water? It was lovely. I went everywhere. Like the wind like the air. Sound is incredible. Senses generally are an amazing experience. The light of the sun and the smell of rain, the touch of a breeze, flute Music, giggles, and taste. Taste is seductive. There's no other word for it. Have you ever tasted chocolate?

WRITER

Yes, it's very tasty Maude. Chocolate and waves are nice, but overall, it's always less than you hoped for and more than you can cope with.( Pauses) I'm glad your back though. You saved my ass. Literally. Every good writer needs a Muse., Maude.

MAUDE

What about June?

WRITER

No. not my leading lady, not Muse, too much like my Mother. ( looks at her) I bet you it was people who made you feel invisible. Maude, out there I'm invisible too, except when they need me. Out there I'm a useful plot device, just like you.

MAUDE

Is that why you don't have a name besides, " The Writer"?

WRITER

(Defensively)I have a name. It's... Benjamin...Benjamin... Whittle.

MAUDE

(Smiling, she shakes his hand) Hello Benjamin....Benjamin Whittle.

WRITER

Hello Maude.

*The hands linger. MAUDE lets her hand finally fall away.*

MAUDE

(Awkwardly back to business)You are definitely solid. That was a very solid handshake, Benjamin. Let's figure out a way to get you out there. So you can write this.

WRITER

Back to my cubicle? No!

MAUDE

But it's a good story!

WRITER

(Considers) What if I stayed here? We write our own story, in here? Why not?

MAUDE

We?

WRITER

Yeah, you and me. I don't care about out there. In here. I can't go there, so I'll stay here with you. Come on! It's so clear.

MAUDE

But, if you stay, we're just daydreams, nothing more.

WRITER

So what? It's real to me. Out there's the fake. All the great things you saw, and tasted and touched and felt. They all get lost, ignored just like us. I got lost. Everyone's lost trying to be what they're not, get where they're not. Everyone but you. And now me. I like being here, now, with you. You're my real Maude, realer than anything out there, and so am I. You are not a daydream or a figment. It's not in your nature. Trust me.

*HE draws her in.*

Forget out there.

*He kisses her.*

MAUDE

(in a whisper) Was that a kiss?

WRITER

Yes.

MAUDE

It's very tangible.

WRITER

So are you. It gets even more tangible after two or three.

MAUDE

Okay.

*They go back to kissing*

ACT 2 SCENE 7 VERA'S INTERRUPTION

*VERA enters. The kiss ends.*

VERA

Am I interrupting?

MAUDE

Yes.

WRITER

Damn it!!Vera exits Stage Left-

*VERA exits SL . VERA returns*

VERA

Stop that!

WRITER

Go away!

VERA

Why? You know I'll keep coming back.

MAUDE

Vera, you are such a cliché!

VERA

Says the useful plot device.

WRITER

Maude, I got this!(confused pause) What do you want, Vera?

VERA

I want a man. (She looks at the writer.)

MAUDE

He's the writer. You can't have the writer, Vera!

VERA

Nobody gets the writer Maude. Sooner or later they just walk off the page.

MAUDE

Benjamin, could you do me a favor?

WRITER

What?

MAUDE

Write her out.

WRITER

(Aside to Maude)I just tried that.

VERA

You gave Tallulah a happy ending. Why can't I have one?

MAUDE

It's got something to do with structure.

VERA

You never worried about structure in the first Act.

MAUDE

Maybe I should have.

WRITER

Maude, I've stuck to the lines all my life. It doesn't help. It's letting go of the lines that got me somewhere. Stop worrying. If we can have a happy ending, why can't she?

MAUDE

Because she's interrupting?

VERA

Give me a break Maude. You started this. And once I get my man you can go right back to your love scene.(to Writer) Now, I don't want Jim,I don't want the waiter, I'm just a side line to him. I want a real man. I want a one true love to rescue me from this dreary plot line of a life.

WRITER

A real man won't do it. Most real men can barely rescue themselves.

VERA

Okay. How about less real, more devoted?

WRITER

In the end Vera, it's up to you.

VERA

But if he loves me-

WRITER

( Finding it hard not to look at Maude) If he loves you he'll be kind. If he loves you, you'll catch him staring at you fondly, at your face or the curve of your hip , at the person you are inside. And if you love him (he hesitates)-

VERA

What?

WRITER

Be kind.You gotta promise me!

VERA

(Wary but interested)Oh, alright. What have you got?

WRITER

We'll see.(crossing his fingers) Cody enters stage left.

*CODY enters stage left. He is the waiter/stagehand now dressed as a cowboy and thrilled to be on stage.*

(aside) Treat him like cardboard and he'll become cardboard. Guaranteed.

CODY

(looking deeply into Vera's eyes)'Xcuse me M'am. Lou-Ann sent me all the way down here to tame a filly. You wouldn't happen to know which one?

VERA

I believe I do.

CODY

I'm mighty obliged. Mighty obliged.

VERA

Let's just mosey on down to the barn and see if she's not hiding in the hayloft.

CODY

What's a filly doing in a hayloft?

VERA

She's a very gifted filly.

*VERA takes CODY'S arm and they walk off together. WRITER turns to MAUDE, but she doesn't look happy.*



WRITER

Not bad, huh? I thought he had real depth for a cowboy. Once I hit that groove (Sees Maude's expression)- What?

MAUDE

She's right. Vera's right. Nobody gets the writer.

WRITER

Why not? Don't you want a happy ending?

MAUDE

How? I'm very confused, Benjamin. All these senses are banging around inside me, totally messing up my head. I'm not supposed to feel them here. That kissing thing was very solid and so are you-

WRITER

You liked it?

MAUDE

That's not the point. I don't know where I am anymore, who I am.

WRITER

You're Maude, my leading lady. My Muse. Isn't that okay? You want to try the love scene again?

MAUDE

(Annoyed)YES!!

*WRITER advances*

NO!! I can't. We're not writing the story. We're escaping from it. Inspiration is all very well from a distance, but once you get up close, it gets complicated.

WRITER

I think you like me, Maude.

MAUDE

Of Course I DO!! That's what we're arguing about! You have to go write this. Be practical Benjamin. We're two totally different species.

WRITER

No. I don't want to! Maude, I'm sick, sick of being practical and logical and anything that stops me from being here with you.

*MAUDE'S not budging.*

Okay, okay, okay. Tell you what. (Figures out a plan) We'll have a love scene and then we'll talk about the plot.

MAUDE

(starts firmly) No talking. Doing. Benjamin. We can't get side-tracked!

WRITER

Doing's fine.(He starts into doing the love scene.)

MAUDE

(Getting distracted) We've both got ...a lot riding on this and I... I should, do, I- (pause) Okay, one more love scene, but then we get down to work. Seriously!

*WRITER AND MAUDE kiss. It continues. It gets steamy.*

#### ACT 2 SCENE 8 THE SUBTLE DENOUEMENT

*CYNTHIA peeks her head in.*

CYNTHIA

Excuse me. I don't wish to disturb whatever you're headed for but-

WRITER/MAUDE

WHAT?!!!

CYNTHIA

Well, the Duchess thinks we should be moving towards the happy ending.

WRITER

We're working on it!

*DUCHESS STEPS out to join CYNTHIA.*

DUCHESS

Hello, Benjamin, Hello Maude welcome back. You have been a bit distracted lately.

MAUDE

UUUh, yes,(Getting up from her compromising position) Sorry.

DUCHESS

Cynthia and I have been talking about the frayed edges of the plot. And Cynthia- It was beautifully clever of you.

CYNTHIA

Thank you. It wasn't all me. We heard something during our double solitaire game. We play double solitaire when ever we're not wanted in the story, which is most of the time.

BENJAMIN

This doesn't have anything to do with your own personal happy ending does it?

CYNTHIA

No, well, yes, maybe.

DUCHESS

Cynthia, Focus.

CYNTHIA

Solitaire?

DUCHESS

Not yet. Cynthia and I have an idea for a perfect ending. But of course, not being your "official Muses". It's going to cost you.

BENJAMIN

Money?

DUCHESS

I was thinking more along the lines of cultural icons with product merchandising.

CYNTHIA

A Cynthia "Barbie"?

DUCHESS

Or something a little less Chesty. And for me... well, as Muse Emeritus, it's only a token payment. A coffee mug with a good quote will do. No refrigerator magnets though. I'm trying to slim down. Alright?

BENJAMIN

What have you got?

DUCHESS

Cynthia? Solitaire?

CYNTHIA

Oh, yes. I asked why is the fourth wall sometimes a door?

DUCHESS

And I said, to get to the other side. (she laughs heartily) Oh, sorry. Very amusing, but quite apt. The only real point to wandering through your imagination, is that you're looking for something you couldn't find anywhere else. What did you find?

BENJAMIN

Everything.

DUCHESS

Specifics?

BENJAMIN

Maude, my Muse, inspiration, myself, a whole new world, a whole new story.

DUCHESS

And what are you doing with it?

BENJAMIN

Enjoying it? Look, Maude wants me to go back there. Why should I go back there, when everything I want is here?

DUCHESS

Oh, For Heaven's sake. It's a wonderful story. It needs to be told.

MAUDE

That's what I said!

BENJAMIN

Why!? Look If I go back, this will all be gone. Maude will just be words on a page. Nothing more. If I go back, I'll just be me in that cubicle, I'll be invisible.

DUCHESS

Invisible is not a bad word. I know that world (points to the audience) doesn't think it's fashionable to be unnoticed. But the best things I know are invisible. Inspiration is invisible until you make it into something. Light is invisible until it touches something. So is love. They illuminate themselves and the things they touch. That simple act is what your world is all about, making the invisible visible. You make us tangible, you and love. You love Maude. Maude loves you. You illuminate each other. You are not invisible, not anymore. Get back out there. Tell our story. People need to know the possibilities of life. Take what you imagine, what you hope for, what you love and make it tangible.

BENJAMIN

But there's a wall. I'm not imagining that.

DUCHESS

Actually you are. Why do you write?

BENJAMIN

It makes life interesting, better.

DUCHESS

You make life interesting. You make it better. You make it real. But you can't do that if you're hiding behind a wall. Out there it's a cubicle. In here it's invisible, but very real. Isn't that ironic. You made it real. Fear is your wall Benjamin. Let go of the fear and everything will be just fine.

BENJAMIN

It's not the same out there. All my life I've hoped for a world where people saw me and loved me and made me listen and learn to love them and be the best I could be in the bargain. I've found that here. I don't want to give that up, just because you say I have to.

DUCHESS

I didn't say that! (To Cynthia) Did I say that?

CYNTHIA

I don't think so. I got confused after the invisibility part.

BENJAMIN

I don't care if I'm invisible. All I really want is Maude.

MAUDE

Don't settle for invisible Benjamin. That's what she's saying. Not even for me. Don't hide here. Don't hide in your cubicle, behind your walls. Imagine better.(Points to audience) Look Benjamin.

*MAUDE walks through the 4th wall into the audience*

BENJAMIN

(Rushes to the edge of the stage) Maude! (Realizes he's seeing the theater and the audience.He freezes)

CYNTHIA

Is change always such a shock?

DUCHESS

It's a little stage fright. It'll pass.

BENJAMIN

Where's my cubicle?

MAUDE

You left it at the office. This is an audience. That's what you wanted isn't it? To be noticed? Well, They're noticing.

(MAUDE realizes that the audience is looking at her as well) OH. yes. Alright. Okay(looks to the Duchess to make sure)

*THE DUCHESS nods*

Benjamin. They can see us, you, me. Everybody's visible. Everybody's(Looking around) visible.And they're very nice.(She surveys the crowd) Most of them. (Confides in the crowd) This is my first time being visible. tactile. Is anyone here interested in, I don't know, shaking hands? With me? I've only done it once. I'd like to compare. (finds someone to shake hands) Oh, yes, that was nice. That was very nice, thank you.(Turns back) Benjamin? Benjamin are you coming?

BENJAMIN

But I thought you were -

MAUDE

You thought wrong. Benjamin. Come on! Are you in one of your moods again? Because I have done a lot for you lately and just once before we solidify this relationship, I'd like to see you do something for me. Come on!

BENJAMIN

I do a lot for you too, you know!

MAUDE

Yes, Benjamin you do. So Help me. Help me make all the things I love real. I love you Benjamin. But if you love me you'll have to love the world, this world as well.It's not perfect, but when you love something that doesn't really matter.

*BENJAMIN turns back to the DUCHESS*

BENJAMIN

She can stay? With me? There?

DUCHESS

Of course she can. She's already there.

BENJAMIN

But she's going to need a social security number, or a green card or-

DUCHESS

But, but, but, but, but, but, BUT!!!(Exasperated) Use your imagination, Benjamin! Don't get too addicted to facts. It's a dangerous thing for a writer. Most facts are just assumptions in disguise anyway. The world is much more malleable than you realize.

MAUDE

Benjamin, Come down and say hello.

*BENJAMIN tests the wall and moves down into the audience. Slowly he puts his hand out to someone and gets them to shake his hands. Once he succeeds Maude steps in and begins introducing him. They begin conversing with the audience. He gets more and more into it.*

DUCHESS

Cynthia?

*CYNTHIA runs off stage*

*CYNTHIA Returning quickly with a piece of luggage, and a hand bag. She steps down into the audience and hands it to MAUDE*

CYNTHIA

(Very excited to meet Audience. Waving) Hello, hello, hello.

DUCHESS

Cynthia, focus.

CYNTHIA

Yes. (opening up Maude's new purse and handing Maude a card.) You'll need this.

MAUDE

(excited)Really?

BENJAMIN

What is it?

MAUDE

It's my Union card, GM.

BENJAMIN

General Motors?

MAUDE

Guild of Muses. I thought I'd never get it. It's a catch 22. You can't get one unless you're a real Muse and you can't be a real Muse without it.

BENJAMIN

(Still dubious) It's not a green card.

MAUDE

Oh, yes. It's anything I need it to be. It's a keycard to the Imagination. Sort of like a passport with perks.

CYNTHIA

I got one too, It's only the lime green one, but I'm not a figment, not anymore! I'm a daydream! I can visit!

*MAUDE and CYNTHIA hug excitedly*

DUCHESS

Congratulations, Maude. You're moving on to foreign studies. I think you've earned it.

CYNTHIA

It's a very good guild. I don't get dental but you don't really need that when you're a daydream. It has a great retirement package. I'm going to Disneyland when I retire.

MAUDE

Disney World is better.

CYNTHIA

Sorry, I should have packed you a swim suit. And well, the styles are a little out of date. Nevermind. Just tell everyone you're very into retro-

DUCHESS

Cynthia? Up here.

*CYNTHIA goes back to the stage.*

Now, have we woven the frayed edges of the plot into a subtle but surprising denouement?

BENJAMIN & MAUDE

Yes.



Are we Happy now?  
DUCHESS

Yes.  
EVERYONE

Good. Off you go. (Points to the exit sign)  
DUCHESS

*BENJAMIN and MAUDE walk hand in hand into the back of the theater.*

Have a nice trip!  
CYNTHIA

(Calls out) Write us when you get there!  
DUCHESS

*LIGHTS FADE as the DUCHESS and CYNTHIA wave good bye. BENJAMIN AND MAUDE disappear into the world beyond.*

THE END