THE GINGERBREAD LADY was first presented on December 13, 1975, by Saint-Siabber at the Plymouth Theatre, New York City, with the following cast:

(In order of appearance)

Michael Lombard
Alex Colon
Betsy von Furstenberg
Maureen Stapleton
Ayn Raymen
Charles Sherb

Directed by Robert Moore
Setting by David Hayes
Costumes by Frank Thompson
Lighting by Marc Arnstein

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The Scene
The action takes place in a brownstone apartment in New York's West Sevens.

Act One
A late afternoon in mid-November.

Act Two
Three weeks later—about 9:00 p.m.

Act Three
The following morning.
Act One
The scene is the third-floor apartment in a brownstone in the West Seventies. It consists of a living room, a bedroom and, to the left, a kitchen. The rooms are fairly large, with high ceilings and what were once very nice wood panelings, now painted over. In the mid-thirties and forties this was a great place to live. The furniture is very good and probably very attractive but one could hardly tell any more; it has fallen into disrepair. Against the wall there is a small, battered piano that is covered with photographs, all of a theatrical nature. A stack of mail is on the table.

A man's sheepskin coat is draped over a chair. From the kitchen we hear the faucet running and a man humming. He comes out with a vase he has just filled with fresh flowers. James Perry is in his early forties, portly and probably homosexual. Probably but not obviously. He wears slacks with a dark blue turtleneck sweater. He first goes to the window and peers out and down, looking for the arrival of someone; then he turns back and looks for a place to put the vase. He tries the piano, changes his mind, then settles on the coffee table. It doesn't please him much.

JIMMY I hate it. (The doorbell rings. He looks at his watch nervously, then crosses to the door and asks without opening.) Who is it?

MANUEL (Offstage) Groceries.

(Jimmy opens the door and glares at the delivery boy, Manuel, who is Spanish and about twenty. He is holding two large grocery bags in his arms)
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

JIMMY Where were you? I thought you went out of business. Put them in the kitchen, please.

MANUEL (At doorway) Mrs. Meara live here?

JIMMY Yes, Mrs. Meara lives here. Would you please put them in the kitchen.

MANUEL (Not moving) Is fourteen dollars twenny-eight cents.

JIMMY Fine. Terrific. That's a charge. Just put them in the kitchen.

(JIMMY starts to walk away but notices that the boy is not moving)

MANUEL Mr. D'Allessandro say to me I mus' have fourteen dollars and twenny-eight cents.

JIMMY No, you don't understand. Mrs. Meara has a charge account. Charge—account! Do you know what that is?

MANUEL (Nods) Tha's a charge account.

JIMMY That's right. It's an account and you charge it. I don't live here. I'm a friend of Mrs. Meara. You charge it to her account.

MANUEL Mr. D'Allessandro say to me eef they say to you, eet's a charge account, you say to them eet's fourteen dollars and twenny-eight cents.

JIMMY Do you want me to get on the phone and call Mr. D'Allessandro? What's the number?

MANUEL The number? The telephone number? Ee's seven-six-six-something, I don't know, I never call them

ACT ONE

... Eef you speak to Mr. D'Allessandro, he's gonna say to you eet's fourteen dollars and twenny-eight cents.

JIMMY (Irritated) I don't have to call Food Fair, you know. They have canned goods in Bohack's, too.

MANUEL Bohack's is nice. My cousin works for Bohack's. They all the same, you know.

JIMMY (Glares at him) I don't have fourteen dollars and twenny-eight cents. I have no money on me.

MANUEL Oh, well, that's okay. I'm sorry.

(He turns)

JIMMY Where are you going?

MANUEL Back to Mr. D'Allessandro.

JIMMY Wait a minute, I'll look. (He takes his wallet from his back pocket. The boy smiles at him. Jimmy turns his back so the boy can't see into his wallet. He takes out one bill) I have ten dollars.

MANUEL (Shrugs) I leave you one package.

JIMMY (Glares more angrily) Wait here. (He starts for his sheepskin coat, notices that the boy has edged inside a step or two) That's far enough.

MANUEL What's a matter, Meester, you afraid I come inside, I rob you house? I don' rob no houses.

JIMMY I don't care what you do, just wait there.

MANUEL I got a good job, I don' have to rob house.

JIMMY (Half to himself as he goes through his pockets) Yeah, in the daytime. (He takes a passbook out of his pocket, along with some loose dollar bills. He holds the
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

book in one hand and counts money as he crosses back)
How much was that again?

MANUEL Same thing, fourteen dollars twenty-eight cents.
(The boy puts down the packages, JIMMY takes out four
singles and hands them to the boy, but in the process he
drops the passbook on the table. The boy picks it up and
looks at it) Oh, I use to have theses. Unemployment book.
You unemployed, Meester?

JIMMY (Grabs it back) None of your damned business.
Who asked you? You’ve got your fourteen dollars.
You can leave now.

MANUEL (Holds out his hand) And twenty-eight cents.

JIMMY (Reaches into his pocket and takes out the change.
He hands it to the boy, one coin at a time) Ten . . .
fifteen, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-
eight cents. (The boy looks at it, and nods his head in
agreement) That’s all. There’s no tip. I don’t live here. I
don’t tip where I don’t live.

MANUEL I don’ wan’ no tip. You ain’t even got a job. I
don’ need your tips.

JIMMY And I don’t need your goddamned sympathy.
You’re very fresh for a delivery boy.

MANUEL Wha’s a matter, you don’ like Spanish people?

JIMMY Who the hell said anything about Spanish people?
You’re the only one I don’t like. Will you please leave
now?

MANUEL (At the door) I know the kin’ of people you like,
Meester.

(He makes two kissing sounds with his pursed lips)

ACT ONE

JIMMY Get out of here! (The boy smiles and rushes out,
the door closing behind him. JIMMY bolts the door, then
crosses to the grocery bags, still funning) I wouldn’t live
in this neighborhood if you paid me . . . (He picks up
the bags and starts for the kitchen) Can’t say a thing
any more, everyone is so goddamned race conscious . . .
Lousy spic! (He goes into the kitchen. We hear the
rustle of the paper bags as the phone rings. JIMMY
comes out with a can of coffee in his hand and
crosses to the phone) Hello? . . . No, she’s not, I’m
expecting her home any minute, Who’s calling, please?
. . . Well, in regards to what? . . . Oh! Well, I’m sure
Mrs. Meara hasn’t paid her phone bill intentionally. She’s
been away sick for the past ten weeks . . . But you’re
not going to cut it off, are you? She’ll pay it as soon
as she gets home . . . Fourth notice already, my good-
ness . . . But you must realize she’s good for it. I mean
this is Evelyn Meara, the singer . . It must be in by
Tuesday, yes, I’ll tell her that. Thank you very much,
I appreciate that. (He hangs up. To the phone) Wait
three years to get one but you rip ‘em out fast enough,
don’t you? (He starts opening the can. The front door-
bell rings. JIMMY turns and looks at the door. He is ex-
tremely anxious. He puts the can of coffee down on a
chair, wipes his hands on his pants and goes to the door.
He calls out without opening) Who is it?

TOBY (Offstage) It’s us. We’re home.

(He starts to open the door, but it doesn’t work,
since he’s forgotten that he bolted it. He tries to
unbolt it but has a little difficulty at first)

JIMMY (Calls out) Wait a second, I’m so damned nervous,
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

(He finally opens it, and Toby Landau enters. She is a very pretty woman, in her early forties—but you'd never believe it. That's because she spends most of her waking hours trying to achieve that effect. She is well dressed in a smartly tailored suit. She carries a large, heavy, but not very elegant suitcase) Look at me, I'm shaking.

Toby (Entering) Don't complain to me. I just spent four hours in a taxi on the Long Island Expressway. Look out the window, you'll see a very rich cab driver.

(She looks around the apartment)

Jimmy Where is she? (He looks out the doorway) Evy? Where's Evy?

Toby She's saying hello to a neighbor. . . . I thought you were going to clean the apartment. Didn't you say you would clean the apartment for Evy?

Jimmy I tried rearranging the furniture, but it always came out like a bus terminal in Passaic. Where is she? Is she all right?

Toby Yes, but you're going to be shocked when you see her. She lost forty-two pounds.

Jimmy Oh, my God.

Toby I will tell you right here and now that a rest home for drunks is the most depressing place in the world.

Jimmy I never thought she'd last it out. I'm so nervous. What do I say to her? How do I act in front of her?

Toby You hug her and love her and, above all, you must trust her.

ACT ONE

Jimmy I'll kill her if she ever takes another drink . . . Where the hell is she?

(We hear Evy's voice just outside the door)

Evy (Offstage) I'm out in the hall. Are you ready?

Jimmy Ready.

(Evy enters, wearing a mink coat and carrying books)

Evy All right, say it, I'm gorgeous, right?

Jimmy Oh, my God, I don't believe it. Who is she? Who is this beautiful woman?

Evy It better be me or I'm out twenty-seven hundred bucks.

Jimmy Am I allowed to hug you?

Evy You're allowed.

(Jimmy rushes into her arms and hugs her. He feels her)

Jimmy It's true. It's gone. Forty-two pounds are gone. Where did it go to?

Evy You want it? It's in the suitcase.

Jimmy I can't get over it. It's like talking to a stranger. Somebody introduce me.

Toby Jimmy, this is Evelyn Meara. Remember? She used to sing in clubs?

Jimmy That fat lady? Who used to drink a lot? Use foul language? No. This is a nice skinny woman. You put a dress on her, you can take her anywhere.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Evy I don’t want to go anywhere. I want to be right here in my own apartment. Oh, it’s so good to be home.

(Looks around) Jesus, it looks different when you’re sober. I thought I had twice as much furniture.

Toby Will you sit down? (To Jimmy) She won’t sit down. She stood all the way in the taxi coming home.

Jimmy You must be starved. When did you eat last?

Evy I had chicken salad in July. I’m not hungry.

Toby The doctors told me she worked harder than any patient there. Even the nurses were so proud of her.

Evy It’s the truth. I was the best drunk on my floor. (Looking at the sectional) Christ, now it’s coming back to me. I threw the other half of this out the window.

Jimmy I want to make you something. Let me make you a tongue and Swiss on toast and a pot of coffee. Sit down. I’ll be five minutes.

Evy I thought my mother lived in Ohio. Leave me alone. I tortured myself to lose forty-two pounds.

Toby Jimmy, stop it, you’ll get Evy nervous.

Jimmy I’m worried about her. If someone doesn’t make it for her she doesn’t eat.

Evy There’s plenty of time to eat next year. I’m all right. I’m home. Let me enjoy myself.

Jimmy Who’s stopping you? (To Toby, softly) She look all right to you? (Toby nods) Is there anything she has to take? Pills or anything?

ACT ONE

Toby Just some tranquilizers. She has them in her bag.

Jimmy But nothing heavy? No serious stuff?

Toby Just a mild sedative to help her sleep.

Evy (At the kitchen door) If you doctors want to be alone, I can go back to Happy Valley. What are you whispering about?

Jimmy We’re not whispering. We’re talking softly.

Evy You were whispering.

Jimmy We were not whispering. We were talking softly.

Evy Why were you talking softly?

Jimmy Because we don’t want you to hear what we’re saying.

Toby Jimmy’s worried about you, that’s all.

Evy If he’s worried, let him worry a little louder. I can’t stand whispering. Every time a doctor whispers in the hospital, the next day there’s a funeral.

Jimmy I’m sorry. I’m sorry.

Evy It took ten weeks to cure me and five minutes for you to drive me crazy.

Toby Jimmy didn’t mean it, darling.

Evy What are you blaming him? You were whispering too.

Toby I had to. He whispered a question to me.

Jimmy All right, can we drop it?

Toby I didn’t even bring it up.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Evy Jesus, I got along better with the nuts on Long Island.

Jimmy I'm sorry, Evy. All right? I'm nervous I'm gonna say the wrong thing. I don't know how to act in front of somebody who just got home from the cure five minutes ago.

Evy You act natural. The way you always acted with me.

Jimmy This is the way I always acted with you.

Evy Yeah? Well, maybe that's why I started to drink.

Toby My God, what a homecoming.

Evy (Wilted a little) Hey, listen, I'm sorry. Maybe I am nervous . . . Don't pay attention to me. Jimmy, you know what I'd love more than anything else in the world? A tongue and Swiss on toast and a pot of coffee.

Jimmy Do you mean it?

Evy I dreamt of it every night. First I dreamt of sex, then a tongue and Swiss on toast.

Jimmy I'll bring you the sandwich. The rest I can't help you with.

(He exits into the kitchen)

Toby (Looking at herself in the mirror) And what can I do, Evy?

Evy You can stop looking at yourself and give me a cigarette.

Toby You are nervous, aren't you?

Evy I hated that place so much I used to save up matches, planning to burn it down. It was a goddamn prison. And then when it came time to leave I was afraid to go . . . I suddenly felt comfortable there . . . Can I have my cigarette, please?

Toby That's almost a whole pack since we left the hospital. Are you sure they said it's all right to smoke?

Evy Once you pay your bill and check out, they don't care if you get knocked up by a dwarf. (Takes the cigarette and smokes) I thought I'd have a million things to do once I got home. I'm here six minutes, I'm bored to death.

Toby You've got to give yourself time, Evy. And then you're going to start your life all over again and you're going to grow up to be a beautiful wonderful person like me.

Evy What's that? What's that crap you're putting on your face?

Toby It's a special crap that protects the skin. Have you noticed you've never seen pores on me? As long as you've known me, have you ever seen a single pore on my face?

Evy I've never even seen your face . . . Who are you, anyway?

Toby A woman can never be too pretty. It's her feminine obligation. I love my looks, don't you?

Evy You're gorgeous. If you went bald and lost your teeth, you'd still be cute-looking. Leave yourself alone.

Toby I can't. Isn't it terrible? I'm obsessed.

Evy You remind me of the psycho in the room next to me. She used to shampoo her eyelashes every night.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Thought all the doctors were in love with her. An eighty-seven-year-old virgin screwball.

Toby What a sweet story ... You just going to sit there forever? Aren't you going to unpack or something?

Evy Unpack what? A pair of pajamas and a bottle of mineral oil? Besides, I'm never going in that bedroom again. I ruined half my life in there. The next half I'm playing it safe.

Toby I understand perfectly. But how will you get to the bathroom?

Evy Over the roof and down the pipes. Just worry about your face, all right?

Toby I can worry about both. I wish I could stay with you tonight.

Evy Then why don't you stay with me tonight?

Toby I have to meet Martin at Pavillon for dinner. It's business—I distract the client.

Evy Some friend you are.

Toby Don't say it like that. I'm a wonderful friend. I'm sensitive. You want me to be hurt?

Evy Don't pout. You'll crack your make-up and start an avalanche on your face.

Toby Anyway, Jimmy can stay with you tonight.

Jimmy (Sticks his head in through the kitchen window) Jimmy has an audition at five forty-five.

Toby You said you'd be free tonight.

ACT ONE

Jimmy I was until the audition came up. I have to eat, you know.

Toby Can't you cancel it? For Evy?

Jimmy I wouldn't cancel it for Paul Newman.

Toby Oh, God, Evy, I'm sorry. What will you do tonight?

Evy I'll turn on television and stand stark naked in front of Merv Griffin. What the hell do you think I'm going to do all alone?

Toby You could call Polly. She's probably home from school by now.

Evy I'm not ready to see my daughter yet, thank you. What I'd really like to do is move the hell out of this dump.

Toby Then why don't you move?

Evy Because, dumb-dumb, I still pay a hundred and twenty dollars for three and a half rooms. It's on a sublet from Mary Todd Lincoln.

Toby You can borrow from Marty and me until you go back to work again.

Evy Work? Singing in clubs? The last job I had was two years ago in Pittsburgh. I broke the house record. Fell off the stool seventeen times in one show.

Toby That's old news, I don't want to hear about it.

Evy I shared a dressing room with a female impersonator who had the hots for me. I think we made it, but I forget which way.

Toby You don't have to sing in clubs. There's television—
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Martin knows people in advertising. You can be a cat in a tuna fish commercial, you’ll make a fortune... I’ve got to go.

EVY So soon?

TOBY I’m afraid so, Marty’s waiting.

EVY Just gonna dump me here like a basket case, heh? I thought you were going to stay and grow old with me.

TOBY Don’t be silly. I’m never growing old... I won’t go if you’re really desperate.

EVY When have you known me when I wasn’t desperate?

TOBY Never. If you need me I’ll be at Martin’s office and then at Pavillon. Can I send you anything?

EVY How about the headwaiter?

TOBY Armand? He doesn’t go for women.

JIMMY (Entering with a tray with cups of coffee) Send him anyway, we’ll find something for him to do.

TOBY Evy, this may be one of the happier days of my life.

EVY Toby, if you didn’t come to pick me up today...

TOBY I told you. I’m always way the hell out on Long Island early Thursday mornings. Tell me once more how pretty I am.

EVY Helen of Troy couldn’t carry your compact.

TOBY I believe you, Evelyn. I really do. I’ll call you from the restaurant. (She goes to the door; stops) Evy... say it just once more.

ACT ONE

EVY Say what?

TOBY What you promised me in the taxi.

EVY (A pause) I will be a good girl. For ever and ever.

TOBY Oh, Christ, I’m going to cry—there goes my make-up.

(She exits quickly. Evy turns to Jimmy)

JIMMY You skinny bastard, I’m so proud of you.

EVY Is that why you didn’t visit me once in ten weeks?

JIMMY I can’t go to hospitals, you know that. I pass out in hospitals. If I ever get hit by a car I tell them, “Take me to a drugstore, never a hospital.”

EVY It wasn’t a hospital. It’s a sanitarium for drunks.

JIMMY They had white shoes and cotton balls, that’s enough for me. (He hands her a cup of coffee) Didn’t I call you almost every day? Didn’t I send you popular novels?

EVY Queen Alexandra and her hemophiliac son? Couldn’t you send me a sex manual, for chrissakes?

JIMMY I’m sorry I was nice to you. Next time I’ll just send you a get-sober telegram.

EVY How much do I owe you for the groceries?

JIMMY We got ’em free. I had an affair with the delivery boy.

EVY Next time I’ll answer the door. Give me the bill.

JIMMY Don’t be ridiculous. Where would I get money?

EVY You were just in a show.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

JIMMY That was in October and we ran two nights and were closed by the police. Please don’t ask me what I had to do naked with six people on the stage.

Evy Was it something sexual?

JIMMY I couldn’t tell, I had my eyes closed . . . That is the goddamned last time I will ever take my clothes off in public. Not only have I not worked since then, I can’t even get a lousy date any more. You know what I did to keep alive? God is my judge, I worked in Bonwit’s selling snakeskin toilet-seat covers, on my mother’s life.

Evy (At the window, looking out) I don’t see any men on the streets. Little boys, fags, hippies, but no men.

JIMMY What kills me is that I’m so good. I’m such a good actor I can’t stand it. But I’m too late. Show business is over this year. There will be no more entertainment in the world after June. Maybe you’ll see a person whistling or humming on the street, but that’s all. I was born too talented and too late. What are you doing at the window? Who are you looking for?

Evy Nothing.

JIMMY You look tired. Why don’t you lie down for a while?

Evy I don’t want to lie down.

JIMMY You’ve got to lie down sometime.

Evy That’s an old wives’ tale. I’ve known people to stand for years at a time . . .

JIMMY (Lost in his own problems) I won’t get this job tonight. They’ll turn me down. I’m auditioning for some nineteen-year-old putz producer who has seventy-five thousand dollars and a drama degree from Oklahoma A&M . . . First time he walked into the theater he fell off the stage, broke two ribs . . . Some chance an intelligent actor has today . . . Oh, God, I want to be a star so bad. Not a little star. I want to be a big star with three agents and two lawyers and a business manager and a press agent, and then I’d fire all of them and get new ones because I’m such a big star. And I’d make everyone pay for the twenty-two years I poured into this business. I wouldn’t do benefits, I wouldn’t give money to charity. I would become one of the great shitheads of all time. Isn’t that a wonderful dream, Evy!

Evy (Looks around) She didn’t leave any cigarettes. Stupid dumb broad.

JIMMY (Takes a crumpled pack out of his shirt pocket) Here. Take whatever I have. My money, my blood, whatever you want—only calm down, because I don’t trust you when you get nervous.

Evy I just made up my mind: I don’t like you.

(She takes one of the cigarettes)

JIMMY You never liked me. For fifteen years it’s been a one-sided friendship. I’m the one who always worries about you, picks you up off the floor, puts you to bed, feeds you—and for what? Christmas you gave me the one lousy album you made in 1933 . . . Well, I’m through. I can’t take it any more. You’re skinny and sober, take care of yourself now.

Evy How’d you like a big wet kiss on the mouth?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

JIMMY  How'd you like a tongue and Swiss on toast? Sit down, it's ready.
       (He starts for the kitchen)

EVY (Yells)  Jimmy, will you stay here and talk to me!

JIMMY (Stops)  What do you want to talk about?

EVY  Anything, dammit, pick a subject.

JIMMY  Why don't you ask me, Evy? Why don't you get it over with and ask me? . . . No, I have not seen him or spoken to him, all right?

EVY (A pause; she nods)  All right.

JIMMY  I'm lying. I saw him at the bar in Downey's last week. I don't think he's doing well because he had one beer and ate all the pretzels in the dish . . .

EVY  Was he alone?

JIMMY  Yes, I know because when he left I watched him through the window hoping he'd get hit by the Eighth Avenue bus . . . What else do you want to know?

EVY  Nothing. I was curious, not interested.

JIMMY  Oh, really? Is that why you keep staring out the window? Is that why you won't go into the bedroom? What are you afraid of, you'll see his lousy ghost sitting on the john doing the Times crossword puzzle? . . . Go on. Go in the bedroom and get it over with, for chrissakes.

       (evy looks at him, then goes into the bedroom. It is quiet a moment. Then we hear evy from the bedroom)

ACT ONE

EVY  How'd you get the Bloody Mary stains off the wallpaper?

JIMMY  I hung your bathrobe over them.

EVY (Reenters living room)  You know what I'll do? I'll repaint the room white. The whole bedroom white, top to bottom. Walls, floors, bedspreads, shoes, stockings, everything white. And I'm going to forget everything that ever happened in there and I'm going to become one happy, TV-watching, Protestant, square-arsed lady, how about that?

JIMMY  Nixon'll be thrilled.
       (The doorbell rings. evy looks startled)

EVY  Are you expecting anyone?

JIMMY  I don't even live here. Should I answer it? They're just going to ring again. (It rings again) See!
       (evy nods. He opens the door. It's the Spanish delivery boy with one package in his arms)

MANUEL  I forget the soda. Six cans Coca-Cola, six cans Canada Dry ginger ale. Two dollars, forty cents.

JIMMY  I paid you before, didn't I?
       (He tries to grab the package)

MANUEL  You paid me for las' time, you dint pay me for this time. Two dollars and forty cents, please.

JIMMY (Angry)  Did you tell D'Allessandro that Mrs. Meara is going to take her business somewhere else?

MANUEL  He don' care. He say, "Take the Coca-Cola somewhere else."

EVY (Steps forward)  What's wrong?
JIMMY There's nothing wrong. (To the boy) Wait out there. I'll get your money.
(JIMMY takes the bags and goes into the kitchen)

MANUEL I don' wanna come in your house.
(EVY steps out into the center of the room so that she is in view of the boy for the first time)

EVY Jimmy, don't leave him out in the hall like that. (To
MANUEL) That's all right, you can come in.
(The boy looks at her and smiles)

MANUEL Oh. Okay.
(He steps in)

EVY (Smiles at him) I'm Mrs. Meara.

MANUEL Oh, yes? Hello, Mrs. Meara, nice to meet you.
(He nods his head a few times, looks her up and down)
I brought you six cans Coca-Cola, six cans Canada Dry
ginger ale. Okay?

EVY I don't see why not. That's a charge. And put fifty
cents on for yourself.

MANUEL Oh, thank you very much.

EVY You're welcome.

MANUEL But I need two dollars, forty cents. Mr. D'Alles-
sandro say to me—

EVY I know what Mr. D'Allessandro said to you. It's all
right. You tell him Mrs. Meara is home and will take
care of everything by check again. Will you do that?

MANUEL Yes. I'm going to tell him that. But he's going to
tell me not to tell him that.

ACT ONE

EVY What's your name?

MANUEL Mr. D'Allessandro.

EVY No, your name.

MANUEL My name? You want to know my name? Manuel.

EVY Manuel?

Eet's Spanish.

(JIMMY comes out of the kitchen)

EVY I haven't seen you before, Manuel. What happened
to the other boy?

MANUEL Pablo? Pablo got married and is now work in a
better job. Bloomingdale's.

EVY Really? He seemed so young.

MANUEL They don' care how old you are in Blooming-
dale's.

EVY I mean to get married.

MANUEL Oh, Pablo is twenny years old, same as me.

EVY You're twenty?

(JIMMY has been watching this with consternation)

MANUEL Tha's me, twenny.

EVY Well, let's hope that you get married and find a bet-
ter job too, Manuel.

MANUEL Eet's okay eef I find a better job, but I don' wanna get married. I'm okay now, you know what I mean?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Evy (Smiles) You mean you have lots of girl friends, is that it?

Manuel Sure. Why not?

Evy Well, you tell Mr. D’Allessandro I will send him his check the first thing every month. Will you do that?

Manuel The first thing every month. That’s what I’m gonna tell him.

Evy And put fifty cents on for yourself. I don’t have any change just now.

Manuel Tha’s awright . . . I come again. You take care of me another time—you know what I mean? (There is a slight suggestiveness in his tone that does not go unnoticed by Evy or Jimmy) Goodbye, Mrs. Meara. (To Jimmy) Okay, Meester, eet’s okay now, we’re good friends again, all right?

(He winks at Jimmy and exits, closing the door behind him)

Jimmy (Yells) Jesus Christ! Why didn’t you invite him in to listen to your Xavier Cagat records? Are you crazy?

Evy Oh, come on, he’s a delivery boy.

Jimmy I saw the look he gave you and I know what he wants to deliver.

Evy I’m not in that kind of trouble yet . . . maybe in a few weeks, but not yet.

Jimmy I can’t trust you. I can’t trust you alone for ten minutes.

Evy I can be trusted for ten minutes.

JIMMY I know you, Evy. I wouldn’t leave you with the Pope during Holy Week . . . Haven’t you had enough trouble this year?

Evy I’ve had enough for the rest of my life. For Christ’s sake, I’m not going to shackle up with a delivery boy. I don’t even have a quarter to give him a tip.

Jimmy You’ll charge it like everything else.

Evy Oh, God, Jimmy, I really love you. You don’t know how good it is to have somebody worried about you.

Jimmy Well, I hate it. I have enough trouble worrying about me. I’m forty years old and I can’t get a job with or without clothes any more. If you want to carry on with Pancho Gonzales, that’s up to you.

Evy (Puts her arms around Jimmy) Of all the stinking people in this world, you sure ain’t one of them.

Jimmy Well, I’m glad you finally realize all the others are stinking.

Evy Why don’t you marry me?

Jimmy Because you’re a drunken nymphomaniac and I’m a homosexual. We’d have trouble getting our kids into a good school.

Evy Give me a kiss. (He kisses her lightly) Come on. Give me a real kiss. Who the hell’s gonna know? (He kisses her with feeling)

Jimmy God will punish us for the terrible thing we’re doing.

Evy Don’t get depressed but you get me very excited.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

JIMMY I don’t have to stay and listen to this kind of talk. *(Breaks away from her)* I’ve got to go. If you promise to behave yourself, I may be nice to you when I’m a star.

EVA We could live together in Canada. They don’t do sex in Canada.

JIMMY *(Putting on his bag)* Stop it, Eva, you’re confusing my hormones. I’m late.

EVA Jimmy!

JIMMY *(Stops)* What?

EVA Nothing. I just love you and want to thank you for being here today.

JIMMY Don’t thank me, just pray for me. Pray that I get this show because I think it’s the last one in the world.

EVA Will you call me the minute you hear anything?

JIMMY It’s off-Broadway, there are no phones. *(On his away out)* I bought you that Strouffer’s macaroni that you love. And some Sara Lee cheesecake. And I made you enough coffee until February. Will you remember to drink it?

EVA Drinking is one thing I remember.

JIMMY And get some sleep.

EVA I promise.

JIMMY And if José Ferrer shows his face again, don’t open the door. The only groceries he’s bringing next time are his own.

*(He exits, closing the door behind him. Eva turns

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and looks at the empty apartment with full realization that she is alone, alone again for the first time in months. She picks up her suitcase and literally throws it into the bedroom)*

EVA All right, don’t panic, we’ll take it one night at a time. *(She looks around, puffs up the pillows on the sofa, then sits down on it) ... And that’s it for the week! *(She crosses to the piano, plays a few notes of “Close to You,” then sings the first line)* ... Thank you, thank you ... For my next number, Ed Sullivan and I will make it right here on this stage ... *(She sighs heavily. She is fighting to keep from losing control of herself. She looks at the phone, goes over to it quickly, sits and dials ... Into the phone)* Hello? ... Is Miss Meara there? ... No, not Mrs. Meara, Miss! ... Oh? How long ago? ... Well, when she gets in, would you please tell her—*(Suddenly a key turns in the lock and the front door opens. Polly Meara stands there with one large, heavy suitcase. Polly is seventeen, pretty, with long straight hair and no pretensions. She wears blue jeans, a sweater and a jacket. There is a long and emotional pause as the two stare at each other across the room. Then Eva speaks into the phone)—never mind, I just heard from her.*

*(She hangs up and stares at Polly)*

POLO I don’t want to get your hopes up, but I have reason to believe I’m your daughter!

EVA No, you’re not. My daughter would have called first ... *(No longer able to contain herself)* ... You rotten kid, you want to give me a heart attack? *(They rush to each other, arms around each other in a huge, warm em-
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

brute. EVY squeezes her tightly) Oh, God, Polly, Polly . . .
POLLY I was hoping I'd get here before you. But I was
late getting out of school. Of all damn days . . .
(They break the embrace. EVY wipes her eyes)

EVY Okay, I'm crying. You satisfied? You just destroyed
a helpless old woman . . . Well, why the hell aren't you
crying?
POLLY I'm too happy. I can't believe it. My God, look at
you.
EVY What do you think?
POLLY You're gorgeous. Skinniest mother I ever had. I
can wear your clothes now.
EVY What size dress do you wear?
POLLY Five.
EVY Tough, kid, I wear a four. (Wipes teary eyes again)
Damn, I knew this would happen. You weren't supposed
to know I was home. I needed three days before I could
face you.
POLLY I called the hospital this morning. You didn't think
I could wait, did you?
EVY Neither could I. Oh God, give me another hug, I
can't stand it. (They embrace) All right, if we're going
to get physical, let's close the door. There's enough
talk about me in this building.
(EVY closes the door. POLLY goes to get the suitcase
from in front of the door)

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POLLY I'll get that.
(She picks it up)

EVY Have you had dinner yet?
POLLY I haven't even had lunch. I was too nervous.
EVY I just loaded up for the winter. We'll have a food
festival. Come on, take your coat off, let me look at you.
Hey, what'd you do with your hair?
POLLY Nothing.

EVY I know. It's been three months. When you gonna do
something?
POLLY Don't bug me about the way I look. I'm not that
secure yet.
(She heads for the bedroom with the suitcase)

EVY I should have your problems. Where you going with
that?
POLLY In the bedroom.
EVY What is it?
POLLY (Looks at it) Looks like a suitcase.
EVY Thanks, I was wondering. What's in the suitcase?
POLLY (S hrugs) Dresses, shoes, books, things like that.
EVY Why do you have things like that in your suitcase?
POLLY Well, otherwise they fall on the floor.
EVY All right, no one likes a smart-ass for a daughter.
What's going on here?
POLLY Nothing's going on. Can't I stay?
Evy  Tonight? You know you can.
Polly  Okay. I'm staying tonight.
      (She starts for the bedroom again)
Evy  With all that? You must be some heavy sleeper.
Polly  Okay, two nights. Let's not haggle.
Evy  Hey, hey, just a minute. Put the suitcase down.
      (Polly looks at her, then puts it down) . . . Now look
      at me.
Polly  I'm looking.
Evy  And I know what you're thinking. Oh, no, you don't.
Polly  Why not?
Evy  Because I don't need any roommates, thank you
      . . . If you had a beard, it would be different.
Polly  I don't want to be your roommate, I just want to
      live with you.
Evy  You lonely? I'll send you to camp. You have a home,
      what are you bothering me for?
Polly  You can't throw me out, I'm your flesh and blood.
Evy  I just got rid of my flesh, I'm not sentimental.
Polly  I've already decided I'm moving in. You have
      nothing to say about it.
Evy  In the first place, idiot, you're not allowed to live
      here. It's not up to you or me.
Polly  And in the second place?
Evy  I don't need a second place. The first one wiped us
      out. You live where your father tells you to live.

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Polly  Exactly. Where do I put the suitcase?
Evy  Are you telling me your father gave you permission
      to move in here with me?
Polly  Right.
Evy  Your father?
Polly  That's the one.
Evy  A tall man, grayish hair, wears blue suits, spits a little
      when he talks?
Polly  Would you like to speak to him yourself?
Evy  Not sober, I don't. What does your stepmother think
      about this? What's her name, Lucretia?
Polly  Felicia.
Evy  Felicia, some name. He must spit pretty good when
      he says that. Did she ever get that clicking in her teeth
      fixed?
Polly  Nope. Still clicking.
Evy  That's a nice way to live, with a spitter and a clicker.
      Thank God he didn't get custody of me too.
Polly  That's why I'm begging you to take me in. I can't
      do my homework with all that noise.
Evy  God's truth, Polly? He really said yes?
Polly  He likes me. He wouldn't kid around with my life.
Evy  Why don't I believe it?
Polly  We've been talking about it for months. He knows
      how hard you've been trying. He spoke to your doctor,
**THE GINGERBREAD LADY**

he knows you're all right . . . And he thinks you need me now.

**Evy** Now I need you? Where does he think I've been the last seven years, Guatemala?

**Polly** He knows where you've been.

**Evy** And what about you? Is this what you really want?

**Polly** I've been packed for three years. Every June I put in bigger sizes.

**Evy** You wanna hear something? My whole body is shaking. I'm scared stiff. I wouldn't know the first thing about taking care of you.

**Polly** I'm seventeen years old. How hard could it be?

**Evy** I'll level with you—it's not the best thing I do. I was feeling very motherly one time, I bought a couple of turtles, two for eighty-five cents, Irving and Sam. I fed them once—in the morning they were floating on their backs. I don't think I could go through that again.

**Polly** I'm a terrific swimmer.

**Evy** Jesus, the one thing I hoped I wouldn't have is a dumb daughter. What kind of influence would I be on you? I talk filthy. I have always talked filthy. I'm a congenital filthy talker.

**Polly** Son of a bitch.

**Evy** I don't think that's funny.

**Polly** Well, I just got here, give me a chance.

**Evy** What the hell is the big attraction? I thought we were doing fine with visiting days.

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**Polly** When I was nine years old, do you remember what you gave me for Christmas?

**Evy** An empty bottle of Dewar's White Label? I don't know, I can't remember yesterday.

**Polly** Don't you remember the gingerbread house with the little gingerbread lady in the window?

**Evy** If you say so.

**Polly** I always kept it to remind me of you. Of course, today I have the biggest box of crumbs in the neighborhood. Come on, be a sport. Buy me another one this Christmas.

**Evy** I don't know if I could afford it.

**Polly** What are you afraid of?

**Evy** Of leaving you with the crumbs again . . . You know what I'm like.

**Polly** I've seen you drunk. Mostly I hated it but once or twice you sure were cute.

**Evy** You only saw dress rehearsals. I was very careful around you. A mother doesn't like to get too pissed around her own daughter. Am I supposed to say things like that in front of you? Pissed?

**Polly** If you can do it, you can say it.

**Evy** There are other things I can't tell you . . . Ah, Christ, I might as well tell you. You knew about Lou Tanner.

**Polly** I met him here a few times.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Evy Did you know we lived here together for eight months?

Polly I didn’t think he got off a bus in those pajamas.

Evy Jesus, at least have the decency to be shocked.

Polly There’s a sixteen-year-old girl who just left school because she’s pregnant. You’re forty-three. If you’re not allowed, who is?

Evy How’d I suddenly end up with the Mother of the Year Award?

Polly I don’t want to judge you, Evy. I just want to live with you.

Evy You’re seventeen years old, it’s time you judged me. I just don’t want you to get the idea that a hundred and eighty-three pounds of pure alcohol is something called Happy Fat . . . Many a night I would have thrown myself out that window if I could have squeezed through . . . I’m not what you’d call an emotionally stable person. You know how many times I was really in love since your father and I broke up? I met the only man who ever really meant anything to me about seven, maybe eight, times. Mr. Right I meet at least twice a week . . . I sure know true love when I see it. It’s wherever I happen to look.

Polly You don’t have to tell me any of this.

Evy I do, dammit . . . I want you to know everything. Polly, before you make up your mind. I lived here with that guitar player for eight of the happiest months of my life. Well, why not? He was handsome, funny, ten years younger than me, what more could a woman want? . . . He sat in that chair all day working and writing and I fed him and clothed him and loved him for eight incredible months . . . And then that dirty bastard—I’m sorry, I’m going to try not to do that any more.

Polly Good.

Evy No, the hell with it. That dirty bastard. He walked out on me in the middle of the night for an eighteen-year-old Indian hippie. “Princess-Screw-the-Other Woman” . . . Wait’ll she gets old and starts looking like the face on the nickel. And he doesn’t have a penny, not a cent. Well, her moccasins’ll wear out, we’ll see how long that affair lasts . . . But I sat at that window for six weeks, waiting and hoping while I ran through two liquor stores in this neighborhood alone . . . Finally Toby came in one day and found me face-down in the bathtub . . . I woke up in a sanitarium in Long Island, and the rest isn’t very interesting unless you like stories about human torture . . . But I went through it and I’m here. And I figure, pussycat, that I have only one more chance at this human-being business . . . and if I blow it this time, they’ll probably bury me in some distillery in Kentucky . . . And if this is the kind of person you’d like to live with, God has cursed me with one of the all-time-great schmucks for a daughter.

Polly (Smiles) How’d you like to come and speak at my school?

Evy (Adores her for this) I think I would rather have you than a mink coat that fits. (She hugs Polly) You still want to take a shot at it?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

POLLY After that story, I'd pay for a seat.

Evy Oh, no. If you move in, it's a whole new ball game. If you're going to live here with me, we turn this place into "Little Women." Clean sheets, doilies on the furniture, TV Guide, a regular American family.

POLLY And we can go to church on Sunday. By the way, what religion are we?

Evy I'll look it up. I've got it here somewhere... I'm going to get a job. Not in show business—a real job.

(She starts pacing)

POLLY I get home from school at four, I could start dinners.

Evy Can you cook?

POLLY No, but I can get them started.

Evy Is that all you can do?

POLLY I can ride a horse.

Evy That's it. When we're starving to death, you're the one who rides for help.

POLLY Can I unpack now?

Evy Yes, you can unpack now!... Holy Christ, Polly, I am suddenly so excited. How did I get so lucky?

POLLY (Shrugs) Some people have it all.

(POLLY starts into the bedroom with the suitcase)

Evy See what looks good in the kitchen, I'll put your things away.

(Evy starts for the bedroom as Polly starts for the kitchen. They pass each other on the way)

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POLLY So far we're doing terrific.

(Evy disappears into the bedroom. Polly is in the kitchen. Both are offstage)

Evy (Offstage) What the hell do you have in here, Yankee Stadium?

POLLY (Offstage) It's my record collection.

(The doorbell rings)

Evy (Offstage) I see a lot of panties here but I don't see any bras. Don't you wear a bra?

POLLY (Offstage) No. Am I missing a big thrill?

(Polly comes out of the kitchen. She looks toward the bedroom, but apparently Evy hasn't heard it. Polly crosses and opens the door. Lou Tanner is standing there. He is in his mid-thirties, with scruffy, unmanageable hair, a full, bushy mustache, a dirty turtle neck sweater and light-tan desert boots, very worn. He is, despite his appearance, attractive. Polly is shaken by his ill-timed arrival)

POLLY Hello, Lou!

Lou (Looks at her, then past her into the room) Hello, Polly.

Evy (Offstage) I'm not going to ask you what these pills are for because I don't want to know and I don't want to hear.

Lou She all right?

POLLY (Still shaken) What?... Yes. She's fine.

Lou Can I come in?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

POLLY (Looks toward the bedroom worriedly) Yes, sure. (He steps into the room. She closes the door behind him) How are you?

LOU I thought she'd be alone ... Maybe I ought to come back later.

POLLY No. No, I'm sure she'll want to see you. (Calls out) Mother! ... Someone's here.

(LOU stares at the bedroom door as POLLY eyes him nervously. EVY appears in the bedroom doorway. She has probably recognized LOU's voice. She comes out of the bedroom and faces LOU)

LOU Hello, Evy.

EVY (Trying to be cool) Hello, Lou ... (There is a moment of awkward silence)

LOU You look fabulous.

EVY Thank you.

LOU How'd you lose so much weight?

EVY Sheer happiness.

POLLY (This is no place for her) I'll finish unpacking. I'll see you, Lou.

EVY That's all right, you can stay.

POLLY I'd rather not, if you don't mind. (Nods at LOU) Lou.

(She exits quickly into the bedroom. EVY and LOU stand there eyeing each other)

LOU I checked the hospital. They told me you were coming home today. Rough scene, heh?

EVY No, I loved it. They showed movies Saturday nights ... How's Pocahontas?

LOU We split about a month ago.

EVY Ah, that's too bad. What was the problem, couldn't she make it rain?

LOU She couldn't make it, period. A lot of sexual hangups among the Cherokees. (Looks around) You going to offer me a cigarette?

EVY No, but you're welcome to take a bath. You look like the second week of the garbage strike. You living indoors somewhere?

LOU Eddie Valendo's on the road, I'm using his place.

EVY I hope he left you food, you look a little shaky.

LOU Musicians don't eat, Evy, you know that. We live on "soul."

EVY Whose?

LOU I wouldn't turn down a bottle of cold beer.

EVY You asking or begging?

LOU Is that what you want to hear? Okay, I'm begging.

EVY I always knew you'd make it big some day. (Hands him a cigarette) Here. There's one left. Smoke it when you're older.

LOU (Tries to grab her) That's my Evy.

EVY (Pulling away) You are one, priceless, unbelievable bastard. You had to walk in here today, didn't you? You
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

had to time it so you’d get me holding my nerves together with spit and coffee.

LOU What’d you want me to do, phone you from a pay station in Walgreen’s? “Hi, Evy, guess who this is?”

Evy The only thing stopping you was the dime.

LOU Come on, Evy, I walked seventeen blocks in borrowed shoes. Talk nice to me.

Evy Like nothing ever happened, right?

LOU No, it happened. We’ll talk about it. But it’s hard when you don’t look at me. I get the feeling I’m suddenly left all alone in this room.

Evy (Turns and looks at him) I know the feeling well.

LOU I’ll say one thing for the Indians. Generally speaking, they’re not a vindictive people.

Evy Really, Lou? What’d she do when you walked out on her? Ride into the sunset? Do a little sun dance? Wriggle and bounce her firm little body? You want to tell me about her tight little eighteen-year-old body, Lou?

LOU Not particularly.

Evy Come on. Lay it on me. Talk that hip, colorful language you dig so much. Tell me your problems, Lou, you’ll get a lot of sympathy from me.

LOU No problems, Ev. Nothing that can’t be worked out.

Evy Lou, I’m forty-three years old and I’m trying to be a grown-up lady. The doctors told me I’m not allowed to drink any more or have affairs with thirty-three-year-
ACT ONE

old guitar players... I thank you for this visit. Now go home, find someone your own age and light up some Astro-Turf or whatever you're smoking these days.

LOU (Smiles) If nothing else, Evy, you have a way with a phrase, I used to quote you. Word for word. Of course, this dumb little Indian chick never saw the humor. We communicated in other ways. But whenever I needed a good honest laugh, I had to quote you, Ev. You weren't in the room, but you were there, you know what I mean?

Evy It's an image I think I'll cherish forever... Listen, Polly is here and I think we ought to cut this short.

LOU I want to come back, Ev. (There is a pause) Today, tomorrow, next week... but I want to come back.

Evy I see!... Would that be with or without meals?

LOU Maybe with a little humility. I'll scrape up whatever I can.

Evy I don't want you to steal just for me.

LOU There it is, Ev. That's what I've come back for. A little stimulation.

Evy Try a vibrator.

LOU Try letting up for two minutes. Take an interest, Ev, ask me how my work is coming.

Evy How's your work coming, Lou?

LOU Gee, it's nice of you to take an interest. I'm writing. I'm not selling anything, but I'm writing.

Evy (Without emotion) I am enormously pleased for you.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

LOU You don’t give a crap, do you? You never did give a good goddamn.

EVY That’s too hysterical to be answered.

LOU Oh, you cared about me. I never questioned that. Affection, love, passion, you had it by the tonnage. All I had to do was look at you with anything less than indifference and you were ready to jump in the sack with your shoes on.

EVY Forgive me. Frigidity is not one of my major hang-ups.

LOU I could have been a counterman at Riker’s, it wouldn’t have made any difference to you.

EVY Nothing made any difference to me except you.

LOU You didn’t give a damn if the stuff I wrote was good or not as long as it was finished. “It’s terrific, Lou, now come to bed.”

EVY You wrote it, you played it, I listened to it. Short of publishing it there wasn’t a hell of a lot more I could do.

LOU You never really liked it, did you? You never thought I had any real talent, did you?

EVY I loved it. Everything you wrote I loved.

LOU Bullshit.

EVY That’s a better way of putting it.

LOU Then why the hell didn’t you say so?

EVY I had enough trouble getting affection from you without giving you bad reviews.

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LOU I can’t believe it. You hated everything I wrote and you never said a word to me until now.

EVY I’m sorry your ego is hurt posthumously. All right, I think you’re very promising. I’ll take a page ad in Variety, now leave me alone.

LOU You know, Evy, you are the biggest ball-breaking insufferable pain-in-the-ass woman I ever met—and I’m standing here enjoying it... I’m cut up and bleeding from abuse and humiliation but at least I know I’m in the room with a living human being... (Softening) I haven’t had a good all-out-fight like that in three months... I have also, in that time, not put down a piece of music worth the price of the paper... Maybe you’re right. At best I’m mediocre. But mediocre is better than wasting good music sheets... Come on, Evy. The truth is, while I was here, I functioned. And when I functioned, you functioned.

EVY Evy and Lou functioning: one of the great love stories of all time.

LOU (With some humor) Well, maybe not the greatest, just the most original... What do you say, Evy? Make a contribution to the world of serious music.

EVY I already gave.

LOU Christ, Evy, you want me to say it, I’ll say it. I need you very badly.

EVY For how long, Lou? Until you run off with the Chinese hatchet girl at Trader Vic’s?

LOU Evy, I swear—
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

EVY Don't make me any promises. I just left a hospital filled with people waiting for promises.

LOU Come on, for chrissakes, you had that problem for twenty years before you ever met me.

EVY No argument. I just don't want it for twenty years after.

LOU What are you going to tell me, you're cured? You had buttermilk for twelve weeks and now you'll live happily ever after? . . . There's still a whole life to get through, Evy . . . I'm not coming in here offering you any phony promises. Sure, in six weeks I may find another cute-assed little chick, and in eight weeks they might find you under the piano with a case of Thunderbird wine. Then again, maybe not. Together, Evy, we don't add up to one strong person. I just think together we have a better chance.

EVY What I need now is a relative, not a relationship. And I have one in there unpacking.

LOU Who are you kidding?

EVY She'll be here in the morning. That's good enough for me.

LOU The mornings have never been your problem.

EVY We were just going to have dinner. I'd ask you to stay but it's just the immediate family.

LOU Well, it was kind of a slow afternoon, I just thought I'd ask . . . I'm really glad to see you in good shape, Evy . . . Take care of yourself.

EVY That's the general idea.

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LOU (At the door) You still have ten seconds to change your mind. (He waits. No reply) My, how time flies.

(He opens the door, about to go)

EVY Lou! (He stops, turns; there is a pause) Will you call me sometime? Just to say hello?

LOU (Looks at her) Probably not.

(He turns, goes, closing the door behind him. Evy stands there a moment. The bedroom door opens. Polly comes out)

POLLY I didn't hear a word . . . But can I say something?

EVY Only if it'll make me laugh . . . Are you unpacked yet?

POLLY It would take me two minutes to put it all back.

EVY If you're unpacked, then wash your hands, set the table and light the stove. It's dinner time.

POLLY (Brightly) Okay, Evy.

EVY And none of the Evy crap . . . I'm your mother. I want a little respect, for chrissakes!

(Evy starts to remove the tablecloth from the table as Polly, beaming, exits into the kitchen)

Curtain
Act Two
It is three weeks later, about nine o'clock at night. POLLY is thumbing through a private phone book. She finds a number and dials. She looks at her watch, concerned.

POLLY (Into the phone) ... Hello? ... Is this Joe Allen's Bar? ... Could you tell me if Evelyn Meara is there, please? ... Evy Meara, that's right ... I see ... Was she there at all today? ... (The front door opens, unseen by POLLY. EVY enters carrying a Saks Fifth Avenue shopping bag)

Evy I'm here, I'm here. Just what I need, a trusting daughter.

(She closes the door)

POLLY (Into the phone) Never mind. Thank you. (She hangs up and turns to EVY. EVY puts down the packages)

Evy If you knew what a terrific day I had you wouldn't be worrying about me ... I've got sensational news ... I was picked up today ... He was eighty-six years old with a cane and a limp, but he really dug me. I don't think he could see me or hear me too good but we really hit it off ... If I don't get any better offers this week, I'm going to contact him at the Home. Hello, pussycat, give your mother a kiss. (She kisses POLLY on the cheek; POLLY receives it coldly) What's wrong?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Polly It's almost nine o'clock.

Evv You're kidding?

Polly (Points to the clock on the mantel) I'm not kidding. It's almost nine o'clock.

Evv All right, don't get excited. What did I miss, the eclipse, what happened?

Polly You don't call, you don't leave a note, you don't tell me where you're going to be. I'm expecting you home for dinner at six-thirty and you don't show and I'm scared to death. What happened? Where were you?

Evv Hanging around the men's room in the subway . . . I had a good day. You want to hear the details or you want to yell at me?

Polly I want to yell at you.

Evv You can't yell at me, I'm your mother. I missed your dinner. Oh, God, Polly, I'm sorry. What did you make?

Polly I don't know. Something out of the cookbook. It was brown and it was hot . . . If you want some, it's in the kitchen now. It's yellow and it's cold.

Evv (Hugging her) Don't be mad at me. All I've got in the world is you and that eighty-six-year-old gimp—don't be mad at me. Let me tell you what happened today.

Polly Did you eat?

Evv Yes, I think so . . . Listen to what happened. I ran into this old girl friend of mine who used to work in the clubs—

ACT TWO

Polly What do you mean, you think so? Don't you know if you ate or not?

Evv I ate, I ate! I had a sandwich for lunch. I'll run up to Lenox Hill and take an x-ray for you . . . Will you listen to my story?

Polly You mean you haven't had anything to eat except lunch?

Evv It didn't say "lunch" on the sandwich. Maybe it was a "dinner" sandwich, I don't know. What are you taking in school this week, nagging? Let me tell you my story.

Polly You don't sleep well and I never see you eat, so I'm worried about you.

Evv Who says I don't sleep well?

Polly I watch you at night.

Evv Then you're the one who doesn't sleep well.

Polly You're in the living room until five, six in the morning, pacing and smoking and coughing. I hear you in there.

Evv It's the television. I listen to cancer commercials.

Polly Making phone calls in the middle of the night . . . Who were you calling at four o'clock in the morning?

Evv The weather bureau.

Polly At four o'clock in the morning?

Evv I like to know what it's going to be like at five o'clock . . . Jesus! Two more years of this, you're going to be a professional pain in the ass.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

POLLY Okay, fine with me. If you don't give a crap, I don't give a crap.

EVY And watch your goddamned language.

POLLY If you don't watch yours, why should I watch mine?

EVY I talk this way. It's an impediment. You want me to wear braces on my mouth?

POLLY You might as well. You never eat anything except a cup of coffee for breakfast.

EVY What the hell difference does it make?

POLLY Because if you don't take care of your body, it's not going to take care of you.

EVY I don't want to take care of my body. I want somebody else to take care of it. Why do you think I'm talking to eighty-year-old men?

POLLY You're infuriating. It's like talking to a child.

EVY (Turns away) I don't get any respect. How the hell am I going to be a mother if I don't get any respect?

POLLY How am I going to respect you when you don't respect yourself?

EVY (Looks up in despair) Oh, Christ, I'm a flop mother. Three weeks and I blew it. Don't be angry, Polly. Don't be mad at me.

POLLY And stop apologizing. You're my mother. Make me apologize to you for talking the way I did.

EVY It won't happen again, sweetheart, I promise.

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ACT TWO

POLLY (Veberently) Don't promise me, promise yourself! I can't live my life and yours. You've got to take over, you've got to be the one in charge around here.

EVY Listen, you're really getting me crazy now. Why don't you write all the rules and regulations nice and neat on a piece of paper and I'll do whatever it says. Put on one page where I yell at you, and one page where you yell at me... Now you want to hear what happened to me this afternoon or not?

POLLY (It's hard not to like EVY; POLLY smiles at her) What happened this afternoon?

EVY I think I have a job.

POLLY You're kidding. Where?

EVY Well... (Pacing) I was in Gucci's looking for a birthday present for Toby... when suddenly I meet this old girl friend of mine who used to be a vocalist in this singing group... Four Macks and a Truck or some goddamned thing... Anyway, she can't get over my gorgeous new figure and asks what I'm doing lately and I tell her... I'm looking for good honest work, preferably around a lot of single men, like an aircraft carrier, Okinawa, something like that... You're looking at me funny. If you're thinking of heating up the cold yellow stuff, forget it.

POLLY I'm just listening.

EVY All right... Well, she starts to tell me how she's out of the business now and is married to an Italian with four restaurants on Long Island and right away I dig he's in with the mob. I mean, one restaurant, you're in business;
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

four restaurants, it's the Mafia ... Anyway, he's got a place in Garden City and he's looking for an attractive hostess who says, "Good evening, right this way please," and wriggles her behind and gets a hundred and ninety bucks a week ... So I played it very cool, and nonchalantly got down on my knees, kissed her shoes, licked her ankles and carried her packages out the store.

POLLY A hostess in a restaurant? Is that what you want to do?

Evy No, what I want to do is be a masseur at the New York Athletic Club but there are no openings ... Can I finish my story?

Polly Why don't you finish your story?

Evy Thank you, I'll finish my story ... So we go around the corner to Schrafft's and she buys me a sherry and we sit there chatting like a couple of Scarsdale debutantes—me, the former lush, and her, a chippie married to Joe Bananas ... And she writes down the address and I have to be—(Consults a scrap of paper from her pocket)—at the Blue Cockatoo Restaurant in Garden City at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, where Lucky Luciano's nephew will interview me. All this in one day, plus getting my knees rubbed by an eighty-six-year-old degenerate on the cross-town bus ... And you're going to sit there and tell me there's no God ... (She looks at Polly expectantly, hoping Polly will be as exuberant and enthusiastic about her prospects as she is. But Polly just glares at her) ... What's the matter?

Polly You had a glass of sherry?

Evy (Turns away) Oh, Christ.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

POLLY (Puzzled) Then what's all the excitement about?
EVY About being asked ... About being wanted.
POLLY I'm sorry—I don't think I understand.
EVY (Goes over to Polly and holds her head in her arms) Please God, I hope you never do ... (Smiles at her, trying to be more cheerful) Listen, how about one more chance at being a mother? If I screw up, you can buy out my contract for a hundred dollars and I'll move out.
POLLY (Takes EVY's hand) Who's going to bring me up?
EVY (Sighs) I'll set you on automatic ... (Crosses back to her shopping bag) Hey, come on, get dressed. We have a party that started fifteen minutes ago.

POLLY What party?
EVY Toby's birthday. (She takes a present from the shopping bag) She's forty years old today. She's promised to take off her make-up and reveal her true identity.

POLLY I've got to study. I have a science test on Monday.
EVY Flunk it! Men don't like you if you're too smart. (She takes out a bottle of champagne. She looks at POLLY, who stares at her meaningfully) I'm pouring! That's all I'm doing is pouring.

POLLY Who's coming?
EVY Jimmy, Marty and Toby.

(POLLY starts to cross to the kitchen with the champagne bottle, and POLLY starts for the bedroom)

POLLY What should I wear? How about the blue chiffon?

EVY You can wear black crepe as long as your boobs don't bounce around.

(She moves toward the kitchen)

POLLY (At the bedroom door) Mother?
EVY Yes?

POLLY Don't take that job. You're too good for it. Hold out for something better.

EVY I'm so glad you said that. Who the Christ even knows where Garden City is? ... Hey, let's have a good time tonight. I'm beginning to feel like my old self again.

POLLY Hey, listen, I forgot to tell you. We have a lunch date tomorrow.

EVY (In kitchen, busy with bottles) Who has a lunch date?

POLLY We do. You, me and Daddy.

(EVY stops what she's doing and comes out to the kitchen doorway)

EVY (Dismayed) What Daddy?

POLLY My Daddy. You remember, Felicia's husband? ... Twelve o'clock at Rumpelmayer's.

EVY Why didn't you tell me?

POLLY Because I never see you. Now I see you. He just wants to have lunch with us, talk, see how we're getting along.

EVY We're getting along fine.

POLLY He knows. He just wants to see.

EVY You mean he's checking to see what shape I'm in?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Christ, he's going to look in my ears, under my fingernails—I'll never pass.

POLLY He just wants to talk.

Evy Is he gonna ask questions, like what's the capital of Bulgaria?

POLLY Stop worrying. It'll be all right. I've got to get dressed. Oh, and if he does, the capital is Sofia.

(She goes into the bedroom)

Evy (Standing there a moment) Just what I needed. A physical examination in Rumpelmayer's. (Starts into the kitchen) I should have had two sherrys today.

(There is a moment's pause. The doorbell rings)

POLLY Are you getting it?

Evy (Comes out of the kitchen) If I was getting it I wouldn't be looking for jobs all day... Get dressed.

(Evy crosses to the door and opens it. Jimmy stands there, looking glum and expressionless. He walks past her into the room. Evy closes the door) No kiss?... No hello?... Aren't you going to look up, maybe you're in the wrong apartment? (Jimmy sits without taking off his coat. He chews his thumbnail. His leg begins to shake) If you're that hungry, have some nuts. (He doesn't acknowledge) What's the matter? What happened?

Jimmy (His leg is still shaking) I'm okay, I'm not upset any more, I'm all right... I know my leg is shaking but I'm all right.

Evy Why? What's wrong?

Jimmy They pushed the opening of the show back one night... It's opening Tuesday instead of Monday.

ACT TWO

Evy All right, it's Tuesday instead of Monday. What's so terrible?

Jimmy It's also another actor instead of me. They fired me. The little son of a bitch fired me three nights before the opening.

Evy Oh, Christ.

Jimmy Fired by a nineteen-year-old producer from Oklahoma A&M... Look at that leg. Do you realize the tension that must be going on in my body right now?

Evy Oh, Jimmy, no, don't tell me.

Jimmy If he didn't like me, why'd he hire me in the first place, huh?... The entire cast is shocked. Shocked, Evy. Three nights before the opening.

Evy They must be shocked.

Jimmy He didn't even get somebody else to tell me. He wanted to tell me himself... He stood there with a little smile on his goddamned baby face and said, "Sorry, Jimmy, it's just not working out." Nineteen years old, can you imagine, Evy?... Ten thousand kids a month getting drafted and they leave this one behind to produce my show.

Evy What can I say? What can I do?

Jimmy Three nights before the opening. My name was in the Sunday Times ad. I've got eighteen relatives from Paterson, New Jersey, coming to the opening. Six of them already sent me telegrams... My Aunt Rosario sent me a Candygram. I already ate the goddamned candy.

Evy Oh, God, I can't bear it. Tell me what to do for you.
JIMMY Everybody in the cast wanted to walk out on the show. I wouldn’t let them. Even the director was crazy about me . . . I can’t breathe, I can’t catch my breath, I’m so upset . . . I gotta calm down, Evy, I’ll be all right.

EVY I know how you feel. I swear. I know exactly how you feel.

JIMMY You do? You know how it feels for a grown man to plead and beg to a child, Evy? A child! . . . I said to him, “You’re not happy, I’ll do it any way you want. Faster, slower, louder, I’ll wear a dress, I’ll shave my head, I’ll relieve myself on the stage in front of my own family—I’m an actor, give me a chance to act.” . . . He turned his back on me and shoved a Tootsie Roll in his mouth.

EVY Listen, maybe the play won’t be a hit. Maybe it’ll be a bomb—it’ll close in one night. You’re lucky you’re out of it.

JIMMY What do you mean, maybe? It’s got no chance. It’s the worst piece of crap ever put on a stage. That’s why I’m so humiliated. To get fired from a piece of garbage like that, who’s gonna want me for something good?

EVY (Puts her arm around him) Screw him, sweetheart, you don’t need them. (She hugs him) Something better’ll come along.

JIMMY When? Next Christmas at Korvette’s? (He pulls away from her) Do you know who they gave my part to? The understudy. He’s not even a full-time actor, he drives a cab in the day . . . A Puerto Rican cabdriver. Can’t speak English. He got me coffee the first two weeks, now he’s got my part . . . Look how my neck is throbbing. That’s blood pumping into the brain, I’m going to have a hemorrhage.

EVY You’re not going to have a hemorrhage.

JIMMY What am I going to tell my family in Jersey? My sister’s taking my twelve-year-old niece, her first time in the theater, never saw me on the stage, she’s gonna think she’s got a Puerto Rican uncle . . . I was thinking maybe I wouldn’t tell anyone. Opening night I’ll show up in the theater, walk out on the stage. Two of us will play the same part, one in Spanish, one in English—the critics will love it.

EVY Whatever you say. You want the theater blown up, the kid rubbed out—I’m in with the Mafia, they’d be glad to do it. (JIMMY still has not removed his sheepskin coat) . . . But I don’t want you upset, not tonight. It’s Toby’s birthday, I’m counting on you for laughs.

JIMMY (Looks at his hand) Look at my fingers. There’s no color in the nails. That’s a hemorrhage. I’m having a goddamned hemorrhage and I can’t find it.

EVY (Crosses to him, tries to take his coat off) Give me your coat. Come on, give me your coat, for chrissakes, you wanna catch pneumonia?

JIMMY What the hell difference does it make?

(EVY suddenly buries his face in his hands and begins to sob, deeply and uncontrollably)

EVY (Almost withers at the sight) Oh, God, Jimmy, no, don’t. (She wrings her hands helplessly) Jimmy, listen, you can’t do this to me . . . Stop it, Jimmy, you hear? I won’t stand for it.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

JIMMY (Sobbing)  What the hell am I going to do?

Evy  You’re not going to crack up on me. I’m not going to get stuck with a dud party. Come on, Jimmy . . .

JIMMY (Still sobbing)  Who am I kidding, Evy? I’m not going to make it, I’m never going to make it in this business.

Evy  Go ahead. You want to destroy me? You want to tear my guts out? You know I can't handle it.

JIMMY  Twenty-two years and I’m still expecting to get discovered. The oldest goddamned newcomer in show business.

Evy (Near tears)  Listen, you bastard, if I start to cry, it’s all over. You really want to see crying? I’ll make you look foolish.

JIMMY  I should have stayed at Bonwit’s. I’d have been a floorwalker today.

Evy  No you wouldn't, because you're going to become a star. A great big star! You’re already a shitheel—there’s no point in wasting it.

JIMMY (Grabs Evy and clings to her)  Don’t say anything. Don’t say anything to Toby.

Evy  I won’t. I promise. Not a word.

JIMMY  Evy, you’ve seen me on the stage. You know I can be good. Was I good, Evy? Tell me—I really have to know.

Evy  You’re the best. There’s no one better. You ring a doorbell, the house comes down . . . Let me get you a drink. You’ll feel much better if you have a drink.

ACT TWO

JIMMY  I’m not Olivier. I never said I was Olivier, did I?

Evy  I don’t even like Olivier. I can’t understand him half the time.

(She goes into the kitchen)

JIMMY (Talking into the kitchen)  Remember Mr. Roberts at Bucks County? Or Born Yesterday in Westport? I never heard laughs like that in my life . . . Did you? The truth! Did you?

Evy (Offstage)  I have never heard laughs like that in my life.

JIMMY  In my life, I never heard laughs like that . . . And I don’t have to get laughs all the time. My God, the things I’ve done . . . Phaedra, Mother Courage, Rhinoceros, The Balcony, Detective Story . . . Jesus, remember Detective Story? The second hood? I was incredible.

Evy (Offstage)  You were brilliant.

(We hear a cork pop from a champagne bottle)

JIMMY  When did you see me in Detective Story? I did that in Columbus, Ohio.

Evy (Comes out with the champagne bottle and two glasses)  You were so brilliant I didn’t have to see it.

(She hands JIMMY a glass. He takes it without being aware he has it)

JIMMY  I played the Dauphin in St. Joan at the Cleveland Auditorium three years before that nineteen-year-old rich Oklahoma idiot schmuck was born.

(ervy pours champagne into his glass, then hers)
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

EVY (Takes a sip) Forget it. He's not worth it.

JIMMY I actually pleaded with him. I humiliated myself in front of the entire cast. I had no shame. No shame, Evy. (He drinks) Opening night my mother will throw herself in front of a rented limousine.

EVY That's the best thing that could happen to your mother.

(She sips a little more)

JIMMY I don't wish anybody in the world harm. I don't curse anybody. I want everybody to live their lives healthy and without pain... But I pray that little bastard gets a Baby Ruth stuck in his throat and chokes him on the spot. (He drinks more champagne. Evy pours more into his glass. He suddenly watches her and realizes what's happening) Oh, my God, what am I doing? I'm sitting here drinking with you. Are you crazy? Are you out of your mind? Put that glass down.

(He reaches for it, but she pulls it away)

EVY I'm not drinking, I'm sipping.

JIMMY You've already sipped a whole glass. Give it to me.

EVY You think I'm going to stand here and watch you have a breakdown on ginger ale? I need help too.

JIMMY You put your lips to that glass one more time, you're going to need more than help.

EVY (Holds the glass up) All right, I'm through, I'm through. (Then she raises the glass to her lips and finishes it) There! All right?

ACT TWO

JIMMY Why do you do that to me? Didn't I have enough heartache today?

EVY A grown man is crying, you want me to sit down and read *Newsweek*? I'm sorry, I panicked.

JIMMY You didn't panic, you drank. Panicking is when you scream and run around like a lunatic.

EVY I will. I promise. Next time I'll panic. Better still, don't tell me your problems. You got a twelve-year-old niece, tell her your troubles. Kids love to cry.

JIMMY (Turns away from her) I'm standing there drinking with her. I see the glass in her hand and I'm drinking with her.

EVY (Walks around in front of him to get his attention) Don't be mad at me. Everybody's mad at me today. Show me a little tenderness, I'll show you a terrific person.

JIMMY (Looks at her; he wilts) How could I be mad at you? You loved me in *Detective Story* and never even saw it.

(He hugs her. The doorbell rings)

EVY (In a low voice) Don't tell Polly. Don't tell her I drank, tell her I panicked.

JIMMY Some mood I'm in for a party. Christ!

EVY (Calls out) Hey, Pol, come on, they're here.

POLLY (Offstage) I don't know how to work the brassière.

EVY (At the door; to JIMMY) Try and be happy tonight. You won't have to do it for another year. (JIMMY nods cheerlessly at her. She opens the door. TOBY stands there,
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

looking absolutely ravishing in a new dress. She smiles at EVY. Oh, God, that's a pretty woman. Look, Jimmy. Look at the pretty woman.

JIMMY (Smiles) Oh, yes. That's a pretty woman.

EVY (To JIMMY) Go, sweetheart. Go kiss the pretty woman.

(JIMMY crosses in front of EVY and kisses TOBY on the cheek)

JIMMY Happy birthday, darling.

TOBY (Smiles) Thank you. (She speaks softly. EVY crosses to TOBY)

EVY Happy birthday, pretty woman. (She hugs TOBY)

TOBY Thank you, Evelyn.

(She goes to the sofa and sits down, opening her purse)

EVY (Looks toward the outside hall) Isn't Marty with you?

TOBY No. (JIMMY closes the door)

EVY Is he coming later?

TOBY (Busy powdering) I don't think so.

EVY (Looks at JIMMY) You don't think so? Don't you know?

TOBY Yes, I know. He's not coming later. (Looks around) Isn't Polly here?

EVY He's not coming for your birthday party? ... Are you going to tell me he's working tonight?

ACT TWO

TOBY No, he's not working. He just couldn't come. To my birthday party.

(She takes out the powder puff again and begins to powder her already highly powdered face)

EVY Why not?

TOBY Well, I didn't catch everything he said ... because he was very busy packing ... but it seems that Martin wants a divorce. (She smiles at them as though she has told them nothing more startling than "it's raining outside." JIMMY and EVY stare at her, stunned. TOBY suddenly controls the flood of tears that are threatening to come by patting her hand to her eye, but we do hear a faint sigh from her) Is there anything to eat in the refrigerator?

(She gets up and quickly crosses into the kitchen to release the floodgates)

JIMMY (Looks up to heaven, clasping his hands) Oh, sweet Mother of Jesus! You just going to stand there? Say something to her? Do something. (But EVY stands there) Toby! Toby!

(He runs off to the kitchen after TOBY. EVY turns, looks around, sees that no one is looking and quickly pours herself a glass of champagne. She drinks it quickly, then puts the glass down. POLLY emerges from the bedroom, looking lovely and feminine)

POLLY (Arms extended) Happy birthday! (Looks around) Where's the birthday lady?

EVY (Motions toward the kitchen) With the great American actor.

POLLY Do I look all right?
EVY (Despondent) Don't count on applause.
(Jimmy comes out of the kitchen)

JIMMY She's all right. Give her a couple of seconds. (To Polly) Hello, Angel. Don't you look gorgeous.

POLLY (Beaming) I was thinking of wearing this for your opening. Okay? (Jimmy looks at evy, then crosses away. Polly looks at them, then to evy) I detect tenseness. Is there tenseness at this party?

EVY And it's only ten after nine.
(toby comes out of the kitchen. She seems composed)

Toby I love the cake, Evy. It's a beautiful cake ... Oh, Polly, how sweet. How sweet and beautiful you are. I was the same way.

POLLY (Goes to her) Happy birthday, Toby.
(They kiss)

Toby Thank you, darling. It's so good to see you. I never see you. I was so anxious to see you tonight and spend some time with you. I never spend enough time with you. Would you excuse us, darling, I have to talk to your mother.

POLLY (Puzzled) Now?

EVY Now.

POLLY (Shrugs) I'll study French. Call me when the games begin. (She goes into the bedroom)

Toby She's going to be beautiful, Evy. There is nothing so important in a woman's life as being beautiful ...
to my face. (She is visibly wounded but is trying hard not to show the hurt) Accustomed to my touch, accustomed to my voice . . . and I think he's a little bored with my hair. (She looks at them, forces a smile, sips a little wine) He's devoted to me . . . He is respectful of me . . . He is indebted to me . . . but he's having a lot of trouble sleeping with me. For some inexplicable reason—"inexplicable" is his word—he has had no desire to make sexual advances towards me. He makes them, but there's no desire. It's as though someone were in back of him "pushing" . . . He is not tired . . . He is not overworked . . . He is not distracted . . . He is simply—"turned off." That's my word.

JIMMY (About to say something helpful) Toby, for God's sake—

Toby Did you know . . . that in 1950 I was voted the prettiest girl at the University of Michigan? . . . An All-American halfback was willing to give up a trip to the Rose Bowl for one night of my favors . . . In 1951 I switched schools and was voted the prettiest girl at the University of Southern California . . . I received, on the average, fifteen sexual proposals a week—at least two from the faculty—

Evy All right, Toby—

Toby When I was sixteen I was offered a seven-year contract by RKO Pictures. They knew I couldn't act; they didn't even care. They said the way I looked, it wasn't important . . . When I was seventeen years old, a married psychiatrist in Los Angeles drove his car into a tree because I wouldn't answer his phone calls. You can read all of this in my diaries, I still have them.

Evy Toby, please stop.

Toby When I was nineteen I had an affair with a boy who was the son of the largest book publisher in the world . . . When I was twenty, I had an affair with the largest book publisher in the world . . . The son threatened to kill the father but by then I was having an affair with the youngest symphony conductor in the world.

Evy Jimmy, for God's sakes, will you say something to her?

Toby (Accelerating) When I was twenty-three, I slept with a member of the British Royal Household. I slept with him. In the British Royal House . . . There is a Senator living in Washington, D.C., today who will vote any way I want him to vote by my spending just one morning in Washington, D.C. . . . I have had more men—men in politics, in the arts, in the sciences, more of the most influential men in the world—in love with me, desirous of me, hungry for me, than any woman I ever met in my entire life . . . And that son-of-a-bitch four-hundred-dollar-a-week television salesman tells me he isn't interested? . . . Then let him get out, I don't need him! (And she begins to sob uncontrollably) Evy . . . Evy! (Evy, of course, is distraught with her own inability to help)

Evy (Paces) Jimmy, do something or I'll kill myself.

(Jimmy quickly crosses to Toby and sits on the arm of her chair, putting his arm around her to comfort her)

Jimmy It's all right, Toby, it's all right.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

ACT TWO

(Acts up at JIMMY) I am still beautiful and I am still desirable, I don't care how old I am.

JIMMY (To evy): I know it. Evy, give her some more wine.

Evy (Giving the glass to JIMMY): Drink this. Come on, JIMMY. (Giving the glass to BILLY) I know I'm a little more champagne. Drink this.

JIMMY (To BILLY): I'm not a stupid woman, I know that. I've traveled a lot. I'm well-read. I've been there, I know. I'm not an uneducated woman. I've gone to two universities. I have had marvelous intellectual conversations with some of the most admirable men in the world...but the thing that most admires me is her feminity and her beauty. That's the truth, Evy, I know it. (To JIMMY) Isn't that the first thing you men look for in a woman, JIMMY?

JIMMY (Heavenly): Yes, I suppose it is.

JIMMY (Back to evy): I know I'm vain, Evy. I never pretend to my body...I sleep all day in soft water. I buy the world's most expensive creams. I have a Japanese man who lives in White Plains come down twice a week just to do my feet. Did you know that, Evy? (evy nods, turns to JIMMY) Did you?

JIMMY (I didn't know he was Japanese.)

JIMMY (I didn't know he was Japanese.)

TOBY, you'll feel better.

JIMMY (Giving the glass to TOBY) Drink this. Come on, TOBY. You'll feel better.

TOBY: We spent two months in the beach at Westhampton last summer, and the sun never once touched my body...I wore more clothes on the beach than I do in New York in January. In Acapulco last year the Mexican thought I was some kind of a white goddess. They would bow to me on the streets. JIMMY, remember I told you that story.

JIMMY: I remember that story.

JIMMY (Addressing evy again): Last December, in Los Angeles, that boy I had an affair with, the book publisher's son, called me at the Beverly Hills Hotel, dying to see me. He came over and we had cocktails in the Polo Lounge. He looked like my father. My father, Evy, he didn't look like my father...And then the waiter came over and, I swear—my God, Evy, he was a waiter. The waiter asked me for my ID card...I don't even think it's twenty-one in California, I think you...
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Evy, if it no longer interests Martin, then I assure you...somewhere, soon, someplace, someone else will be very...very...very...interested!

(Her voice has trailed off, becoming almost inaudible at the end. There is a long, desperate silence in the room)

Evy (Finally) For purely medicinal purposes, I'm having a drink.

(She starts for the bottle)

Jimmy (Warning) Evy!

Evy I'm only a hundred and thirty pounds but if you try and stop me, I'll kill you...One drink, for chrissakes.

Jimmy You had one drink.

Evy For your story. Now I need one for hers.

(She pours a drink)

Toby (Looks up as if in the room for the first time) What's the matter? What's going on?

Evy Nothing's going on, but it's going to start right now...We've all had a few minor setbacks, but it's a birthday part—and I don't give a crap if the room is on fire, we're going to start having some fun. (She drinks quickly from her wine glass, then looks at the bottle and holds it up) We need a new bottle. (Calls out) Polly! Fun and games.

Toby (Pulling her things together) I'm not staying, I just wanted to talk to someone.

Evy Nobody's leaving this room until we're all happy. Now sit down, dammit. Drink your booze. (She drinks a little more from her glass. The wine is now beginning to take effect on evy; since she is an alcoholic, it doesn't take much wine or time) Jesus, what a bunch of depressing people.

(Polly comes out)

Polly (With a big smile) Okay, who do I dance with?

Evy (Points to polly) Now that's the kind of person you invite to a party. (To polly) So far it's just you and me, kid, but we're gonna goose things up. Put on one of your records. I'll get some more wine. (Stars for the kitchen) And none of that folk-singing crap where they throw babies in the Talahachee River. I want some real music, pussycat.

(She goes off into the kitchen)

Polly (Looks after her) Is she all right? What's going on?

Jimmy Nothing. Everything's fine.

Toby I think I must have upset her. Did I upset her, Jimmy?

Jimmy It's not you, it's everybody. We're all upsetting each other. Some friends...

Polly She had a drink at Schrafft's this afternoon, did she tell you?

Jimmy At Schrafft's? Who the hell goes off the wagon at Schrafft's?

Toby I shouldn't have said all that to her. I could see she was very upset.

(They both look worriedly toward evy in the
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

kitchen . . . A cork explodes. EVY comes out with an opened bottle of champagne)

EVY Goddamned cheap champagne—I had to make the noise with my tongue. Glasses up, everyone. (She looks at the silent phonograph, then at POLLY) You’re not going to play that louder, right?

POLLY (Going for the bottle) Let me pour it, Mother.

EVY Ooh, you hear that? Mother, she calls me. If it’s one thing I know how to get, it’s respect.

TOBY Evy, don’t pay attention to what I said before. Everything’s going to be all right, honestly.

EVY (To TOBY) No, listen, you have a major problem. You and Marty are only making it two times a day, if I were you, I’d kill myself.

(She pours wine into TOBY’s glass)

TOBY (Embarrassed) Evy, please. Can we discuss this later?

EVY What’s the matter? You’re worried about Polly? My Polly? You don’t know about kids today, do you? (She puts her arm around POLLY) She could give you a sex lecture right now, your eyebrows would fall out. (To POLLY) Am I right? Is that the truth, Polly?

(POLLY forces a smile and shrugs)

JIMMY May I have the wine, please?

EVY What do you think, kids learn about sex today the way you and I did? In rumble seats? They have closed-circuit television—(To POLLY) Am I right? Actual demonstrations. Two substitute teachers go at it in the gymnasium and the kids take notes. Is that the truth?

POLLY (Smiles, embarrassed) That’s the truth.

EVY It’s the truth. Polly has a sixteen-year-old girl friend in school who got knocked up for homework. Am I lying? Heh?

POLLY (Weakly) No.

EVY (EVY pours some wine into her own glass and drinks it. She laughs) Oh, Christ, that’s funny. (No one else laughs) Look how funny you all think it is . . . Gee, what a terrific party. Later on we’ll get some fluid and embalm each other. Polly, get a glass. You have to drink to Toby’s birthday.

POLLY (Reaches for the bottle) Can I pour it myself?

EVY (Holding back the bottle) What’s the matter, you don’t trust me? One glass, that’s all I’m going to have . . . My daughter is worried about me. (She puts her arm around POLLY again) Do you know what it is to have a daughter worried about you? It is the single greatest pleasure in the world . . . In the world . . . (To TOBY) You can have your toes tickled by a Jap—I’ll take a daughter worrying about me any time. (She sips from her glass. She is beginning to lose coordination and control) I don’t even deserve it. The truth, Polly, I don’t deserve it. You grew up, you saw the bus driver more than you saw me, am I right?

JIMMY Polly, why don’t you get the cake?

EVY No, it’s all right, Polly and I understand each other. We have an agreement. She doesn’t bug me about the past and I don’t bug her about not wearing underwear.

TOBY Evy, stop, you’re embarrassing her.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

EVY I am not. Am I embarrassing you, sweetheart? I'm not embarrassing you, am I?

POLLY (Good-naturedly) I'll let you embarrass me if you let me take your glass.

EVY (Holds the glass away from Polly but ignores her remark) I told you I'm not embarrassing her. I mean the girl is beautiful. Toby, if you saw her sleeping in the raw you'd kill yourself. It's all firm. Remember "firm"? . . . You don't remember firm.

POLLY (Forcing a smile) Okay, now I'm getting embarrassed.

EVY (Going right on) The body of a young woman is God's greatest achievement . . . Of course, He could have built it to last longer, but you can't have everything.

TOBY Evy, it's my birthday and you're not making me very happy. Let's not have any more wine.


JIMMY Evy, I don't think anyone's in the mood.

EVY Well, put 'em in the mood. What else you got to do? You're not working!
   (She pulls the reluctant Jimmy to the middle of the floor)

JIMMY I'm never good at these things. I never know what to say.

ACT TWO

EVY Glasses up, everyone.
   (She stands next to Polly. Evy seems to be unaware of the tension she is causing in the room. Once on alcohol, she enters a world of her own)

JIMMY (Holds up his glass) To Toby . . . whom we all love and cherish. Happy birthday.

POLLY Happy birthday, Toby.
   (They all drink)

TOBY Thank you.

EVY That's the toast? Sounds like she died of leukemia. "Fifty dollars donation in memory of Toby Landau, who we loved and cherished . . ." She's alive, for chrissakes—tell her what a great broad she is.

TOBY It was a lovely toast, Evy . . . and I'm very touched.

EVY You're a great broad, Toby. I want you to know it. Only one who came to see me in the hospital. I'll never forget you for that—

TOBY Evy, stop, I'm going to cry again.

EVY I don't care if you whistle Dixie through your ass, I'm telling you I love you . . . (Toby looks at Polly) Whoops, sorry, Polly. Mother's being naughty.
   (She pours some more wine into her glass)

JIMMY Evy, will you give me that bottle?

EVY When it's empty, pussycat.

POLLY Mother, should I get the cake now?

EVY I'll tell you when to get the cake. I'm not ready for the cake yet. What the hell's the big rush with the
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

cake? I didn't rent it, I bought it outright... I'm still telling Toby how much I love her. *(She points to Toby with the hand holding the glass. The wine spills on Toby's dress)* Oh, Christ, Jesus, I'm sorry... *(Tries wiping it with her hand)* On your birthday, got you right in the crotch... Polly, get me a Kleenex or something.

Toby It's all right, it'll dry.

Evy It's ruined. Your two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar dress is ruined... Listen, I want you to take my mink coat. I paid thirty-two hundred bucks for it in 1941. You can get about four dollars for it now and I'll pay you a little bit each week.

*(She's still rubbing Toby's dress)*

Toby Evy, it's all right, it's an old dress.

Evy No kidding? I'll buy it from you. What do you want, about twenty dollars? I mean, it's not worth more, it's got a goddamned wine stain right in the front.

Jimmy Polly, why don't you get the cake?

Evy *(Screams)* Don't you touch that cake! I'm emceeing this party—

Toby Evy, please don't drink any more.

Jimmy Evy, I'm asking you nicely for the last time. Put down the wine.

Evy I am. I'm putting it down as fast as I can. *(She crosses to Toby)* Listen, I got a first-class idea. Why don't you two move in with us? We don't need anybody else... Just us four girls. What do you say?

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ACT TWO

Toby *(About to fall apart)* Evy, I've got to go. *(Crossing the room)* Thank you for the party.

Evy What party? Two salted peanuts, everyone took turns crying, and you fink out on me.

Toby Evy, I can't sit here and watch what's happening. *(At the door)* Polly, take care of her. I'll call you in the morning... *(To Evy)* Evy—I'm sorry if I did this to you.

*(She can't say any more; she turns and runs out)*

Evy *(Calls out)* Wait a minute. Your present. I didn't give you your present. Polly, get her back.

Polly She's gone, Mother.

Evy *(Playfully goes to Jimmy)* I believe this is your dance, Colonel Sanders, and by the way, I love your finger-lickin' chicken.

Jimmy Evy, Evy, you stupid bitch.

Evy Hey, hey, watch that kind of talk. I have a daughter here someplace.

Jimmy Then why do you act this way in front of her?

Polly Jimmy, it's all right.

Jimmy It's not all right. She's drunk and disgusting and she doesn't give a damn about herself or anyone else. Well, then damn it, neither do I. Go on. Finish the bottle. Finish the whole goddamn case, for all I care.

Evy Okay, buster, you just talked yourself out of an opening-night party.

Jimmy And you just drank yourself out of a couple of
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

friends. I don't want to see you any more, Evy. I swear to God. I am through. Finished forever, I've had it . . .
Goodbye, Polly, I'm sorry.
(He goes quickly to the door)

Evy How about a little kiss goodbye? (She grabs his arm) Come on, one little kiss on the lips. It'll make all the New York papers.

Jimmy Let go of me, damn it!
(He wrenches from evy and runs out, leaving the door open. Evy rushes to the door and yells out)

Evy (Pleading) Jimmy! Jimmy, come back, I'm sorry . . . Jimmy, don't leave me, you're the only man in my life. (But he's gone. She comes back into the apartment. Evy tries to compose herself in front of Polly) I guess this would be a good time to get the cake.

Polly I'm not hungry. I've got homework to do. I'll clean up later.

Evy Oh, you're mad at me. I don't know what I did, but you're mad at me, right?

Polly I'm not mad at you, Mother.

Evy What then? You're ashamed? Ashamed of your sweet little old mother because she had two tiny glasses of domestic wine?

Polly I'm not ashamed.

Evy Then what are you?

Polly I'm sorry . . . I'm just plain sorry.

(She looks at evy, then slowly goes into the bed-

ACT TWO

room and closes the door behind her. evy stands there)

Evy (Loudly) Sorry for what? For me? Well, don't be sorry for me because I don't need your goddamned teen-age pity . . . I'm terrific, baby, haven't you noticed? Cost me twenty-seven hundred bucks and I'm skinny and terrific and I can have any dirty old man in the neighborhood . . . (Suddenly softening) Oh, Jesus, Polly, I'm sorry (Closes to the bedroom door) Polly, don't be mad . . . Come on out. We'll have our own private party . . . Look! Look, I'm gonna put on some music. (Goes to the record player) I've just had a request to play one of my old numbers. (Takes out her album) Come listen to mother sing when she was a big star, darling. (Puts the record on the machine) Well, not exactly a big star . . . But I once had a sandwich named after me at the Stage Delicatessen . . . (The music starts. We hear evy singing. She stands there listening, drinking from the wine glass) That's not bad, is it? It's not bad . . . It's not thrilling but it's not bad. (She sings along, looking around the room) This is about the same size audiences I used to get. (She crosses to the bedroom door) Polly, please come out . . . I don't want to listen to me all by myself . . . Polly? (No answer. She looks at the phone) I am not going to listen all by myself . . . (She crosses to phone, takes a deep breath and dials into the phone) . . . Hello? Lou? You alone? . . . Guess who wants to come over to your place?

Curtain
Act Three
It is the following morning, Saturday, about eleven o’clock. Polly is seated on the piano bench, staring aimlessly and worriedly. Toby, in a polo coat over pajamas, sits on a chair, nervously smoking.

Toby I’m not worried.

Polly You’ve told me that since eight o’clock this morning, Toby.

Toby (Puffs again) She’s all right. She’s done this before. I am not worried.

Polly Is that why you’ve had nine cigarettes since you got here?

Toby I have other problems on my mind besides your mother’s disappearance. (Puffs) If I get nicotine stains on my teeth, I’ll never forgive her.

Polly She just walks out and disappears all night without saying a word. Where the hell could she be?

Toby Don’t swear, darling, your mother wouldn’t like it . . . You really should get some sleep, angel. You’re going to get little ugly puffy rings under your eyes.

Polly I’m sorry, Toby. I’ve never gone through this before.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

TOBY She's put me through it for twelve years. That's why I wear such heavy make-up. Underneath this is my mother.

POLLY (Determined) I'm not going to forgive her, Toby, I swear... The minute I hear she's all right, I'm not going to forgive her.

(She starts to cry, rushes into the bedroom and closes the door behind her. Toby picks up her coffee cup and starts to go into the kitchen, when the door opens. It's Evy, hiding her face)

TOBY Well, good morning.

Evy That's entirely possible.

TOBY Do you know what time it is?

Evy November?

TOBY Evy!

Evy Later, Toby. I have to go to the john.

TOBY I refuse to talk to your unbrushed hair all morning. Turn around and look at me. (Evy turns around, revealing a black-and-blue eye) Oh, God—your eye! Evy, what have you done?

Evy You want to be my friend, Toby? No questions and no sympathy. I'm all right.

TOBY I don't think I want to hear about it.

Evy Where's Polly?

TOBY She's been up all night calling everyone. I made her go in and lie down.

ACT THREE

Evy Well, if she sleeps for three weeks I may get away with it.

TOBY You don't seem to be acting much like a woman who just got beaten up.

Evy I didn't get beaten, Toby, just punched. One clean little punch, I never even felt it.

TOBY Really? Have you seen what you look like?

Evy Compared to you, what difference does it make? ... I'm all right, I promise you.

TOBY Sit down. Let me put some ice on it.

Evy I've already had medical attention. A dog licked my face while I was down.

TOBY Who did it?

Evy What difference does it make?

TOBY Because I feel responsible.

Evy Come on, Toby. I got what I asked for last night because I wasn't getting anything else. (She sits) All right, I'm sitting. Are you happy now?

TOBY How can I be happy when your face is half smashed in? How many places did you have to go before you found what you were looking for?

Evy Just one. If there's one thing I know how to do, it's shop.

TOBY (Turns away) Oh, Christ, Evy, sometimes you disgust me.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Evy That seems to be the general feeling around town.

Toby It was Lou Tanner, wasn’t it?

Evy That’s him. The man I love.

Toby Jesus, I knew it. There was always something about him that frightened me. You could see it in his eyes.

Evy Never mind the eyes, it’s the big fist you gotta watch . . . I wouldn’t hate you if you left me alone now, Toby.

Toby Why did you go there, Evy?

Evy He plays requests—I was lonesome.

Toby Why did you start drinking yesterday? Everything was going so good for you. Why, Evy?

Evy What do you want, a nice simple answer? When I was six years old my father didn’t take me to the circus . . . How the hell do I know why I do anything?

Toby Didn’t you learn anything in ten weeks at the hospital?

Evy The doctor tried to explain, but I was too busy making a pass at him . . . If I knew, Toby, would it make any difference?

Toby It would help.

Evy If you haven’t eaten in three months you don’t want a description of food, you want a little hot something in the plate.

Toby And did you get your fill last night, Evy? Did you get your little hot something in the plate?

ACT THREE

Evy No, but we negotiated for a while . . .

Toby With someone like that? A deadbeat musician who doesn’t give a damn about hitting some drunken woman.

Evy You just don’t get hit like that, you gotta ask for it . . . I happened to make a bad choice. I broke his guitar. I smashed it against the refrigerator, handed him the pieces and said, “Now you can look for work you’re equipped to do.” I thought it was cute. The man has no sense of humor.

Toby The truth, Evy. When he was beating you, did you enjoy it?

Evy Well, for a second there I said to myself, it hurts like hell—but it sure beats indifference. (She gets up) Is there anything in the kitchen? I’m always hungry after a fight.

Toby (Angrily) What fight? There was no fight. You just stood there and let him beat the crap out of you.

Evy That’s right, pussycat.

Toby The way you let everybody beat the crap out of you.

Evy Same as you. Only Marty doesn’t punch, he just walks out on you. In your own adorable way, you’re no better off than I am.

Toby (Still angry) At least my face isn’t beaten to a pulp.

Evy Terrific. You spent forty years being gorgeous and all you’ve got to show for it is a turned-up little nose . . . We cried for you yesterday; today is my turn.
**THE GINGERBREAD LADY**

Toby At least I've tried to make things work. I've at least made the effort.

Evie The only effort you make is opening your compact. If you powdered Marty once in a while instead of your face, you'd be wearing his pajamas now instead of yours.

Toby I powdered my goddammed face because I was afraid every time Marty looked at me too closely. Afraid he'd see what I was becoming.

Evie Terrible. Why don't you spend the rest of your life in the Beverly Hills Polo Lounge? You can put on a Shirley Temple dress and suck a lollipop ... And next year you'll have an affair with the book publisher's grandson ...

Toby Go to hell.

Evie Toby, you know I love you. We're the same kind of broads. We both manage to screw up everything ... The only difference is, you dress better doing it.

Toby Damn you, Evy. Damn you for being so goddamned honest all the time. Who needs the truth if this is what it gets you?

Evie Listen, I'm willing to live a lie. As far as I'm concerned, I'm twenty-two with a cute little behind. Now find me a fellow who believes it.

Toby You're not twenty-two, you're forty-three. And you're an alcoholic with no sense of morality or responsibility. You've never had a lasting relationship with anyone who wasn't as weak or as helpless as yourself.

**ACT THREE**

So you have friends like Jimmy and me. Misfits who can't do any more than pick up your discarded clothes and empty glasses. We all hold each other up because none of us has the strength to do it alone. And lovers like Lou Tanner whose only talent is to beat your bloody face in and leave you when something better comes along. I know what I am, Evy. I don't like it and I never have. So I cover the outside with Helena Rubenstein. I use little make-up jars, you use quart bottles—and poor Jimmy uses a little of both ... Some terrific people ... But by some strange miracle, in there—*(Indicates bedroom)*—is a girl who is crazy in love with you because she's too young to know any better ... But keep it up, Evy, and she'll get to know better before you can say Jack Daniels ... The way I see it, you've got two choices. Either get a book on how to be a mature, responsible person ... or get her out of here before you destroy her chance to become one. There's your honesty and truth, Evy. It's a perfect fit. How do you like it?

Evie Actually, I was looking for something in a blue.

Toby That's the first time in my entire life I ever told anyone off. I think I'm going to be sick.

Evie Look who's getting to be a real person. *(She goes over and puts her arms around Toby)* Next week, with a little luck, you'll throw away the eyelashes.

Toby Don't hate me, Evy. I still need a little help from my friends. Tell me you don't hate me.

Evie Hate you? I'm having trouble seeing you.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Toby So am I. But the picture's getting clearer...
Come on, let me put something on your disgusting eye.

Evy I got a big scene to play with Polly. I don't need
an audience. Go on home.

Toby I can't. Marty's still there collecting some papers
and things.

Evy You want to take some advice from a drunk? Go
home, wash the crap off your face, put on a sloppy
housedress and bring him a T-V dinner. What the hell
could you lose?

Toby Nothing... Wouldn't it be funny if you were
right?

Evy Of course I'm right. I'm always right. That's how I
got where I am today.

Toby Jesus, I suddenly hate my face... What I'd love
to do is get rid of the goddamned thing.

Evy No, you don't. You're going to send it to me by
messenger. This lady is still in trouble.

Toby I'm going. (Goes to the door) I'm scared to death,
but I'm going... I suddenly feel ten years older...
Look, Evy. Look at the pretty old lady.

Evy You'll love it. Little boys'll help you across the
street.

Toby (Opens the door) Evy, don't tell Polly the truth
about what happened. Lie a little. Protect her. That's
what mothers are for.

Evy I'll say I was walking along West End Avenue and
was hit by the Eastern Airlines shuttle to Boston.

ACT THREE

Toby It needs work. I'll call you from home later. I have
to stop off first and blow up my beauty parlor.
(She exits, closing the door behind her. Evy sits
there a moment. Polly comes out)

Polly Good morning.

Evy (Her back to her) You're up. Did you get any sleep?

Polly No. There was terrible news on the radio. Someone
was hit by an Eastern Airlines shuttle to Boston.
(Evy turns around and reveals herself to Polly)

Evy It was me... How do you like it?

Polly Wow. It's terrific. Goes very nice with this neigh-
borhood. Listen, I don't have any steak to put on that.
Will bacon and eggs do?

Evy You're not going to yell at me, is that it?

Polly I thought you were going to yell at me. I didn't
go to sleep last night either. (Suddenly Polly rushes into
Evy's arms) Oh, Evy, Evy, I'm so glad to see you.

Evy (Winses) The jaw, the jaw, watch the jaw.

Polly Listen, don't tell Toby. I promised her I wouldn't
forgive you.

Evy She's not even my friend any more. She's too old
for me.

Polly Starting tomorrow I'm not speaking to you. But
I'm so glad to see you today.

Evy (Pulls her to the sofa) You got to admit, it's not a
dull place to live.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

POLLY Listen, we're not going to discuss it. It never even happened. Can I get you anything?

Evy If you move from me, you'll get worse than I got. *(She hugs her. There's a moment's pause)*

POLLY I had a drink.

Evy What?

POLLY I made myself a Scotch at two o'clock in the morning. The Excedrin P.M. wasn't working, and I had to do something to stop the throbbing in my head.

Evy Did it stop?

POLLY No, but it made it bearable . . . Is that what it's like, Evy? Is that what it does? Make things bearable?

Evy *(Nods)* Mm-hmm. And if you take enough, it even stops the throbbing . . . Jesus, three weeks and I turned my daughter into a lush.

POLLY I hated it. I'll never take another drop in my life. From now on I'm sticking with marijuana.

Evy That's mama's good girl.

POLLY *(Pulls back)* Hey, listen, we better get moving. We have a lunch date in a half an hour, remember?

Evy What lunch date?

POLLY I told you last night. With Daddy, at Rumpelmayer's.

Evy Are you serious? With me looking like Rocky Graziano? He'll send you to a convent.

ACT THREE

POLLY We could put something on it. Some powder or something. Or you could wear a hat. With a little veil.

Evy I could sit behind a big screen and talk through a microphone. I can't go to Rumpelmayer's looking like this.

POLLY We'll think of something . . . How about, you just did a Tareyton commercial?

Evy How about just forgetting it?

POLLY We can't. He's expecting you. What about a pair of dark sunglasses?

Evy It's not just the eye, baby. I have a hangover and the shakes. When I start spilling water on his lap, he's gonna notice something.

POLLY But if you don't show up, he'll think something is wrong.

Evy How right could things be if you show up with a punchy mother? . . . Is Melissa coming too?

POLLY Felicia.

Evy Felicia . . . Can you picture that scene? I walk into Rumpelmayer's looking like a dead fish, and she clicks in her coffee and he spits in his sherbet.

POLLY She's not coming. It's just the three of us. He wants to talk to us together. I promised him that when I came here.

Evy Well, unpromise him. I'm not going.

POLLY *(Giving up)* Okay . . . I'll tell him you're not
FEELING WELL. I'LL FIGURE OUT SOMETHING. WE'LL DO IT AGAIN NEXT WEEK. (POLLY GOES FOR HER COAT) IN THE MEANTIME, WILL YOU SEE A DOCTOR?

EVS YES, ANGEL.

POLLY WHEN?

EVS AS SOON AS I LOOK BETTER.

POLLY I'LL BRING YOU BACK A COFFEE MALTED AND A TOY. GET SOME SLEEP. I'LL BE HOME IN AN HOUR.

(SHE OPENS THE DOOR, ABOUT TO GO)

EVS POLLY!

POLLY (STOPS; TURNS) YES?

EVS MAYBE YOU'LL BETTER NOT MAKE ANOTHER DATE FOR NEXT WEEK . . . NOT YET, ANYWAY.

POLLY YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT BY NEXT SATURDAY. IT'S NOT THAT BAD, REALLY.

EVS IT'S NOT THE EYE I'M WORRIED ABOUT . . . IT'S THE REST OF THE PERSON.

POLLY (CLOSES THE DOOR) WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MOTHER?

EVS NOTHING, BABY . . . IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T KNOW IF I'M PULLED TOGETHER YET . . . YOU SAW HOW SUDDENLY EVERYTHING UNRAVELED YESTERDAY . . . THEY WARNED ME IN THE HOSPITAL THAT AFTER A WHILE I MIGHT EXPECT SOME SORT OF SETBACK.

POLLY OKAY, YOU HAD A LITTLE SETBACK . . . ONWARDS AND UPWARDS.

EVS DIDN'T YOU EVER HEAR OF DOWNWARDS?
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

a couple of weeks. And when you get back, I'll be a regular Doris Day type mother, okay? Freckles and every-thing.

POLLY If I leave now, you know where you'll be in two weeks. You still have another eye left.

Evy Polly, please—

POLLY And in two weeks you'll find a reason to add another two weeks. And before you know it, Evy, I'll be all grown up and won't even need you any more.

Evy Listen, you weren't in such bad shape when you got here.

POLLY (Angrily) Is it such a goddammed big deal to need somebody? If you can need a bottle of Scotch or a Lou Tanner, why can't you need me?

Evy I do need you, baby. I just don't want to use you. Like the rest of the company around here ... In a few weeks you'll know the regular routine. You'll get a two-hour storm warning, then wait in your bedroom until all the bottles are empty and all the glasses are smashed, and in the mornings there'll be a lot of Alka-Seltzers and black coffee and crying and forgiving and promises, and we'll live happily ever after for two more weeks. And in a year or so you won't even mind it. Like Jimmy and Toby . . . But they have nothing better to do with their lives. You're only seventeen.

POLLY They're just friends. I'm your daughter.

Evy You get my point?

POLLY No! . . . What is it, Evy? Am I getting kicked out

ACT THREE

because you're afraid I'm going to grow up to be a crutch instead of a person? Or do you just want to be left alone so there's no one here to lock up the liquor cabinet?

Evy You're going to be late for Rumpelmayer's.

POLLY Screw Rumpelmayer's!

Evy (Looks at Polly and smiles) My, my . . . Look how quickly you can learn if you pay attention.

POLLY I'm sorry.

Evy Go on. Please, Polly. Go now.

POLLY Don't I get to argue my side?

Evy Not today. Mother is hung over.

POLLY I see . . . Okay . . . If the room's not for rent, it's not for rent . . . When do you want me out?

Evy All right, let's not get maudlin. You're not moving to the Philippines, just 86th and Madison.

POLLY (Nods) I'll be back for my stuff later.

Evy I'll get everything ready. If nothing else, I'm a terrific packer.

POLLY I'm glad you finally found something to keep you busy.

(She glares at Evy, then crosses to the door. She turns and looks at Evy)

Evy (A pause) What?

POLLY I was just wondering if you were going to say goodbye.
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

EVY Not unless you want to see a major breakdown.

POLLY Never mind. It's the thought that counts.
(The phone rings. POLLY exits, closing the door behind her. EVY is at her low ebb. She crosses to her mink coat and takes out a pint bottle of liquor. She pours it into a glass and sits down on a chair, her legs up on a stool. The phone stops ringing. She drinks. After a moment the doorbell rings. She pays no attention. We hear JIMMY's voice)

JIMMY Evy? ... Evy, it's Jimmy ... Evy, I know you're there. I just saw Polly on the stairs. (She drinks) Damn it, Evy, answer me.

EVY Evy's not here. She moved. This is a recording.

JIMMY (Pounds on the door) Evy, I'll break this door down, I swear ... I know what you're doing in there. (A pause) Three seconds, Evy. If it's not open in three seconds, I'm breaking it down.
(She drinks. Suddenly the door breaks down and JIMMY's body buries into the room and onto the floor. EVY looks at him)

EVY Jesus, I didn't think you could do it.

JIMMY (Gets up, moves to her) I knew it. I knew you'd be here with a glass in your hand drinking yourself—(He notices her eye) Oh, my God. Look at you. Look at your face.

EVY If you're going to throw up, use the bathroom.

JIMMY He beat you. The son of a bitch beat you.

EVY And if you try to take this away from me, I'll show you how it was done.

ACT THREE

JIMMY It was Lou Tanner, wasn't it? Toby just called me. I'll find him. If it takes me the rest of my life, I'll track that son of a bitch down and kill him.

EVY Once he hears, he'll never sleep another night ... Will you close the drapes, Jimmy? And then leave me alone like a good boy.

JIMMY (He closes the drapes) Sure. I'll leave you alone. I turn my back for two seconds, they have to call the emergency squad. What happened? How did he beat you?

EVY How many ways are there? You get hit and you fall down.

JIMMY Look at your eye. What did he hit you with, his guitar?

EVY No, the guitar was the preliminaries.

JIMMY I want to know the details, Evy. How did he beat you?

EVY Since when are you interested in sports? (In a fit of anger, he pushes her)

JIMMY You think it's so goddamned funny—go look at yourself.

EVY How come everybody's so physical lately? Where were you all when I needed you?

JIMMY Have you called the police? Have you seen a doctor? What have you done?

EVY Outside of bleeding, not very much. You want the
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

goddamned case, I give it to you. If you're interested in
my welfare, get me another glass, then turn out the light
and get out of here. Leave me alone, Jimmy, please . . .

JIMMY I'll never forgive myself for running out last
night. Never. (He turns off the alcove light. He goes
back to evy on the sofa, and puts his arm on her) It's all
right, baby . . . We got through it before, we'll get
through it again.

EVY And again . . . and again . . .

JIMMY Feel better?

EVY Much . . . There was this movie with Jean Simmons.

JIMMY English or American?

EVY English. And she was in love with this boy.

JIMMY Stewart Granger? David Niven? Michael Wil-
ding?

EVY He was very short with blond hair.

JIMMY Short English actor. Blond hair. Alec Guinness?
   Michael Caine?

EVY Miles? Mills?

JIMMY Mills. John Mills. Great Expectations, directed
   by David Lean, with Valerie Hobson, John Mills, Fran-
cis Sullivan, and introducing Jean Simmons. What about
   it?

EVY She had this crazy old aunt who spent forty years in
a wedding dress. The boy she loved never showed up for
the wedding. Never saw him again but she never changed

ACT THREE

a thing for forty years. Cobwebs on the goddamned wed-
ding cake. And she never went out into the city and she
closed all the shutters and never let the sun into the
house. She was covered with dust, this crazy old broad.
Sat there in the dark, rotting and falling apart . . . Mice
nibbling away at the wedding gifts . . . And as I
watched her I remembered saying to myself, "She doesn't
seem so crazy to me."

JIMMY Martita Hunt played the aunt. Her dress caught
fire and she burned to death, screaming on the floor. Try
not to think of it.

EVY I'm okay. There ain't no cobwebs on me.

JIMMY What can I get you? Let me get you something.
   Coffee? A sandwich? Something to drink? I'll even let
   you have a real drink, how about that?

EVY It's no fun that way. I have to sneak it.

JIMMY If I go away, if I leave you alone, will you take a
   nap?

EVY For you? Anything.

JIMMY Not for me. For yourself.

EVY Well, we'll split it. I'll sleep a little for you and a
   little for me . . . Will you turn the rest of the lights
   out? (JIMMY crosses and turns out another light) I can
still see you, Charley. (He turns out the remaining light.
The room is almost in total darkness, except for the light
in the kitchen) That's better.
   (JIMMY moves in the dark and stumbles against a
   stool)
JIMMY Christ, now I can't find the door.
EVY Don't worry about it, darling. Come to bed.

JIMMY Bitch, go to sleep. *He has found the door and opens it* I'll take a walk in Central Park. If I'm not back in an hour, I found true happiness.

(He goes, closing the door behind him)

EVY And get something for me, you bastard.

(She is alone. She gets up, crosses to the record player and switches on the record again. Her voice is heard, singing the song from last night. She pours herself another drink and goes back to the piano, drinking and listening. Suddenly the front door opens and POLLY stands there in the doorway, looking worriedly into the dark room)

POLLY (Concerned) Mother? Are you all right?

EVY (In the shadows) What are you doing here?

(Polly gets up quickly)

POLLY I forgot my wallet. I don't have carfare . . . What's the matter with the lights?

EVY Nothing. I have a headache.

POLLY Well, no wonder. It's so depressing in here. Like some ghost movie on the late show.

EVY (Turns off the record player) Great Expectations, directed by David Lean. (Polly switches on a light. Evy winces from the glare) Christ, do you have to do that?

POLLY I have to find my wallet. I'll be out in a minute.

(Polly starts to look around and then finds the half-

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ACT THREE

empty liquor bottle on the table where Evy was sitting. She holds up the bottle, turns and looks at Evy)

EVY Well, if that's your wallet, take it and go.

POLLY It's not my wallet. It looks like yours.

EVY All right, what do you want, a reward? Put it down and go. Can't you see I'm trying to take a nap?

POLLY Some nap.

(She turns on another light and then another lamp)

EVY What are you doing? I don't want those lights on.

(Polly stands there in the doorway, looking worriedly into the dark room)

EVY I was sitting on the bed."

(Polly stands there, looking worriedly into the dark room)

EVY What are you doing? I don't want those lights on.

(Polly turns on a lamp and then another)

EVY I was sitting on the bed.

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(Polly turns on a lamp and then another)
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

POLLY  Ten more minutes and you'd have meditated right out on the floor. That's why you want to be alone.

Evy  I'm not alone. Jimmy was here. And he's coming back in an hour.

POLLY  And he'll do whatever you ask him, right? Turn out the lights, seal up the windows, refill your bottles? Anything as long as Evy's happy.

Evy  Yes! Yes, dammit! Now get out of here and leave me alone!

POLLY  That's why you kicked me out. Because you're afraid of me. Aren't you, Mother? Admit you're afraid of me.

Evy  Don't test me. One more word, you'll walk into Rumpelmayer's looking like me.

POLLY  Go ahead, hit me. I don't mind a little pain, Mother. It sure beats indifference!

Evy  Jesus, you can't say a word around here without you listening at the door.

POLLY  I don't have to listen through the door. When you're drunk, they can hear you in Brazil.

Evy  I won't stand for this kind of talk.

POLLY  Yes, you will. You'll stand for anything!

Evy  Stop it! Stop it, Polly!

POLLY  Then make me! Do something about it!

Evy  I won't be talked to this way. I swear, you're going to get it, Polly.

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POLLY  I'm waiting. Please! Give it to me. Evy!

Evy  Not from me. From your father. I swear to God, I'm going to tell your father.

POLLY (Yells)  Then tell him! Tell him what I've become after three weeks. You want things to tell him about, Evy? (Picks up a glass) Here! (She hurls it against the bookcase, smashing it to pieces) All right? Now come to Rumpelmayer's and tell him . . . Only please don't sit in the dark for the rest of your life.

(POLLY has burst into tears. She kneels, crying. Evy finds it difficult to go to her. It is quiet for a moment)

Evy  Couldn't he have picked a nice out-of-the-way restaurant in Nebraska?

POLLY (Turns around hopefully)  You mean you've changed your mind?

Evy  I didn't change anything.

POLLY  All right, don't change your mind. Just change your dress. You can change your mind on the way over.

Evy (Looks to heaven)  She's his daughter. I have too much class for a daughter like this.

POLLY  Listen, how about if I don't come back as a daughter? I could be a house guest. I'll just stay till I'm thirty-five, then get out. I promise.

Evy  Didn't we just settle all that?

POLLY  You and your daughter settled all that. I'm a
THE GINGERBREAD LADY

stranger, Why don't you show me the rest of the apartment?

Evy (Again, up to heaven) Who is she? Who sent this monster to torment me?

Polly Felicia. She can't stand any of us.

(Polly has clearly won. Evy wilts and opens her arms. Polly runs in)

Evy Oh, God, I'm not strong enough to resist you . . . I suppose I'll be speaking at your school next week.

Polly We've got fifteen minutes. What can we do with your face in fifteen minutes?

Evy Christ, I don't know. There's a one-hour cleaners around the corner.

Polly You've known Toby Landau for twelve years and you never heard of make-up? Come on, sit down.

Evy We'll never get away with it.

Polly Yes, you will.

(She takes out a compact from her purse)

Evy I'll get twenty years for impersonating a mother.

Polly Good. We'll share a cell together.

Evy The hell we will. I'm forty-three years old. Someday I'm getting my own place.

(Polly starts to apply make-up under the eye)

Polly Now remember. Once we get there, don't be nervous. Just be cool and nonchalant.

Evy What if I do something stupid like eat the ice cream with a fork?

ACT THREE

Polly Then I'll eat mine with a fork. He'll look at us, think he's wrong, and eat his with a fork . . . Try not to move.

Evy Who would believe this? A middle-aged drunk with a black eye is worried about impressing a forty-seven-year-old spitter.

Polly All right, I'm through.

Evy How does it look?

Polly Much better.

Evy (Picks up the compact and looks at herself) It's not better. It looks like I was punched in the eye and someone put make-up on it.

Polly If we don't get away with it, we'll tell him the truth. He's a terrific person, Evy. He'll understand the truth.

Evy About Lou Tanner?

Polly No. The Eastern Airlines shuttle to Boston. Come on. Let's get a decent dress on you. You look like you're collecting for UNICEF.

Evy Polly.

Polly What?

Evy When I grow up, I want to be just like you.

Curtain