

AMARA

by

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ACT ONE

(Lights up on Lyla Baines as she portrays the character of Mary Wilk in the midst of the final scene from the play within the play, "DANCE WITH DEATH." For the moment, this should be kept a secret from the audience -- that is they should feel as though they are watching the "real" play. If at all possible the characters of Eva, Gwynne and Marty should enter from the actual house of the theatre.)

(Chopin's Waltz in A-flat Major, Opus 69.No.1 plays loudly)

(Lyla/Mary wears a painter's smock over her clothing as she works on a wooden sculpture in her studio, which occupies one area of the stage.)

(Various art pieces are displayed in the studio; wood, clay, ceramic. A woodburning stove with a firepoker beside it sits upstage. After a moment, the telephone rings. Lyla answers it.)

MARY/LYLA

Mary Wilk. Oh, hello, Marcus.

(beat)

Hmmm? I can barely hear you. Just a moment. Let me turn the music down.

(she turns down the music)

That's better. What were you saying? No. Johnny isn't here. I haven't seen him all day. Oh, yes. We've already suffered tremendously through the reviews. He's been stomping around like a wild boar since they've come out.

(beat)

What? Oh, no. Marcus, no! How much damage did he cause? He destroyed everything? All of his work?

(Deiter Olbrych portraying Johnny

Jakes enters the studio. He is bruised and bloodied, his right hand wrapped in a blood-stained rag. Mary/Lyla sees him at once. During the rest of the conversation, their eyes remain locked.)

MARY/LYLA

What about your gallery? Oh, Marcus! I'm so sorry. You must send all the bills to me. Marcus, please don't argue with me about this. It's bad enough as it is. I insist. Send all the bills to me.

(beat)

Oh, yes, I'm quite sure I'll be seeing him. What? Afraid of Johnny? Oh, Marcus, my dear friend, don't worry about that. I have nothing to fear from Johnny Jakes.

(She hangs up the phone.)

JOHNNY/DEITER

So he called you already.

MARY/LYLA

Yes, he called.

JOHNNY/DEITER

He couldn't wait to pour out every bloody detail.

MARY/LYLA

Oh, Johnny! What did you expect?

JOHNNY/DEITER

What did I expect? How about kindness. How about regard?

MARY/LYLA

Regard for what? Your wild temper?

JOHNNY/DEITER

Did you see what they wrote about me?

MARY/LYLA

I've heard nothing but what they wrote about you since the reviews came out.

JOHNNY/DEITER

"Mary Wilk's ill-tempered boy should stick to what he can do best. And that most assuredly is not art!"

MARY/LYLA

How many times do I have to tell you, reviews don't matter!

JOHNNY/DEITER

They've driven me crazy. I've gone mad with the torment. Mary. I destroyed all my pieces.

(Johnny moves further into the room. He stumbles as he goes. He's been drinking. Mary notices his hands.)

MARY/LYLA

Oh, Johnny. What did you do to your hands?

JOHNNY/DEITER

I smashed them.

MARY/LYLA

(she goes to them)

These hands contain the power of your soul. Haven't I taught you at least that much?

JOHNNY/DEITER

They crucified me, Mary.

MARY/LYLA

No.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Humiliated me...

MARY/LYLA

Johnny ...

JOHNNY/DEITER

They're consumed with envy. They have no integrity, no sense of style. They can't create anything on their own. The only power they have is to destroy!

MARY/LYLA

Listen to me. They don't matter. The reviews don't matter. The only thing that does matter is you. You, Johnny.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Mary. Do you still believe in me?

MARY/LYLA

Oh, Johnny ...

JOHNNY/DEITER

Do you?

MARY/LYLA

I've always believed in your talent.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Oh, thank God. I knew you'd never desert me. I can start all over again. I can build everything up from nothing. Only bigger this time. Only better. I just need three months. Three months here, in your studio, then you sponsor another show...

MARY/LYLA

Johnny ...

JOHNNY/DEITER

It'll be wonderful. I promise you. Better than you could ever dream. And I'll be good boy this, I swear. On my best behavior, no matter what those fools have to say --

MARY/LYLA

Oh, Johnny...

JOHNNY/DEITER

Just one more show -- that's all I need, and I'll streak to the top like a comet. One more, and I'll be out of your life forever, is that's what you want.

MARY/LYLA

(beat)

I can't.

JOHNNY/DEITER

What did you say?

MARY/LYLA

I can't. You cost too much. I can't afford you any longer.

(He rises)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Can't afford me!

(Violently he knocks over the telephone table)

JOHNNY/DEITER

What the hell are you saying?

MARY/LYLA

Johnny!

JOHNNY/DEITER

Are you turning your back on me?

MARY/LYLA

Listen to me ...

JOHNNY/DEITER

Now, when I need you most, you're going to desert me, to?

MARY/LYLA

I can't help you any more.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Don't do this to me!

MARY/LYLA

You've done it to yourself. You always do it to yourself. Time and time again you destroy everything that can bring you love or joy! I can't help you anymore! You're too close to destroying me. And I will never let that happen.

JOHNNY/DEITER

(stalking her)

Oh, no! Not the great Mary Wilk!

MARY/LYLA

Yes! Mary Wilk!

JOHNNY/DEITER

The crown jewel of the art world!

(He knocks over a sculpture)

MARY/LYLA

Stop it!

JOHNNY/DEITER

All you've ever cared about is yourself! You've always been terrified of my talent. You've always known I have the power to eclipse your shining star!

MARY/LYLA

Then do it! For God's sake, go out and do it! I'll applaud you! I'll be the first in line!

JOHNNY/DEITER

You know I can't do it without you!

(From off-stage we hear the voice of
Boris Jamrog call:)

BORIS/THADDEUS

(off-stage)
Mary!

(Johnny grabs Mary, picking up a
knife)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Answer him, and I'll kill you.

(Mary struggles, breaking free.)

MARY/LYLA

Boris! Help!

BORIS/THADDEUS

Mary!

JOHNNY/DEITER

Goddamn you!!!

(Johnny grabs her, plunging the
knife deep within her. Boris enters
the studio. Mary slumps to the
floor.)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Mary!

(On top of his line, Eva Janek
screams, bolting to the stage)

EVA

Nnnoooo!!!!

(She grabs the poker, and with gale
force, crashes it down on the sofa)

EVA

No! No! No!

(Gwynne Field rushes on stage.)

GWYNNE

EVA!

from (Suddenly, as if ripping herself
a nightmare, Eva stops. Her arm goes
limp, the poker bangs to the floor.
Gwynne wraps her arm around Eva.
Martin George steps on stage.)

MARTY

All right people. All right. Let's take five.
(to Gwynne)
Let's get her out of here.

(Deiter, Lyla and Thad leave the
stage in stunned silence. Marty, Eva
and Gwynne move to the backstage
area.)

(Lights shift)

(Marty leads Eva to a chair in an
office area and crouches down beside
her.)

MARTY

You want to tell me what that was about?

(Before she can reply, Nate Bower
from the New York Tribune enters
the room)

NATE

Hey, Ms. Janek?

GWYNNE

Bower! What the hell are you doing here?

NATE

Look, I know I wasn't supposed to be out there...

GWYNNE

You're damned right...

NATE

I just wanted to talk with Ms. Janek.

GWYNNE

Marty, I'm gonna kill him.

MARTY

Take it easy, Gwynne.

NATE

Just a few minutes, that's all. Off the record.

GWYNNE

I guess you understand English about as good as you write it.

NATE

Well. About as well as you write it.

GWYNNE

Get out of here now.

MARTY

I think you'd better go, Nate.

NATE

(to Eva)

Ms. Janek. I saw "Dance with Death" downtown last season. I couldn't believe the twisted sense of evil you captured, like somehow you were able to crawl inside the warped mind of this murderer..

GWYNNE

Get him out of here!

MARTY

Nate. Come on. That's enough. Let's go.

NATE

All right. All right. I'm sorry, Marty. I'm going. (pulls out a card)

Ms. Janek. Please. Just a few minutes.

GWYNNE

OUT!

NATE

Off the record. I swear. On my word as a gentleman.

(Nate exits)

GWYNNE

Gentleman, ha! You believe the cheek of that guy. Don't you dare give him an interview, Eva. He'll treat you like you're the second coming, then turn around and rip your guts out in print. Did you see what he did to me when he reviewed "The

Monkey Chased the Weasel?"

MARTY

All right, Gwynne.

(Marty crouches beside Eva again.)

MARTY

Hey? You want to tell me what's going on?

EVA

I saw it, Marty.

MARTY

What did you see?

EVA

The murder.

GWYNNE

Of course you saw it. You wrote it.

EVA

That's not what I mean.

MARTY

Tell me what you saw.

EVA

I was watching rehearsal, and Johnny grabbed the knife. It was glinting in the lights. And all of a sudden there was this piercing sound, a terrible ringing. My head felt like it was going to explode. And then I saw her. A beautiful woman all dressed in white. Dancing, her dress flowing around her. She turned, she turned, Marty and she was covered with blood.

GWYNNE

Holy shit.

MARTY

Wherever did you learn such incredible sensitivity skills.

GWYNNE

Look, what we got here is a raging case of opening night jitters. Eva, how much time do you figure you've spent with this play. Two years? Maybe three? Writing and re-writing, readings, workshops downtown -- in bed day in and day out with the mind of a murderer. Now, in one short week, you open on Broadway. Look,

kid, anyone would get a little screwy, you know what I mean?

MARTY

I don't think this is just about...

GWYNNE

Marty, how many times I got to tell you, you think too much.

MARTY

Well, let us not forget, Gwynne, I am thinking for two.

GWYNNE

Ha. Ha. You're a card, Marty. A real card. Kids, look. One short week. That's all we got. We don't have time for nervous breakdowns. I got Thaddeus Murdoch out there still bumping into the furniture.

EVA

There's nothing wrong with Thaddeus.

GWYNNE

Sweetheart, I know you love the guy, but Thaddeus Murdoch was washed up before you got your first kiss.

EVA

Thaddeus Murdock is perfect for this part.

GWYNNE

How would you know, sweetheart? You refused to let anyone else audition!

MARTY

Here we go again.

GWYNNE

I could've had ten guys, big names, like that!

EVA

I wanted Thaddeus.

GWYNNE

And you got 'im. And I'll be there to pick up the pieces when you realize how badly you've shot yourself in the foot.

MARTY

Okay. I think we've beat that horse to death enough. Gwynne, if you wouldn't mind, I'd like a moment alone with my playwright, please.

GWYNNE

You got five. Then it's showtime. Clock's ticking chickies -- tick- tick- tick.

(She exits)

MARTY

Tick, tick, tick, kapow!

EVA

Sometimes, I could just kill her.

MARTY

You'd have to get in line.

EVA

Marty? Do you think she's right? Do you think I'm just scared?

MARTY

Are you?

EVA

To death.

MARTY

Me, too.

EVA

You?

MARTY

Did you think I wasn't human?

EVA

But Marty, you've been around forever ...

MARTY

Hey ...

EVA

You know what I mean. You must've directed hundreds of plays.

MARTY

Perhaps not quite hundreds. Most of them fabulously forgettable. I care about this one.

EVA

Are you afraid the play won't be ready?

MARTY

I'm afraid you're afraid it won't be ready. You've been working like a madman.

EVA

Woman.

MARTY

I beg your indulgence, madam madwoman.

(beat)

The way your churning these pages out -- you must be working day and night.

EVA

And all the time in between.

MARTY

We don't have to open next week. It's not written in stone. The sky will not come crashing down if we give ourselves a little more time.

EVA

Gwynne will. She'll bash our brains in.

MARTY

Well, there is that. Eva, I learned a long time ago that nothing, nothing, not an opening, not a job, not even your blasted career is worth sacrificing your soul for.

EVA

This play is my soul.

MARTY

What?

EVA

Somehow, Marty, I think it is. Everything I am, I think is tied to this play. I've got to finish it.

MARTY

Finish it?

EVA

I'm so close. Every day, every moment, I draw closer and closer. It has to be done.

If it kills me, Marty, I am going to see "Dance With Death" through to the bitter end.

(Lights fade on Eva and Marty)

(Lights fade up very dimly. A pinpoint of light illuminates a beautiful woman dressed in a flowing white gown as she dances. A child's voice hums Chopin's "Waltz in A Flat", accompanied by the silvery sounds of a music box.)

(As the woman dances, Eva joins her, dressed in a flowing nightgown. The two woman hold hands and loop gently in a circle. Eva giggles. The woman dances away, her back turned to Eva. She turns back, and her face and gown are covered with blood. Eva screams)

(Black out)

(Lights fade up. Lyla and Deiter prepare with physical and vocal exercises on the set of DANCE WITH DEATH)

LYLA

(trilling)

Aaaaaaeeeeiiioouuuu!!!

DEITER

The tip of the teeth, the lips and the tongue ...

(In the backstage area, Thaddeus sits before his dressing room mirror, rehearsing his lines)

(Gwynne and Marty enter the backstage area in the midst of a heated argument)

GWYNNE

No dice, Marty.

MARTY

I'm just talking about a postponement.

GWYNNE

Do you have any idea what a postponement at this late date will do to the publicity of this show?

MARTY

I don't give a damn about the publicity.

GWYNNE

No. You never did. Which has always been your problem.

MARTY

She's working like a maniac, Gwynne. Like someone possessed for God's sake.

GWYNNE

Are you allergic to success? Is that the problem here? This play is the best shot I've had in fifteen years, not to mention the best one you'll probably ever see again.

MARTY

Gwynne...

GWYNNE

This is your ticket, sweetheart -- one way express uptown.

MARTY

I don't want to see anyone get hurt.

GWYNNE

No one is going to get hurt.

MARTY

She's fragile.

GWYNNE

She's a rock.

MARTY

I can't go through that again, Gwynne. Do you hear me? I will not allow it to happen again.

GWYNNE

Marty, that was another lifetime ago. We were different people then. It's over. Forget about it.

MARTY

I can still see her face.

GWYNNE

Stop torturing yourself!

(Eva enters unseen)

GWYNNE

Marty -- this is my shot, and the only thing I see is HIT. This show's going on exactly as scheduled, and I will do anything to

make sure nobody screws that up.

MARTY

Anything?

GWYNNE

Sweetheart, I chose you to direct this play for one reason and one reason only--- because you are the best goddamn director around. Don't make me sorry.

(Gwynne sees Eva)

GWYNNE

Eva! Fabulous rewrite on Thad's speech. We need some more in two-three.

(to Marty)

See you out front.

(Gwynne exits)

EVA

What was that all about?

MARTY

Hmmm? Oh. I suppose one would say, vintage Gwynne.

EVA

Ah. You okay?

MARTY

Huh? Oh, yeah. Yeah.

EVA

You sure?

MARTY

(snapping to)

You betcha. Hey, did you see Thad?

EVA

Has he seen the re-writes?

MARTY

I think they heard him exclaim in Jersey.

(an imitation)

"This is why I became an actor!"

(she laughs)

Come on out front. We're almost ready to get started. You can be my shield. Protect me against the evil monster they call

Gwynne.

(they begin to cross)
Tell me, Eva, these words of yours, do they just pop
full-blown out of your head.

EVA

Oh, Marty, I don't know. Sometimes I wonder just who
is really writing this play.

(Marty and Eva exit as Lyla, Thad
and Deiter take their places on the
set of DANCE WITH DEATH)

(Marty, Gwynne and Eva are seated
off to the side where we can observe
them as they observe the play. We
are at the end of the previous scene
we saw from DANCE WITH DEATH. Johnny
holds Mary in a forceful grip)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Oh, no! Not the great Mary Wilk!

MARY/LYLA

Yes! Mary Wilk!

JOHNNY/DEITER

The crown jewel of the art world.

(He knocks over a sculpture)

MARY/LYLA

Stop it, Johnny!

JOHNNY/DEITER

All you've ever cared about is yourself. You've
always been terrified of my talent. You've always known I have
the power to eclipse your shining star.

MARY/LYLA

Then do it! For God's sake, Johnny, go out and do it! I'll
applaud you! I'll be the first in line!

JOHNNY/DEITER

You know I can't do it without you!

(From off-stage Boris Jamrog calls:)

BORIS/THADDEUS

(off-stage)
Mary!

(Johnny grabs Mary, picking up a
knife)

JOHNNY/DEITER
Answer him, and I'll kill you.

(Mary struggles, breaking free)

MARY/LYLA
Boris! Help!

(off-stage)
Mary!

BORIS/THADDEUS

JOHNNY/DEITER
Goddamn you!!!

(Johnny grabs her, plunges the knife
into her chest. Boris enters. Mary
slumps to the floor)

BORIS/THADDEUS
Mary!

(Boris flies at Johnny, knocking him
to the ground)

(They fight, but Boris is no match
for Johnny. Johnny lands one last
viscious punch, and Boris crumples
to the ground. Johnny stands over
him wielding the knife)

JOHNNY/DEITER
Where the hell did you come from!

BORIS/THADDEUS
Johnny. She's hurt.

JOHNNY/DEITER
Don't move!

(Johnny turns to Mary who lies
lifeless)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Oh, no. Oh, Jesus, no.

(He goes to her, caressing the still form)

JOHNNY/DEITER

What have I done?

(Boris rises. Johnny turns)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Get back!

BORIS/THADDEUS

Please. Johnny. I just want to see her.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Get back down on the floor!

(Boris sinks back to the ground)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Johnny ...

JOHNNY/DEITER

Shut-up! Shut-up and let me think!

(Johnny looks wildly about the room -and stops at Boris. He rips the rag from his hand and wipes the knife clean. He wraps the rag around the blade, and holding out the knife, crosses to Boris)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Take the knife.

BORIS/THADDEUS

What?

(Visciously Johnny grabs Boris, forcing him to grasp the handle of the knife)

JOHNNY/DEITER

I said take it! Good. That's right. I want your hands all over it.

BORIS/THADDEUS

What are you doing?

JOHNNY/DEITER

You were jealous of us. Ever since she threw you over for me, you were eaten up by your jealousy. This afternoon, when you saw me enter the studio -you snapped. In a jealous rage you slammed into the room, grabbed up the knife, and before I could stop you, you killed her.

BORIS/THADDEUS

No! No one will ever believe you!

JOHNNY/DEITER

Oh, yeah? You're prints are all over the knife.

BORIS/THADDEUS

You'll never get away with this.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Who's gonna stop me, old man? You? You gonna call the police?

BORIS/THADDEUS

Johnny ...

JOHNNY/DEITER

Go ahead! Call 'em! Pick up the phone, and bring the police crashing down here.

(Boris turns away)

I didn't think so.

BORIS/THADDEUS

Why don't you just go! Go on! You've done what you wanted. Now get out!

JOHNNY/DEITER

I'm not quite finished yet.

(He searches the studio, pulling draws open, knocking things to the ground until he finds Mary's portfolio)

BORIS/THADDEUS

You leave those alone! Those are Mary's!

JOHNNY/DEITER

Now, they belong to me.

(Johnny begins to exit, but stops at

the still form of Mary. His breath catches. He goes to her, kissing her)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Mary.

(beat)

I loved you so much.

(Johnny tosses the knife at Boris' feet, and exits)

(Bruno Janek enters the house area, sees Eva and sits next to her)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Bastard!

(beat)

Mary.

(Boris crosses to her, fighting his tears. Gently he lowers her skirt)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Ah! Such a mess! Look at what a mess he made here. Don't worry, Mary, I'll clean it up.

(begins picking up the mess)

I'll pick everything up. Make everything just so, the way I know you like it.

(he collapses, sobbing)

Oh, my God, Mary! I let him go!

(beat)

How many times did I warn you about him? Stay away from him. He's no good. But in all those times, did I ever once warn you about me?

(beat)

He knew. From the moment he first met me, those eyes of his pierced my soul and he knew! Coward!

(Bruno, watching intently, sits rigidly, like a spring about to recoil)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Coward! Coward! Coward!

(In the background, the faint wail

of a siren.)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Police? Oh, God! Did Johnny call the police?

(frantically he looks around the room)

I am everywhere here!

(Panic rising, Boris grabs the bloody rag and wipes furiously at the knife)

BORIS/THADDEUS

My fingerprints are everywhere here!

(Boris shoves the knife in his pocket, and rises. He freezes.)

(Lights change. Tight spot on Boris. Chopin's Waltz in A Flat plays faintly in the background)

BORIS/THADDEUS

(in spot)

I tell you I did not know her! Yes, yes, I lived next door. But I barely knew the woman. Enough to say hello. That's all. No. I heard nothing. No. I saw nothing. I was away at work all day. I fix things. That's what I do. I was away fixing things all day. I heard nothing. I saw nothing. I barely knew the woman. Just enough to say hello. Beyond that, I cannot help you!

(Music crescendos and out. Lights change -- spot goes out.)

Boris stands alone on the stage, Mary's body a shadowy silhouette behind him)

BORIS/THADDEUS

She was an artist of rare vision and integrity. She feared nothing. She should have lived. At the very least, she should have lived on through her work. But in the end, I robbed my beloved of even that.

(beat)

Johnny, streaked to stardom like a comet just as he said he would; but it was I who had planted him in the heavens. All of Johnny's greatness came through the visions he had stolen from Mary that night.

(beat)
Shattering silence.
(tears fill his eyes)
Forever, to live in shattering shame. Oh, Mary. Forgive me.

(A moment, then Marty speaks
quietly:)

MARTY
And lights ...

(With the cue, the room erupts with
applause and a cacophony of sound.
Gwynne bounds on stage like a boxing
champion. Marty hugs Eva)

MARTY
I don't care who the hell's writing this play, just
keep it coming.

(Marty strides onto the set. Lyla
stretches, awakening from the dead)

LYLA
Bravo, my dear Thad. Can you help me up?
(Thad helps Lyla arise)
Didn't think you had it in you.

GWYNNE
That makes two of us.

THADDEUS
Ha! I will not allow you two harpies to ruin my afterglow.
Lyle, you're positively dripping with envy.

DEITER
I'd watch myself around him, ladies. Son of a bitch packs a
mean punch.
(to Thaddeus)
You're a killer. I'm going to bruise and swell.

(Eva steps onto the set, but Bruno
remains distant and rigid in the
house area. Thad bounds over to Eva)

THADDEUS
Eva! I fear after all, finally, you might make me a
star!

LYLA

Eva, my dear, lovely as always. Just keeps on getting better. I wonder though ... I mean, well, have you noticed, dear, I am on the ground back there in the shadows for an awfully long time.

(Marty approaches)

THADDEUS

Would you like a spotlight like I have, Lyla?

LYLA

I was talking to Eva.

(spots Marty)

Marty! Marty, I was just saying to Eva that I'm back there ...

THADDEUS

In the shadows ...

LYLA

Do you mind, Thad!

THADDEUS

Perhaps a death rattle or two ...

MARTY

Children, fight nice. Go ahead, Lyla.

LYLA

Well, as I was saying, there I am, lying there, my costume absolutely encrusted with filth, in the shadows ... and after all ... what is the point? What does all that lying about actually mean? When the spot goes out on Thad, I should arise and exit, c'est tout.

MARTY

Mmm-hmmm.

LYLA

He is in a different time at the point after all, isn't he?

MARTY

But you see, Lyla dear -- you make such an absolutely heart-wrenching corpse.

LYLA

Heart-wrenching?

MARTY

You have no idea. You're not out front. You can't see it. But that final ghostly vision, your translucent beauty shimmering, now forever extinguished-- well, what more can I say -- mon cherie, c'est le commencement de la fin, la bonne bouche, le coup de grace.

LYLA

Oh. My.

THADDEUS

He is soooo goood.

EVA

(to Thaddeus)

Thad, I want you to meet my father.

THADDEUS

Delighted.

(Eva walks Thaddeus toward Bruno)

EVA

Pop?

(she's struck by Bruno's ashen appearance)

I'd like you to meet Thaddeus Murdock. Thad, this is my father, Bruno.

(The two men stand, eyeing each other rigidly. Confused, Eva glances from one to the other.)

EVA

Pop?

BRUNO

Oh .. I am sorry ... what did you say, Eva?

EVA

I want you to meet Thaddeus Murdoch, Papa.

(As suddenly as it appears, the tension breaks)

BRUNO

Thaddeus Murdoch?

THADDEUS

A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Janek. Eva's told me so much about you.

BRUNO

Thaddeus Murdoch. Of course. My Eva never stops talking about Thaddeus Murdoch.

EVA

Can you join us for lunch, Thad?

THADDEUS

Oh, darling, there's nothing I'd like better, but really, I think I'd better not.

(soto voce)

I really was rather stinko out there today.

EVA

Oh, you were not!

THADDEUS

The lines, Eva! Your glorious lines! Didn't you hear how badly I muffed them? Marty's going to blow, and believe me, nobody wants to be around when Marty George blows!

MARTY

Okay, one hour. After lunch we're going from the top, so if it wouldn't put anyone too terribly out -- can we have our lines, please?

THADDEUS

(to Eva)

Told you.

MARTY

Thaddeus, I think you know who I'm talking to.

THADDEUS

(to Marty)

I was letter perfect on the new ending.

MARTY

Uh-huh. And paraphrase paradise everywhere else.

(The actors exit, ad libbing lines about how wonderful everybody was.)

(Bruno and Eva are alone. Bruno walks the set, touching everything)

BRUNO

It looks so real. Everything looks so real.

(he stops at the sink)

Does the plumbing work, too?

EVA

It will.

BRUNO

Imagine that. Just like you could move in.

EVA

That's Broadway.

BRUNO

Broadway. Broadway, my Eva. So. Does your play look very different from the time it was done before?

EVA

It keeps changing.

BRUNO

Yes. And at least this time, I know what is going on in your life.

EVA

Are you going to start again?

BRUNO

How can I start again when we have never finished.

EVA

I'm finished. Come on, Pop, let's go to lunch. I'm famished and I only have an hour.

BRUNO

Eva, I know this is your dream. From the time you were old enough to hold a pencil all you wanted to do was write. But, Eva, this play ...

EVA

I don't want to hear it.

BRUNO

No. You never have. Not from the beginning.

EVA

If the things I write about bother you so much, don't come.

BRUNO

At least this time I'm given a choice.

EVA

Oh! You drive me mad! When I first showed you this script you went insane. Did you forget that? You threw the script across the room and forbid me -forbid me to continue!!! What did you expect me to do after that? Hand-deliver a formal invitation to my opening so you could rant and rave all over again in public?

BRUNO

Everyone is always saying how much like me you are. But they have never seen your mother. Not only have you inherited her beauty, you have inherited her spirit as well. Though some might call it her pigheadedness.

EVA

(gently)

She would have had to be pig-headed to be able to live with you.

BRUNO

Yes, well, they are always saying that as well. Eva, it is not your writing that I was so upset over, It's just ...

EVA (finishing his thought)

... why must I write of such things.

BRUNO

You think I am a foolish, old-fashioned, old man.

EVA

You forgot over-protective.

BRUNO

I've seen the ghouls. Creeping out of everywhere.

EVA

There are no ghouls.

(beat)

Papa ... I'm not a little girl anymore. Look at me. I'm all grown up.

BRUNO

Eva, I could not bear for you to be hurt.

EVA

Trust me, Papa. I can fly.

BRUNO

You are my life.

EVA

Papa. I can fly.

(Lights dim)

(Lights fade up slowly on the set of DANCE WITH DEATH. It is very dark. Eva sits alone on the set, her notebook abandoned beside her. She rises, pacing the set, touching the props. She crosses to the stove, and picks up the poker. There's a noise off-stage)

EVA

Marty?

(No reply. Another sound. Eva grasps the poker, fear rising)

EVA

Who's there!

(Nate Bower crashes onto the set, tripping)

NATE

Holy cow!

(Eva whirls, wielding the weapon)

NATE

Hey, hey -- it's just me. Nate Bower. Remember? Ace reporter and theatre critic extraordinaire.

EVA

How'd you get in here?

NATE

The stage door was unlocked. You're not going to use that thing are you?

EVA

Only if I have to.

NATE

(opening his arms wide)

I'm clean. I swear. Not even a jackknife.

(Eva continues holding him at bay)

NATE

Would you put that thing down? You're making me very nervous.

EVA

I'd say that makes us even.

NATE

I'm sorry. Miss Janek, I didn't mean to frighten you. The stagedoor was wide open, and I just walked in.

EVA

Mr. Bower...

NATE

Nate.

EVA

I'm busy.

NATE

I know.

EVA

I'd like you to leave.

NATE

I know.

(he holds out a take-out bag)

But I have Chicken Chop Suey.

(off her look)

Marty's the snitch. He said you'd even been known to eat it for breakfast. I've been waiting, loitering around the stage door. For hours. Lingering for you to make an appearance. Do you think it would be at all possible for you to lay your weapon down?

(Eva re regards him a moment. She replaces the firepoker)

NATE

Ah. Good. That's better. Have you any idea what an imposing figure you cut, especially when armed?

(He sits, and begins dishing out the food)

EVA

I believe I told you I have work to do.

NATE

I believe you did. Mmm-mmm! Doesn't that smell fine.
Miss Janek, one cannot live on inspiration alone.
Come on. Have a little something to eat. I won't bite, you
know.

EVA

That's not what Gwynne says.

NATE

Gwynne deserves to be bitten. Fiercely.
(holds up a bottle)
Wine?

EVA

You brought wine?

NATE

Would you have expected less?

EVA

Mouton cadet. '35.

NATE

I read you enjoy good wine.

EVA

You do your homework.

NATE

Scrupulously.

EVA

Mr. Bower ...

NATE

Nate.

EVA

Nate. What are you after?

NATE

Miss Janek. You offend me.

(beat)

I like the play.

EVA

Uh-huh.

NATE

Have some chop suey.

(beat)

I saw "Dance with Death" when it opened downtown. Saw it under duress, actually. My editor made me go. Nobody else wanted to.

EVA

Thanks.

NATE

You know how it is. New play. Unknown writer. Downtown. Their loss, as it turned out. I was quite impressed.

EVA

Were you?

NATE

Seriously. Seriously impressed. I knew you were young. Heard you were beautiful. And then I saw your play. And inside, buried deep within this beautiful young woman was this mind... out of which came this play.

EVA

With which were you most impressed?

NATE

Sorry?

EVA

The play? Or the fact I had the mind with which to write it?

NATE

The fact that you were able to construct a world that contained characters of such tormented evil and devastating humanity.

EVA

Oh.

NATE

Co-existing within the same persona.

EVA

I see.

NATE

I went to the play opening night. I went to the play closing night. I went to the play quite a few nights in between. I wanted to talk with you.

EVA

And?

NATE

I didn't. You were always... surrounded. Ringed by these leather-booted, black turtle-necked artsy serious village types.

EVA

You were intimidated.

NATE

I didn't say that.

EVA

I've always wanted to intimidate somebody.

NATE

I don't know why I didn't go after an interview then. When I saw you were moving to Broadway, I was determined not to err twice.

EVA

I don't want to be interviewed.

NATE

Why not?

EVA

Because I don't.

NATE

That's not an answer.

EVA

It'll have to do.

NATE

Does the concept of publicity mean anything at all to you?

EVA

I don't care about publicity.

NATE

Gwynne know that?

EVA

I'm sick to death of this bloody play! I've lived with it for three years. Sleeping. Awake. It's always hanging around. Sneaking up, tapping me on the shoulder. Writing, and re-writing, and still it's not right.

NATE

What's not right?

EVA

Day after day I come to this damn theatre. Watching, listening, waiting. I know it's right there, lying in wait among the silence. But I can't grab it.

(Pause. Eva suddenly looks at Nate)

EVA

Gwynne was right when she warned me about you.

NATE

What?

EVA

You don't print any of that. Understood. Not a word.

NATE

I promised you anything you told me would be off the record, if that's the way you wanted it. I gave you my word.

(beat, a moment between them)

Would you like some more wine?

EVA

I would. Yes. I think I would.

(Nate pours her more wine. They sip)

NATE

You've barely touched your Chop Suey.

EVA

It is awfully good.

NATE

You think that's good, you should try this place I know in Chinatown. Nobody goes there but the natives.

EVA

Intriguing.

NATE

You should try it.

EVA

When?

What? NATE

Chinatown? EVA

Oh. You want to? NATE

Are you asking? EVA

Are you accepting? NATE

Do I dare? EVA

Would you? NATE

I don't know. You haven't aksed me anything yet. EVA

Miss Janek. NATE

Eva. EVA

Eva. Would you honor me with the pleasure of your company for dinner tomorrow night? NATE

I would be delighted. EVA

Really? NATE
(beat)
Wow. That was easy.

(They regard each other a moment)

You know, you never did answer my question. EVA

What question was that? NATE

EVA

Why are you so interested in "Dance with Death."

(Pause)

NATE

Oh. Let's just say, I owe it to somebody.

(Lights fade)

(Lights fade up on the set of DANCE WITH DEATH and the backstage area. Lyla and Deiter run through a scene as Eva, Marty and Gwynne watch. Thad waits for his cue, checking his make-up in a backstage mirror.)

(In the studio, Mary works on a piece. She picks up a knife.)

MARY/LYLA

Oh! The devil take it! Johnny! Did you sharpen these knives?

(Johnny is absorbed in a sketch)

JOHNNY/DEITER

Yes.

MARY/LYLA

When, for God's sake? Last week? This one's as dull as death.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Yesterday.

MARY/LYLA

You couldn't have.

(Johnny throws his sketch aside and crosses to Mary.)

JOHNNY/DEITER

I sharpened the knives. Just like you asked me to. I sharpened all of them.

MARY/LYLA

I'm sure. I've told you a hundred times, these knives must be sharpened everyday until they can slash like a

rapier...

JOHNNY/DEITER ...slicing through the heart.

(picks up another knife)
Here. Try this one.

(Mary reaches for it, Johnny pulls it back)

JOHNNY/DEITER
Unh-unh. What's the magic word?

MARY/LYLA
Give me the knife. I've got work to do.

JOHNNY/DEITER
And rather magnificent work, too.

MARY/LYLA
Ach! It's horrible. It's dull. It has no life!

JOHNNY/DEITER
I think it's beautiful, Mary.

MARY/LYLA
I haven't found the soul.

JOHNNY/DEITER
The soul?

MARY/LYLA
Without the soul, the piece is nothing. Now give me the knife.

JOHNNY/DEITER
(teasing)
No.

MARY/LYLA
Johnny! I haven't got time for your games.

(She reaches for the knife. They struggle. Johnny cries out:)

JOHNNY/DEITER
Ow!!! My finger.

MARY/LYLA

Serves you right.

JOHNNY/DEITER

I've cut my finger!

MARY/LYLA

Oh, let me see. It's barely a nick.

JOHNNY/DEITER

These are my hands!

MARY/LYLA

I guess you didn't forget to sharpen that one.

JOHNNY/DEITER

I don't want anything to ever happen to my hands.

(She takes his hands in hers)

MARY/LYLA

No. Of course not. Within your hands lies the power of your soul. Ah, Johnny. You have beautiful hands.

JOHNNY/DEITER

Do you think so?

MARY/LYLA

Exquisite. I've tutored a lot of students in my time, but never a one like you.

JOHNNY/DEITER

What do you mean?

MARY/LYLA

Come now. Back to work. I've an exhibit in three weeks, and not a piece worth a damn to show.

JOHNNY/DEITER

What do you mean?

MARY/LYLA

You've got magic in your hands. If you ever learn to harness the power of your soul, one day you just might grow into an artist.

(Johnny sweeps her up suddenly,
kissing her)

MARY/LYLA

What are you doing?

JOHNNY/DEITER

Harnessing the power of my soul.

(Johnny pulls her to him again, but
before he can kiss her, Thad enters)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Mary ... Oh ... I ... I'm ...

LYLA

For Christ's sake, Thad! What the hell are you doing!

THADDEUS

I am taking my entrance.

LYLA

That is not your entrance! We kiss. We kiss a second
time. We go over to the couch ...

DEITER

We don't go to the couch. The couch was cut.

(Marty steps onto the set)

MARTY

The couch was cut, Lyla.

LYLA

Well, this is the first time I've heard about it.

DEITER

We just went over the bloody blocking this morning!

LYLA

All right, all right. But there is a second kiss.

MARTY

Yes there is. Thad let them kiss again.

LYLA

And let us kiss for awhile.

(They all look at her. Covering:)

We are establishing a love scene, are we not?

THADDEUS

Just let me know how long you require, Lyla dear. Or perhaps I
should be asking Deiter?

DEITER

Just keep it like it was this morning. Okay? Is that so damnably hard. Just keep the bloody blocking exactly like we played it not two hours ago.

THADDEUS

Fine.

LYLA

Fine.

DEITER

Great.

MARTY

Why don't we take five.

(The actors begin to exit)

GWYNNE

Hold it.

MARTY

Gwynne...

GWYNNE

Are you forgetting something, Marty?

MARTY

I don't believe so.

GWYNNE

I want those changes.

MARTY

I know you do.

GWYNNE

I want them now.

MARTY

(to cast)

Go ahead, people. Run-through in twenty. From the second kiss.

(Marty takes Gwynne's elbow)

Gwynne.

(He escorts her downstage. The cast and Eva exit)

MARTY

You don't make the rules on my stage. Is that clear?

GWYNNE

Who do you think you're talking to?

MARTY

I've got twenty minutes from right now. Your office or mine.

GWYNNE

When did you become such a tough guy?

MARTY

About twenty years ago. And I learned from the best. Shall we?

(They exit)

(In the backstage area, Eva runs into Deiter)

EVA

Have you seen Thad?

DEITER

If I were looking for Thad, the first place I'd check would be his dressing room. In front of his mirror. Again.

EVA

Thanks.

DEITER

It was nothing.

(He exits. Eva crosses to Thad's dressing room)

EVA

Knock, knock.

THADDEUS

Eva.

EVA

May I come in?

THADDEUS

And since when do you need a formal invitation?

(Eva enters. Thad has not turned away from the mirror)

EVA

I guess Deiter was right.

THADDEUS

Deiter? Whatever could that young pip be right about?

EVA

You, adoring yourself in front of your mirror.

THADDEUS

Oh. Then I suppose he was right. Oh, Eva, I do adore myself these days. Or rather, I adore myself in this part, these days.

(Eva hugs him)

Who would have thunk it. An old washed-up old ham like me ...

EVA

You are not a washed up old ham.

THADDEUS

Ah. No longer. Because of you.

EVA

I'd say you had a little something to do with it.

THADDEUS/EVA

Perhaps a tad.

(They enjoy the moment together. Thad turns from the mirror to look at her)

THADDEUS

Eva. You are positively glowing.

EVA

I am, aren't I?

THADDEUS

All right. Who is he?

EVA

Why does it have to be a "he"?

THADDEUS

Hey, kid. I wasn't born yesterday. Now, give.

EVA

All right, all right. But you wore me down.

(beat)

Nate Bower.

THADDEUS

(brittle)

Nate Bower? You mean the reporter?

EVA

Yes.

THADDEUS

Oh. Eva.

EVA

What's the matter?

THADDEUS

A reporter, for God's sake. And Bower to boot. The philistine. He eats playwrights for breakfast. Doesn't even chew them. Swallows them whole.

EVA

Oh, stop.

THADDEUS

You think I'm joking. Tonight you go out to dinner, tomorrow your life's history is shamelessly splashed all over "On the Town With!"

EVA

I promise I won't tell him a thing about my night terrors.

THADDEUS

Night terrors?

(pause)

Again?

EVA

(beat)

Yes.

THADDEUS

You've had that dream again?

EVA

Yes.

THADDEUS

I thought the nightmares had stopped.

EVA

They had. Completely. I hadn't been bothered for months, until ...

THADDEUS

Until we started rehearsals again.

EVA

Yes. And now it's not just when I'm asleep.

THADDEUS

What do you mean?

EVA

Oh, Thad! I wasn't going to tell you this. I know how you worry.

THADDEUS

I do worry. Tell me.

EVA

The other day when I screamed and charged the stage ...

THADDEUS

Yes...

EVA

I saw her. That beautiful woman in white I always see in my dreams ...

THADDEUS

Yes, yes...

EVA

I saw her. Only this time, it wasn't in my dreams. When Deiter grabbed the knife, when he was stalking Lyla-- suddenly it wasn't Lyla anymore. She turned. She turned to face me, and it was her -- the woman in white covered with blood.

THADDEUS

Good God.

EVA

Thad ... something's trying to come in.

THADDEUS

What do you mean? Come in?

EVA

Something there -- at the edge of my mind -- a vision

THADDEUS

What kind of vision?

EVA

I don't know!

THADDEUS

Do you mean this woman in white?

EVA

Something more.

THADDEUS

What more?

EVA

I don't know! That's what I can't see! That's what's driving me mad! It's like there's this veil -- this curtain -- that's dropped down. I can see something, shadows, wisps, shimmering behind it -- but it won't come into focus!

THADDEUS

I want you to come and stay with me.

EVA

Thad ...

THADDEUS

No, Eva. I'm serious. I've got that great big place ...

EVA

Thad ...

THADDEUS

I don't think you're safe!

(Before Eva can respond, Gwynne Field charges on stage yelling:)

GWYNNE

It's the way I want it!

MARTY

(right behind her)
Well, you're not going to get it! Not as long as I'm directing this show!

(Thad, Eva, Deiter and Lyla gather in the backstage area, watching the confrontation)

GWYNNE
Oh, yeah, hot shot! You do what I say or you're out!

MARTY
You're firing me!

GWYNNE
You heard me. Don't let the door hit you in the ass on the way out.

(Marty's jaw sets rigidly. With icy calm, he crosses the stage, picks up a chair and hurls it across the room. The chair breaks into pieces. No one moves. Marty picks up the broken leg, and moves in on Gwynne)

MARTY
You fire me, and it's the last mistake you'll ever make.

(He drops the leg, and exits)

GWYNNE
All right, kids, gather 'round. You heard it. Marty's out. We do a run-through in fifteen -- and anybody, anybody not up and ready can pack their bags and join Marty in the street. We got six days. You got that? No one else better get in my way. Eva.
I need to see you now. On stage.

(Deathly quiet, the cast retreats to their dressing rooms. Eva follows Gwynne to the set.)

GWYNNE
We need some changes.

(She strides to the stove, picks up the poker and points it like a weapon at Eva)

GWYNNE

The other day was inspired. I should have seen it immediately. When you charged on stage and picked up this poker and smashed it down on the couch ...

(Gwynne brings the poker crashing down, Eva gasps, jumps back)

GWYNNE

(re Eva's reaction)

Yes! That's it! That's theatre! That's what this piece has been crying out for!

(she advances on Eva, wielding the poker)

I want to see Mary Wilk on this stage beaten to death with this firepoker and covered with blood!

(Suddenly the stage is plunged into darkness.)

(Black Out)

(In the darkness, a sickening thump is heard, followed by a moan. Furniture scrapes. Gwynne hollers. Voices are raised: "What's going on! Somebody find the lights! Doesn't anybody have a light!")

(A match is struck. Figures huddle in silhouette. "Somebody go trip the circuit breaker." More stumbling. Thuds. And the lights pop back on)

(Eva lies in a heap on the floor, her head bleeding. Gwynne stands over her, still holding the poker. Deiter and Lyla stare open-mouthed. Thad kneels beside Eva.)

THADDEUS

Eva ...

(From the house, Nate enters with

Marty)

NATE

Eva!

(He rushes to the stage)

NATE

Eva.
(to others)
What the hell happened here!

(Eva begins to stir. She moans)

NATE

Eva. Easy, now. Easy.

EVA

(coming to)
What happened?

(Suddenly Thad points out towards
the house)

THADDEUS

Look, there!!

NATE

What is it!

THADDEUS

Somebody's out there!!

(Thad and Nate rush off stage. Eva
slowly sits up. Marty goes to her)

MARTY

Hey. Slow, slow. Nice and easy. How you doing?

EVA

What happened?

MARTY

We need to get you to a doctor.

EVA

Somebody tell me what happened!

GWYNNE

The lights went out. When they came back on ...

DEITER

Gwynne was standing over you, wielding that poker.

GWYNNE

(turning to him)
What did you say?

DEITER

Well, you were the only one anywhere near Eva.

GWYNNE

Why you little skunk!

DEITER

Oooo. Methinks the lady doth protest too much

GWYNNE

Do you see any blood on this?

DEITER

You had plenty of time to wipe that poker clean
before Marty tripped the circuit breaker.

GWYNNE

Are you accusing me...!

MARTY

That's enough! Everybody just calm down!

(Gwynne spins on Marty)

GWYNNE

You showed up in the nick of time. Just what the hell are you
doing back here?

MARTY

I came back for my script.
(holds up his script)
This time, you're going to sink on your own.

EVA

Please, will somebody please tell me what happened.

LYLA

I don't think anyone knows, darling. I came on stage just as
the lights snapped back on. Gwynne was standing over you with
that poker. Thad was kneeling at your side. Marty and Nate were
bustling up the aisle. And Deiter, I'm afraid, was grinning.

(Nate and Thad re-enter)

NATE

Nothing.

THADDEUS

We chased him clear to the alley, but we must've lost him.

NATE

Just what the hell are you people doing for security anyway? I came looking for Eva and I waltzed right through the front door!

DEITER

Hmm. Was that before or after the lights went out.

EVA

(swooning)

Nate ...?

NATE

(he wraps his arms around her)

It's okay. I'm right here. I'm taking you to the hospital.

(to the others)

Do something about the goddamn security in this place, before somebody else gets hurt. Or worse!

(Lights fade)

(Lights fade up with morning light on the backstage area. Marty, Gwynne and Eva are seated around a desk. Eva wears a bandage on one side of her forehead. She appears drawn and pale, almost grim.)

GWYNNE

Well why not you, Marty? You could have sneaked back into the theatre, tripped the lights, crept on stage, whacked Eva, believing it was me...

MARTY

Oh, for God's sake!

GWYNNE

Then galloped off and switched the lights back on just in time to look like a hero! How long were the lights out anyway, Eva?

EVA

I have no idea.

GWYNNE

Let's face it, chickies. It could have been any one of us.

MARTY

Or, given what Thaddeus claims he saw, any one of any other number of people.

EVA

It wasn't anybody. Do either one of you honestly think that Lyla or Deiter or Thad for God's sake, tripped that switch, plunged the theatre into darknes and smashed me over the head. Why would they? Why would you, Marty? Or Gwynne? Dear God, we all know the only thing Gwynne wants is a hit.

GWYNNE

No need to be so blunt. But Eva's right, of course.

EVA

As for Thad's "Phantom of the Biltmore" ... His imagination in overdrive, I'm afraid. The wiring in this place has probably needed an overhaul since 1938. The power blew. The lights went out. I fainted and hit my head. End of story.

MARTY

We've got to be certain....

EVA

That it isn't something more sinister than an overwrought playwright on the brink of emotional collapse? Marty, there are no ghouls lurking deep within the bowels of the theatre just waiting for the right moment to strike. It was a silly stupid accident, and that's all that it was.

MARTY

Well security has got to be tightened at the very least.

GWYNNE

There's no question there.

MARTY

(to Gwynne)

Then I suggest you do it.

GWYNNE

Ja-vol!

(she swings her feet from off the desk to the floor)

Okay. End of meeting. Let's get back to work.

EVA

It's not the end of the meeting.

GWYNNE

What're you talking about?

EVA

I want Marty back at the helm.

(Gwynne sits back down. A pause)

GWYNNE

Ah, jeeze, Louise. I'd say that's up to Marty.

MARTY

Really? Last time I checked you were extolling me not to let the door slam me in the ass on my way out.

GWYNNE

Yikes. You always did have a memory like an elephant.

MARTY

Yes I do.

GWYNNE

You're gonna make me pay, aren't you?

MARTY

Yes I am.

GWYNNE

I haven't changed my mind about the rewrites. This play needs a socko ending.

MARTY

I couldn't disagree more.

GWYNNE

Think of the drama, Marty!

MARTY

What drama? Mary's brains smashed out with a poker. Blood running everywhere! Some drama! It ruins the elegance! It ruins the poetics! It ruins the entire statement of the play!

GWYNNE

What statement? The play is about murder.

MARTY

The play is a psychological examination into the event of a murder. The play is the journey of three souls caught in a web of escalating emotions and events that ultimately climax in the only way they can -- with murder and betrayal.

GWYNNE

Wow. Perhaps I should read the stunning opus again.

MARTY

That might be a start.

EVA

The ending has to be written. That's the only way we'll ever know.

MARTY

What?

EVA

I have to get down how it was actually done. Once I do that, we'll know.

MARTY

Know what, Eva?

EVA

How the murder really happened.

(Nate enters)

NATE

Knock, knock.

MARTY

Hey, Nate.

NATE

Hey. I'm not interrupting anything am I? I just wanted to check in on the patient.

MARTY

You're not interrupting me.

(moves for the door)

I've got a rehearsal to run.

(Nate raises his eyebrows. He'd heard that Marty had been fired.)

GWYNNE

That's right, Bower, you got your scoop. He was

fired. He was re-hired. Now, do me a favor if you would, please. Keep it the hell out of the papers.

(Gwynne follows Marty out the door, calling:)

GWYNNE

Marty! Wait up!

(She exits.)

NATE

You're still working on re-writes?

EVA

Yes.

NATE

Now? Shouldn't you be resting?

EVA

With all the painkillers they pumped me full of, I slept like I was dead last night. I've gotten enough sleep for a lifetime.

(She rises and crosses to the desk, sitting behind it. She puts a sheet of paper into the typewriter, and stares for a moment at the blank page.)

EVA

Do you know how I wrote this play? It came to me in a rush in the middle of the night. I woke up, and there it was, inside my head screaming for release. I got out of bed, picked up a yellow legal pad, and wrote. When dawn came, I had the first draft. Pretty amazing, huh? Every writer's dream. The piece that screams itself into existence, and keeps on screaming.

(She looks at Nate who regards her with such deep concern, that Eva laughs lightly. She goes over to him.)

EVA

It's okay. I'm not losing my mind. Nate, ever since I was a little girl it's like there's been this door, planted right here in the middle of my mind. I could go up to it, I

could even touch it, but it wouldn't open. Dance with Death, somehow, is opening that door. This time, I'm going to walk through it. This time, I'm going to find out what's on the other side.

(Lights crossfade -- coming up fuller on the set. Eva still sits at the typewriter in dim light, working. We are able to see her as the actors rehearse. In the "house", Gwynne and Marty watch, as Deiter slumps in a chair, napping. On the set, Boris and Mary sit on the sofa in Mary's studio. A tea service is on the table in front of them. Boris holds an exquisite antique music box, looking at it closely.)

BORIS/THADDEUS

Ah, yes, even so. Exactly so. Just like the music box my grandmother cherished.

(He closes the box tenderly and places back on the table.)

MARY/LYLA

Did you ever recover any of your things.

BORIS/THADDEUS

No. Years later, after my grandmother had brought me to this country, they wrote her. The Communists. They offered to sell her everything they had stolen. My grandmother was a lady, you understand, very proper, but when she got that letter, she took it and she spit right on it.

MARY/LYLA

What monsters men can become.

BORIS/THADDEUS

They came riding down from the North, Cossacks, like demons, swords raised, and left behind nothing but death and chaos. But still, that was not even the worst of it. The worst of it came after. Once they had plundered and conquered our village, they were bound to pillage our souls. They wanted to make us Russian. The schools - Russian. The language - Russian. Oh my God, even the churches - Russian. Anyone who resisted would disappear. Day after day, year after year, one person after another -- gone. And you never knew when the day

would come that they would be coming for you.

(beat)

My. Listen to me carrying on, and it's so late. Already I've taken up too much of your time.

MARY/LYLA

No. Not nearly enough.

(She opens up the music box.
Chopin's Waltz in A Flat plays)

MARY/LYLA

And I haven't had my dance.

(She holds her arms out to him.
Boris goes to her. The music fades up. They dance.)

(The Woman in White enters USC. Eva continues to work. Boris and Mary on one side, and the Woman in White on the other, dance. The music swells, the dancers turn in sweeping rhythms)

(Suddenly, the Woman in White turns and freezes, facing front. Her face is covered with a gruesome death mask. She opens her arms in a graceful arabesque.

She reaches out and touches Eva's shoulder. Eva turns, sees her, and screams.)

(Black out)

(End Act One)

ACT TWO

(Lights fade up. The Woman in White is gone. In the backstage area, Eva stares at the page in the typewriter, and screams again.)

(On the DANCE WITH DEATH set, the

rehearsal stops cold. People shout out: "What was that!" "Did you hear that?" "Was that a scream":)

THADDEUS

Eva!!!

(Thaddeus breaks for the backstage area, closely followed by Lyla. Gwynne, Marty and Deiter break from the house to backstage. Thaddeus is the first to reach Eva. She sits stunned, visibly making an effort to pull herself together)

THADDEUS

Eva! Are you all right?

GWYNNE

What the hell happened?

DEITER

Good God! My heart is beating like a rabbit!

LYLA

Did somebody break in again? Good God, did somebody hurt you again, Eva!

MARTY

Give her some room!

(They move away from her)
(Eva rises from behind the desk, still making a concerted effort to bring herself under control. She looks at the typewriter, sees the page, and pulls the paper out, tucking it away into a pocket)

EVA

I'm all right. Really. I'm sorry. I was working. I must have been ... lost in thought. I heard a sound, it must have broken my reverie, and I ... I screamed.

GWYNNE

Well I can tell you one thing, it wasn't some creep lurking about. I've got this joint locked up tighter than a vestal virgin before the sacrifice.

EVA

Oh, I'm so sorry. I feel like such an idiot.

LYLA

I don't know how much more excitement I can stand.

THADDEUS

Darling Lyle, you're positively thriving. You're cheeks haven't been so pink since that British chap at Stockbridge carried you off at the end of Lear with his hand dipping beneath your teddy.

(Lyla hauls off and belts him one.)

MARTY

I think we'd better call it a night.

DEITER

Now? My entrance is coming up.

EVA

Oh, Marty, no. I'm fine.

MARTY

I don't think anyone of us is fine. Look, people, we've gotten through the first act...

DEITER

Almost. Almost through the first act. I enter. Remember? I enter and see them waltzing. It crushes me. Marty, the scene is my watershed, it's my Waterloo. I see them together and at that moment I realize how hopelessly in love with her I am.

MARTY

Oh, Deiter, yes. Bravo! You've got such an emotional grasp of who this character is!

DEITER

Well, I like to be prepared.

MARTY

Well it shows. What a perfect place to stop. Right here, on the brink, if you will, of your apogee. Oh, I can't wait until tomorrow. I can't wait to see what you'll bring as you attack the apex fresh and renewed.

DEITER

Hmmmm.

MARTY

We're in a very good place, people. Even Thad remembered all his lines.

THADDEUS

Oh, Marty, don't make me use the "F" word to you.

MARTY

And I think what we all need most desperately right now, is rest. Remember, tomorrow's off, Tuesday -we go. Dress rehearsal in the afternoon. Invited dress Tuesday night.

LYLA

Oh, I love the theatre so.

(Thaddeus, Deiter, Lyla, Gwynne and Marty start to file out.)

EVA

Thad. Could I talk to you for a minute?

THADDEUS

Of course, my dear.

GWYNNE

Just leave everything when you go, Eva. The security man will lock up.

EVA

All right. Good night, Gwynne.

GWYNNE

Goodnight.

(Gwynne exits)

MARTY

Are you staying?

EVA

Just for a minute.

MARTY

I thought I just heard myself order some R and R.

EVA

I've got pages scattered all over the office.

MARTY

You're not going to stay here and write are you?

EVA

No. No. I just need to pick up.

MARTY

Eva, the one who needs the rest the most is you.

EVA

Marty, you're in danger of turning into my father. And I most definitely don't need another of those.

MARTY

Don't stay too late.

EVA

I won't.

MARTY

(to Thad)

Make sure she gets out of here before dawn's early light.

THADDEUS

You can count on me, my captain.

MARTY

I don't know why I do it. It's insanity. It's all sheer and total madness. Goodnight.

EVA/THAD

(together)

Goodnight.

(Marty exits. Thad moves closer to

Eva.)

EVA

Alone at last. I have to show you this. I have to show it to you before I bust.

(She pulls the piece of paper from her pocket, smoothing it as she speaks.)

I sat down at the desk to work. The next thing I knew -- it was like I was startled out of a deep sleep. I looked at the page in the typewriter, and this is what I saw.

(She hands him the paper. Thad looks down and jolts, dropping the page.)

THADDEUS

Oh!

(He covers immediately, bending down

to pick up the page)

THADDEUS

You see how clumsy I grow in my dotage.

(He studies the page)

Hmmm.

EVA

What is it?

THADDEUS

I don't know.

EVA

I've covered the page with it. Amara. Over and over again. Have you ever seen that word before?

THADDEUS

I don't think so.

EVA

What does it mean?

THADDEUS

I've no idea.

EVA

Is it something foreign?

THADDEUS

I don't know.

EVA

Is it a name?

THADDEUS

(sharply)

Why are you asking me? Am I supposed to know?

EVA

No. No, of course not. I was hoping you would. I was hoping you might be able to tell me something.

(Thaddeus regards her a long moment.)

THADDEUS

My darling Eva. I haven't a clue.

(Suddenly, he laughs, a deep, resounding gale. The laugh is so infectious, Eva joins in.)

THADDEUS

You mustn't ask me, you know. I'm not a detective, after all. I'm just an old ham actor.

EVA

You're a wonderful actor.

THADDEUS

I am wonderful actor. Even more gifted than I think you will ever know.

(he hands her the paper)

Amara. And now of course you cannot rest until you've solved the enigma. What will you do?

(Eva folds the paper, and tucks it into her pocket.)

EVA

Sit back, relax and enjoy the ride.

(Thaddeus lightly kisses her cheek)

THADDEUS

Come, I'll walk you out of this cauldron.

EVA

You go ahead.

THADDEUS

You can't be serious. Well, how long are you going to be for heaven's sake. I'll wait.

EVA

I'm all right, Thad. Go on.

THADDEUS

Dear God! You do insist on the strangest things.

EVA

The secret's here. In this place I've created. I can feel it, Thad, bubbling beneath the surface.

THADDEUS

If Mr. Martin discovers I've left you here alone I'll be the one bubbling. In oil.

EVA

Your secret shall remain forever safe with me.

(Thaddeus gazes at her fondly, then
with an almost profound sadness:)

THADDEUS

"Two may keep counsel, putting one away."

(He bows)

Once upon a time, I could have really astounded you.

(He exits)

(Eva, left alone once again, sits
back behind the desk. Lightly she
touches the keys of the typewriter.)

EVA

Amara.

(She picks up the phone, and dials.)

Come on, Pop, answer the phone.

(She waits longer)

Come on.

(a moment, then into phone.)

Oh! Hello! Mrs. Zimmerman! Did I wake you? It's Eva. I'm
sorry. You were sound asleep, weren't you? I'm trying to reach
my Father. ... Yes, I'll hang on

(she waits)

Not there? But it's after midnight. He wasn't home for supper?
..... Yes. Of course. I'm sure it's something like that. Yes.
At the theatre now. I'll wait here awhile. Tell him that,
okay? If you see him. Or maybe leave him a note. Tell him I...

(she's fighting tears)

Oh, God! I really need to talk to him. Something happened
today. I was writing and ... I'm sorry. Mrs. Zimmerman, I can't
explain this ... just, please, tell him to call me!What?
Yes. I'll wait. I'll wait here as long as I can.

(beat)

Thank-you. I'm sorry I disturbed you, Mrs.

Zimmerman. Yes, all right. Goodnight, Mrs. Zimmerman. (She
hangs up)

Where can you be? (beat)

Call me, Papa.

(She pushes back the desk chair,
throws her feet up on the desk, and
digs the paper out of her pocket.
Eva stares at the page a moment,

then throws her feet to the ground, and still holding the page, exits.)
(A moment, then Eva enters the set of DANCE WITH DEATH. It is very dark.)

She fumbles for a work light, finds it and snaps it on, but the bulb is low. The set sits in shadow. Eva walks the set, her eyes falling on the stove with the firepoker resting against it. She sets the paper down on the table in front of the sofa, and crosses to the stove. She picks up the poker, studying it.)

(Out of the shadows a figure wearing a large, heavy coat approaches. Eva, intent on the firepoker is aware of nothing. The figure is an indiscernible shadow in the dimness. Stealthily, the figure approaches Eva. The arm reaches inside the heavy coat. Eva turns. Her eyes widen. She draws back the firepoker and with all her strength, swings.)
(A guttural cry. The figure crouches, missing the blow. Eva is thrown off balance. She stumbles and falls, the poker clanging loudly to the floor. the figure flees.)

(Lights fade)

(Lights fade up brightly on the set of DANCE WITH DEATH. Nate paces the stage. Eva sits on the sofa. In the struggle, the paper covered with AMARA has fallen to the floor.)

NATE

Nobody saw anything? That security guy didn't see anything?

EVA

That security guy was asleep.

NATE

That's par for the course.

EVA

I called Gwynne. She went apoplectic. Fired the entire company.

NATE

They'll never work in this town again. What did the cops say?

EVA

What do cops say? They'll check it out. They'll put on an extra man. Go home.

NATE

That's the first sensible thing I've heard all night.

EVA

They think it was probably a vagrant.

NATE

A vagrant.

EVA

Somebody just looking for shelter. You don't think so?

NATE

I don't know what to think. Come on, let's get out of here.

(He takes her arm and they start to exit when he sees the typewritten sheet laying on the floor. Almost absently, he bends to pick it up.)

NATE

Yours?

(As he hands the paper to her, he glances down, seeing what's written there. A sharp intake of breath)

NATE

Oh, God!

EVA

What is it?

NATE

Did you write this?

EVA

What's wrong?

NATE

Is this yours?

EVA

Do you recognize that word?

NATE

Did this come from you or that vagrant that broke in here?

EVA

From me! I wrote it! I sat down to work on re-writes and I wrote that instead! Have you seen that name before? What does it mean?

(Nate crosses to the sofa. He sits, gathering his thoughts a moment)

NATE

Have you ever heard of "The Silent Diva."?

EVA

"The Silent Diva?" No.

NATE

There was a woman. She was beautiful. A Broadway star. Her name was Amara. She was murdered.

EVA

Murdered?

NATE

Twenty-three years ago. Eva, "Dance with Death" has a lot of similarities to that murder. When I first saw the play downtown, I was amazed at how close it was. But now, with all the re-writes you've done -the similarities are uncanny.

(Pause)

EVA

How do you know about it?

NATE

My father was a cop. The Silent Diva was the first case he caught after he made detective.

EVA

Here?

NATE

What?

EVA

Was she murdered in the city?

NATE

No. Just outside. Connecticut. Saugatuck.

(Eva crosses away)

NATE

The case drove my father crazy. A quiet suburban neighborhood, middle of the afternoon, nobody saw anything. He worked on it for years. Even after it was officially declared unsolved.

EVA

They never found out who murdered her?

NATE

No.

EVA

I grew up there.

NATE

What?

EVA

In Saugatuck.

NATE

You grew up in Saugatuck?

EVA

We lived there until I was about seven or eight years old.

NATE

You grew up in Saugatuck. That explains it, then.

EVA

That explains what?

NATE

How you know so much about this murder ...

EVA

No ...

NATE

The details, the similarities with "Dance With Death"...

EVA

No!

NATE

It was in the papers. As a child, you must have seen it. A child would remember something like that.

EVA

No! It doesn't explain anything! Do you hear me!! It doesn't explain a damned thing!!!

(Off-stage the voice of Bruno Janek calls:)

BRUNO

Eva ...! EVA!!

EVA

(calling)
Papa! Onstage, Pop!

(Bruno enters, wearing a heavy coat,
and breathing rapidly)

BRUNO

Oh my God, Eva! What has happened! Mrs. Zimmerman told me you called. I came down here as quickly as I could. Everywhere there's police! Outside. In the hallways.

EVA

It's all right, Papa.

BRUNO

Are you all right, Eva!

EVA

Yes. Yes.

BRUNO

I was at the neighbor's fixing her sink ...

(Nate steps forward)

NATE

Mr. Janek, I'm Nate Bower. I'm a friend of Eva's.

BRUNO

Mr. Bower.

NATE

Somebody broke into the theatre tonight.

BRUNO

Somebody broke in?

EVA

A vagrant. The police think it was just somebody looking for shelter.

BRUNO

Oh, my God. And you were here, Eva?

EVA

Yes.

BRUNO

Did he hurt you?

EVA

No. No. I'm fine. Papa, sit down. Look at you. You're dripping with sweat.

BRUNO

I got your message, I thought my heart was going to stop.

EVA

Take off your coat. Why are you wearing such a heavy coat?

BRUNO

It was the first thing I grabbed.

EVA

You were at the neighbor's?

BRUNO

Yes. Mrs. Marchand. Across the street.

EVA

At midnight?

BRUNO

What?

EVA

It was midnight when I called.

BRUNO

Her pipes burst.

EVA

Mrs. Zimmerman said you hadn't been home for supper.

BRUNO

I ate at the drugstore.

EVA

At the drugstore!

BRUNO

Why are you asking all these questions?

(he dabs at his face with his handkerchief)

I get a message. I grab a cab. Do you have any idea what it is like to get a cab from Brooklyn at this hour of the night?

EVA

Papa. Let me get you some water.

NATE

I'll get it.

(Nate exits)

EVA

Let's take off this coat.

(She helps him take the coat off)

BRUNO

Eva. what is this all about? When I spoke with Mrs. Zimmerman, she said you sounded like you were crying.

(Pause)

EVA

I want to show you something.

(She pulls the piece of paper out of her pocket, and hands it to Bruno. He takes it, and pales. Trembling, he sets the paper down, and walks away)

EVA

You recognize that name, don't you?

BRUNO

Yes.

EVA

You know she was murdered in Saugatuck.

BRUNO

Yes.

(he tries to control his rising emotions)

How did you discover her name?

EVA

I was working on the play. I was trying to re-write the murder scene. I wrote her name instead.

(He sighs heavily)

EVA

Nate told me "Dance with Death" is very similar to the murder of this woman. Amara.

BRUNO

Yes.

EVA

Did I know about that murder, Papa?

BRUNO

The murder happened in Saugatuck, Eva.

EVA

I have no memory of it.

BRUNO

No.

EVA

This is what you've been so afraid of? That I would remember this murder?

BRUNO

Yes.

EVA

But why, Papa? Why be so afraid of a murder that had nothing to do with me?

BRUNO

Eva, you had just lost your mother. You were such a little thing to suffer such a big loss. Then, just

a few months later there comes this brutal horror. One thing and then the other. You cried every night, shaking with fear. I had to take you to the doctor. Seven years old -- and he gave you pills to stop the nightmares so you could sleep.

EVA

I remember my mother's death.

BRUNO

Yes.

EVA

But I don't remember this murder.

(beat)

There's something else.

BRUNO

No, Eva.

EVA

There's something you're not telling me.

BRUNO

No. There is nothing!

(Nate re-enters with the water)

NATE

Here you are, Mr. Janek.

EVA

Papa, Nate's father investigated the murder.

BRUNO

His father?

NATE

He was a policeman in Saugatuck.

BRUNO

The police?

NATE

A detective.

EVA

Nate has all his father's files.

NATE

I kept everything.

EVA

I'm going to go through them.

BRUNO

What?

EVA

I'm going through every last piece of information he has.

BRUNO

No.

EVA

Why not?

BRUNO

Just stay away!

EVA

Why!

BRUNO

Aren't months of living in terror reason enough? Months of screaming awake night after night? Leave it alone!

EVA

All my life I've been surrounded by secrets. All my life, you've been hiding something from me.

BRUNO

No!

EVA

Something connected with this murder.

BRUNO

NO!!

EVA

For once in your life, answer me! For once in your life, tell me the truth!!

(Bruno grabs her forcefully)

BRUNO

You want the truth? The truth is unspeakable evil! The truth is nightmares and terror and lying trembling awake! The truth is shattering silence! And why? Why? Because one act, one moment of horror unbidden comes tumbling into our lives! This could have happened to anybody! You

understand me! It could have happened to anybody!

EVA

Papa!

BRUNO

Stay away from this murder! There is nothing there for you!
Just stay away!

EVA

You're hurting me!

(Bruno realizes how tightly he's
been holding her)

BRUNO

Oh, God. Oh, my God. Eva.

(he pulls her to him)

My, Eva. A man works hard all his life. He carves
out a place of peace, of protection for his wife, his child.
Then one day this terrible thing comes into that life and
changes everything forever. No longer is there peace. One
moment, and everything vanishes forever.

(he moves away from her)

Eva. I am your father. I love you. I am begging you not to go
any farther into this thing.

EVA

I have to, Papa.

(beat)

Papa, no matter how hard you tried to make them go away, the
nightmares never stopped. They live inside me. They haunt me
every day of my life.

(she moves to him)

I have to know the truth.

BRUNO

No.

EVA

You know something else.

BRUNO

I don't know anything!

EVA

Papa! Please! Tell me what you know!

BRUNO

I've told you all I ever will!

(He grabs up his coat and exits)

EVA

Papa!

(beat)

NOOOOOO!

(She paces fiercely)

EVA

There's something more!!!

(She seizes the firepoker, and with all her fury, she crashes it down onto the couch)

NATE

Eva!

(She stands a moment stunned, then slumps to the ground, cradling the poker)

(Very softly underneath, Chopin's Waltz in A flat begins to play. USC a pin spotlight fades up, revealing the beautiful woman in white, dancing. Eva whimpers)

NATE

Eva ...?

(Eva sits transfixed, watching the woman dance.)

(The woman freezes. In slow motion, in terror, she raises her hands up in front of her face. Her mouth opens in a silent scream. With heartbreaking grace, she slowly crumples to the ground)

EVA

(a strangled whisper)

Oh, no ... No ... Please, God ... No!

NATE

Eva...

(Spot goes out. Music out)

EVA

This is how she died, isn't it? She was beaten.
Bludgeoned to death with a firepoker.

NATE

(beat)

Yes.

EVA

You knew all along.

NATE

Yes.

EVA

The mind of a murderer.

NATE

What?

EVA

How could I know so much about the twisted mind of
a murderer?

NATE

What are you saying?

EVA

All my life, the nightmares never stopped. Haunting.
Bits and pieces ... fragmented memories of murder.

NATE

Eva, what are you talking about?

EVA

All my life the images have come. Blinding lights,
exploding, then just when I reach out to grasp
them -- fading, dying away -- leaving nothing behind but the
faintest imprint of horror. What horror was too terrifying to
remember. I picked up the poker.
I picked it up and brought it smashing down ...

(She smashes the couch with the
poker)

NATE

Eva! No!

EVA

Smashing it down again and again and again and again.

NATE

No!

EVA

Smashing it down until her skull was shattered.

(Nate grabs the poker from her,
wrapping his arms around her)

NATE

Eva! No! It wasn't you! Do you hear me! It wasn't you! Eva -- you were just a child. A child could never have had the strength. A child, you, Eva -you would never have that kind of evil.

EVA

Oh, Nate.

(He holds her)

NATE

It wasn't you.

EVA

She was so innocent. So brutally slaughtered. How can there be no one to answer for her murder?

NATE

There's someone, Eva. Somewhere, somebody knows something. It's what drove my father insane.

(beat)

Eva, seven years after the murder of Amara, my father died. His death was ruled a suicide, but I never believed that. Eva -- I think my father was killed because he came too close to solving her murder.

EVA

You think he was murdered?

NATE

Yes.

(beat)

Eva. I think you're coming too close.

EVA

What?

NATE

Tonight was no accident.

EVA

You think someone is trying to hurt me?

NATE

I think someone is trying to silence you.

EVA

The other day, when the lights went out ...

NATE

Someone made that happen. You know something, Eva.

EVA

Not just from a story in the paper. Not just from people talking.

NATE

No. And somebody's running scared as hell. She's been silent for twenty-three years. There were no clues. Not only was there nothing to lead to her murderer, there was nothing to lead to her past. It was like she sprang up on a Broadway stage full blown from nowhere. My father worked the case like a maniac. Every lead, every angle. He found one connection, a brother ...

EVA

She had a brother?

NATE

Tommy Blaine.

EVA

What was his name?

NATE

Tommy Blaine. Right after the murder, he vanished without a trace.

(A noise off-stage)

NATE

What the hell was that?

EVA

Pop?

(Marty George calls from off-stage)

MARTY

Who's there?

(He enters. For a moment, they all freeze, staring at each other. Then they all speak at once)

EVA

Marty ...

NATE

Marty! What are you doing...?

MARTY

What are you two doing back here!

(They all stop again)

MARTY

I just spoke to the cops. They told me nobody was back here. What the hell are you doing here, Nate?

NATE

I could ask you the same question.

MARTY

Gwynne called me. She was in a panic. She said somebody broke in. Attacked Eva. Eva. Are you okay?

EVA

I'm okay.

MARTY

What the hell happened?

NATE

The cops think a vagrant broke in.

MARTY

A vagrant. Did you he hurt you, Eva?

EVA

No. No. I called Nate, Marty.

MARTY

Oh.

(beat)

I see.

(beat)

You could've called me.

EVA

I know.

MARTY

You sure you're okay?

EVA

I'm okay.

MARTY

You'd better get home. Nate? Can you see she gets home?

NATE

Of course.

(Marty moves away, pacing, running
his hands through his hair)

NATE

Marty? Are you okay?

MARTY

Me? Oh, yeah. Hell, I'm swell. I just got vagrants attacking my playwright in the middle of the night. A playwright who insists on writing like a demon in the middle of the night. A hysterical producer making panicked phone calls all over the city in the middle of the night. And an invited dress the day after tomorrow which I am praying like hell can come off before another goddamn thing goes haywire to this show in the middle of the night!

NATE

(beat)

I'll take Eva home.

MARTY

Right.

(Nate and Marty start to leave)

MARTY

Eva.

(she turns back to him)

Get some rest, will you?

EVA

Sure, Marty.

NATE

Goodnight.

MARTY

Goodnight.

(They exit. Marty remains alone on stage. He sees the fire poker laying beside the couch, crosses to it, and picks it up.)

MARTY

(a sigh, a prayer?)
Oh, my God.

(He carries the poker to the stove. A moment. Then he raises the poker over his head and brings it smashing down)

(Lights)

(Lights fade up brightly full stage, the set, backstage area and the house. On stage, Deiter rehearses the movement leading up to Mary/Lyla's murder. Backstage Lyla and Thad vocalize in separate areas. Eva and Nate enter through the house. Deiter sees her.)

DEITER

Eva!

NATE

(Nate kisses her cheek.)
I'll be out front.

EVA

Okay.

(Nate exits. Eva goes up on the stage.)

DEITER

Have you got the re-writes?

EVA

The re-writes?

DEITER

Gwynne told me you were changing the ending. That now Johnny's going to smash Mary's brains out with the firepoker.

EVA

Deiter ...

DEITER

The firepoker is exactly who Johnny is!

EVA

I don't know if I'm going to change anything.

DEITER

But you have to. Gwynne promised me you would. I couldn't sleep last night just thinking about it! Picture it, Eva! I enter the stage for my curtain call, exhausted, spent, covered with blood. Oh, Eva, Johnny's got to bludgeon Mary to death with that firepoker.

EVA

Deiter, can we talk about this later? I've got to find Marty.

(She begins to move away from him)

DEITER

Eva, I know who Johnny is! I know how he thinks. I know what he feels! Eva, I know what the guy eats for breakfast. Johnny has got to smash Mary's brains out with that firepoker. That's the only way Johnny would kill.

EVA

Excuse me.

(She exits to the backstage area.
Marty enters as Eva does.)

MARTY

Eva! I didn't think you'd make it. Are you all right?

EVA

Oh, God, Marty, do I look that awful?

MARTY

What's wrong?

EVA

I was up all night trying to re-write that final

scene. I can't make it work.

MARTY

That's because the play is done.

EVA

It's not the vision I had.

MARTY

"Dance with Death" has evolved into a life of its own.

EVA

You can say that again.

MARTY

Then leave it be.

(he looks her over carefully) This isn't just about the play, is it?

EVA

No.

MARTY

You want to talk?

(Off-stage Gwynne Field calls.)

GWYNNE

(off-stage)

Marty!

EVA

Yes. Desperately. Do you have about, oh, twenty-three years?

(Gwynne Field enters)

GWYNNE

There you are! Didn't you hear me calling?

MARTY

Like a bull moose trapped in the wild.

GWYNNE

Cute. Can we get started? It's almost noon.

(sees Eva)

What the hell happened to you?

MARTY

Sensitivity personified.

GWYNNE

Well, jeez Louise, Eva you look like shit sauteed.

MARTY

That's because she was up half the night trying to jackhammer your vision into her play.

GWYNNE

You mean the firepoker? I know she didn't write it. Deiter told me.

EVA

He didn't waste any time, did he?

GWYNNE

That firepoker was Eva's inspiration.

MARTY

The firepoker was Eva's frustration.

(Lyla enters the area, with Thad following closely behind her.)

MARTY

That firepoker has absolutely nothing to do with this play!

GWYNNE

Oh, I'm sick of the whole subject, anyway. I like the knife. It has more elegance. It has more poetry. Let's go, chickies. Tick, tick, tick.

(She exits)

MARTY

By tonight she will be utterly convinced the knife was her idea in the first place.

LYLA

Eva, I need to talk to you a moment. May I? You know that Russian Cossack scene? Curtain Act One?

EVA

I know where it is, yes.

LYLA

Well, darling, don't you think Thad goes on a bit, well, a bit too too? I mean he has pages and pages ...

THADDEUS

Hardly pages. Paragraphs perhaps.

LYLA

Well, if you want to get technical. But all I say is "mmm-hmmm".

THADDEUS

You don't say "mm-hmmm."

LYLA

I know I don't say those words exactly. I don't say anything exactly! Mary just wouldn't do that. She's far too verbal. She always has something absolutely compelling to say.

THADDEUS

What you mean, Lyle dear, simply put, is you want more lines.

LYLA

You know, Thad, you can be so bloody crass.

MARTY

Lyla, Thad? Let's go. I want everybody in the Green Room. Now.

LYLA

Oh, but Marty, surely you agree with me.

MARTY

No, but, Lyla, surely I don't. The play is done. And if one of you even thinks of approaching Eva again with another suggestion, I will personally snap your wrist in two. Clear?

THADDEUS

Oh, Martin, you are such a beast.

MARTY

Let's go, people. Green Room. Now.

(Marty takes Lyla's arm, and
gestures to Thad)

THADDEUS

I'd like a word with Eva.

(Off of Marty's look)

Not about the play.

MARTY

You've got two and one half minutes. Tick, tick, tick.

(Marty and Lyla exit.)

(Thaddeus looks at Eva)

THADDEUS

(deeply caring)

Ah, my dear. You look ghastly.

EVA

I know.

THADDEUS

You've been working, haven't you? That brain of yours in overdrive, ticking away. Ghosts tumbling ghoulishly from their graves. Darling sit.

(She does. He takes her hands)

I'm afraid I haven't been totally honest with you.

EVA

What are you talking about?

THADDEUS

Amara? That slip of paper...

EVA

Amara...

THADDEUS

Amara. Amara Wolf.

EVA

Thad... you knew her!

THADDEUS

Not personally, love. She was far too splendid, the toast, the shining star of Broadway, to know someone like me. A young pup, panting away at her heels, begging to be let in out of the rain.

EVA

She was murdered.

THADDEUS

Yes.

EVA

Twenty-three years ago.

THADDEUS

Yes. When you showed me the paper, I was stunned. Frightened. For you. Because, somehow, darling, you seem to know all about

it.

EVA

Nate says the similarities between the play and the murder are amazing.

THADDEUS

And you've no idea how you come to know these things?

EVA

No! And it's driving me mad! She lived in the same town...

THADDEUS

Ah...

EVA

It was in all the papers. But it doesn't explain anything!

(beat, frightened)

Thad, oh, God, I think... I think somehow... my father may have been involved.

THADDEUS

Your father?

EVA

Nate's father investigated the murder. We've spent the last two days poring over the files. I'm so close. I feel her whispering.

THADDEUS

Eva, listen to me...

EVA

I have to find out the truth.

THADDEUS

You have the files.

EVA

Yes. Everything.

THADDEUS

Good. Tonight, you're coming home with me.

EVA

Oh, Thad...

(Marty calls out from off-stage)

MARTY

(off)
Places, everybody.

THADDEUS

Meet me in my dressing room as soon as the curtain comes down. I knew a lot of people who were working on Broadway in the twenties. With those files I can find your answer.

EVA

(throwing her arms around him)
Oh! Do you really think so!

THADDEUS

As sure as the sun shines in the east, little morning star.

EVA

What?

MARTY

(off)
Thaddeus! Let's go!

THADDEUS

Coming!
(to Eva)
My dressing room. Right after curtain!

(He exits on the fly)

EVA

Thaddeus, wait!

(Marty calls again from off-stage)

MARTY

(off)
Let's go people! We're at places!

(Eva stands alone on stage. Lights shift. The Woman in White enters USC. Chopin's Waltz in A flat begins to play very softly)

EVA

Little morning star.

(The Woman in White dances. Slowly Eva turns to watch, then suddenly as

a child would she throws her head back head, and laughs, rushing to the Woman. They grasp hands and whirl.)

(The music fades up louder. Eva hums with the music box in a high, childlike voice. The dance ends. The woman hugs Eva tightly to her.)

AMARA

Oh, darling, that was splendid!

EVA

(as a little girl)
Really?

AMARA

Absolutely sublime. The best dancing partner I've ever had.

EVA

Do you think I could grow up to be a dancer like you?

AMARA

Well, of course you can. Why ever not?

EVA

Oh, no. I could never dance like you.

AMARA

My little morning star, you just did.

EVA

(her eyes shining)
Really! Oh, my!

AMARA

(laughing)
I'll tell you what we're going to do. How would you like to put on a show!

EVA

Oh!

AMARA

We'll have to work very hard all summer long, but by the fading light of August, we'll be ready! Who should we invite?

EVA

Can we invite my father?

AMARA

Oh, yes, your father, indeed. Shall we make him get all dressed up in a black tie and tux.

EVA

Oh, yes!

AMARA

I'm sure he'll look very handsome. What should we serve?

EVA

Serve?

AMARA

We need to present some refreshments to our audience.

EVA

Cookies!

AMARA

Of course! Cookies. And a drop of tea. That sounds yummy.

EVA

Maybe ice cream?

AMARA

Yes, ice cream it is. But not too much. We must be free and light so that we may dance!

(Eva claps her hands. Amara spins around with her again, then hugs her, running her fingers through her hair.)

AMARA

Look how beautiful your hair is. It's like spun gold. I think you must have been kissed by an angel.

EVA

My mama used to say I was an angel. My mama used to say she could see my wings.

(The sound of a phone ringing)

AMARA

(crossing to the an imaginary phone)

Your mama was right. I can see them, too. One there.
And one --- oops, this one is folded over..

(she pretends to unfold a wing)

There. Perfect. Now flutter your wings.

(Eva runs in a circle, flapping her
arms like wings. Amara laughs. She
mimes picking up a telephone)

AMARA

Amara Wolfe. Oh, hello, Maurice! Hmmm? Wait a
moment. I can barely hear you. Let me turn the music
down

(She mimes turning music down)

AMARA

(to Eva)

Eva, run along into my room and pick out some
costumes.

EVA

Costumes!

AMARA

Of course! We must have skads of gorgeous costumes
for our show. Surprise me. Anything you wish.
Jewels, furs, feathers. Evening gowns.

EVA

Oh! I want an evening gown. I want a bright red
evening gown covered with beads!

(Eva rushes upstage, and freezes.)

(Lights fade until the stage is in
shadow, the players now mere
silhouettes.)

(The music box plays in the
darkness, but now its silvery tones
sound distorted, discordant)

(Eva turns back slowly.)

EVA

Amara?

(The discordant tones sound in the

dark. Amara, like a marionette who's strings have been cut, crumples slowly to the floor)

(Eva walks slowly over to her.)

EVA

Amara?

(She reaches out her hand, and lightly caresses the fallen woman.)

(Bruno Janek enters the dark stage. We see only his silhouette.)

(He walks over to Eva and Amara, and picks up the firepoker. Eva looks up at Bruno. He stands over her and Amara, holding the firepoker.)

(Lights fade to black.)

(From off-stage in the blackout we hear the voice of Marty:)

MARTY

(in black out)

All right, people, this is it. Today, the show belongs to you.

(Lights bounce up full. Eva stands on the set of DANCE WITH DEATH beside the stove. The firepoker rests against it.)

MARTY

Eva! Eva! Come sit down!

(Eva crosses from the stage into the house where Gwynne, Marty and Nate are already seated. She sits beside Nate.)

NATE

Eva? You look like you've seen a ghost.

EVA

Take my hand.

NATE

You're trembling.

EVA

I know what he was trying to keep from me.

MARTY

And lights

(Lights begin to fade)

NATE

(to Eva)

Your father?

EVA

(to Nate)

I know what he's spent a lifetime trying to keep me from finding out.

(Lights fade to black.)

(Lights fade up on the final scene from DANCE WITH DEATH. Though we see the actor's on stage, this final scene is taking place in the mind of Eva. The lights are shifted, slightly distorted. Chopin's Waltz in A flat plays loudly)

(Mary/Lyla sits alone in her studio working on a sculpture.

She works in silence for awhile. Then stops in disgust.)

MARY/LYLA

Oh! That isn't right!

(The telephone rings. Mary goes to answer it.)

MARY/LYLA

Amara Wolfe. Oh, hello, Maurice. Hmm? Just a moment. I can barely hear you. Let me turn the music down.

(Upstage, the Woman in White, AMARA, enters, holding an imaginary telephone. Until Lyla exits, Amara

and Lyla speak their lines in
unison)

AMARA/LYLA

That's better. What? No Tommy isn't here. I haven't
seen him all day. Oh, yes. I've been suffering with him
tremendously through this whole rehearsal process. He's been
stomping about like a wild boar... What? He did what?

(Thaddeus Murdoch enters the room,
his face bruised and bloody. Lyla
sets down the phone, and exits as
Amara crosses down.)

AMARA

Oh, my God! Oh, Maurice! How bad is the damage? He
destroyed everything? Oh, my God. ... Of course. Of
course ... I'm sure it's nothing but utter chaos.

(Amara locks eyes with Thaddeus)

AMARA

Fire him?

(beat)

Yes. I heard you, Maurice.

(beat)

Please, Maurice, don't apologize. You're not the one
who should be doing the apologizing.

(beat)

Oh, I'm quite sure I'll be seeing him. What? Afraid
of Tommy? Oh, my dear friend, don't worry about
that. I have nothing to fear from Tommy Blaine.

(She hangs up the phone)

THADDEUS

So, he called you already.

AMARA

Yes, he called.

THADDEUS

Couldn't wait to pour out every bloody detail.

AMARA

Oh, Tommy! What did you expect?

THADDEUS

What did I expect? How about kindness? How about regard?

AMARA

Regard for what? Your wild temper?

THADDEUS

Do you know what he said to me?

AMARA

I've heard nothing but what he's said to you for weeks.

THADDEUS

He said I was worthless! In front of the whole cast, bellowing, screaming that I was no good.

AMARA

How many times do I have to tell you, Maurice is not the only director in town.

THADDEUS

He said if it wasn't for you, I would never work again.

AMARA

Tommy ...

THADDEUS

I went crazy, Amara. Mad with torment. I smashed up the set.

(She notices the marks on his face)

AMARA

Oh, Tommy, what did you do to your face?

THADDEUS/TOMMY

I smashed that, too!

(She goes to him)

AMARA

Your beautiful face contains the power of your soul. Haven't I taught you at least that much?

THADDEUS/TOMMY

He wants to crucify me, Amara.

AMARA

No.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Humiliate me ...

AMARA

Tommy ...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

He's consumed by envy! He has no integrity. No sense of style. He's the one who's no good! He can't bear the talent I have so he's determined to destroy me!

AMARA

Listen to me. Maurice doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is you. You, Tommy.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Amara. Do you still believe in me?

AMARA

Oh, Tommy...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Do you, Amara?

AMARA

I've always believed in your talent.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Oh, Amara. Oh, thank God. I knew you'd never desert me.

AMARA

Tommy...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

That's why I came straight here. I knew you'd help me. I just need six months. Six months in this show ...

AMARA

Tommy...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Oh, I'll be wonderful in this show. Better than I've ever been before. I'll make you so proud. And I'll even be a good boy this time. I promise you I'll behave myself, no matter what that fool says to me ...

AMARA

Oh, Tommy ...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Then watch me streak to the top like a comet! Call him. Call Maurice right now.

AMARA

I can't.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

What?

AMARA

I can't. You cost too much. I can't afford you any longer.

(He rises)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

You can't afford me?

AMARA

Tommy ...

(Violently he knocks over a table)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

You can't afford me! What the hell are you saying?

AMARA

Tommy!

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Are you going to turn your back on me?

AMARA

Listen to me ...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Now, when I need you most, you're going to desert me again?

AMARA

I can't help you anymore.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Don't do this to me.

AMARA

You've done it to yourself. You always do it to yourself. Time

and time again you destroy everything that can bring you love or joy. I can't help you anymore. You're too close to destroying me. And I can't let that happen.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Oh, no. You're the great Amara Wolf.

AMARA

Yes! Amara Wolf!

THADDEUS/TOMMY

The brightest star on Broadway.

(he stalks her)

All you ever cared about was yourself!

AMARA

That isn't true!

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Even when we were little. Even then you were afraid of me. You knew I had talent. You always knew I had the power to eclipse your shining star!

AMARA

Then do it! For God's sake, go out and do it! I'll applaud you! I'll be the first in line!

THADDEUS/TOMMY

I can't do it without you!

AMARA

Yes, you can!

(She moves in close to him)

AMARA

You can. Listen to me. Go away from here. Go where nobody knows who you are.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Where nobody knows I'm your brother?

AMARA

Where you can build a life of your own.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

A life of my own. All alone. That's what you want, isn't it?

AMARA

Tommy ...

THADDEUS/TOMMY

To be left all alone. To leave me all alone. Again.

AMARA

You're not a child anymore.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

But I was a child. A little boy. How old was I? Six, maybe seven years old.

AMARA

I came back for you.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

After how many years?

AMARA

I came back just as I promised I would.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

After how many years! You deserted me!

AMARA

No.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

I was just a little boy and you ran off to become a star!

AMARA

No! It won't work this time.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

And you left me all alone in that hell.

AMARA

No! It won't work! Not anymore! For years I was so consumed with guilt, so tormented by my sins of abandonment that I was blinded to who you really are.

THADDEUS/TOMMY

And who is that?

AMARA

You're a beast. Only a beast would behave as you do. How many shows have I let you destroy? How many times have I opened up my heart only to have it broken over and over again. Do you think you're the only one who suffered? My soul is choked with scars. But I survived! I survived!

(He picks up the firepoker and

brings it crashing down on the sofa.
Amara screams. Tommy stalks her)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

You survived!

AMARA

Tommy! Put that down!

THADDEUS/TOMMY

You destroyed me so that you could survive!

(Amara desperately tries to flee,
but in an unholy rage, Tommy brings
the fire poker crashing down. Amara
slumps
to the floor)

(Eva, enters the room)

EVA

(as a child)

Amara?

(Tommy whirls to face her)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Oh! Where'd you come from?

(He walks toward her, still holding
the poker. Eva, whimpering backs
away from him)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Oh .. oh... I know who you are. You're her little
morning star.

(He moves closer. Eva whimpers,
backs away)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

She told me all about you.

(beat)

What are you so afraid?

(He looks at the poker, as if seeing
it for the first time. He turns to
see the still form of Amara)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Oh, my God! Amara! Oh! What have I done!

(Tommy crosses to the still form.)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

Amara?

(beat)

Amara?

(to Eva)

When I was a little boy, a long time ago, before she left me, I was her little morning star, too.

(he looks at the poker, still in his hand, and back at Eva)

If you tell anyone about this, I'll kill you. Do you understand what I'm saying? Wherever you go, whatever you do, I'll find you. I have powers. I'll find you, and I'll kill you, too.

(Tommy wipes the poker clean with his shirt tail. He places it down beside Amara)

THADDEUS/TOMMY

You remember what I said, okay? Little morning star.

(He exits)

(Eva crosses to Amara)

EVA

Amara?

(she caresses her)

Amara?

(Lights fade to black)

(In the black-out, Marty and Gwynne applaud heartily. Gwynne whistles)

MARTY

All right! All right!

(Lights fade up, the stage is empty. Marty and Gwynne continue to applaud and whistle. Eva stares in a daze)

(Deiter, Mary and Thad enter the set together, take hands, walk downstage and bow)

MARTY

That's right. Together first. And now Deiter ...

(Deiter steps forward)

Good. And our glorious Thad ...

(Thad steps forward to bow. Eva bolts onto the stage, attacking him, pummeling him with her fist, as a child might)

EVA

Murderer!

MARTY

Eva!

(Marty hurtles on stage, Nate right behind him.)

THADDEUS

Everybody stay back!

(he grabs Eva)

I've got a knife.

NATE

Let her go!

THADDEUS

Shut-up!

(Bruno Janek enters from the house, pointing a gun at Thaddeus)

BRUNO

Let her go, Mr. Blaine.

THADDEUS

Everybody shut-up! Don't move! Anybody moves and I'll kill her.

GWYNNE

Oh, my God!

DEITER

Would somebody please tell me what's happening here?

THADDEUS

I'll tell you what's happening, Deiter. Eva has remembered.

(beat)

Oh, God. She's remembered.

(beat)

Please, don't anybody get in my way. I really don't want to have to hurt her.

(beat)

Eva. Let's go.

(He pulls her back. Eva struggles)

EVA

No!

THADDEUS

Don't make me have to kill you.

(He pulls her again. Eva twists away, breaking his grip, slicing her fingers across his eyes.)

(Thaddeus howls with pain, covering his eyes, doubling over)

BRUNO

Run, Eva!

(Eva runs from Thad. Bruno fires.)

(The bullet hits. Thaddeus crumples to the floor. Bruno advances, holding the gun)

BRUNO

The day I met you in the theatre, you looked so familiar. Just being next to you made my skin crawl. But Eva said your name was Thaddeus. And so I thought, no this cannot be the same man I remembered coming to her house. The same man who disappeared so suddenly after Amara was murdered.

(beat)

Somebody call the police.

GWYNNE

I'll go.

(She exits. Bruno hands Nate the gun)

BRUNO

Would you take this, please?

NATE

With pleasure.

(He takes the gun.)

(Lyla and Deiter, for once speechless, sit on the sofa. Marty walks upstage.)

(Bruno crosses to Eva, embracing her)

BRUNO

Eva.

(Sirens wail in the background.)

NATE

That's your cue, Tommy-boy.

(Nate gets Thaddeus to his feet)

BRUNO

(to Eva)

I've had the gun for years. I knew they never found him. I lived in terror that one day he would find you.

(Lights fade to black)

(In the darkness we once again hear the dulcet trill of Lyla Baines)

LYLA

AaaaaeeeeeiUUUU!!!

(Lyla enters with Deiter nipping at her heels)

DEITER

Lyla! Have you seen Franklin! Where in God's name is Franklin?

LYLA

(singing the lines)

How on earth should I know?

DEITER

I need him here now.

(on the verge of total collapse)
Oh, this is impossible! Franklin will never be ready
to go on tonight.

LYLA

Deiter, relax. Gwynne has been preparing Franklin on
the q.t. since the first read-through.

(Gwynne hollers from the other side
of the theatre)

GWYNNE

Marty! Marty!

MARTY

(yelling from the back of the house)
What!

GWYNNE

We're sold out! Marty! We haven't even opened yet,
and we're sold out!

(Deiter and Lyla mob Gwynne. Marty
leaps on stage.)

DEITER

I knew this show would make my career!

GWYNNE

It's all over the radio! Winchell has the story!

DEITER

Well, she has to change the ending now.

MARTY

(to Deiter)
Give me your hand.

DEITER

Why?

MARTY

I'm going to break your wrist.

GWYNNE

I should call about the Alvin. That's a much bigger theatre
than this squawk box. That awful comedy is in there now. Mr.
Roberts. That turkey won't last through previews, I guarantee
you that.

MARTY

People. half hour. Let's go.

LYLA

Eva must write another play.

GWYNNE

Oh, yes. Chapter Two!

LYLA

Pick up where "Dance with Death" leaves off.

DEITER

I could play Thad this time.

LYLA

You're much too young to play Thad.

DEITER

I am not.

LYLA

You are, too.

MARTY

Half hour. Full house. And they're writing a sequel. Mes enfants! Allez-vous maintenant!

DEITER

Well, who're you going to play? You're dead.

LYLA

(wailing as she exits)

Gwynne! He's right! I'm dead! Gwynne! I'm dead!

(They exit)

(Lights fade to a pinpoint of silvery luminescence. Amara enters, dressed in a flowing gown of radiant white. Chopin's Waltz in A flat plays)

(On the other side of the stage, another pinpoint of light. Eva, dressed also in a gown of flowing white enters)

(Amara holds out her hands. Eva, her

head thrown back, rushes to her.
They dance. Amara spins away, then
pirouettes back. Her face glows.
Gently
she blows Eva a kiss. Eva repeats
the gesture. Amara curtseys and
exits)

(Lights fade up. Eva stands center
stage. Nate enters, taking in her
radiance.)

EVA

Amara.

(she places her hand over her heart)

Oh, Amara. I remember you.

(Lights fade out)

END OF PLAY