

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Longfellows Woods, a modern retirement facility.

SOUNDS of dinnertime. A shiny aluminum walker stands next to a table where MILDRED GILLARS sits.

ELEANOR CLUFF, a pregnant CNA, approaches with a pitcher of water.

ELEANOR

Are you sure you want to eat alone this evening...

She peers down at Mildred and reads:

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Mildred?

Mildred glances down at her name tag.

MILDRED

Miss Gillars.

Eleanor takes this in with a nod and then pours a glass of water. Mildred abruptly unpins her name tag, holds it over the glass, and drops it in. Eleanor leaves. Mildred holds the glass up to the light and peers at it.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

How humiliating. I thought they put the identification tag on your toe.

Eleanor comes back with a pitcher and a fresh glass.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Ah, return of the native.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
(imitating Eleanor's Yankee
accent)

And how's ya dyin' going today? Well that's wicked!

Flustered, Eleanor spills some water and mops it up with her apron.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Oh, that's all right. I know how confusing things can be when you're trying to do... *one thing at once!*

She studies Eleanor, smiles malevolently, and bats her eyes. Eleanor stares right back at Mildred, then smiles and leaves. Mildred claps her hands in admiration.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

(in a professional radio announcer's voice)

And that's how we do it, ladies! Do you realize the power we have when we put our hearts and minds together? Because we're running things, aren't we, girls, and there's an American girl sitting at the microphone every Tuesday evening at the same time with a few words of truth to her country's women back home. Because when Berlin is calling, it pays to listen. When Berlin is calling, it pays to listen in! And now, girls, I do believe that it would be nice to play a little bit of music, don't you? The type of music which is near and dear to the hearts of men in French South Africa today, over there in the dry and hot desert.

She toasts them and drinks.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

They dream now of a lazy day at home, a lazy day when spring comes calling, a lazy day when crooning singers are whispering of home sweet home. And now here it is, conveying all the dark thoughts of all of those men so far away from their mothers and wives today...

SAM FORRESTER strides to the table and looks down at her. Then he takes a spoon and chimes the glass twice. Mildred looks up at him.

FORRESTER

(with a Southwest twang)

Excuse me, ma'am. Did you see a woman pass through here a minute ago? Name's Red. Bright red hair. Like a fire engine! Can't miss her. Did you see her?

MILDRED

Why, no, I've only just--.

FORRESTER

Got here yesterday, didn't you?

He throws a glance at her walker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MILDRED

Yes.

He winks broadly and thrusts out his hand, which she hesitantly takes. He turns her wrist over and kisses it. She quickly pulls her hand back.

FORRESTER

Well I'd be happy to be introduce you around. Sam.

MILDRED

Sam.

FORRESTER

That's me, like Uncle Sam! They haven't given you a *name tag*? We'll have to go talk to them about that.

MILDRED

My name is Mildred.

FORRESTER

Could you say that again?

MILDRED

Which part?

FORRESTER

Any of it. All of it. Backwards and forwards, and inside and out. Take it all the way through the woods and out the other side, Mildred.

MILDRED

I don't believe--

FORRESTER

Your voice. You've got a beautiful voice.

Mildred laughs and shakes her head.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

It almost has two sounds, like morning and evening. It's like a purty piece of music. A fella could get used to a voice like that. You know, there was a...

He notices something in the distance and goes on tip-toes. He points.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Red!

He tips his hat to Mildred and leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Mildred approaches manager PEGGY PHILLIPS, who is talking on the telephone. On the wall are framed certificates. To the side is an exotic plant in a large jardiniere. Mildred takes a seat and starts flipping through a brochure just as Peggy hangs up.

PEGGY

Now, Mildred...

MILDRED

Miss Gillars...

PEGGY

Miss Gillars, you haven't taken part in any of our activities, and you've been here four days. There are many wonderful seniors here who'd love to get to know you better. Our philosophy is, the sooner one gets involved, the better one gets along.

MILDRED

Yes, it's right here in the brochure -- 'congregate care' -- it all sounds vaguely... orgiastic.

PEGGY

Maybe you'll enjoy our Thursday Adult Education Nights.

MILDRED

Is that anything like 'adult entertainment'? And do you use 'adult language' there?

PEGGY

Oh, it could be a speaker who's famous or a travelogue or one of our own clients who's had an interesting life or who shows an unexpected talent. It's usually just shared with our residents, but we also hold an annual Cavalcade where families are invited, too.

Mildred rolls her eyes. Peggy flips through a file.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

You take your meals...

MILDRED

Alone, yes. My solitude is my 'preexisting condition.'

PEGGY

But you're feeling well?

MILDRED

I'm in the pink. I am ready for the Olympic Decathlon. And isn't that why I've come here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PEGGY

According to your chart, you were born in Portland. So was I! Have you been here ever since?

MILDRED

According to your *brochure*, Longfellows Woods has no apostrophes. Do you study apostrophes or Longfellow in school anymore?

PEGGY

Longfellow's a poet. *Leaves of Grass*, right?

MILDRED

Whose Woods these are I think I *don't* know.

PEGGY

He wrote that, too?

MILDRED

No, no, no. We'll have to leave *Leaves of Grass* to Walt Whitman. *Frost* lost his compass in the woods. Longfellow was one of the Five Worthies.

They both look to the side as RED, red-haired, childlike, and ethereal, drifts in.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

And look! Here wanders in our own Evangeline.

Red starts to fondle Peggy's plant, arranging its leaves.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

(to Red)

I believe your husband is looking for you.

Red darkens and starts twisting the leaves of the plant.

PEGGY

Red! Red, what are you doing? That was my grandmother's...

Red rips a leaf off.

RED

The Five Worthies. The five worthies are: Henry Wadsworth LONGfellow...

She rips another leaf off and throws it at Peggy.

RED (CONT'D)

Henry David ThorEAU...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Another leaf. Peggy ducks.

RED (CONT'D)

Ralph Waldo EMerson...

Another...

RED (CONT'D)

James Russell LOWELL...

Another...

RED (CONT'D)

And John...

She brightens and throws a handful of leaves into the air like a naughty child.

RED (CONT'D)

GREENLEAF Whittier!

She yanks a third of the plant out of the pot, hands it ceremoniously to Mildred, and floats out. Peggy pulls a thick folder out and enters a few angry scribbles into it before looking up at Mildred. Mildred looks at the diplomas.

MILDRED

I see you have a masters degree in social work.

PEGGY

Yes, my specialty is laugh therapy.

MILDRED

Then why aren't you laughing?

What could be

She mimics Red, swinging the plant's stub...

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Whittier!

Mildred pushes herself out of the chair and grasps her walker, still holding the plant up.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

May I?

Peggy shrugs her shoulders and nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Because I do believe we're out of time.

PEGGY

Miss Gillars, I'm sorry for the interruptions.

MILDRED

(sarcastically)

Same time next week? I do enjoy our little chats.

She nods goodbye to Peggy and departs. On the wall is a large sign: OXYGEN IN USE. NO SMOKING. After taking several slow steps with her walker, she stops and reaches into the pocket of her dress and pulls out a cigarette and a cigarette holder. Straightening to light up, she thrusts out a hip in a sexy way and tosses her hair back...

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I do so enjoy our little chats... from the Reichsrundfunk Overseas Service in Berlin, seven hundred kilocycles for the benefit of America and all of her civilization and indeed the betterment of mankind.

SCENE 2

Mildred sits at her table. Opposite her sits the rescued plant, now potted. Eleanor approaches with a pitcher, pours Mildred a glass of water, and extends the same courtesy to the sprig. Mildred smiles.

MILDRED

It's Ellie, isn't it?

ELEANOR

(smiles)
Miss Cluff to you.

MILDRED

Touche'.

Mildred nods and grins as she watches Eleanor replace the linen napkins on the tables with new ones.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Is it hard to keep talking to people who are nothing but rude to you?

ELEANOR

I guess I'm just used to it.

MILDRED

Or barely say anything at all?

ELEANOR

My grandmother told me the people who talk the least sometimes have the most to say... Miss Gillars, is everything going all right with you?

MILDRED

Yes, I'm fine. Here in Longfellows Woods, woe betide you if you're not fine. Are you fine, Ellie?

ELEANOR

Not exactly.

MILDRED

Really! A European sensibility. Americans are always fine. A good Maine girl is *finestkind*. Tell me what's *not fine*.

ELEANOR

You know, boyfriends. Boyfriend, actually.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILDRED

Boyfriends! Here in the Edna St. Vincent Millay...Cafeteria?
Or is it The Cafeteria at Edna St. Vincent Millay? So we're
burning our boyfriends at both ends, are we? Do tell!

ELEANOR

It's okay. We're trying to work things out. But he's got such
a temper.

MILDRED

'And how does that make you feel,' Ellie?

ELEANOR

Terrible. Sucky.

She looks up.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Oh, you're just teasing me. I shouldn't be bothering you like
this.

MILDRED

No. I mean I know what that's like. Like you've done
everything for him, given him your soul and everything you've
ever believed in, and then, what, he's gone? It happened to
me, back when I was trying to be... an actress.

ELEANOR

I knew it! I knew all that vinegar was an act.

MILDRED

I think Vincent and I were the only two Maine girls in
Greenwich Village back then. Two fishergirls trying to lose
our accents, and did we evah!

ELEANOR

Who's Vincent?

MILDRED

Up there!

She points to a sign on the wall.

ELEANOR

Where?

MILDRED

In heaven, or thereabouts. Also up there.

ELEANOR

(reading)

Edna St. Vincent Millay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MILDRED

Edna St. Vincent Millay. Her name rides in like horses, doesn't it! And me just Midge. But we two hit New York together in a way, both of us fishergirls trying to talk as though we'd just stepped out of the Ritz. Ritz crackers, more like it. Oh, we were hilarious!

ELEANOR

An actress. So maybe you'll be in the talent show. You've got to be in the talent show. Won't you be in the talent show?

MILDRED

Not even if you gas me. I'd simply drop that line of questioning if I were you, do you see? By not attending to my words, you're missing what I was telling you-

Eleanor sits down.

ELEANOR

About Edna Saint Vincent Millay?

MILDRED

Yup. And it pays to listen in. We lived in a tiny little walk-up in an alley off Bleecker that was so narrow even she had trouble going up the stairs. Oh, wasn't she the popular one, our young Vincent, with her aureole of red hair and her free ride at Vassar -- do you know she'd actually *faint* while reading her poetry -- but I ask you, when one is working at Macy's because one is not earning enough money as an actress because one is just starting out, do you think it's fair for another, older one -- however elfin and Pulitzer-bound -- to meet and greet and deliquesce her sweets with another's boyfriend when one is not there just because she is going to be one of the greatest poets of the 20th century? Who was she? Nobody. "I turned and looked the other way and saw my boyfriend with Millay." In Greenwich Village, everybody was going to become somebody then.

ELEANOR

And you did!

MILDRED

Except me. I didn't make it as an actress. I went to Hunter College, your City University of New York...

ELEANOR

And?

MILDRED

And I tried and tried but it didn't take. After that I went to Paris; I guess I became sort of a...deejay.

ELEANOR

A deejay! They'd love a deejay for the talent show.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MILDRED

That would be some show.

ELEANOR

It's Friday night next month on the 31st. The theme is "Winter Cavalcade." You'll do it, won't you, Miss Gillars?

MILDRED

As seductive an invitation as that is, and I do appreciate it, Ellie, I'll have to say thank you no.

ELEANOR

A deejay!

MILDRED

I'm written up in *Lives of the Great Deejays!*

ELEANOR

You mean like in American Bandstand?

MILDRED

More *American* than American Bandstand, my dear.

ELEANOR

How could that be?

MILDRED

Well, let me see. Do you know that wasabi horseradish we tried, the hot stuff a few evenings ago?

ELEANOR

That green bird doo?

MILDRED

Did you try it?

ELEANOR

We're not allowed to eat what the residents...

MILDRED

Yes, yes, I know. Did you try it?

Eleanor looks around, nods vigorously.

ELEANOR

It blows the top of your brain off. It takes you through the roof!

MILDRED

That's how American we were. Through the roof! No one had an audience like ours. Our broadcasts are still travelling out into deep space, out beyond the Martian chronicles. I'll tell you, we had one hell of a show.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ELEANOR

Where are they now?

MILDRED

The shows? Mars, Orion's Belt. I don't know. Merv Griffin probably owns the rights to them.

ELEANOR

Where did you broadcast the show?

MILDRED

Well, well, well. Aren't you the inquisitive one, the peculiar one! God loves the peculiar ones! Well, my British friends could listen in nightly on Medium Wave 391 and 449.1. Your grandmother could hear me on Channel 15, 11, 10, 9, and 7.

A beeper attached to Ellie's waist goes off. She turns it off.

ELEANOR

I've got to go. So you'll think about the talent show?

MILDRED

Thank you, no. I am a very private deejay.

ELEANOR

Goodbye Miss Gillars...

MILDRED

Midge. All my enemies call me Midge.

ELEANOR

You're not my enemy. I think you're fascinating. You don't talk like anyone else I know.

MILDRED

I'm quite sure you're not and I don't. I've got a bad habit of joking with myself. But you'll forgive me, won't you? We'll be best girlfriends, through and through. Bosom buddies?

ELEANOR

When I was growing up, I wasn't very popular.

MILDRED

Oh, dear, yes. You poor thing. Well I'm afraid the children I grew up with weren't much kinder.

Background noise of little CHILDREN in a cruel, REPEATING chorus:

CHILDREN (O.S.)

Sisk, Cyst, boy is she pist, I'll slap her with my little fist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MILDRED

It didn't even rhyme. When I tried to explain it to them, they only said it more.

Eleanor's beeper goes off again. She leaves and Mildred gets up and walks to a chair near a window and picks up a book. Forrester enters.

FORRESTER

You're looking good. Better than good.

MILDRED

I've never felt 'better' in my life. That's because I don't know what 'better' feels like. I don't know what 'better' is.

FORRESTER

You know, it's when you don't feel blue anymore.

MILDRED

Like I said.

FORRESTER

Well, you're a quizzical one, aren't you? But like I said, I love a good mystery.

MILDRED

You didn't say that.

FORRESTER

Like I should have said. Ought to have said. My God, you have a pretty voice. It takes me...

MILDRED

Did you find your... friend?

FORRESTER

Oh, Red? Sure. She's my... my other friend.

MILDRED

Oh, I'll bet you've got a lot of friends in here.

FORRESTER

Always room for another.

MILDRED

I need sort of a big room, Sam. Say, whereabouts are you from, Cowboy?

FORRESTER

From the Piney Woods in Northeast Texas, where all the bluebirds flew when they left here, like I like to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MILDRED

But you came up *here*!

FORRESTER

Don't *like* bluebirds, don't you see. Where are you from, someplace fancy?

MILDRED

The fanciest! I'm from the beautiful city by the sea.

FORRESTER

Here? No!

MILDRED

It pays to listen in.

FORRESTER

You bet it does! Say, do you have a date for the Cavalcade on the 31st?

MILDRED

You must be joking.

FORRESTER

Well, an old guy like me would be mighty happy to escort you.

MILDRED

(absently)

Troop ships in need of an escort...

(to Forrester)

Thank you, Sam. But what about Red?

FORRESTER

Well, Red too.

MILDRED

(darkens)

Oh, I see. We'll be a threesome then.

FORRESTER

Four or five, most likely, with Nora and Violet if she gets back from seeing her daughter.

MILDRED

(laughs)

Oh, my!

FORRESTER

Brings out your eyes, when you laugh. Maybe all the bluebirds didn't fly the coop after all.

MILDRED

Maybe not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Forrester tips his hat and leaves.
Eleanor enters with a magazine cart.

ELEANOR

Hey, Miss Gillars.

MILDRED

You're not even trying, Ellie. It's
(using vocal color)
Hello.

She signals for Ellie to re-enter.

ELEANOR

(returning, in a deep voice
with a great flourish)

Hello.

MILDRED

You're not calling a lobster boat, Ellie, you're
participating in the milieu.

ELEANOR

Okay, so we're up to...

MILDRED

Nineteen hundred and thirty-two--

ELEANOR

Thirty-two...

MILDRED

And I was an ingenue at Hunter College, with a mad crush on
my classics professor. Max looked a little like Johnny
Weismuller.

ELEANOR

Johnny Who?

MILDRED

You know, Tawzin.

ELEANOR

Taahzan.

MILDRED

Well we'd better make this your next lesson. Proper young
ladies, that is to say, ladies of a proper... well in any
case, do not ever let anyone catch you saying aah.

ELEANOR

Not even at the dentist?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

MILDRED

Particularly not there, dear. Nor ever. For instance, what did we have for lunch today?

ELEANOR

Clam chowder.

MILDRED

(smiles)

Oh no we didn't! We had clum chowder. In New York patois, one learns pretty quickly that clum rhymes with plum. Now you say it.

ELEANOR

Clum chowder.

MILDRED

That's the spirit. I'd say things are pretty nice over on my side of the fence, aren't they?

ELEANOR

They sure are!

MILDRED

I should say they are. Proper elocution defines the young lady. I had to learn all of this myself, you know. I haven't always sounded like I'd just stepped out of...

ELEANOR

The Waldorf-Astoria. Oh, where did you learn it?

MILDRED

From fillims, from the very first as a young girl, watching more fillims, then a lot more at Hunter College. Hunter was where I first learned to express myself, and where in all events I first fell in love.

Eleanor pulls up a chair.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Oh, he was beautiful, like I said a little like a young Johnny Weismuller.

ELEANOR

Oh, Tarzin.

MILDRED

That's right, Tawzin. I think we can all learn a little something from Tawzin, don't you? I remember the fillim *Tawzin in New York*. People in New York society tried to civilize him with silk shirts and custom-tailored clothes, but when he shrugged his shoulders his dinner jacket ripped clean in two right down the back.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

So it was with my Max, who had rippling muscles below the comparative calm ocean of his being a classics scholar...

"Apeneck Sweeney spreads his jaws to laugh, swells to maculate giraffe..."

ELEANOR

I'm sorry?

MILDRED

He and I were in league, you see.

ELEANOR

You and Max?

MILDRED

Me and Max. He showed me, he showed me...

ELEANOR

He showed you...

MILDRED

That there never will be, never could be a love so powerful...

She motions for Eleanor to move closer. "Moonlight Serenade" plays in the background, and the ghost of Max joins them in pantomime.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

At first, we met behind the quad, near a ridiculous blue juniper bush. I'll never forget it. It looked like a little blue cloud that had barely made it in for a landing. He said, "Miss Gillars," and suddenly I wasn't a ridiculous little coed with pimples all over my forehead hidden under spit-curved bangs but rather a young woman with the delicious power to get him canned if I ratted on him but of course I wouldn't because I was not a rat then and I am not a rat now but rather a human being if you get my meaning. I mean do you copy? And in the darkness he put his head down and kissed the top of my head and I felt as though I were going to faint and I looked up and saw his eyes were wet. My God, the feeling of his arms around me!

ELEANOR

He took advantage of you!

MILDRED

So that's what you call it now. We had our secret places. One night at Hunter we made a kind of love in the natatorium.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Remember this was years ago but it happened awfully fast oh the blitz of him in any event I remember walking in and undressing while he sat and watched me or my silhouette anyway in the reduced sodium lights of the pool. You know I felt like the White Rock girl! I didn't know *all* the parts of my body could blush.

ELEANOR

What did you do?

MILDRED

Well one gets into the water as quickly as she can.

ELEANOR

And there, in the pool, did you...?

MILDRED

No! It was funny. *He* wouldn't. You just have to understand Max and Max ain't talking if you mark my meaning. That is, no one could understand him, least of all me at first. But by *not* touching me it was as if he were making the whole pool touch me, don't you see? With him just sitting and watching and unpacking his egg salad sandwich, in all probability. I mean I couldn't see him. I got out of the pool, all shivering, and he said, "Let's go." He watched me pull my clothes back on, which was a little difficult because I didn't have a towel. By the time I finished I was sure I had everything on backwards. Then he took me to the planetarium and we watched the stars for hours without saying a word to one another. We fell asleep in each other's arms and only started when we heard the slap of the janitor's mop.

ELEANOR

This is a *happy* memory, right?

MILDRED

The happiest!

ELEANOR

Because it seems a little wee-id.

MILDRED

(fondly)

Wee-id. Up till then no one had taken the slightest interest in me. He made me feel like a goddess. Then, suddenly, he left Hunter and overnight I was an ex-goddess, I mean a former goddess, there's a difference, you know. He went to Germany.

The music stops and the ghost of Max departs.

ELEANOR

Without *telling* you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

MILDRED

That's Max, through and through. Wee-id. But I knew. I knew he had to leave me because he had such a grand passion for me he was afraid he was going to dishonor his position.

ELEANOR

What happened next?

MILDRED

Exactly next? I would never see him again. At least that's what I feared. I had to force myself to believe he'd never come back, for my own good. I was lonely. But at least I knew how to be lonely. Not to mention rejected. That stood me well during so many auditions.

ELEANOR

That must have been terribly painful, Miss--

MILDRED

As I told you, it's Midge, simply Midge, and back then I was trying awfully hard to be an actress, you have to understand. And when one is trying awfully hard to be an actress one goes to call-backs every afternoon when one isn't working in department stores selling various dilutions of April in Paris or trying to meet Mr. Eugene O'Neill who according to his secretary Ruth Caldwell has not been in for five consecutive years--

ELEANOR

That's a long time not to be in...

MILDRED

Midge. And with all due respect, you have no idea how long a 'long time not to be in' can be.

Anyway, O'Neill. I could never meet him. Finally I went to an audition at the Eltinge for *Strange Interlude* and my job was to join a crowd cheering a crew race during the penultimate scene of the play? Do you know O'Neill? Of course you don't. Well, I didn't either. He's not the sort of person you just know, you know?

The ghost of Eugene O'Neill approaches Mildred in pantomime.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Anyhow I was cheering like a rally good scout and a moment later here was O'Neill wading through all the other girls and walking toward me and I thought he'd taken an interest and I gave him my biggest hopeful smile but I wasn't listening to him and he was asking me to leave, saying I couldn't act the cheerleader.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

O'Neill shakes his head no and jerks his thumb backstage as he departs.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

He'd decided that from over 100 feet away, sitting up there in the darkness with an afghan over his knees. *I* couldn't cheer. *Mine Sigestaumel!* Was *that* cheering? How about *Frauen Vereinigen*, translation: Women to Victory?

ELEANOR

You will do it, won't you! You're going to be in our Cavalcade!

Ellie departs and Mildred joins Forrester, looking out a window.

FORRESTER

Will you look at this!

MILDRED

Hello, major. Taking in some snow?

FORRESTER

Never had much growing up.

MILDRED

Texas, right?

FORRESTER

Deep in the heart of Texas, though the Piney Woods are just 50 miles from Shreveport.

MILDRED

Bayou country. No, I guess that's southern Louisiana. Louisiana has always seemed to me to be...

FORRESTER

Land of the tall girls and the virgin pines.

MILDRED

Always the flirt.

FORRESTER

Say, you don't think *your* life is over, do you, just because you're in here? You're not one of *those*, are you?

MILDRED

Well, I...

FORRESTER

Because if you *think* it's over, you'll be right.

MILDRED

It's not as if we're just beginning...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

Forrester leans over and kisses her hand.

FORRESTER

Oh yes it *is*.

Forrester looks back out the window.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

I remember when I first saw snow.

Forrester kisses her hand again.

MILDRED

(laughing)

You never let a woman finish a sentence because it might end in NO! When *did* you first see snow?

She looks back out the window.

FORRESTER

Oh, we had it occasionally where I grew up, and during training at Fort Dix I saw some showers. But I saw real snow in the Ardenne Forest.

Mildred looks down.

MILDRED

You were in the Ardenne Forest.

FORRESTER

We were across the Meuse River at St. Vith when the Battle of the Bulge started. We didn't even know what the Bulge was, but a girl named Axis Sally told us all about it on the radio. The Germans hooked loudspeakers back in the woods up in the trees, and she was talking on that.

Mildred stiffens.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

First she played Bunny Berrigan and Louis Armstrong. Then she said something like, "Don't worry -- your girls back home have new loves to keep them warm." The snow was so blinding we could barely move. She said, "We've captured the 106th Division; you might as well give up. The war's over -- the Sixth Panzer army is going all the way to Paris." We didn't believe her, but she sounded so beautiful it was hard not to believe her. By then we just hoped *somebody'd* get to go all the way to Paris, because it wasn't going to be us or even the Germans fighting us. The *snow* was winning the war. That's where I lost these two fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

He cheerfully holds his hand for Mildred to see. It is unscarred and smooth where the fingers are missing.

MILDRED

I can't even see where they were.

FORRESTER

I can still move them! In my head, I mean. See that? I'm wiggling them. Hold my arm.

MILDRED

I wouldn't dream of it.

Forrester puts his arm up to his own ear and listens.

FORRESTER

See? In my head I'm a young man. I have my regular fingers and my *magic* fingers. That's why I'm not afraid of dying.

Forrester shifts a little closer.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

If my fingers are gone but I feel they're still there -- I mean I *know* they're still here -- that's how *all* of me is going to be someday, see? I'll have disap-*here*'d.

He leans over to try to kiss the top of her head, but she jerks away.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Mildred, there's *smoke* in your hair!

He throws his head back and mimics smoking a cigarette.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

My doctor hasn't let me smoke for 10 years. But when I dream I'm still smoking.

We pulled back across the Meuse River, then joined Patton's Third Army to repel the German troops laying siege on Bastogne. A few months later we were all on liberty in Paris, sleeping under the Eiffel Tower.

He reaches over to stroke her hair.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Have you ever been to Paris?

Mildred turns away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

MILDRED

So you've always been in the Army.

FORRESTER

After the war, I went to college on the Army's dime, at UT-Galveston. Never left uniform until I retired after 35 years. Army's done a lot for me.

MILDRED

What did you study?

FORRESTER

EOD.

MILDRED

Engineering Ordnance Disposal.

FORRESTER

You make everything sound beautiful. *How'd you know?* We'd go to unexpended ordnance and stop it from going... BOOM!

MILDRED

Yes.

FORRESTER

I was good at it!

MILDRED

I can see that.

FORRESTER

It was like following a deer. You have to walk up to it very slowly, on its own terms. Kind of like you.

Talking to you is like... finishing a conversation I began as a young man. Little Ellie told me about how you've been to Paris. Did you sleep under the Eiffel Tower, too?

Mildred regards him carefully.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

No, a lady wouldn't do that. You ought to have. There's nothing like 500 of us GIs packed like sardines under the whole thing, tryin' to sleep under the rain.

MILDRED

But it doesn't offer any shelter at all!

FORRESTER

We had ponchos and plenty of cigarettes by then. They treated us like we were Napoleon's victorious troops. *La Tour Eiffel* was our *Arc de Triomphe*, that's all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

MILDRED

I don't see how it's possible.

FORRESTER

What?

MILDRED

That even your French could have a Texas accent.

FORRESTER

Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?

MILDRED

(laughing)

Quel vaillant!

FORRESTER

It's just roadkill French. Didn't mean anything.

He looks up.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Hey, Bunk!

Mildred smiles thinly and leaves. Bunk Wylie enters.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

It's the same voice.

WYLIE

Doesn't prove anything.

FORRESTER

Does if you'd been there and heard her from those loudspeakers, like the rest of us did.

WYLIE

Tellin' you, it doesn't prove anything.

FORRESTER

Well what if it *is* her?

WYLIE

Yep. What if?

FORRESTER

See, it's the kind of voice *you don't forget*.

WYLIE

Why don't you just ask her?

FORRESTER

There's an idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

WYLIE

It's not as if you're shy. The 'Longfellow Lothario.'

FORRESTER

This is different, Bunk. You know it is.

WYLIE

They'll adjust your medication and you'll be just fine. The war's over, Sam. If it *is* Midge, she's paid her price. I mean, look at what they've done to her! They've sentenced her to be an old lady.

FORRESTER

I think she's quite lovely.

WYLIE

Then what's the problem?

FORRESTER

I can't believe I said that.

WYLIE

What?

FORRESTER

That she's really quite lovely.

WYLIE

You think they're all 'quite lovely.'

FORRESTER

Yeah.

Red walks in.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Especially my lovely wife, Red.

RED

So you like her.

FORRESTER

Not the way I like you, Red. It's different.

RED

Sam, it's okay. I have three beautiful children and a dozen grandchildren, a baker's dozen when our youngest has hers. We're just good buddies, and that's that.

FORRESTER

Better'n good buddies. Comrades in arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

RED
She's beautiful, isn't she, Sam?

FORRESTER
God, Red, no one's more attractive to me than *you*.

RED
But she has a strange quality. It's --

FORRESTER
You've noticed it, too?

RED
It's hard to miss, Sam. I can't believe I'm saying this, but I can see what you boys saw in her.

Forrester hangs his head.

FORRESTER
I love you, Red.

RED
Yes, you used to.

FORRESTER
There is no used to. There's only right now.

RED
I used to be lovable. Before I lost my --

FORRESTER
Don't talk about that, Red. Not here.

RED
Before I lost my mind.

FORRESTER
Red. You've been doing fine all day.

RED
Have I?

Red looks at Forrester and cries, and Forrester folds her into his arms. Small, meticulous MILTON STONE enters, followed by Peggy the manager.

PEGGY
Hi, all!

Forrester and Wylie return gruff salutes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Well, it looks almost as if we have a quorum here.

FORRESTER

Yep. Mutiny's already underway. Next thing you know, we'll have our lives back.

PEGGY

Oh, you're so cute! Isn't he cute!

WYLIE

Up in Harpswell, cute meant an entirely different thing than it means now. It meant you were payin' attention and were sharp.

PEGGY

That's acute.

WYLIE

That's-a right!

FORRESTER

Doc. Phillips.

PEGGY

Peggy.

FORRESTER

Can I ask you something about Mildred?

PEGGY

I don't know if I can answer it.

FORRESTER

She used to teach in a girls' school, right?

WYLIE

A parochial school in Ohio?

PEGGY

How do you know?

MILTON

Doesn't everybody know?

FORRESTER

What we mean to say is, has she mentioned anything about her past to you?

PEGGY

Major, I'm surprised at you. You know we keep our conversations in strictest confidence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

FORRESTER

I don't care about conversations. I mean in consultation.

PEGGY

Major!

FORRESTER

Nothin', huh?

PEGGY

Why would you ever want to know more about Mildred?

FORRESTER

What with all the activities we have around here? It's a wonder to me, too.

PEGGY

I just think she's entitled to her privacy, that's all.

MILTON

Assuming she's a private person.

PEGGY

Well I suggest if you have a question for her, why not go right up and ask her?

WYLIE

(nodding toward Forrester)

Shy.

PEGGY

I beg your pardon?

WYLIE

He's shy.

PEGGY

You don't mean in a romantic... Oh, I see!

FORRESTER

Things like when's her birthday, so's I can get her a birthday card. I'd like to seem... sensitive.

PEGGY

Well, now that I know what it's for, I'll see what I can do.

She leaves.

FORRESTER

All right, what have you got?

WYLIE

It's from the National Archives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

FORRESTER

Already?

WYLIE

They've got it all on microfiche. Everything's faster now that they've moved the real goods to College Park.

MILTON

What does it say?

WYLIE

It's unbelievable.

FORRESTER

What is?

WYLIE

What's in it.

FORRESTER

Let me see that, Bunk.

WYLIE

Sure.

He hands it over. Forrester puts on reading glasses and reads.

FORRESTER

(reading aloud)

U.S. Department of Justice. Use Care in Handling This File.

WYLIE

Don't they ever declassify anything?

FORRESTER

Nope. They're still protecting our secret plans for Civil War ironclads.

WYLIE

At least they gave us this much, even though most of it's blacked out.

FORRESTER

How much have you read?

WYLIE

Nothing! I just got it and saw all the black marks. What's it say?

Forrester reads, flips a few pages. Wylie leans over and tries to look in, but Forrester brushes him away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

FORRESTER

Hold on a sec.

WYLIE

What's it say?

FORRESTER

They're interviewing this guy.

WYLIE

What guy? Who?

FORRESTER

(reading)

FBI. Looks like they're interviewing this army sergeant who was captured with a head wound. He was in a P.O.W. hospital near Berlin, and then he was sent to Furstenburg. This is in September, 1943. All of a sudden a woman whose picture he immediately identifies as Mildred Elizabeth Gillars --

WYLIE

Wow!

FORRESTER

Wow what?

WYLIE

Just wow. I mean you've got this prison camp, and then this mysterious woman enters.

FORRESTER

(reading)

And while they look on she starts setting up a microphone in one of the barracks. She is described as 5'7" in height,

WYLIE

Wow.

FORRESTER

Would you cut it out?

(reading)

One hundred twenty pounds...

WYLIE

Un-hunh.

FORRESTER

(reading)

Thin build.

WYLIE

Yup.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

FORRESTER

What are you doing?

WYLIE

I'm *agreeing* with you.

FORRESTER

What are you agreeing to?

WYLIE

What you're saying.

FORRESTER

Do you want to hear this or not?

WYLIE

Yup.

Milton shakes his head. Eleanor walks through, and Forrester addresses her, nodding toward Wylie.

FORRESTER

Lobsterman.

WYLIE

Yep.

She smiles, confused, then leaves.

FORRESTER

(reading)

"Age is about 38 years, hair is blonde, she's wearing a black dress with a black fur coat. Peculiarities include a peaked face and the fact that she's well poised, a smooth talker."

Forrester flips ahead.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Now they've got this major being interviewed...

He flips through a few more depositions and then sees something that makes his eyes open wide. He slaps the file shut. Then he opens it and re-checks the section. He points to the entry.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

And do you know who *this* guy *is*?

WYLIE

Nope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

FORRESTER

Oh yes you do! Harry Oden.

WYLIE

Our Harry Oden?

FORRESTER

"At Monhegan Island, Maine! Interviewed in accordance with the Department's Instructions..."

Wylie gets up and starts to leave the room in a hurry.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Where you going?

WYLIE

I'm gonna get Harry!

Forrester and Milton get up, too.

Red, behind them, runs to keep up. Then they start to look around.

WYLIE (CONT'D)

This is a part of The Woods I don't like.

FORRESTER

Nobody likes it. These are the Woods you don't come out of. But we've got to see if Harry recognizes her.

RED

Or you could always ask her.

FORRESTER

It's just not something you ask.

RED

Men.

They walk a while longer.

RED (CONT'D)

Sam?

FORRESTER

Yes, Red?

RED

When *I* go in here, you'll come visit me, won't you? To see me?

FORRESTER

You'll never go in here, Red.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

A young orderly pushes a wheelchair in which a frail woman is strapped. She is nodding with her eyes closed and doesn't seem to notice or care when the orderly rams her foot into a partition as they pass by. Red looks wildly to Forrester when this happens. The orderly insolently tips his cap and smirks. Forrester gives Red a hug.

RED

I don't know what she said to you, Sam. I don't know how it felt. I'm sorry you were hurt by what she said. All I know is, it couldn't have been as mean as "Assisted Living."

They approach a frail man in a wheel chair.

WYLIE

Here?

FORRESTER

Here.

Forrester, Wylie, and Red stand around HARRY, who slumps in his chair and responds animatedly though foggily to their questions.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Harry?

HARRY

Sam, did I ever tell you about my dad?

FORRESTER

Hello, Harry! It's good to see you!

HARRY

But did I *tell* ya?

FORRESTER

Why don't you tell Bunk and Red? They're both here, too.

HARRY

All right, I think I will. When my dad got older, he used to go outdoors and walk back into the woods on the island where we had some old rivulets and creeks running. I'd come back from our boat the *Jack of None* and see him, digging.

FORRESTER

Just once or all the time?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

HARRY

Oh, all the time!

WYLIE

What was he trying to do?

HARRY

Well, see, he'd find a crooked little creek and make it straight as a stick. Then he'd take a straight one and shovel into it so's it would be crooked. Do you follow me?

WYLIE

Sure, Harry.

HARRY

He'd never tell me why. Later on he did it at night, with the stars reflecting in the water. One morning we found him out there.

WYLIE

That's an awfully good story, Harry. How would you like to get out of here?

HARRY

I'd like it an awful lot, Bunk.

WYLIE

Sam?

Forrester gently stokes Harry's hair
but to Wylie sadly shakes his head no.

SCENE 3

Practicing in the day room/dining room, Bunk Wylie finishes a song on the clarinet as a young DIRECTOR ushers in the next act, Milton, who carries a ventriloquist's dummy. Mildred nods toward Wylie.

MILDRED

Good song. It's called "The Sandman."

ELEANOR

How's that?

MILDRED

He was playing "The Sandman," not "Mr. Sandman." It's a song that makes you feel so lonely it turns your guts inside out. I liked to play it just at the stroke of midnight.

The Director overhears Mildred.

DIRECTOR

So you know your music, do you?

MILDRED

Just the heartbreakers.

DIRECTOR

But only Big Band, right?

MILDRED

Whatever you say... Somebody's Son.

A WOMAN in the audience stands up.

WOMAN

He's *my* son.

MILDRED

Well then he *has* to be somebody!

DIRECTOR

So you're not actually an aficionado.

MILDRED

Ain't that a shame. You think music left us behind, and the worst part of it is, you think we don't even know it.

The Director shrugs and walks over to Milton, who's setting up his stool and already has the dummy over his arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He and Milton talk out of earshot for a few seconds, then Milton turns on his heel, his face red.

MILTON

It's not fair!

DUMMY

Don't make me say 'That's Showbiz,' Milton.

MILTON

(to the Director)

It's not right!

Milton turns and walks away, mumbling.

DIRECTOR

Careful, Milton. I can see your lips moving.

The others depart as Mildred walks across the stage and sits in armchair. Eleanor follows her, pushing a medication cart. She hands Mildred a small cup and a few pills.

MILDRED

You look tired. Why don't you sit down for a minute? 'Take a load off,' so to speak.

Eleanor sits, stretches her legs out, looks at her toes. Mildred studies her.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

How'd you come to work here? This isn't your home town, is it?

ELEANOR

No, I grew up in Paris, up by Sabbathday Lake. Billy, that's my baby's father, wanted to move here, hoping for a job at the shipyard.

My parents don't like Billy. They call him a skinhead.

MILDRED

Well, is he?

ELEANOR

Nobody should take him seriously when he spouts all that white power stuff. He just wasn't very happy growing up. I think it's just because he thinks everybody else gets a break when he doesn't. Sometimes I want to leave him myself, but then he'd have nobody. The shipyard job hasn't worked out yet, and he's really down about it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I feel kind of uncomfortable talking about it, like I'm being disloyal or something.

MILDRED

So Billy's the 'birth father,' in your modern parlance. I moved to Paris -- the one with the Eiffel Tower -- in 1934 or so.

ELEANOR

So, there were more roles in Europe than here in the US?

MILDRED

It's simpler than that. *He* was there.

ELEANOR

Max! This is so romantic. I left Paris for my boyfriend and you went to Paris to follow yours.

MILDRED

He'd met in Paris with a group of 'ultra-patriotic' individuals who said they loved the United States more than anyone else and who pledged to do everything they could to save America, the 'real' America, as they described it, from Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the, well, the whole thing got put up on the radio, that's all. Some of the most 'patriotic' of us ended up in Berlin.

ELEANOR

Weren't we fighting *against* Germany then?

MILDRED

It's all so crazy and futile now. No one would believe that what I thought I was doing was trying to stop the U.S. from entering the war. Ellie, I could tell you I was swept into this because it was romantic and I was in love, and that would be true but not the truth. The truth is, I was wrong, wrong, wrong.

ELEANOR

Surely people understood once they heard it all.

MILDRED

They understood all too well.

ELEANOR

So you were...anti-war demonstrators?

MILDRED

That was our biggest lie of all. We did plays on the radio demonstrating the futility of war. We tried to convince America that it *was and always has been* England who has tried to keep us down. We were pawns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELEANOR

My mother was against the Vietnam War.

MILDRED

Same difference. Well, different difference. The point is, we enjoyed a certain celebrity and tried to dignify it by saying we hated war and were trying to put a stop to it.

ELEANOR

But how did you catch up with Max? You didn't know where he was.

MILDRED

I didn't know where he was...where I was... Well, all I know is...I was lost. There was nothing for me in New York. He wrote to me. There were never such beautiful letters. Here was no, no, no, and he was everything yes, yes, yes. Hand me that jewelry box.

Mildred points to a box. Ellie brings it to her and Mildred takes out a packet of letters. She starts to read until MAX'S VOICE takes over.

MAX'S VOICE (O.S.)

Dear Midge, when I last saw you I said I could not foretell the future like the Lady Orlofski at Coney Island the time we went -- do you remember that? -- and no doubt I've disappointed you by disappearing out of your life. But from the depths of my heart it was because I love you and I will always love you and I dare to say it now because you're safe from me and an ocean away. No doubt many boys are courting your favor; with your charms could it be otherwise? But it's raining now and whenever I see it coming down softly and quietly over the river I think of you and how you'd arrive in class, late sometimes! but as beautiful and quiet as a soft rain. So you can see it's your time over here and you are everywhere I walk. I think perhaps I am covered in you, were it not for the perfume that even the rain in its freshness lacks... I don't know. There are French girls here going about their daily business but they are simply happy, that is, happy in a simple way and therefore simply not you. You are my girl in the rain. I never thought I'd wish for rain let alone tell you that you are everything I can think about. I don't know what is happening to me..."

MILDRED

He told me he loved me. No one had ever told me that, at least not so solipsistically. I fell into him like a fat fly into sticky bourbon-treated colored fly paper.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I went to Saks Fifth Avenue and bought a matching crocodile valise and round hat bag, and I took the Clipper across the Big Wide Blue into the clouds and by the time we were descending I was drinking so hard all of Paris wasn't raining like he'd promised but instead was that brown sepia color as if everything were tinged in liquor, and there he was waiting for me, my God he could make a show of things, and then he took me home and we copulated like hedonous larvae.

ELEANOR

Didn't you say at first you took a steamer to Paris?

MILDRED

Paris isn't on the coast, Ellie.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry. I guess that sounded stupid.

MILDRED

Rule No. 1. NEVER say I'm sorry. I'm something of an expert on sorry. It doesn't do you any good, and nobody ever believes it anyway.

ELEANOR

Your parents never told you they loved you?

MILDRED

They always said "*Because we love each other*" we have to do awful Such and Such. No one had ever told me he or she loved me without putting the 'Because' in front of it first, like some dirty little mud room you have to walk through before you reach the real feeling. My stepfather... ugggh. Then it was just my mother and me. She loved me but she never thought I'd amount to anything. She wanted me to be an actress, 'as long as that's what you want,' she always said. But Max--

ELEANOR

How often did he write you?

MILDRED

Before I flew over? Thrice, like a magic incantation. The first letter was from Paris, full of a higher sense of purpose. Everybody winds up in Paris, waiting to fit in, and *what better place to wait in than in Paris?* Berlin, exactly, I can tell you're about to say Berlin! Well of course Berlin! You don't have to tell me! It was more Parisian than Paris. Everybody who was anybody back then was gravitating to Berlin. It took me a while to figure that out, but you asked me about Letters Two and Three so I'll tell you directly that Letters Two and Three were not love letters, *per se*, but simple expressions of desire, simply the addresses where he was staying and not a word more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ELEANOR

Nothing more?

MILDRED

Don't you see, he was *demanding* that I come to him. The third letter also had my plane fare in it, a transatlantic crossing on the Yankee Clipper. I don't care where it's going, if the Yankee Clipper has your name on its manifest, you're going to get on. Manifest destiny, don't you see?

ELEANOR

Did he also send you... a little something for clothes?

MILDRED

There *was* a little something. But when I thought of all the shoes in Paris I saved what I had left for that. In new blue pumps I was Oola in *Neap Tide* and Roxanne in *The Left Bank*. I was the Lord High Teller in *Nexus*, where they didn't see my legs at all (she hikes up her skirt), and with these I wasn't happy about that, and I appeared briefly in the fillem *Short Shadow*, though I don't think it's available anywhere but in the... well I do think there's a copy in the Library of Congress! In fact there's a whole sort of file, a kind of exhibit on me there!

ELEANOR

And still, with all Paris flourishing around you, there was only the one and only?

MILDRED

Only my Max. If there's one thing you can say about me, it's I'm loyal. Unfortunately there are few people who have just one thing to say about me. I got off the plane and there he was, saying, "You're beautiful." I asked him why he left without telling me, and he said, "I thought by living alone I would find peace. But there is no peace in living alone, only loneliness."

ELEANOR

So you flew into his arms!

MILDRED

Like a moth into shalloon.

ELEANOR

What was he like?

MILDRED

He was really 'opinionated.' There were times I wanted to run away. But ours was a love that no one understood, the greatest love story of World War II. Ha! It's like life had already taken a bite of me and, not liking me, had hidden me back in the middle of the chocolate box for others to ignore.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

It seemed hopeless. Then there was Max's beautiful open mouth.

ELEANOR

What do you mean?

MILDRED

I mean with all our literature and our films does one person in the world really understand another? I loved Max so much I'd have done anything for him and did do anything for him. There were other girls... I...

well over time I suspended my judgment in his favor.

ELEANOR

You fell for him, hard.

MILDRED

I never stopped falling. We were in the latest plays on the Left Bank, in and around the *ecole*, and then there was Vienna for a beautiful three weeks -- like a honeymoon! -- and then a group of us went to Berlin. *En masse*, a troupe of sorts. My God we stormed Berlin. We lived in the "Pink Village." Berlin was queer as a big green luna moth back then, and there were so many other artists, actors, and cabarets there. We had a place on Auguststrasse, over Clarchen's Ballhaus. I was teaching Berlitz English, hosting a radio show for Bremen Sender for 180 marks a week, and doing some dribs and drabs with Germany's film colony when Max as head of the Rundfunk's Subsection IX ran into the radio thing, which was all-consuming, of course, and withal it was discovered that *my* voice was in some demand, so that after a few bit parts Max steered me into...it just got, well after a while every week after no one knowing me and then the rasp and sparkle of the microphone in my face and ALL OF A SUDDEN... It was like flying... *Berlin calling... This is Berlin calling...*

Eleanor's beeper goes off.

ELEANOR

I've gotta go.

Mildred waves to bid her goodbye.

MILDRED

This is Berlin calling, Berlin calling the American mothers, wives, and sweethearts, and I'd just like to say, girls, that when Berlin calls, it pays to *listen*. When Berlin calls, it pays to *listen in*, because there's an American girl sitting at the microphone every Tuesday evening at the same time with a few words of truth to her country's women back home.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Girls, you all know of course by now that it's a very serious situation, and there must be some reason for my being here in Berlin, some reason why I'm not sitting at home with you at the little sewing bees knitting socks for our men over in French South Africa. Yes, girls, there *is* a reason, and it's this. It's because I'm *not* on the side of President Roosevelt, I'm *not* on the side of Roosevelt and his Jewish friends and his British friends, because I've been brought up to be a 100-percent American girl, conscious of everything American, conscious of her friends, conscious of her enemies. And the enemies are precisely those people who are fighting against Germany today and in case you don't know it, indirectly against America, too. Because a defeat for Germany would mean a defeat for America. Believe me. It would be the very beginning of the end of America and all of her civilization. And that's why, girls, I'm staying over here and having these little heart to heart talks with you, once a week. I know they're awfully short and there's not much that one can say. But at least I'm still convinced that it's the truth, and I'm sure the truth will win. And besides as you know I'm in constant touch with your men over here, returned to Germany as prisoners of war, and I'm sure you'll be very happy to get some news of them from time to time. And I'll do our best to transmit that to you just as often as I can. And now, girls, I was just last weekend speaking to one American boy. He told us then about the films he'd seen in America, films which dealt with the barbarism of Germany out of the viewpoint of what it's like to American prisoners and all that sort of thing. That's why I'm going to put all the energy I can and try to get you to see the light of day and to let you realize you're on the wrong side of the fence. And now, girls, I do believe that it would be nice to play a little bit of music, don't you? The type of music which contains the thoughts which would be in the hearts of men in French South Africa today, at home, a lazy day when spring comes calling, a lazy day when crooning singers are whispering of home sweet home. And now here it is, conveying all the dark thoughts in the hearts of all those men so far away from their mothers and wives today...

SCENE 4

Rundfunk Overseas, Berlin, 1944. Max appears in the booth with three Nazi officers. Mildred sits at the mike.

MILDRED

How was that, Max?

MAX

It was good. Let's go.

She unplugs her headset.

MILDRED

Don't you think 100-percent American girl is stretching things a bit? Lately in light of my recent activities I've felt myself slipping to... 95? I could be your 95 percent American girl!

The three Nazi officers look at Max and shake their heads.

MAX

No.

MILDRED

Come on, Max, are you sure? All right, then, I'll be your 100-percent American Girl. I'll be your sugar plum fairy if you like. Only tell me again, Max, how many listeners did we have last week?

MAX

There's no way to tell. It's in the... Look, let's go.

MILDRED

But it *is* over a million, isn't it, Max? You've promised me that.

MAX

Sure, over a million. Get into your coat.

Mildred walks over to her stone marten fur and throws it around her neck.

MILDRED

Golly, a million. Rudy Vallee didn't have a million, all at once, anyway. Did I ever tell you I came from the same podunk town Rudy Vallee came from?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

What were the odds?

GERMAN SOLDIERS

Rudy Vallee? You know Rudy Vallee?

MILDRED

Rudy Vallee was the usher at the Star Theatre where I come from. Before that he used to serve us phosphates at the drug store when he wasn't spilling ice cream all over himself.

(to herself)

Now *I'm* the star! *This is Berlin calling...*

GERMAN SOLDIERS

Do you think you could call Rudy Vallee to come over here?

(sings)

"If you were the only girl in the world and I were the only boy..."

MILDRED

I'll see what I can do. I'm glad you see, boys, it pays to listen in. Come on, Max. Good night, boys.

GERMAN SOLDIERS

Gute nacht.

They click their heels. Then, once she disappears, they laugh.

SCENE 5

Mildred is in her room. Offstage, other VOICES in the atrium are audible.

LADY (O.S.)

Can you believe it?

HER FRIEND (O.S.)

She's so famous it's like having a movie star come here!

LADY (O.S.)

So dainty and beautiful she's like a little child, almost a fairy princess.

Mildred looks up.

HER FRIEND (O.S.)

She's one of us now, at the Woods! Isn't it exciting! I heard she's gonna move into 8-D. She's speaking tonight. Boy is Milton angry, bumped like that from the schedule.

LADY (O.S.)

Thank God. Who wants to hear him and his dummy anyway?

Eleanor enters, pushing a cart. She nods to Mildred. Mildred snags her by the forearm; several bruises show. Eleanor pulls her sleeve down.

MILDRED

Who's coming?

ELEANOR

Oh. Yes. Well, you know. She came in today, with all the photographers? Lena Eglin.

MILDRED

Lena Eglin.

ELEANOR

The Holocaust survivor who speaks all over the country!

Imagine, an international celebrity retiring right here!

MILDRED

Imagine that.

SCENE 6

Forrester and Red are playing checkers.

FORRESTER

Look out there. We come and go, but the snow always comes down and sort of evens everything out.

RED

I think it's beautiful!

FORRESTER

It's your move, Red.

RED

Wait a minute. What color am I?

FORRESTER

You're red, Red. You're red, and you're winning!

RED

Now what do I do, Sam?

FORRESTER

It's all right, Red.

RED

But what *color* am I? Sam, I can't stand this. I can't stand not knowing. When we were younger there were so many things I didn't want to see and remember, but now I can't remember what I want to see.

Red knocks all the pieces off the table just as Milton comes in. One of the checkers hits Milton.

MILTON

Some people would say we pay top dollar not to have to live with children and...

FORRESTER

Some people would be looking for a punch in the mouth.

Milton departs, joins Peggy, and starts whispering. Forrester signals to Wylie, who approaches.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

(whispering quickly)

All right, Bunk, Peggy's coming over, and I'm afraid Red might be headed for the Alzheimer's wing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Forrester braces Red's shoulders.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Now Red, you're going to be very quiet and very, very still. Okay?

He kisses her again and she nods as Peggy walks briskly toward them.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Let's get back to our rousing game of "What Organ Am I Missing?" Hi, Peggy! Maybe you'd like to join in. You're going to have to wait to play, though, because it's Bunk's turn to ask the questions. Right, Bunk?

Wylie nods gravely and rubs his chin.

WYLIE

(to Forrester)

Do you have to take insulin?

FORRESTER

Nope.

WYLIE

Do you have a coloscopy bag?

Peggy shakes her head and leaves.

At her table, Mildred tends to her plant. Eleanor enters and stares at a stone marten fur that is visible behind Mildred.

MILDRED

Hello, Ellie.

Would you like to try it on?

ELEANOR

Thank you, no!

MILDRED

Feel how soft they are? No, of course you wouldn't. That's all right. Shy is good. Stay over there, Ellie. I wish I had.

What do you think of our plant? It's a night-blooming cereus. On only one night of the year, it comes out of hiding and shows everyone exactly who she is. But just once.

Ellie's beeper goes off, and Mildred looks at her watch. Ellie starts out of the room but turns when she hears Mildred struggling out of her chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ellie returns and gives her arm to Mildred when the beeper goes off again. Ellie stops and takes the beeper's battery out and puts it in her apron. She smiles.

ELEANOR

Oh! The battery went out!

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Don't you ever change, Ellie. Because it doesn't do to change.

She touches the sides of her mouth to correct her lipstick.

There. Are you ready? Yes, I'm ready. Contact.

They walk over and take a seat near where Forrester and Red are entering and sitting down for Thursday Adult Education Night. The Lady beside Red looks at her.

LADY

Shhh!

RED

I wasn't saying anything.

LADY

Be quiet! It's about to begin.

RED

Sam, I wasn't saying anything.

FORRESTER

I know, Red. I don't know what's the matter with her.

LADY

Shhhh!

A FELLOW RESIDENT steps onstage.

FELLOW RESIDENT

I'm glad you could all make it here tonight... Otherwise, you'd be dead! Naw, just kidding. I'd better save some of these jokes for the Cavalcade. But tonight, as part of our Adult Education series, it is my great honor to present someone whose personal situation transcends 'talent' because what she went through in the Treblinka and Auschwitz camps actually beggars the imagination. She was only 14 then, but her memories are so powerful that when she speaks, according to the *Baltimore Sun*,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He pulls a newspaper fragment out of his vest pocket, puts on his glasses.

FELLOW RESIDENT (CONT'D)

(reading fragment)

"The audience is spellbound. Suddenly the buildings of the camp, and the barbed wire, and the hollow eyes of neighbors grip you by the shoulders and won't let go."

He puts the newspaper fragment back into his pocket.

FELLOW RESIDENT (CONT'D)

But in any case it is a great honor to present the internationally acclaimed Miss Lena Eglin!

Lena steps lightly to the microphone.

LENA

Can you hear me?

There are a few claps.

LENA (CONT'D)

Can you hear me?

A MALE VOICE

We can hear ya!

LENA

It's so good to be with friends. Are there any other survivors of the Holocaust here?

A lady and man raise their hands. Lena nods. Milton is taking furious notes into his notebook.

LENA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you something short tonight. When we went into the cattle cars, men and women had written messages on the sides of the boxcars for those who would follow, though it was not allowed. You could see they'd started to write something and then the coal or chalk would make a bright line, quick, like a shooting star, as the author was pulled away by guards or the force of a crowd in terror. As a result, these beautifully sad *half messages* haunt me. I remember some of them still:

She lowers her head to compose herself and then looks up, transformed:

LENA (CONT'D)

"If you see my wife, Eva Radasky, tell her I am fine. I have been selected for a work camp in Tarnow, but in --- "

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Lena stops her hands midair, signifying
the interrupted poem is over.

LENA (CONT'D)

"My husband, Ruben Plosted, was a professor of physics when--"

LENA (CONT'D)

My name is Shel Rosencratz, and my mother's name is Anna
Rosencratz. My fa --

LENA (CONT'D)

So you see, these people, a generation of us, have been
stopped in mid-sentence. The beauty is, we are forever. Our
poems are completed by silence, by the stars. When I saw
these things, I wore a brown cape and my school shoes. I
didn't know how terribly silence could snuff out a poem, a
life. I didn't know anything... then.

Lena bows her head. The lights go out.
The sound of spattered CLAPPING comes
on, then the clapping gets louder and
louder until it is the sound of
Hitler's voice at a Nazi RALLY,
followed by BOMBS.

SCENE 7

Berlin Apartment, 1945, night. Mildred paces while Max lounges, smoking. The sound of BOMBS continues.

MILDRED

When will they stop?

MAX

Your 'good guys?' Your good guys never stop.

MILDRED

Max, I'm afraid.

MAX

You're on air tonight. Save some of the melodrama for that!

MILDRED

They've been bombing all day. Don't they ever run out of gas?

MAX

They have all the fuel in the world.

MILDRED

Do you mean to say they're winning? You said they couldn't possibly win!

MAX

(with a jazzy intonation)

I mean to say.

MILDRED

Hold me, Max. Please?

Max walks over and pats her head.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

If we're finished, we're finished. How do I look, Max?

MAX

Beautiful. Like the bride of Mister OK.

He motions toward a full-length mirror on the wall.

MAX (CONT'D)

See for yourself.

A BOMB blast shatters the mirror, and the lights go out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILDRED

Max, you'll never leave me, will you? Max, you *know* what I've done because I love you.

Max?

We hear steps going away.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Max!

ACT TWOSCENE 1

Mildred reads as Eleanor enters and fills her glass. Mildred looks up, Ellie turns away.

ELEANOR
Morning, did you sleep well?

MILDRED
I had a bad dream.

ELEANOR
What was it? I'm good at 'dream interpretation.' Often dreams don't mean what the dreamer thinks they mean.

MILDRED
I dreamed I was here.

ELEANOR
Oh. Sorry.

MILDRED
There you go again.

Eleanor covers her blackened eye.
Mildred pulls her hand away.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
You told him you were leaving, didn't you!?

ELEANOR
(whispering)
I did!

MILDRED
So he gave you this *caress*.

Eleanor touches her face.

ELEANOR
He couldn't help it. It's really my fault.

MILDRED
It's always our fault.

ELEANOR
He called me stupid, even disloyal, for getting pregnant and for wanting the baby. Then he said he was so ashamed.

MILDRED
And you believed him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELEANOR

He promised it was the last time. He never meant to hit me.

MILDRED

He never meant to hit you... how many times?

ELEANOR

You don't understand.

MILDRED

I understand only too well.

Eleanor pulls up a chair and sits. She looks down at her hands.

ELEANOR

Look, Billy may not be all that, but I want my baby to have his father. I don't know, though, whether it's the baby or Billy I want. It seems like I'm being forced to choose one when I want both. It doesn't make any sense, because if Billy won't let me keep the baby, I couldn't stand to be with Billy anymore, and if Billy left me because of the baby, I wouldn't want the baby anymore. I guess I'll go to hell for saying that. Sometimes I get so confused when I try to sort it out, but please don't tell me what to do. Everyone just keeps trying to tell me what to do.

MILDRED

Ellie.

Eleanor looks up.

ELEANOR

What?

MILDRED

For all my fanciful speeches, I've already won that trip to hell with the matching hand bag. I've been so dishonest to you, and now I've committed another sin, of omission.

ELEANOR

Did you and Max have a child? What was his name?

MILDRED

He's not allowed to have a name. But he has a story.

ELEANOR

You don't have to tell me about this.

MILDRED

Oh, yes I do. It's the most important thing I'll ever tell you. Listen: Children are *forgiveness*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELEANOR

Do you know where he is?

MILDRED

He died during the war, Ellie.

No, I'm dissembling again. By that, I mean he never got to live. But how I wanted him to live! He was my last chance.

I couldn't wait to tell Max I was knocked up, because he'd just told me he was leaving his wife. I was overjoyed. Max and I were so involved in the radio broadcasts and so excited we were reaching such a huge audience that we no longer heard or even recognized the words that were coming out of our own mouths. It was evil, Ellie, just pro-war propaganda, and I was in the thick of it. But evil doesn't always stand still and pose for a photograph.

We were in Messegelande at the little restaurant halfway up our radio tower when I whispered to him over our beers, "Max, dear. I'm going to have a baby." He reached over and slapped me on the face.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

(imitating herself)

"Max, I love you. Aren't you excited?"

ELEANOR

Did he say anything?

MILDRED

"Don't be ridiculous." I burst into tears. Everyone was looking at us, and any one of 'everyone' back then could have been a lot of trouble for me and Max. I dried my eyes while Max told me, "You have to dispose of it." What a little fool I was!

ELEANOR

How mad was he... once you got home from the restaurant?

MILDRED

How mad was I? I was in a nightmare, like the rest of the world. But mine was the most selfish! True to form I'd picked precisely the wrong time and place to tell Max! Wrong *time* because only I could have failed to notice he was 5 years into a 10-year nervous breakdown. Wrong place: Sitting inside Straumer's architectural wonder that became a Nazi monument. Up here, we could see everything but the future. The food was the best in Berlin! People were starving, but we had oysters, asparagus, and lobster.

ELEANOR

Lobster? Mildred, were you a Nazi?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MILDRED

Fresh Maine lobster, yes, Ellie! And telephones brought to our tables for our oh-so-important calls, black *reichspost* telephones you had to crank back then -- that's how long ago it was. "Hello? Yes? I'd like two front row tickets to "Egemont" at the Schauspielhaus..." Everyone went up there. Gottfried Benn, Carl Zuckmayer, Bertolt Brecht for God's sake! Dietrich after the premiere of *The Blue Angel* and me sitting not two tables away... It was 'our' place, modeled on the Eiffel Tower but created as a part of the new Germania. From the top you could see the auto races, the Tiergarten, the Olympic Stadium...

One night I saw my friend Emmy Sonnemann, another actress, sitting up there -- but never again! Were we all amazed when she became the second Mrs. Hermann Goering! She had the 2,000 guests at her reception in the Lustgarten, but nobody's wife was ever invited to the observation deck.

ELEANOR

You were a Nazi.

MILDRED

'Lust' translates to something closer to joy in English. The *Victorians* made it dirty. At all events, up in this wee-id radio station trumpeting the unblemished prospects of the Third Reiche, Max ordered me to abort the mission, so to speak. I promised I would. We didn't discuss it for three days. Then I put on a long nightgown so silver and smooth I looked as if I were walking out of the moon. It cost me two weeks' pay. I woke him up.

ELEANOR

Miss Gillars...

MILDRED

I had to tell him my idea!

There's a very old tradition in Germany that girls, young women in trouble, that is, have availed themselves of since the days of Siegfried. After she bears a baby she cannot care for, a young mother wraps her treasure up and takes him in the middle of the night to the main gate of a cathedral. There in the wall is an aperture in the shape of a semicircle. The young woman reaches into the hole, puts her baby on a wooden turnstyle, and swings the baby through the wall like fruit on a lazy susan. This motion tugs a rope that rings a bell that wakes a nun who comes to the window. No one ever has to know.

ELEANOR

Like at *Kentucky Fried Chicken*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MILDRED

...and without comment or judgment the nun takes him into her arms and thus he enters life in God's grace in the service of the church. Maybe he washes stone floors, maybe he becomes a great scholar or a knight. But he's alive, alive! I told Max about it. It was the perfect idea. We'd seen such a depository in Bamberg, a city so old they call it the Navel of the World. The cathedral was built in 1,000 A.D., and it was one of Max's favorite places.

But he said, 'I won't hear of it.' Less than a week later, he took me to a doctor who spoke neither German nor English, and that was that.

I always see the scene in my dreams. I'm alone in a shawl, and I'm holding my son and passing him through the wall. I see his eyes and then the sweet eyes and face of the nun, who accepts him with care and without judgment. It's raining, just a gray drizzle. Remember I'm the 'rain girl'? Then in the forgiving darkness I find myself slowly walking down the hill to the rest of my life along the curve of the great wall.

ELEANOR

But it didn't happen.

MILDRED

No. *You* are happening. Send Billy through the wall and keep the baby yourself. Then, please, let me see hold him in my arms, just once.

ELEANOR

You could have been his godmother!

MILDRED

Don't even think like that. If you knew everything you wouldn't let me touch him. I've done some terrible things, Ellie. All I ask is that you please let me see him, once.

ELEANOR

I'll bring him to you. There's nothing you could do to shake me off.

MILDRED

I shook you off a long time ago. I shook everybody off. The hell is, even though I've spent 12 years in jail, nothing makes up for what I did.

ELEANOR

You were in jail! Is that what you're so ashamed of, that people will find out? What did they charge you with?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MILDRED

Treason. Ten years because I was ashamed, two years because I was afraid. I actually refused parole because I thought I might step out of the Federal Women's Reformatory in Alderson, West Virginia, and realize I was still me. At the trial they called me a spy.

ELEANOR

Were you?

MILDRED

I might just be a *murderer* for all you know. But no, I had to be... a third-rate entertainer for the Third Reich.

She motions to the stone marten wrap.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

That's why I keep these ridiculous pets, Ellie. After the judge pronounced my sentence, they took all my clothes away and put them in storage. I'd forgotten about the furs, but they were the only family waiting for me when I got out. It wasn't the 1940s anymore, it was 1962 and absurd to think of wearing them. I remember their little glass eyes peering through the cellophane bag...

ELEANOR

Maybe this has gone too far.

MILDRED

Maybe it has.

Eleanor walks out.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

See how you grow in power. And your audience is only Longfellows Woods! Imagine thousands, millions waiting for the bad news to snake its sibilant way out of your lips... Unpopular girls, unite!

SCENE 2

A few days later. Forrester approaches Mildred's table.

FORRESTER

Do you realize this is the first time I've had you alone in a week? This rest home is running me ragged.

MILDRED

I've had a lot on my mind. What do you have in mind, Sam?

FORRESTER

We have some wily customers in these parts, but there's no one as extraordinary as you!

MILDRED

Sam, you're letting your Texas slip!

FORRESTER

Come again?

MILDRED

Cowboys don't say extraordinary.

FORRESTER

Your voice sounds extraordinarily familiar to me.

He kisses the back of her hand.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Were you the one they called Axis Sally?

MILDRED

What you want to know is, *am* I Axis Sally.

She folds her hands on her lap.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

It depends upon what you mean by Axis Sally. Would it change how you feel about me?

FORRESTER

Don't know.

MILDRED

I was anything anybody wanted me to be. My on-air was Midge at the mike.

FORRESTER

You were home and hearth and silk sheets to us. For months at a time, you were the only woman's voice we heard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILDRED

You mean you're in love with me, Sam? Or are you excited by your ability to hurt me? Maybe you'd like to get behind a microphone and tell everyone here the bad news.

FORRESTER

Just tell me they were pointing guns at you to make you say those things, like they did to Tokyo Rose.

MILDRED

Tokyo Rose wasn't one person. There were 20 Tokyo Roses forced to broadcast. She was like Lassie. If you know who I was... *am*, then you know nobody pointed rifles at me. I was a volunteer.

FORRESTER

There was only one *you*.

MILDRED

How many of *you* were there, Sam? How many of *you* are there now? If I didn't believe there were more than one of me, outside the radio persona, I couldn't live with myself.

FORRESTER

It was almost always snowing when I heard your voice through speakers high up in the trees. When my unit crossed the Rhine into the Ardennes, you were there to greet us, warm and seductive. We were hungry, we were tired, we were scared, we were lonely.

Your voice came over the woods on the radio. Then, it echoed over the German loudspeakers. Between the volleys of fire, everyone was listening to you.

MILDRED

What was I saying?

FORRESTER

I'm almost ashamed to say it. Half-*believable* lies.

MILDRED

Sam, am I about to win you over to the German army?

FORRESTER

No, but we all laughed when you talked about the British. It was quite a trick, making us suspicious of our Allies. You asked why, since they've snubbed us from Colonial Days when they taxed us and burned our cities and walked around in their prissy white wigs, why all of us red-blooded guys came running to England to fight for them. You quoted famous Brits saying we have no writers, no painters, no civilization at all since we're all just working class. Then you played the best music we could tune in on our field radios.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

To this day I flinch when I hear swing music, because I feel someone's about to shoot at me.

MILDRED

Aversion therapy. Now I can add *A Clockwork Orange* to my credits.

FORRESTER

You spoke directly to each and every one of us when you signed off. You even named our division. You said you had to leave us in the woods pinned against the river by enemy fire because...

MILDRED

Like your girlfriends and wives, I had a *hot date!*

FORRESTER

It was unkind.

MILDRED

It wasn't meant to be kind.

FORRESTER

Who was the hot date?

MILDRED

Has it ever occurred to you that I'd just like to forget about it, if only I could? I told you there was more than one of me. Well, old buddy Sam, sometimes the rest of us Mildreds just can't -

He was my husband. We both worked at Berlin Radio. I made the mistake of staying so long there was no way I could leave. God help me, I deluded myself into thinking I was providing a useful service, visiting American soldiers in the prison camps -- I took the opportunity, on the air, to tell their mothers their sons were *okay*.

FORRESTER

Between lines of propaganda that shamed those boys and made their parents want to die.

MILDRED

You can't tell me they weren't happy to learn their sons were still *alive!* I just wanted the war to be over. But before it was over, so were Max and I.

FORRESTER

I'm just getting it. You were married to Mister OK.

MILDRED

Like yours, my memories are of snow.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Max, he was, well, I *thought* of him as my husband, it's just things were so crazy then with Berlin crumbling around us there wasn't even time to get married, or that's what Max would say whenever I brought it up. One day he just disappeared during a bombing...

FORRESTER

Was it worth it? What was it all for?

MILDRED

I heard that the Rundfunk station had been hit. I went over there, but they didn't know where he was, either. Others at the station said he was ill, that he'd been hiding it from me, and that they didn't know which hospital he was at.

Forrester looks down.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

More bombs were coming down and they were evacuating themselves. Even though I was an expert at lying, I didn't realize my friends were lying to me. I went from hospital to hospital only to find out he'd gone back home... Turns out he'd returned to his wife and four children.

The bombs never stopped falling. One by one my friends' apartments were flattened. The little grocery store where I got my cigarettes caught fire and burned to the ground, and then I came home one day to find everything I owned but the clothes I'd worn to work were destroyed. I was heading for a shelter on Unter den Linden when suddenly there was a big white light, but try as I might, I can't remember any sound. I don't know how long I was unconscious. When I awoke the nurses told me it was probably two days or so. I couldn't remember who I was, who Max was, or what I was even doing there. I wanted to stay in the hospital, but of course I couldn't because so many others were critically injured. I went outside, and like the rest of us lucky enough to be alive I wandered for 16 months, scrounging for food with all the other homeless. I remember so clearly snow coming down like inside a shaken snow globe. Only the buildings inside it were broken. Many of us slept in an old cathedral so bombed out it was nicknamed The Hollow Tooth. I was raped so many times in that cathedral I lost count, but that wasn't unusual. During the first days of occupation, Soviet soldiers were allowed to go anywhere and do anything they wanted. One day I was in a crowd of people begging for food at the American sector when I was recognized, even though I'd lost thirty pounds. I was arrested and deported, and at my trial, it really was with an analytical curiosity that I listened to Lt. Robert Anderson's witnesses describe my role as "Axis Sally." The prosecution played tape after tape of my broadcasts, but I hardly recognized myself. Of the twelve Americans convicted for treason following World War II, seven were radio broadcasters. I was found guilty of crimes against the United States. Twelve years later I left prison, went into a convent in Ohio, and

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

taught for a while. Then I went back to college and studied speech, the way an ex-heroin addict goes back for a degree in drug counseling.

FORRESTER

I'm sorry.

MILDRED

You're sorry for Axis Sally?

She laughs.

FORRESTER

No, I mean...

MILDRED

I know what you mean, Sam, and thanks. But you know now I can't exactly say I'm sorry. It would be *meaning less*.

FORRESTER

You mean you won't.

MILDRED

No! I mean I can't! I'd have to tell each one of you soldiers individually. I wanted revenge: When you total all the receipts the fact is I tried to break your hearts. You were all the boys who didn't notice me, who hadn't asked me to dance. I told myself Max was the one person who could love me, but he never did. Sorry is a sorry excuse for a word.

FORRESTER

Why don't you try?

MILDRED

I'd have to forgive myself first. Why don't you stop trying to reform me, Sam? Why don't you go tell your buddies you've completed your last mission and hunted the dangerous Axis Sally to her grave?

FORRESTER

I don't see any point in that. You're just all of our petty little prejudices, with a mink and a microphone. Everyone's got a secret.

He stands up.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Maybe that's why I'm working so hard to make things up to Red. I feel I owe that to her, after 40 less-than-stellar years.

Peggy enters with Ellie's medicine cart. Forrester tips his hat and leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MILDRED
Where's Ellie?

PEGGY
She hasn't come in yet.

MILDRED
Is everything okay?

PEGGY
Don't worry, we have everything taken care of.

MILDRED
Okay, Ms. Phillips, what's wrong with Ellie?

PEGGY
She called in sick last night for her graveyard-- I mean, her 11 to 7 shift, that's all. There's no problem!

MILDRED
No problem.

PEGGY
Can I get you anything?

MILDRED
No thanks.

Peggy stands there, uncomfortably.

PEGGY
Mildred?

MILDRED
Miss Gillars.

PEGGY
It's been six weeks, so your 'get acquainted' period is nearly over. I wondering if you've made a decision to make this your permanent home?

MILDRED
My last home, you mean. Well, it hardly matters to me. Tell me this: Can you see any of us?

PEGGY
Excuse me?

MILDRED
Snow covers us like age until you can't tell one of us from the other. To you young people, at our best we're just a group of smart-talking old codgers. At our worst we just look old. You know you've got quite the hornet's nest here. You should call in for backup.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

PEGGY

I'm just here to make you--

MILDRED

To make us 'comfortable.'

PEGGY

Yes.

MILDRED

In our careening train as it smashes into the mountain.

PEGGY

Well let me know what you decide.

Peggy leaves and Red steps in.

RED

Did she want to talk money?

MILDRED

No, she wanted to talk 'feelings,' but I guess it amounts to the same thing.

RED

I knew it! She always tiptoes like that when she's circling in for the kill.

MILDRED

How do most people here handle it? It seems like so much money.

RED

Well, Sam and I let our children think they've tricked us into moving here. They think we're so stupid and addled that we don't know what a place like this costs, and that our social security benefits cover it. We know perfectly well they're making up the difference, and that makes them feel less guilty for not taking us into their home. Besides, why would we ever want to live with their teenage children?

MILDRED

Have you seen Ellie?

Red furrows her brow.

RED

Who's Ellie?

Now Red breaks into a big smile.

RED (CONT'D)

I haven't seen her at all today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

She leaves. Mildred is reading her paperback when Peggy returns.

PEGGY

Mildred, I have some upsetting news.

MILDRED

Is she dead?

PEGGY

No. She's in intensive care. She hasn't regained consciousness, but the doctors are being encouraging.

MILDRED

What about the baby?

Peggy shakes her head no.

PEGGY

They've already caught the boyfriend.

MILDRED

Well, that just fixes everything, doesn't it? I should have done something. I knew this would happen.

PEGGY

There was nothing you or anyone else could do. You can't give advice to a girl like that. It's sad, but she never had the education or background to know any better.

MILDRED

How comforting to know that you underestimate your staff as profoundly as you do your residents.

PEGGY

The important thing is that you don't feel in any way responsible for this unfortunate turn of events.

MILDRED

Now *that's* "gracious living for the retired."

PEGGY

I'm sure you're going to like Cindy. She's already quite popular!

SCENE 3

Forrester sits next to a bed that Red is tucked tightly into. She has a saline solution bag on a stand hooked up to her arm and a heart monitor next to the bed.

RED

You promised this wasn't going to happen to me, Sam.

FORRESTER

I know, dear. It was my fault I wasn't with you.

RED

It was like I was tumbling down a cliff.

FORRESTER

Well, you did fall, Red. But do you remember anything before that?

RED

I felt dizzy. Then I think I went *outside*.

FORRESTER

That's right. And you can't do that in this kind of weather, silly girl.

RED

But it was beautiful.

FORRESTER

Doesn't matter. You've gotta promise *me*.

RED

I promise, Sam.

FORRESTER

Joanie and Rick are coming from Phoenix.

RED

They can't come back here! They were just here two weeks ago.

FORRESTER

Red, honey, that was six months ago. They just want to make sure you're all right.

RED

Of course I'm all right! I'm getting up right now.

She starts, then holds her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED (CONT'D)

No I'm not.

She lies down.

FORRESTER

Do you still feel dizzy, Red? Do you have a headache?

RED

I can go to the Cavalcade, can't I?

FORRESTER

You bet.

RED

I can't wait for tonight. The scary thing is, when you think like that, all of a sudden your life is over.

FORRESTER

You're gonna be fine, Red.

RED

You mean I'm not fine now?

FORRESTER

You're always fine.

RED

Come see me a little later? Hey, when did you come in, anyway?

FORRESTER

I've been here, Red. I've been here right along.

Forrester leaves Red's side only to find Wylie and Milton standing there waiting, flipping through documents.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Uh oh. It's the Warren Commission.

WYLIE

Sam, we're sure, that's all. We've got the trial depositions, copies of more witness statements...

FORRESTER

Your timing stinks, Bunk.

WYLIE

How *is* Red?

FORRESTER

Well, how would *you* be?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WYLIE

It's my worst nightmare.

FORRESTER

Milton, what are you doing here? How did you get mixed up in all this?

MILTON

Sam, I am an attorney.

FORRESTER

A probate attorney.

MILTON

It doesn't matter what kind of attorney I am. I know how to read.

FORRESTER

But what difference could it possibly make to you?

MILTON

Oh, yes! I forgot! I didn't even fight in the war. You veterans have made it abundantly clear that I have no right to voice any opinion about what happened then.

WYLIE

Sam, you really do have to take a look at these.

FORRESTER

And why is that, Mr. Special Prosecutor? I told you last week I thought we might be wrong about her. It's just not the kind of thing you come out and accuse a person of.

MILTON

I will not live here if she's the woman in these files.

FORRESTER

I think you're getting a little too worked up about this, Milton. Don't you think so, Bunk?

WYLIE

No.

FORRESTER

Look, I'm worried about Red right now. She's feeling better, but it'll be all I can do to spring her so she can come down and see the show tonight. She's really been looking forward to the music. Peggy actually came right out and suggested she may have to move her to the other wing, and you know how Red feels about that.

WYLIE

Peggy didn't say that right to her face!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FORRESTER

No, but it's under discussion. I mean I can hardly blame the staff. I know she needs more round-the-clock care, and maybe I can't do it myself anymore. It's just they don't understand Red.

WYLIE

Well after what happened...

FORRESTER

We just have to make sure it doesn't happen again. I'm counting on you guys. Tell you what: How about if you boys sift through those documents somewhere out of sight, pull your 20 most conclusive pages for me, and I promise I'll read 'em. But let me ask you this, Milton. If she *is* Axis Sally, she's spent a dozen years in prison. She's done more time than most Nazi prison guards and SS criminals. She's a notoriously horrible entertainer, but so wasn't Bob Hope. Hasn't she paid her debt to society?

MILTON

There are some debts you can never retire.

FORRESTER

You're getting a little prissy about this, Milton.

MILTON

I lost family in the Holocaust...

FORRESTER

We're your family now, Milton. Have you ever considered that?

MILTON

Don't insult my intelligence with such New Age drivel. Miss Gillars is a murderer. She aided and abetted the enemy.

FORRESTER

Assuming of course you have the right woman here. Assuming, beyond that, she still is that woman and not just a little old lady come here to die in peace like the rest of us.

MILTON

These documents are incontrovertible proof--

FORRESTER

That I won't read them, okay, Milton? Or listen to them now.

Are you still doing your ventriloquism tonight?

Milton permits himself an economical smile.

MILTON

Naturally, Woody and I will be there!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FORRESTER

Let's all just have some fun tonight. Then tomorrow morning I'll take in these 'documents.'

WYLIE

See you later, Sam.

They leave. Forrester gets behind a wheelchair in which Red, stiff but in a silver gown, sits.

FORRESTER

All right, then! You look lovely tonight, Red. Fire engine on wheels.

RED

They can't be on wheels. They already have wheels. What you mean is hell on wheels.

FORRESTER

Good one! Boy, you've gotta watch what you say around here.

He begins to push Red.

RED

Hold it, Sam. Stop!

FORRESTER

Now what?

RED

I lost my shoe.

Forrester retrieves it, gets down on one knee, and wistfully puts it on.

FORRESTER

There you are, Cinderella. Are you ready to go to the ball now?

Red?

She kicks her other shoe off.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Hey, that's not funny.

He gets the second shoe and puts it on.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

You smell good, Red. What's that perfume?

RED

Don't you remember *anything*? Shalimar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Forrester kisses her and wheels her to the auditorium.

The Director is checking in performers. Mildred enters and sits next to Milton, who is seated in the extreme back row, busily looking through his notebook. Milton's dummy is seated on Milton's other side. Milton looks up with extreme interest as Lena Eglin enters and goes to the front row. He starts arranging the order of some newspaper clippings he has tucked into the back of his notebook.

MILDRED

Shouldn't you be up there with the performers?

MILTON

Woodie and I don't need to mingle with the other "performers." We're already an established act. In the meantime, I want to make sure I get the whole picture and ensure every last word comes all the way to the back of the room here.

Mildred studies him for a moment, and he looks away.

MILDRED

You're not planning on making any trouble here, are you? You have the same look on your face that I've seen on a student's just before she pulls a mean prank on a classmate.

MILTON

Oh, I just want to make sure that everyone has a good honest time and we all get our money's worth.

MILDRED

And who made you the judge of what is honest?

MILTON

Sometimes the truth hurts. I just have to make sure Miss Eglin doesn't tarnish history by embellishing it.

THE DUMMY

And I'd be careful if I were you, too, Sally.

Mildred gets up and walks quickly out of the room. All of a sudden some phonographic FANFARE signals the beginning of the show. The crowd applauds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

DIRECTOR

Good evening, ladies and gentleman. Tonight it's our pleasure to present you with a typical evening at your local USO, with a few notable exceptions --

He nods toward Lena and continues.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

and as a bit of an appetizer, we'd like to introduce THE LONGFELLOW DANCERS, who seem to have traveled here... on the *A Train!* toward this magical experience in swing time.

On one part of the stage, dancers are spotlighted briefly, and then the spotlight dims.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

That's Dr. Wayne Atherton, Mrs. Carol Thurston, Chi-Chi Ethridge, and Bob Crommett. Let's give them a hand!

The audience applauds.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Whereas our next act requires a Hand Saw. Without further ado, we present a musical construction by our favorite retired dentist, ROBBIE OLSON, D.D.S. Robbie?

A genial, wiry man gets up and ascends the stage. In the back of the audience, Milton gets up and solicitously motions to two figures who have just arrived from a door in distant corner of the room.

ROBBIE OLSON, D.D.S.

How's everybody doing? How about this whole USO!

He pauses for some clapping.

ROBBIE OLSON, D.D.S.

(CONT'D)

I don't know how many USOs featured what I'm about to perform, but there really is a sound that's quite unique and perhaps even magic about a musical saw...except when I play it, of course! I used to use a No. 3 Stanley crosscut, but...as anybody who has read Margaret J. Synnberg's influential *5 Minute Course for the Musical Saw* (1937, published by M.M Cole of Chicago), can tell you, and let me tell you, we were in the Dark Ages before Synnberg, with the right player and an audience who dares to believe, almost any saw will do! Not every saw you see will play jazz, though.

(MORE)

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ROBBIE OLSON, D.D.S.

So in the interest of pure science, I've asked our super, Henry Laughlin, who has just finished our new gazebo on the west lawn, and isn't it beautiful, to lend us the instrument he used in that endeavor to see if in these controlled conditions it will portend good music for the gazebo in the future. Henry?

HENRY, grinning, hands up a saw.

ROBBIE OLSON, D.D.S.

(CONT'D)

You could at least have cleaned it, Henry. Now for a little linseed oil and a bit of bourbon from a souvenir bottle my wife and I took home from the Stork Club on the last night it was open, December 26, 1962...

WYLIE

Just play the damn thing before I start sawing wood!

ROBBIE OLSON, D.D.S.

Maybe some of the younger employees would rather hear me play *I SAW Her Sanding There*, or *I SAW Her Again Last Night*, but for you, my friends, my family, I'd like *In my SAWlitude*. Maestro?

There's a drum roll, then a record comes on with an instrumental version of Duke Ellington's song. Dr. Olson sits down, bends the saw, and plays until the light fades on him, too.

DIRECTOR

He came, he SAW, and he conquered! Next we have a magic trick from everybody's favorite tax accountant, WILLIS BOOTHBY!

Boothby, in a black tuxedo, genially takes the stage.

BOOTHBY

I'd pull a rabbit out of this hat except for the no-animals clause in our residency agreements! That's right, the real magician here at Longfellows Woods is Doris Dixon up on 3-11, who knows how to make a certain *two illegal canaries* disappear on the no-pets-allowed floor!

A woman in the audience flushes, stands up, and heads toward her room.

BOOTHBY (CONT'D)

No, you don't need to check for them, Doris, I've got them right here!

He reaches into his hat and produces a brilliant yellow canary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

The woman stops in her tracks and runs up to collect her bird. She cups it against her chest and is about to leave when Boothbay stops her.

BOOTHBY (CONT'D)

I think you've forgotten something...

He pulls out another yellow canary and hands it to her.

BOOTHBY (CONT'D)

Michael Lovejoy over on 3-12 says that when he turns his water on, this one sings like Frank Sinatra!

The magician finishes to applause. Then Milton comes on with a box with the name Woodrow Wilson stencilled on it. He feigns surprise that he's 'accidentally' locked his ventriloquist's dummy in the box. Milton works hard to keep his lips from moving while the dummy speaks.

DUMMY

Let me out. Let me out.

MILTON

Not with material as old as that. You've gotta come up with something a little newer, fresher to keep up with the times. Woodie, I thought you were PRESIDENTIAL TIMBER!

Milton searches in his pocket, pretends to find an old-fashioned skeleton key, and with a flourish unlocks the box, takes the dummy out, and puts Woodie in position on his arm.

DUMMY

Whew! It was getting as hot in there as the Day Room on Bingo Night!

MILTON

You missed some great dancers. They were swell.

DUMMY

I guess that's a lot better than being swollen.

MILTON

Too bad Grace couldn't join them -- she's just had her hip replaced.

DUMMY

She had to do the Hip Op instead of the Hip Hop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

The director reaches over and hits the Snare Drum key on his machine.

MILTON

Take a look out there, Woodie. Pretty nice crowd, huh? Hey, is my friend Sam Forrester out there?

Milton covers his eyes and scans the crowd. Forrester waves, Milton waves back.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Hi, Sam! Hi, Red!

DUMMY

If it isn't Red and Bluebeard!

Someone in the crowd laughs nervously.

MILTON

Now how about Bunk Wylie?

DUMMY

He's not going to say hi to us. Not unless Sam gives him permission to speak.

MILTON

Did you hear that they took all the Lazy Boys out of the high security wing?

DUMMY

Why not? They figured the residents were all off their rockers anyway!

SCENE 4

Mildred peers intently into the mirror. First she sees her own reflection and then it's as if her image changes into a younger version of herself as Midge on the Mike in the Rundfunk Booth, June, 1944. She steps away from a mirror and over to her microphone.

YOUNG MILDRED

And gee, girls, isn't it a darn shame, all the sweet old American summer atmospheres the boys are missing now, just imagine sitting out on the old back porch in a sweet old rocking chair, listening to the birds at twilight? Instead of that the boys are over there in the hot sunny desert, longing for home, and for what? What has any of this been for? Well, good night girls. I'll send you on a final lullaby. You're stepping aboard a plane with bandleader Glenn Miller, and he's taking you all to heaven, up into the atmosphere in the fog that goes all the way down from the moonlight over Iceland down to the waters below. He's trying to radio you now, girls. Can you hear him? Glenn? Is that you, Glenn? Wait a minute. He's coming in!

Mildred puts the needle on a record that's spinning on a turnstyle. It's Glenn Miller's *Moonlight Serenade*. It plays for a while.

MILDRED

Beautiful, isn't it? But what's that sound?

She hits a switch and the sound of a FIGHTER PLANE cuts into the music -- there's an EXPLOSION and the high-pitched WHINE of a nosedive as Miller's aural 'plane' crashes.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

(suavely)

And that was Colonel Miller's... *Moonlight Serenade*. Now here's a new sketch that's sure to be a popular favorite. I call it "Vision of Invasion," broadcast to you American Invasion Force assembled on the British Coast on the Eve of D-Day. Oh, we know you're there! In the greatest role of my career, it is my privilege to play the mother of an Ohio soldier who sees her son in a dream. My son tells me that he's already dead, his ship having been destroyed mid-invasion by the Germans. The effect of our broadcast, created by our Direktor, Max Otto Koischewitz, Radio Berlin's Program Director, is sure to be more chilling than heartwarming... Take it away, Max.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

"Vision of Invasion" begins to play, complete with the sounds of BOMBS and GI's screaming. Everything goes black, and... it's present day. Mildred is still staring in the mirror. She now takes a tube of lipstick and applies several coats in an exaggerated fashion. She goes over to the closet and takes out the stone martens.

SCENE 5

Milton has just finished his act to lukewarm applause. He leans over to Lena as he passes by.

MILTON

Looks like it's your turn. I've warmed them up for you.

Lena gets up and in a shower of applause almost floats to the microphone. The lights come on slowly as she lifts her head.

LENA

Tonight I am going to take you back to the night of December 24th, 1943, in the Auschwitz camp. This is the night that my girlfriend Mardla tried to run away. Even as a skinny little shadow she was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Full lips for a girl so young and a face so soft it retained its beauty even after her hair was cut off. I knew something was wrong with her because a few days before two male guards had taken her from our sewing detail for some "other" work. There was nothing we could say. Liuda, who worked beside me, said, "It is a good thing you are ugly, Little One," to me but nothing more. They returned Mardla a half hour later, bruises everywhere and sobbing. Of course there was some blood and she bent over, holding her stomach. 'My God, they've hurt you!' I cried. The others didn't dare to get up. But when I reached her I saw that Mardla was smiling. 'I've seen her!' she said. 'I've seen my mother!' I frowned, because this was impossible. 'Your mother's not here, Mardla. We saw her ourselves. We saw her in line. At least she saw you wave.' But for the next few days Mardla kept 'seeing' her mother. She'd giggle and run around a building and motion me over. "I'm coming," I'd tell her. But in the end, nothing was there. Like an apparition, or a fairy, she'd left our world and could see other things. Then, one night, I awoke to see her blanket disturbed and Mardla gone. We were not allowed out of the buildings so I crawled to the windows. The others tried to hold me down. But I heard dogs barking and the sound of an alarm. Soldiers stood at the base of the administration building on the other side of a ditch we were not allowed to cross, and they were pointing. White in the night like a beautiful star, Mardla was on top of the building, shivering. She was too young and too starved to be called nude; all you could say was she did not have her rags on. I left our barrack, clutched a blanket around me, and hurried around the edges of the building so I could hear. "Here, here is the crazy one," I heard the guard we called Bobcat say. I was surprised because in the past we had remarked upon his kindness.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENA (CONT'D)

More than once he had given us some extra bread while we were working. But now amid jeers and cheers he shouted 'Put a light on her!' They put a light on her and for a moment she looked like a movie star, her skin almost blue. I was crying and ran back to the building. But that morning I saw. They must have wired her to the building and sprayed her with water, because I saw them taking her down all blue, with her arms and legs pointed like this, a frozen star.

Mildred enters through the back door. She stands against the back wall beside Milton and his guests. She has the stone martens around her neck.

LENA (CONT'D)

I told the other women, but everybody but Rhona told me no, that she had found her mother, that's all. Then Bobcat entered the room and took some bread out of his coat. Rhona stood up. It was as if Mardla's spirit had gone into Rhona. Rhona had never been bold. She had never acted angry in front of the guards. But now she knocked the bread out of his hand as he offered it to her. She spit on it on the floor and said "You brute! The brute, brute heart of a brute like you."

ONE OF MILTON'S GUESTS

(to Milton)

Those are Sylvia Plath's words.

At this, Milton leans forward and waves his hands at the back of the audience. He addresses Lena over everyone's heads and calls out for everyone to hear.

MILTON

I'm sorry, Miss Eglin. but as wonderful as your stories have been over the years, this is a fabrication. I'd like to introduce you to Yuri Stenowith, who was in the men's compound the same time you were there. Yuri?

A frail man, blinking in the spotlights that have discovered him at his seat beside Milton, stands up.

LENA

Yuri, is that you?

YURI STENOWITH

The ditch... wasn't dug until late 1944. The guard you call Bobcat, from records provided by the Warsaw Institute, does not appear until early 1945. Mardla was shipped away to a work camp. She had a terrible time making it through. But she is here tonight!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LENA

Mardla!

A woman straightens up slowly, leaning on the cantor. She opens her mouth and then closes it, shaking her head. Lena looks confused.

MILTON

Miss Eglin, since the 1950s you've been an inspiration to children all over the world. But these... are fabrications, well intended as they might be.

He waves a newspaper clipping from his notebook.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Timothy Ryback in "The Last Survivor" says you

(reading)

"have moved beyond the facts of history and into the sheer undercurrent of a more profound emotional force."

(looking up)

Maybe all of this is true, but it's true only to you. You have engagements in Philadelphia next week and Baltimore later this month. I'm sorry, but we can't let you do this anymore. Even the slightest inaccuracy hurts the very cause you've done so much over the years to help.

Lena wavers but keeps her footing.

LENA

I... When I was a young girl in the camps... It happened. It all happened just like I remembered.

MILTON

We're sorry to interrupt, folks. But we feel you have a compelling right to the truth.

Forrester gets up out of his chair and heads back toward Milton. With everyone turned toward Milton, Red stands up and creeps out of the room.

WYLIE

You're humiliating her!

Mildred quickly strides up toward the stage, just lightly tapping her cane now. She hands a tape to the director, bolts up the steps, and stands with supreme confidence in front of the microphone, adjusting her stone marten. She is every bit the defiant Axis Sally from the newsreels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MILDRED

Let's have no more of that! You're call this entertainment? Acch! Introductions are long overdue. This is your favorite expiring actress, Midge at the Mike. Do I have your complete attention, boys? Because it pays to listen in.

Lena sits down, relieved that the attention is no longer focused on her. It's dead quiet.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I thought I'd do a little piece we liked to call "Vision of Invasion" for you. It's actually for Ellie Cluff, who has lost someone very dear tonight. Because sometimes real life intrudes on our little cavalcades. But you might as well think it's for you.

She looks over the crowd to Milton and Forrester, who are arguing...

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Will that do, boys? I'd like to make you happy, boys. I'm here to make you happy. But first I'd like to introduce my orchestra. From Poland, our director is Klaus Koszalinski. Koz was headed for Auschwitz when we recognized he had a better talent for living than he did for dying! Together with the rest of his partners in crime, they can play swing music better than butter because if they do not, they will die! So they play as if their lives depend upon it, every night! Wow! Right here in the orchestra pit! Or yes, you guessed it, there's another pit waiting for them. But why weigh down a show on such matters of gravity. Behold, our signal rises up into the troposphere to a height of 24,000 feet above mean sea level and reaches Egypt, Africa, The Sudan, even a pretty little seacoast town on the northeast of nowhere -- here, I mean, and every little 'here' where they have ears to hear the thumping syncopation of, well, as I can tell you, they're better than Benny Goodman. You'd better catch your breath, Koz, because you're on...right...now!

She points to the Director, who awkwardly snaps in the tape she passed him into a player. In a second, Benny Goodman's *Sing, Sing, Sing* starts to pound. But like a deejay, Mildred cuts in on it.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

So do we have a deal, boys? No more hypocritical explorations of the truth?

MILTON

Didn't you know you were hurting all our GIs and everyone left behind? What would you say to them now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MILDRED

I'd say to them they should have chosen me for kickball. They had, oh, 100,000 or so chances before I kicked back.

MILTON

What was it like...to be a traitor?

Forrester grabs Milton's arm, but Mildred waves him off.

MILDRED

No, I want to answer that. *What was it like?* At first I was shy. But when I walked up to that microphone, oh! I'd never felt such power. For once I had an audience. I imagined my voice echoing around the world. I thought the microphone meant power to the powerless.

MILTON

Monster.

Mildred shrugs for the audience and bows, agreeing.

MILDRED

I guess. It swept over me. Besides, our radioplays were so melodramatic that Nobody could have believed us! Did you believe we'd bombed Radio City Music Hall? Nobody would believe that!

MILTON

A *lot* of nobodies could have believed you. What did you have against us?

MILDRED

I felt this was my brass ring. Then I got so cozy with the evil I began to glory in it. It was like playing Lady MacBeth. Let me tell you this. *Never* do listeners attend so well as when you're hurting them. Then you've got their interest! They say art is pain, but I learned that the pain *is* the art.

MILTON

So... this isn't an apology.

MILDRED

No, it's just entertainment. All it's good enough for, girls, is one hell of a show! Your blandishments, your coaxings, they all amount to a coaxial nothing because I'm standing on top of the airwaves, I'm up here on the ziggurat pinnacle and you, down there lounging on the sublunary levels, hearing your little truths only on your terms and within the narrow range of human decibels, are merely LISTENERS which is fortunate in this case, because it pays to listen in.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

After years you *tired of listening* to Lena Eglin's greater truths and decided she'd be more interesting as a new kind of victim. But forget about her, *I'm* the train wreck all you rubbernecks came here for. The devil gets all the curtaincalls.

For a split second she looks over the crowd and looks relieved to see Lena giving her a nod and a smile.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

The 'truth.' The sheer undercurrent of a profound emotional force. Well we've got current, haven't we, Fritz! We've got the lumens and we've got me, Midge at the mike, and gee, girls, isn't it a darn shame. Let's close the evening with a final lullaby.

Mildred motions to the director to flip the tape over, and *Moonlight Serenade* plays in its entirety this time. As the final strains waft away, Milton shouts.

MILTON

We want you out of here. Get out! Get out!

MILDRED

Sam?

FORRESTER

Red!

(to Mildred)

Red's gone!

MILDRED

I'll check her room.

MILTON

We don't need your help.

Mildred pushes through the crowd.

FORRESTER

She's out there. We've gotta find her, fast!

He runs offstage as the lights go out.

SCENE 6

Outside Longfellows Woods, night. Flashlights bounce everywhere. In the blackness we hear VOICES but see only the Longfellows Woods sign in the distance as the search party spreads out. They say, variously, "Red!" "Ruthie!" and "Mrs. Forrester!" or "Mrs. Sam!" The lights move in the darkness like winter fireflies. There are even a few red and blue flashing lights: ambulance, police.

As the gibbous moon moves out for a second from behind the clouds, Red is running and dancing joyfully. She runs over a hill, stops beside a tree and looks back at the lights. Then she runs again, heading downhill just as clouds cover the moon again.

A few streaks of light barely show on the horizon. The Longfellows Woods sign is now just barely visible through falling snow. Forrester, Wylie and Milton meet up.

FORRESTER

See anything?

MILTON

Nothing.

WYLIE

We've looked everywhere, Sam.

They stand together, waiting for Forrester to excuse them. They clap their arms to keep warm.

FORRESTER

You boys have done enough. You'll catch your death. Go on in.

WYLIE

We can't go without you, Sam.

FORRESTER

I'll be right in. You go on. It's the strangest thing, I feel like I've been here before, like this is an old snowstorm that's come back. Maybe you only get so many snowstorms. I know my way around here. You boys go on in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WYLIE

Are you sure, Sam?

FORRESTER

Absolutely.

MILTON

I mean we can keep going. But with it this cold out here, I can't help but think...

FORRESTER

I said, go in, okay? Milton, you're a popsicle.

MILTON

Okay, Sam. Well, at least take my scarf.

FORRESTER

Can't do that. That's a girl's scarf, Milton.

Forrester waves goodbye and walks into the darkness.

The Longfellows Woods sign is too far away from here to be seen. The sky is tinged with purple and pink, ethereal, snowy. Mildred walks in and stops. The scene in front of her looks like a horrible Christmas card. There crumpled in the snow lies Red.

MILDRED

Oh my God! Red!

Mildred hurries to her side and turns her over. Mildred puts her ear near Red's mouth and listens. Mildred talks in a low hurried voice now.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Oh, Red, you're gonna make it. Come on, we've gotta get in! It's breakfast time!

She wraps her coat around Red. Red slowly opens her eyes.

RED

(weakly)

I like it out here.

MILDRED

I'm gonna help you up, Red. Do you think you can get up?

RED

I like it down here. I like the stars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MILDRED

Come on, Red, I've meant to show you my Night Blooming Cereus. It bloomed tonight into a beautiful white flower.

RED

Like you, Midge.

MILDRED

No, I'm a cactus through and through. But you, Red, they need you in there. Come on up now. Put your arm around my shoulder.

RED

I just want to go to sleep right here.

She closes her eyes.

MILDRED

Red, you've got to stay awake. Oh, Red!

Mildred pats her cheek. She then bends over and checks for her pulse. She tries to resuscitate Red by blowing air into her lungs but starts to cough because she's so weak herself.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I can't do this alone. Red, you've got to help me. Sam! Sam!

Mildred tries to push herself up but slips on the snow and hits her head on a protruding rock. Now both Mildred and Red are unconscious.

Morning light rises as Forrester leads staffers and residents over the snow. They stop when they see two figures beside a crooked little stream. Staffers, Forrester, and some of the more robust residents rush to the pair, with the other men and women following gingerly over the snow.

STAFFER

One of them's alive.

SCENE 7

Longfellow's Woods is filled with 50 residents and family members in formal dress. Milton hands guests long roses as each one enters and passes a casket, laying it on top before taking a seat. There are lots of whispers.

LADY GUEST

She *killed* her. Axis Sally killed her.

HER FRIEND

Long live the witch of the west.

LADY GUEST

Too bad Red had to spend the last moments of her life with that horrible woman. She's not coming today, is she?

HER FRIEND

I don't know how she could show her face.

LADY GUEST

Well I don't think anybody's seen her since she recovered from the frostbite.

HER FRIEND

No, she's probably still holed up in her room. I just wish she'd leave. *Did you hear Lena left this morning?*

LADY GUEST

Then there's nobody worth knowing left.

HER FRIEND

I beg your pardon?

LADY GUEST

Well, present company excepted, of course!

Mildred enters and sees Milton handing out roses to the line of guests. She turns around and heads for the door. Then she wheels about and gets back in line. Forrester shows up in the line behind her.

FORRESTER

Steady, girl.

He takes her arm at the elbow.

MILDRED

I'm not sure I should be here, Sam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORRESTER

It's as easy as jumping out of a C-47. Do you have your parachute on?

MILDRED

Yup.

FORRESTER

Static line connected?

MILDRED

Check.

The line advances.

FORRESTER

You're next.

MILDRED

I--

FORRESTER

Step up to the hatch.

SOUNDS of a warring plane at altitude. Milton looks at Forrester and balefully shakes his head. Forrester pushes Mildred in front of him. Milton pointedly stops his automatic motion of presenting the rose and looks askance at Forrester.

FORRESTER

Hello, Milton. We're here to bury the dead.

Milton frowns.

FORRESTER

Red would have wanted her to be here.

Mildred looks down.

FORRESTER

After all, that's why any of us is here... for the music.

Stomping at the Savoy comes on. Ellie's beeper can be heard softly in the background. Now it gets louder. Milton stares stonily at Mildred. Then, very slowly, he gives her the rose.

THE END

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)