



Alarms

by Susan Yankowitz

Written by Susan Yankowitz, *Alarms* was commissioned and produced by **Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company** in 1986. Full information about this production (which, following its 1986-87 UK tour, opened the 1987 Women in Theater Festival in Boston, Mass.) can be found on the company's website:

<https://monstrousregiment.co.uk/productions/alarms/>

A revised version of the play (with some additional characters) was published in *Female Voices* (ed Juliet Aykroyd, Playwrights' Press, London 1987), and used in its 1988 production by Omaha Magic Theatre. It is a scanned copy of this published text, kindly provided by the author, which is presented here.

A typescript of the earlier version of the play, along with several drafts, is held in the Monstrous Regiment archive at the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives; a copy of this may be added to the website at a later date. It is also available at the British Library in its Modern Playscripts Collection (Archives and Manuscripts MPS 3293: 1986)

Requests for permission to perform or translate the play should be addressed to the author via: www.susanyankowitz.com

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TALL *(MIMICKING J.B. AT HIS MOST FRENZIED)* The - what panic who's panicking I'm not panicking lets sort things out quick before I panic - type! Your type!

J.B. That's a terrible thing to say! How could you say that?

LOUIS I think it's got something to do with the way you eat a lobster.

J.B. What are you doing? Joining the crazy side too?

LOUIS *(TO TALL)* I hope, if I decide to believe you that you'll be right. I don't understand much but now I think about it, everybody being dead seems a funny way to make life better.

J.B. It's not enough. *(LONG PAUSE. BECOMES CURIOUS SUDDENLY)* When was I a girl? I'm sure I'd remember that shit. **SMALL** *LEAPS TO TOMB AND BRINGS OUT HER DRESS. SHE HOLDS IT UP AGAINST J.B., LOOPING THE ARMS ROUND HIM SO IT HANGS IN FRONT OF HIM. HE IS NERVOUS AND SLIGHTLY REPELLED BUT INTERESTED.*

J.B. Feels wierd. *(PAUSE)* Interesting. Yeah, interesting. *(PAUSE)* Why don't we go back to life? See if we remember any of this stuff. *(STARTS TO TAKE DRESS OFF AND HAND IT BACK TO SMALL IN A SUDDEN PANIC)* There's no guarantee I'll go back as a man, is there?

TALL None at all.

LOUIS If I turn out to be a girl this time, maybe I marry a nice bloke like me.

J.B. Or a guy like me.

LOUIS But you'd be different than you were. A bit better. A little bit maybe.

J.B. Let's go back. No point hanging around down here any more. *(PUSHES DRESS AT SMALL)* I'll buy my own wardrobe. And I ain't marrying anything, man, woman or stuffed cat that dreams of pyramids. Come on, gondolier. **J.B. AND LOUIS GO OUT THE DOOR, LOUIS WITH A BACKWARD WAVE AT SMALL. TALL AND SMALL SHAKE HANDS.**

TALL What will you do? **SMALL** *SHRUGS, STARTS TO TIDY THE TOMB.*

TALL I suppose, after what happened before you don't trust life so much. I hope it gets to be a better proposition, for you and the floating babies. I wouldn't risk giving up your little home here, just yet, if I was you. **TALL GOES OFF. LIGHTS DIM, SOUND OF ECHOING EMPTINESS AS AT OPENING. SMALL STARTS TO REARRANGE HER BELONGINGS. SUDDENLY SHE TAKES THE STICK AND KNOCKS OVER ALL THE PICKLED BIRDS. SHE GOES TO STAND IN THE DOORWAY, TAKES A LAST LOOK ROUND HER TOMB. SHE LOOKS DOWN AT THE STICK AND WITH A MOMENT'S HESITATION SHE THROWS IT AWAY. FALTERINGLY, SMALL STEPS OUT OF THE DOORWAY. RUMBLING SOUNDS OFFSTAGE FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO THE DOORWAY.**

BLACKOUT.

THE END.

ALARMS

by Susan Yankowitz

Commissioned by the Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company in 1986 and subsequently presented by them, in an earlier version, on tour and at the Riverside Studios, London.

Cast: Mary McCusker, Sue Rogerson, Gerda Stevenson and Tim Gatti.

Directed by Penny Cherns.

Designed by Iona McLeish (with Teresa Wheeler)

Lighting Design by Veronica Wood.

Ideally, the cast for this play would be composed of three women, two men, and one extra of either gender.

The play belongs loosely to the expressionist tradition and is written with the premise that political urgency is shown more vividly by extreme physical imagery than by the conventions of naturalism; the images telegraph emergency rather than submit it to debate. This style deliberately exaggerates the argument of the play in order to speak more directly to our deeper fears and knowledge than to our rational minds (although the play hopes to involve the intelligence of its audiences as well).

The stylization of the characters — a product of this odd blend of myth, satire, expressionism and heightened realism — should extend not only to costumes and symbolic attributes but to the set, movement patterns and vocal styles of the performers. The physical details written into the text are meant more as guidelines or suggestions than strict instructions to either director or designer.

The use of transformations — the fluid transition, through the medium of an object, a gesture, or a word, from one character to another by the same actor — should be employed throughout the production in order to refer backward and forward in time during the same scene. Thus, one actress moves between Dr. C and Cassandra, giving each character the resonance of the other. Wherever possible, without belabouring it, this technique should be employed.

SCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP ON A PICTURE FRAME, INSIDE OF WHICH IS A TABLEAU, A REPLICA OF THE PAINTING OF AJAX PREPARING TO RAPE CASSANDRA. AJAX IS TUGGING HER BY THE HAIR; CASSANDRA HAS THROWN HER ARMS AROUND THE WOODEN STATUE OF ATHENA, WHICH HAS ITS EYES UPRAISED TO THE HEAVENS.

TITLE. A MYTH IS A STORY THAT TIME FATTENS WITH MEANINGS

CASSANDRA I saw, I saw —

ATHENA And what good does that do you? Foresight without power. Useless!

CASSANDRA I didn't realise. I wanted the gift of prophecy. I thought that would give me control over my fate. I should have asked for the power to alter the future, not just to see it. (*AS AJAX PULLS ON HER HAIR, AND BEGINS — IN SLOW MOTION — THE ANTICIPATED RAPE*) And now Ajax will rape me! I was a fool!

ATHENA I'm afraid you're right. Nothing will change. Now and for evermore you'll be merely a figure in other people's stories, a minor character. *AS THE RAPE PROCEEDS, DR. C, DRESSED IN WHITE, WALKS INTO SCENE. HER HAIR IS ONLY A FUZZ — SHE APPEARS ALMOST BALD — BUT HER EYES ARE AS ENORMOUS AS SEARCHLIGHTS.*

DR. C What's going on here? Come on, come on, get your hands off her. Ow! (*AS IF HER HAIR WERE BEING PULLED*)

ATHENA Why? Is a body more important than a city?

DR. C If it's my body, you bet!

CASSANDRA But it's not. It's mine.

DR. C Then why do I feel *my* hair being pulled? Ow!

AJAX You? You have no hair!

DR. C (*YELPING, HER HANDS TO HER SCALP*) Ow! Ow!

ATHENA Must be empathy. Fortunately, the gods don't have to bother with any of that.

DR. C You're a god?

ATHENA Athena.

DR. C Well, what's going on here?

ATHENA Cassandra is about to be raped by Ajax.

DR. C And you're not stopping it?

ATHENA Oh, I'll punish him. Afterwards. Gods only have limited jurisdiction. I'm afraid I must keep my eyes averted.

DR. C But that... that's terrible!

CASSANDRA It's my destiny. I can't escape it.

AJAX I am entitled to my spoils! (*THE RAPE CONTINUES*)

DR. C Does she want to be raped?

CASSANDRA No, no.

DR. C I thought Cassandra was a prophetess...

ATHENA She was. But this painting is the prototypical representation of her.

CASSANDRA The artists adored me in this role.

DR. C But what about the Trojan Horse?

ATHENA Everyone prefers sex to history.

DR. C Then what about Cassandra being given the gift of prophecy by Apollo?

AJAX (STOPPING THE RAPE AND STEPPING OUT OF THE PAINTING; TRANSFORMS INTO APOLLO) You mean this moment? (GRABS DR. C AND HOLDS HER FACE CLOSE TO HIS; THEN, IN AN ALTERED VOICE) Apollo granted your wish. I gave you the gift of prophecy, new eyes that could see the future. You promised to sleep with me and what did you do? You changed your mind. How typical! How low — to use your body to get power and when you have it to say "no"! (SPITS VIOLENTLY INTO HER MOUTH) There! Now you will prophesy, yes, but no one will believe your visions and though you speak the truth, you will lack all power of persuasion, and what now seems to you a blessing shall be a curse! (FLINGS HER ASIDE AND RETURNS TO THE PAINTING) Rape is more exciting. (CONTINUES RAPE)

DR. C To whom? Not to her. Not to me. That's distorted! There should be a painting of Cassandra foretelling the destruction of her civilisation. That's the important thing about her!

AJAX Be quiet. You talk too loud!

CASSANDRA That's what they always said about me. (TAKES OFF HER LONG WIG AND THROWS IT TO DR. C) Here. The bridal bouquet! You need it.

DR. C CATCHES THE WIG.

DR. C Mine will grow back. The doctors swore.

SPOTLIGHT ON JILL IN HER UNDERCLOTHES, SMOKING A CIGARETTE.

JILL And gratitude? Have you forgotten that? In a civilised country, people say 'thank you' when they receive gifts. Cassandra didn't. What a fuss she made! Oh my, such inflated importance some women attach to a few yards of skin, a patch of hair, internal roadways and canals. What is a woman after all but a little piece of geography?

DR. C Speak for yourself.

JILL I am.

DR. C Who are you?

JILL A fragment of the story.

DR. C What do you mean?

JILL Go to your library. Use your dictionary. A myth is a story that time fattens with meanings. Get it?

DR. C (LOOKING AT THE WIG BEFORE PUTTING IT ON HER HEAD) She had a permanent.

JILL Permanent. Right. (PICKS UP A CAMERA) Hold it. (THE TABLEAU FREEZES. JILL TAKES A FLASH PHOTO; TO DR. C) For your album. So you remember who you are, where you've come from, and where you're headed. I'll send you a print in the future.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP. A HOSPITAL BED. MRS JONES — CHARACTERIZED BY A PLASTIC SMILE OVER HER MOUTH — IS SEATED THERE. THERE IS AN IV IN HER ARM.

DR. C, WEARING THE WIG — FOR THE REST OF THE PLAY - IS EXAMINING HER, TAKING NOTES, ETC.

ON ONE WALL IS AN EMPTY SHELF. DURING THE COURSE OF THE SCENE, AN ORDERLY (MALE OR FEMALE) REGULARLY WALKS INTO THE ROOM, PLACES A JAR CONTAINING A FOETUS ON THE SHELF, AND LEAVES. BY THE END OF THE SCENE, THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST SIX SUCH JARS.

TITLE. A SMILE IS NOT AN UMBRELLA

DR. C Does it hurt?

MRS. JONES (NODDING) Mmmm.

DR. C Where, Mrs Jones?

MRS. JONES (GESTURING TOWARD HER BREASTS, HER UTERUS, HER GROIN) Here... here... here...

DR. C I'm sorry. I had to take stitches. (MRS. JONES NODS, ALWAYS SMILING) ... Who is your regular doctor?

MRS. JONES Dr. Jem.

DR. C Isn't he retired? (MRS. JONES NODS) You weren't seeing any doctor? (MRS. JONES SHAKES HER HEAD) Why?

MRS. JONES Wasn't anything the matter. Didn't seem like, I mean. And I knew what to do about eating and so forth.

DR. C When did you notice something was wrong?

MRS. JONES I don't know.

DR. C From the beginning?

MRS. JONES No.

DR. C You never noticed anything unusual?

MRS. JONES Not specially.

DR. C You just started bleeding.

MRS. JONES Cramping.

DR. C That's when you called the hospital?

MRS. JONES No.

DR. C Why not?

MRS. JONES Well... I sorta hoped it was the labor starting.

DR. C You were only in your seventh month.

MRS. JONES Babies come early sometimes, so I was hoping that — you know.

DR. C Yes. (OFFERS HER SOME WATER; MRS. JONES DRINKS) When did you decide to call?

MRS. JONES Didn't call. Just drove.

DR. C Alone?

MRS. JONES Ed was working that night.

DR. C Ed's your husband? (MRS. JONES NODS) Does he work at the plant? (MRS. JONES NODS) According to the file, this is your third miscarriage. (MRS. JONES NODS) But you have two other children?

MRS. JONES Oh yes.

DR. C And those births were full term?

MRS. JONES (NODS) The girl's nine and the boy is five... Open that little drawer, will you? (DR. C DOES SO) See that photo? You can take it out. (DR. C DOES AND LOOKS AT IT) Those are my two kids.

DR. C LOOKS UP AND MEETS MRS. JONES' EYES. MRS. JONES RIPS OFF THE PLASTIC SMILE. BENEATH IT HER MOUTH IS GRIM.

THE ORDERLY SETS DOWN THE LAST JAR.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE

AGAIN, A HOSPITAL BED, PLACED AT A DIFFERENT ANGLE TO SUGGEST A DIFFERENT ROOM, WITH A VERY PREGNANT WOMAN IN IT.

IN DIMINISHING PERSPECTIVE, A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS ROW OF HOSPITAL BEDS IS SEEN, A PREGNANT WOMAN IN EACH. (NOTE: PUPPETS OR DOLLS MAY BE USED IN THE BEDS; OR A PAINTED FLAT MAY SUBSTITUTE; OR MIRRORS MAY SUGGEST THE WARD)

DR. C WALKS FROM BED TO BED, CARRYING HER CASE. WITH EACH PATIENT, SHE PERFORMS A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT EXAMINATION, USING HER STETHOSCOPE, SPECULUM, A THERMOMETER OR BLOOD PRESSURE EQUIPMENT, ETC.

HER TAPE-RECORDED VOICE ASKS QUESTIONS.

TITLE. *A MATTER OF EPISTEMOLOGY; OR, IGNORANCE IS WHOSE BLISS?*

DR. C (ON TAPE) Is this your first pregnancy? How many pregnancies have you had? How many miscarriages? How many ectopic pregnancies? Is your husband's sperm count normal? What percentage of his sperm show signs of genetic mutation? Do you have any congenitally deformed offspring? Does anyone in your family suffer from diabetes, cystic fibrosis, retardation, Down's syndrome, heart disease, asthma, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, leukemia or any other form of cancer? Have you been x-rayed for any of

the following childhood diseases - tonsillitis, bronchitis, adenoids, appendicitis, broken arms or legs, or concussion? Have you been subjected to a uterine or pelvic x-ray? (AN ORDERLY ROLLS IN A STRETCHER. AS THE TAPE CONTINUES, HE OR SHE PICKS UP OR ROLLS THE PREGNANT WOMAN FROM HER BED TO THE STRETCHER. THIS TAKES TIME. WHEN SHE IS SETTLED ON THE STRETCHER, HE ROLLS IT OFF) Do you live within thirty miles of a nuclear reactor? Have you worked with radioactive materials? Have you been downwind of a nuclear accident, however minor? ... How do you know? Have you been in a rainfall downwind of a nuclear accident, however minor? Have you drunk milk from a cow who has grazed on grass downwind of a nuclear accident, however minor? ... How do you know? Have you eaten the meat of such a cow? Have you eaten fish from a contaminated river? ... How do you know. (DR. AP ENTERS, CHARACTERISED BY A BEAUTIFUL, SENSUAL MOUTH, AS EXAGGERATED AS DR. C'S HAIR AND EYES, AND BY A HEART BEATING ON HIS CHEST) (HE BEGINS AT THE FIRST BED AND PROCEEDS IN THE SAME MANNER AS DR. C) Have you eaten leafy vegetables grown in contaminated soil? Have you sat on a lawn or grassy hill on which radioactive dust or rain has fallen? ... How do you know? Have you breathed air containing radioactive particles? ... How do you know?

ANOTHER PREGNANT WOMAN, CARRYING HER LITTLE OVERNIGHT BAG, WALKS TO THE VACATED BED. SMILING, SHE BEGINS TO UNPACK HER BELONGINGS.

DR. C STOPS HER ROUNDS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEW PATIENT. DR. AP TURNS TOO.

DR. C AND AP BOTH WALK TOWARD THE NEW PATIENT, TRANSFORMING INTO CASSANDRA AND APOLLO. (THIS CAN BE SUGGESTED BY STYLISTIC CHANGES IN MOVEMENT, VOCAL DELIVERY, AND GESTURE)

APOLLO My god, what beautiful hair.

CASSANDRA Are you Apollo?(HE NODS)Then you're the God, not I.

APOLLO And you would do anything for me, wouldn't you, my priestess?

CASSANDRA That depends.

APOLLO In exchange for one night, I'll give you whatever you desire.

CASSANDRA Anything?

APOLLO Anything.

CASSANDRA Give me vision, then. Give me the gift of prophecy so I can see into the future. (APOLLO PULLS HER CLOSER, GAZES INTO HER EYES, TOUCHES THEM WITH HIS MOUTH) My eyes... my eyes are stretching open inside my head... I see... I see...

APOLLO (FORCING HER FACE TOWARD HIMSELF) You see me.

CASSANDRA I see... wind... a rain of dust... the rubble of cities, steel and —

APOLLO (FORCING HER FACE BETWEEN HIS HANDS AGAIN) No. You see ME! (SHE TWISTS HER FACE AWAY. HE GRABS HER HAIR.

THEN, TRANSFORMING BACK INTO DR. AP, STROKES IT) My god, what beautiful hair.

CASSANDRA (TRANSFORMING BACK INTO DR. C) What does God have to do with it? ... And by the way, there's nothing wrong with your mouth, either.

DR. AP Do I know you?

DR. C Are we still in the biblical mode?

DR. AP In any mode, ignorance is not bliss.

DR. C AND AP REMAIN STANDING, EYES LOCKED. THE NEW PATIENT CAN BARELY CONTAIN HERSELF.

NEW PATIENT Hey! This isn't the right time. Hey. This isn't the right place. I'm the patient. Look at me. It's starting. Help me.

DR. AP Dinner tonight? A nightcap? A night?

DR. C I see that you have a great deal to offer me... My place or yours?

NEW PATIENT Oh! Oh! I can't hold it in. My waters are breaking. My waters are pouring out...!

BOTH DR. C AND AP TURN TO HER.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FOUR

DR. C'S BEDROOM. OVER THE BED IS THE PAINTING OF CASSANDRA'S RAPE.

TITLE.: SEX IS —

A) COM—MUNICATION

B) COM—PROMISE

C) COM—MERCE

D) COM—BAT

E) OTHER.

THE PAINTING IS LIT; THE BED BELOW IS IN DARKNESS. VOICES ARE HEARD.

DR. AP You have your eyes closed. Don't you want to look at me?

DR. C I see better in the dark.

DR. AP Oh yes. Cassandra with her infamous foresight.

DR. C And what's wrong with my hindsight?

IN ANOTHER AREA OF THE STAGE, IN HER ROOM, JILL IS GETTING DRESSED IN HER USUAL 'SPY' REGALIA - EYELASHES AS LONG AS HER NOSE, ENORMOUS FALSE BREASTS, A FLESHY REAR END, SILK STOCKINGS, HIGH HEELS, ETC. SHE WATCHES HERSELF IN A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR. AS ALWAYS, SHE DRAGS FREQUENTLY ON A CIGARETTE.

JILL Nice ass. That's what they say, the ones who say anything. Nice ass, looking at me, naked — they think!

LIGHTS UP IN ANOTHER AREA. MR DEAL'S OFFICE. HIS BACK IS TO US AS HE SPEAKS ON THE TELEPHONE.

MR. DEAL Of course it's grave. Yes, take it seriously. But just how seriously is seriously? We can buy our shrouds, or we can buy time and, seriously, time is essential. If we've made a mistake, we should quickly bury it and get on with our lives. The composition of the soil has not been gravely altered, has it? No, not gravely. Remember, we're talking about an impoverished, remote, tiny geographical area. We have the whole country to worry about! To be absolutely frank, my advice is that we simply flush the whole damn mess down the toilet! Of course I'm serious! (LISTENS)

JILL (IN HER AREA) So, sure, I say, sure, why not, o.k., all right, yes, come on, get on and whisper to me, whisper... let it all pass through me and whisper, turn the light out...

GETS HANDBAG, TURNS OFF THE LIGHTS IN HER ROOM, ETC.

MR. DEAL Well, I'm sorry to hear it. Seriously. Send the widow some flowers. (LISTENS)

JILL (WALKS TOWARD MR. DEAL'S OFFICE) ... while I lie, I lie, lying there in his open arms grabbing the dark in my fist, pulling the night over us...

MR. DEAL How much do they want? What? But that's... that's expensive! Extravagant! Exorbitant! Extortion! ... We'll pay! (SLAMS THE PHONE DOWN, PICKS IT UP, DIALS) Hello? Hello? Deal here.

JILL (ENTERS THE OFFICE; SOFTLY, TO DEAL'S BACK) Hello? Hello? Jill here.

MR. DEAL (WITHOUT TURNING AROUND) How do. Have a seat. Have a cigarette. Have my fingers in a few pies. Be with you in a jiff.

ON THE DESK IS A SMALL FISHBOWL WITH A FEW GOLDFISH IN IT. JILL FLICKS AN ASH INTO IT.

JILL Sure, o.k., yes, I say, yes, peeking through keyholes, disappearing in smoke, hiding in lipstick, yes, I say, yes, with my body, living in it, living for it, living off it, living off men living off me, yes, I say, yes...

DIM LIGHTS COME UP IN THE OTHER AREA.

DR. AP Yes, I was surprised...

DR. C Why? You're very attractive.

DR. AP Thank you.

DR. C And you're President of the Medical Society. An irresistible combination.

DR. AP You're irresistible yourself.

DR. C It's just that you have a weakness for beautiful women. Now don't deny it. Your reputation preceded you.

DR. AP So did yours.

DR. C Really? What kind of reputation do I have?

DR. AP It's said that you're brilliant, opinionated, aggressive, — and obsessed with the nuclear weapons industry and its offshoots.

DR. C Quite a recommendation. And that didn't discourage you?

DR. AP I like a challenge. I've even read some of your research.

DR. C You mean I don't write in invisible ink? Well, that puts me on — (SHE MOVES SO THAT SHE IS ON TOP OF HIM) — on top of the world.

DR. AP You certainly like to take control.

DR. C How many chances do I get? Yes, I like it. I like it. Yes.

BLACKOUT THERE.

IN THE OTHER AREA.

JILL (PACING IN THE OFFICE) Yes, I say, lying on my back, lying through my teeth, blood in my belly, bombs in my ears, death in my eyes, and a country's children in my — (HAPPILY PATS HER REAR) nice ass, isn't it?

MR. DEAL TURNS AROUND. HE HAS ONE ARTIFICIAL HAND LIKE A LOBSTER CLAW. HE HOLDS A FILE IN IT.

MR. DEAL (STARTLED BY HER WORDS) What was that?! What?

JILL Talking to myself. Sorry.

MR. DEAL Don't apologise. (PINCHES HER REAR WITH HIS PINCER) The truth is beautiful.

JILL Nice ass, right. What do you want me to do with it?

MR. DEAL Here's the file. Peruse. (SHE DOES. THE TELEPHONE RINGS. MR. DEAL PICKS IT UP) Grave? What kind? Grave serious or grave dead? Words matter, damn it! Be precise! (HANGS UP)

JILL (LOOKING UP FROM HER READING) A woman!

MR. DEAL Equal opportunity. (GUFFAWS)

JILL I've never worked a woman before.

MR. DEAL Should be a snap. Like looking in the mirror.

JILL I don't know a thing about women.

MR. DEAL Then you'll learn. Dr. C is a threat to our security. And security means the future. And the future means survival. She's been running around the country, screaming about the bomb, about nuclear power plants, about chemicals and toxic waste and x-rays and — everything! She's a luddite, hates progress. Everywhere she goes she collects data — and advocates. People listen to her. Why? Not because she makes sense, because she doesn't. But because she yells.

JILL In short, she has a big mouth. So what? Sticks and stones, you know. How much power can she have? One little woman.

MR. DEAL You deprecate your breed. Do you think Deal likes to spy and worry, investigate and incriminate? Wheel is breathing down my neck; Siren is shrilling; and Harpy will do you-know-what on me if I don't start cooking!

JILL You want to put the screws on her, I still think you're better off with a man — (PAUSE) Unless she's... lesbian.

MR. DEAL She isn't.

JILL Then why not a man?

MR. DEAL She just found one. (FLIPS A PAGE IN THE DOCUMENT JILL HOLDS) They had sex five times. On their first date. (GUFFAWS) And five more times on their second. (READS; GUFFAWS) She likes to be on top.

JILL I don't think this is up my alley.

MR. DEAL This won't have anything to do with your alley. (GUFFAWS) She's been ringing alarms all over the country. Flies here, flies there, like some bird of prey, swooping down with wings of doom, striking fear in gullible hearts.

JILL Fear won't hurt us.

MR. DEAL No, no? Last month she incited a group of workers to strike for better safety conditions at their plant. The conditions are safe, safe, everyone agrees, safety is relative, after all, you can't avoid now and then a tiny leak, everything leaks, after all, even in my own home — but we buy washers! Or we change the pipe!

JILL The report says something about the Russkies.

MR. DEAL Well, sure. They eat it up. She's got a big correspondence with the international radical fringe. Here. Take the file with you. We've written everything up. I mean down.

JILL How am I supposed to get her confidence?

MR. DEAL Like this. (HANGS A CAMERA AROUND HER NECK) You're a photographer.

JILL How did you know I used to take pictures?

MR. DEAL We know everything, our hands reach everywhere, even into your miserable adolescence, your failed exams, your father's defection, your—

JILL Sorry I asked.

MR. DEAL Get a good night's sleep. She's flying to Arizona to visit a hospital. We've booked the adjacent seat for you. You're off to a hot spot for a special photo essay.

JILL Hot seat, you mean. Women make me nervous.

MR. DEAL You'll get the feel. (HIS PINCER REACHES OUT, TWEAKING HER NIPPLE; IT REMAINS ATTACHED THERE) Just a reminder; this is classified. Keep it close to your skin.

JILL NODS, PUTS OUT HER CIGARETTE IN THE FISH BOWL, AND WALKS OFF WITH THE HAND STILL GRIPPING HER BREAST.

MR. DEAL PULLS ANOTHER LOBSTER CLAW OUT OF HIS SLEEVE, AND HANGS A STRING WITH HOOK AND FLY FROM IT. HAPPILY HE DANGLES A HOOK INTO THE FISH BOWL.

THE LIGHTS COME UP FULL IN DR. C'S ROOM, AS THE LOVERS BEGIN TO DRESS.

DR. AP When will I see you again?

DR. C I'm going out of town for a few days.

DR. AP Pleasure?

DR. C Jealous?

DR. AP What right do I have to be jealous?

DR. C None.

DR. AP I'm jealous.

DR. C I'm flattered.

DR. AP I'll do anything you want.

DR. C That's what I was counting on. (HANDS HIM AN ARTICLE) Can you get this published for me?

DR. AP (READING TITLE) "No Vacation from Radiation". Why don't we make a pop song out of it?

DR. C Why not? You know everyone.

DR. AP I'll do my best.

DR. C (KISSING HIM) We're off to a flying start.

SOUND OF A JET OFF-STAGE AS THEY KISS.

THEN ELSEWHERE.

MR. DEAL (TALKING TO THE FISH) Oh, come on, dearie. Have a nibble. Bite.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FIVE

LIGHTS COME UP ON TWO AIRPLANE SEATS. JILL IS JUST SITTING DOWN IN ONE OF THEM, SHE IS TRANSFORMED - UTTERLY TAILORED, DRESSED IN A SUIT, A CAMERA AROUND HER NECK, A HUGE EQUIPMENT CASE SLUNG OVER HER SHOULDER. SHE WEARS LARGE CHIC EARRINGS ON THE ONE ANATOMICAL FEATURE THAT IS NOW EXAGGERATED; HER EARS.

JILL LEANS OVER AND PLACES A 'BUG' ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE ADJACENT SEAT. AS SHE IS LEANING OVER, DR. C ENTERS, STANDS, CHECKS SEAT NUMBER.

TITLE. THE VESSEL OF GOD'S CURSE; OR, DOES MEDUSA HAVE A TONY, TOO?

JILL (STRAIGHTENS UP TO FIND DR. C WATCHING HER) Oh, oh! Is this your seat? (DR. C NODS) I dropped my rouge so I — (STANDS, HOLDING THE ROUGE) I'm too pale without it.

DR. C Red dyes 2 and 3, skin permeable.

SITS, AS DOES JILL.

JILL My husband says I look like dirty underwear without colour in my cheeks.

DR. C Get more exercise.

JILL Maybe my blood runs thin. Maybe my heart pump is wearing down. Fact is, nothing helps but rouge. And in my profession, if you look like shit, you're treated like shit. (COOLLY APPLIES ROUGE)

DR. C You mean that's all I have to do? Make up?

JILL (OFFERING HERS) Here.

DR. C No. No. If you're opposed to chemicals, you can't go and put them on your face, can you? Or wash your hair with them? There's formaldehyde in shampoo, you know. Whenever my critics attack me, they always go for my hair. It's wild, too curly, too long, too undignified, too flamboyant, too too too too!

JILL You can't be too quiet for them, though, can you? Can't be too self-effacing. (PUTS AWAY ROUGE, LIGHTS UP A CIGARETTE)

DR. C You got it. (NOTICING THE CIGARETTE) Hey. This is a no smoking section.

JILL What? But it can't be. I smoke.

DR. C Not here you don't.

JILL My husband wouldn't have booked me a seat in a non-smoking area...

DR. C Why didn't you book your own seat?

JILL Damn! (PUTS CIGARETTE OUT; MUTTERS) Traitor!

DR. C Maybe he wanted you to stop smoking.

JILL Do you think so?

DR. C How can I know? He's your husband.

JILL He does complain the smoke gets trapped in my hair and then he won't come near me, I smell so bad.

DR. C You can't smell lung cancer.

JILL That's a scary thing to say.

DR. C You ought to be scared.

JILL I guess I'm just not a spiritual person. I don't believe in invisible things.

DR. C No? Well, you don't taste the asbestos, but it gets into your lungs anyway. You don't feel your teeth decaying. You don't feel the sperm hitting the egg —

JILL Oh, don't say that. Don't talk about that.

DR. C It's just biology.

JILL Not to me. To me it's... history. Tragedy. You see... my husband and I, we wanted kids. (PAUSE) We can't — *He* can't.

DR. C He's sterile?

JILL Well, you don't have to use that word! His... you know... they don't swim straight.

DR. C Poor mobility or structural deformation?

JILL Pardon?

DR. C Forget it. Sperms, eggs, wombs — all insulted. Does anyone apologise? No. Industry and government would rather make microwave ovens than healthy babies.

JILL Don't! (MISERABLY) Oh, I just wish I could go to some tropical island and forget it all, lie on the beach, catch a few rays... Oops. That's not good either, is it? (DR. C SHAKES HER HEAD. SUDDENLY THE PLANE STARTS DIPPING AND ROCKING. THE WOMEN ARE JOLTED. DR. C STIFFENS AND TURNS WHITE) What's the matter?

DR. C Nothing.

JILL Well, something's wrong. You're as white as a ghost.

DR. C Are you going to offer me some rouge?

JILL Sorry. I only meant to help.

DR. C Just ignore me. Oh!

JILL How could anyone ignore *you*? We're just hitting a few air pockets. Normal. Like life's little ups and downs. That's what I always tell myself anyway.

DR. C How comforting.

JILL Statistically, you know, you stand less chance of crashing than of cancer.

DR. C Thanks. (ANOTHER DIP) Oh!

JILL Listen. Would you like a Valium?

DR. C God, you have a poison for everything.

JILL It's going to be all right, don't you worry. It's just a bit of turbulence. We'll come through. You know, I used to take pictures of clouds. Nature. A wing cutting through the sky. — Don't worry. We're doing fine. I'm just talking you through this. — But no one wanted them. Didn't have any human interest, the publishers said. So they assigned me a different kind of picture. That's why I'm going to Arizona. I'm supposed to take photos of those people in the hospital, the ones that live near a reactor, you know?

DR. C I know.

JILL Their hair's falling out. They keep throwing up. I don't understand. I thought that only happened when a bomb was dropped.

DR. C You mean you don't know anything about the effects of low level radiation? (ANOTHER JOLT) Oh, god, when is this going to end?

JILL Soon. Relax. Just keep talking. You know a lot about radiation?

DR. C Too much. (TRANSFORMING INTO CASSANDRA) Too much. "Oh sorrow sorrow of my city dragged to death!" Disaster. Doom. The Trojan Horse welcomed into the gates —

JILL The Trojan Horse? What are you talking about?

DR. C (CASSANDRA) (HOPELESSLY) You don't understand me either?

JILL No. I'm sorry.

DR. C (CASSANDRA) "Alas for the misery of my ill-starred life! This pain that floods the song of sorrow is mine alone." (ANOTHER JOLT; C LURCHES, CRIES OUT, AND BEGINS TO TRANSFORM BACK) Alone. Alone.

JILL I'll be with you. Don't worry.

DR. C Yes, yes. Come along on my interviews. You take the pictures, I'll ask the questions. Then you'll understand.

JILL Terrific! Fabulous! Thanks a lot —

DR. C Do you have gloves?

JILL Are we going to a tea party, too? — There. Smooth sailing. Don't you feel better now?

DR. C Yes. But what about you? You must have protective gloves. There'll be radioactive dust on everything you touch.

JILL Just from a slow leak?

DR. C On the fork. On the cup. On the doorknobs. On the —

JILL No, dammit, no, the file didn't say a thing about — No, I don't have gloves!

DR. C Lucky you made my acquaintance. I just happen to have with me not one, not two, not three, but fifteen pairs of gloves. (DIGS IN PURSE, HANDS PAIR TO JILL) Boy scout motto.

JILL (LOOKING AT THE GLOVES) God, they're ugly.

DR. C God's not responsible for that one.

JILL That's not what the fundamentalists say. They're going to be raptured up to Heaven and saved. (PUTS ONE ON) Hey! My nails are too long. They'll tear the rubber.

DR. C Be ruthless. (HANDS HER A SCISSORS FROM DOCTOR'S KIT)

JILL No rouge, no cigarettes, no nails... Who am I? (BUT SHE STARTS CUTTING)

IN C'S ROOM - A FLASHLIGHT TRAVELS OVER THE PAINTING. THE FLASHLIGHT IS HELD BY A SHADOWY FIGURE WITH A LOBSTER CLAW. THE CLAW MOVES DOWN TOWARD THE BED, PICKS UP THE PILLOW. BENEATH IT IS A WIG OF CURLY LONG HAIR. THE CLAW PICKS UP THE WIG. IT IS IN FACT MEDUSA'S HEAD, THE HAIR LIKE SNAKES. MR. DEAL SCREAMS, STARING AT THE HEAD, THEN BURIES IT FRANTICALLY UNDER THE PILLOWS.

JILL (SHOWING A FEW PARED NAILS TO DR. C) Let me tell you, doing this is murder.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SIX

SOUND OF JET CONTINUES, THEN DIES OFF.

SPOTLIGHT ON DR. AP RECLINING ON C'S BED AMIDST A PROFUSION OF HAIR. WIGS OF EVERY SHADE AND STYLE.

ELSEWHERE, AT THE SAME TIME. LIGHTS UP ON TWO HOSPITAL BEDS. SEATED ON ONE IS A WOMAN, LEANING FORWARD, BRUSHING HER HAIR. LITTLE BY LITTLE DURING THE COURSE OF THE SCENE THE HAIR FALLS OUT. ON THE OTHER SITS ANNA. HER FACE IS MASKED BUT BEAUTIFUL.

DR. AP Women women women. What do I love best about them? The odors that waft from them, the odors of deserts and of seas, of wildflowers and of fish, odors that aren't odors only but personalities, each one a kind of invitation, a pure yes, a yes and no, a maybe, a musky no, a temptation denied or satisfied. What does it matter if their skin is like silk or like sandpaper, if their thighs are loose or tuned tight as violins, there's music in them, in their voices and in their hips, inside where the darkness hums, women, with their eyes opened wide as doorways, or with their eyes narrowed to squeeze a man's breath, eyes that shut in self-defense when the fire burns too hot, eyes that take you by the hand and lead you in... inside... where it's always a mystery, and if you take your time, the mystery doesn't disappear, it deepens... Where are you when you're in there, in women, surrounding yourself with them, sliding into darkness that is your own darkness, a darkness you can never find alone.... (BURROWS INTO THE HAIR, PLAYS WITH IT, ETC.) I could drown in this hair.

TITLE. LET DOWN YOUR HAIR, OR; ANNA AND RAPUNZEL MEET THE PRESS.

IN THE HOSPITAL ROOM, JILL TAKES A FLASH PICTURE OF THE TWO PATIENTS. WHEN THE FLASH GOES OFF, ANNA CRIES OUT AND HIDES HER FACE. DR. C GOES TO HER.

DR. C (SHARPLY TO JILL) Idiot!

JILL But you told me...!

DR. C (GENTLY REMOVES ANNA'S HANDS FROM HER FACE) What happened?

ANNA (IN A SING-SONG VOICE, ALMOST BY ROTE) My name is Anna. No bomb flew over my town and dropped destruction on me. Normal life, normal normal normal normal... (SHE GETS SNAGGED ON THE WORD; DR. C GENTLY TOUCHES HER SHOULDER)

DR. C Go on. It's all right.

ANNA ... Sitting in the front yard, a sunny day, holding my baby here. Here! Do you understand? (TOUCHES HERSELF ON HER UPPER CHEST) Holding my baby here, rocking her, cooing, my face bent over her, when the air went hot around me, my baby started screaming. I looked up and the sky, the sky was on fire, clouds on fire, treetops blazing, everything burning, my own skin, my arms, my face, my face, my face — (SLOWLY PEELS OFF THE MASK THAT COVERS HER FACE. ONLY GAUZE IS VISIBLE) There is no face. Just rocking my baby, on a beautiful day, near my house, near my house, near a reactor, near a reactor that leaked, human error, that's all, human error in a reactor, a reactor, a reactor.... (AGAIN SNAGGED; DR. C TOUCHES HER) Then came a terrible silence. I looked down at my little girl who wasn't screaming anymore and it was because she was... she was... where she lay against my chest, my skin was protected. She was not... was not... was not... (REVEALS HER UNSCARRED UPPER CHEST) This is her body here.

IN THE OTHER BED, THE WOMAN LIFTS UP HER HEAD. THERE ARE ONLY A FEW STRANDS OF HAIR HANGING FROM HER SCALP. ONE HALF

OF HER FACE IS DISFIGURED WITH BURNS.

WOMAN (REACHING OUT TO STROKE DR. C'S HAIR) What beautiful hair you have...

DR. C TURNS AWAY ABRUPTLY AND SEES DR. AP IN HER ROOM. SHE WATCHES HIM LUXURIATING IN THE HAIR, THEN —

DR. C (TO JILL) Take pictures.

JILL But you said —

DR. C Take pictures!

SHE WALKS OUT ON JILL WHO SIGHS AND ADJUSTS THE CAMERA AGAIN. SLOW BLACKOUT THERE AS DR. C MOVES TOWARDS HER OWN ROOM.

SCENE SEVEN

TITLE. THE MYRIAD MIRACLES OF TECHNOLOGY.

DR. AP HIDES THE WIGS UNDER THE BED JUST IN TIME AS DR. C ENTERS HER ROOM.

DR. AP Darling. You're home!

DR. C A plane ride — a few hours in the sky — a little trip to hell.

DR. AP And back to heaven. That's modern technology. (MOVES TO EMBRACE HER) I missed you.

DR. C Where do you get your energy?

DR. AP Love is a vitalising force.

DR. C I'm depleted.

DR. AP Let me fill you up.

DR. C (LAUGHS) That fuel pump of yours is always ready. (SITS) Let me get my bearings. (PAUSE; SARCASTICALLY) And not 'ball' bearings, either.

DR. AP No hurry. We have all night. (CONSULTS HIS WATCH) It's not even mid-night.

DR. C (LOOKING AT HIS WATCH) Let me see that watch... (DOES) It has a luminous dial.

DR. AP Another miracle of technology.

DR. C It's radioactive.

DR. AP Don't be ridiculous.

DR. C It's a fact. These watches emit radioactive rays. Get rid of it.

DR. AP Stop exaggerating. Think for a minute. How much radiation could this tiny watch contain?

DR. C Workers who painted the dials on watches like these suffered amputations of fingers and hands. That's how much radiation!

DR. AP But I'm not an industry. I'm one person with one watch. Be reasonable.

DR. C You be reasonable. Please. Throw it away.

DR. AP It's very expensive... But — let's compromise. I'll turn its face away from you. (TAKES OFF WATCH, EMBRACES HER) There. Pure hands. Uncontaminated flesh. (SLIDES HIS HANDS ONTO HER BREASTS) Like yours.

DR. C Oh. Now you're sexualising my mammary glands.

DR. AP What?

DR. C Is this a bargain? You take off your watch, I take off my clothes? Please. Just say goodnight.

DR. AP But I waited here until you came home...

DR. C (PICKING UP A STRAND OF HAIR FROM THE BED) I see how you waited. (TRANSFORMING INTO CASSANDRA) "Lord of the ways, my ruin, You have betrayed me again."

DR. AP (TRANSFORMING INTO APOLLO) You wanted my protection. I gave it. You wanted my power to raise you high in the esteem of others. I gave it. Now give me what I ask.

DR. C (CASSANDRA) My body. Apollo desires my body.

DR. AP (APOLLO) The gods are notorious for their passions.

DR. C (CASSANDRA) And their betrayals.

DR. AP (TRANSFORMING BACK) I was alone. — I haven't seen you for a week...

DR. C (CASSANDRA) I see... I see...

DR. AP I see you. Look at me. Look here.

DR. C (CASSANDRA) Yes. Look. (TRANSFORMING BACK) Look. I've been through hell — while you've been through women. Of course you're free to do as you like... (KISSES HIM LIGHTLY) Goodnight.

DR. AP Is this the way it's going to be?

DR. C You want me to look into the future?

DR. AP That's your gift, isn't it?

DR. C If it doesn't please you, I'm sure you'll find someone less talented who won't object to your radioactive watch.

DR. AP You have a nasty tongue. (TURNS TO LEAVE)

DR. C Funny. That's what they all say. (AS HE EXITS) Listen. I'm just tired. I'll see you tomorrow night. All right?

DR. AP (CALLING BACK) Who knows? I can't see that far ahead.

DR. C (BEGINS STRAIGHTENING HER BED. THEN, TO HERSELF) Hair in my bed. Not my hair. Whose? How many? Oh why do I care? It's not important. "What beautiful hair you have," she said. Dying. The poor thing. Oh what am I going to do? What? (A LOBSTER EMERGES FROM THE DISHEVELED BED-CLOTHES AND CRAWLS NEAR HER HAND. SHE SCREAMS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE TELEPHONE RINGS. SHE RUNS FOR IT) Yes? Yes?

VOICE (A STRANGE, DISTORTED, SING-SONG VOICE IS HEARD) Hello, hello, speaking here is a voice without a throat, a voice without a tongue, wires simply that simply sing. Hello, I'm speaking to you today in simple praise of electricity.

DR. C I paid my bill.

VOICE No response necessary. We can listen without ears, we can see without eyes, and we can torture, if we must, without using our hands.

DR. C Torture?! Who is it? Who's there?

VOICE This is the electric company.

DR. C The hell it is!

HANGS UP. BUT THE VOICE CONTINUES, FILLS THE ROOM.

VOICE We are checking to make sure that all your electric equipment is in good working order. Is your phone working? Your lights? toaster? television? refrigerator? blender? vacuum? shaver? hair curlers? electric knife? cattle prods?

WORDS REVERBERATE; THEN SOUND GOES DEAD. DR. C SEEMS STUNNED. THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN. SHE HESITATES, THEN PICKS UP.

DR. C Who is it?

LIGHTS UP ON JILL WITH A SHEAF OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN HER HANDS.

JILL Jill. Sorry, C, I've got bad news. The pictures didn't come out.

DR. C What? But how —?

JILL I don't know. Must be a defect in the camera.

DR. C But you're a professional!

JILL Right. (LIGHTS WIDEN TO REVEAL JILL STANDING NEXT TO DEAL. HIS LOBSTER CLAW REACHES FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHS. JILL MAKES A FIST AROUND THE CLAW TO STOP IT) Sorry about that. (HANGS UP)

DR. C HANGS UP. THEN SHE STANDS WATCHING THE LOBSTER CRAWL. SHE PICKS UP HER DOCTOR'S KIT AS IF TO SMASH IT, BUT CAN'T. SHE STANDS THERE HELPLESSLY WATCHING.

JILL Let me keep them, Deal. When the job is over, I might really need a portfolio...

MR. DEAL Now you can see into the future?

JILL This clairvoyance stuff is catching.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE EIGHT

A HOSPITAL ROOM.

MOTHER EARTH, A WOMAN WITH A LARGE MATERNAL BOSOM MADE OF FRUITS, WEARING A NURSE'S CAP, STANDS BESIDE A BED. ON IT, LIKE A PATIENT, SITS A MINIATURE TREE, A FEW LEAVES HANGING FROM ITS BRANCHES. A BRIGHT OVERHEAD LIGHT, LIKE AN OPERATING LAMP, SHINES DOWN ON THEM.

IN THE COURSE OF THE SCENE, DR. C ENTERS THE ROOM REPEATEDLY, BRINGING IN OVERSIZED AND OTHERWISE DEFORMED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, PLACING THEM NEAR THE BED LIKE A GROTESQUE STILL LIFE. SHE ECHOES SOME OF MOTHER EARTH'S PHRASES DURING HER PERAMBULATIONS.

TITLE. STILL LIFE (REMAINS)

MOTHER EARTH Here is a leaf soon after birth, no longer a bud but not yet distinct. Note its plumpness, the absolutely smooth surface of its skin, the soft green color, the way the edges unfurl ever so slightly, like a baby trying to make a fist. This is one of nature's most common creations, struggling to find its form, to discover its identity, all contained even at this early stage inside its body. Through processes invisible to the naked eye, the leaf breathes and eats and grows and fills out. Music delights it; noise defeats its efforts. Perhaps it laughs or cries or makes merry with the birds; this we do not know. What we can affirm, without doubt, is that nature has created a plan which this tendril is in process of attaining. Were the design unimpeded, our leaf would elongate, its color deepen; it would lose its baby fat, so to speak, and begin to achieve its mature form. In that stage, triumphant, we would see it securely rooted to the branch, fully grown and defined, its flesh supple and firmly etched with lines, like the palm of your hand... (OFF-STAGE A TELEPHONE STARTS RINGING FAINTLY; THEN MORE TELEPHONES) But should the tree receive upon its outstretched branches the effluvia of a radioactive rain, everything alters. The natural growth pattern is speeded up to a startling degree, and the leaf immediately begins to show signs of premature deterioration and decay. Its edges begin to brown and curl inward, like claws; moisture evaporates; the earlier radiance fades; age spots, dark blemishes, discolour its surface, and the entire shape changes, shrinking and shrivelling, until the leaf is a miserable twisted and desiccated thing, barely recognisable as its earlier incarnation; brown where the other was green, dried out, stiff where before it contained juice... (SIRENS COMBINE WITH THE TELEPHONES) The lightest breeze, even one delicate breath, can sever it from its source; your feet, dancing or sombre, can unwittingly grind it to oblivion in the earth's sudden graveyard.

MR DEAL (OFF STAGE) Is it safe? Is it safe?

MOTHER EARTH The leaf, my friends, is luckier than we are in one respect; it has no foresight and thus does not know its fate. Neither, however, does it have the power to change that fate — as we do.

DR. C PROFFERS THE BOUQUET OF OVERSIZED FLOWERS SHE HOLDS. MOTHER EARTH PULLS DR. C INTO HER EXPANSIVE EMBRACE. THE FLOWERS SCATTER.

LIGHTS DIM THERE AND COME UP IN MR. DEAL'S OFFICE AS HE TALKS ON ONE PHONE; BUT THE OTHERS KEEP RINGING.

MR. DEAL Hello? Hello? Deal, yes. Deal here. Is it safe? (ON SECOND PHONE) Very safe, but not completely. (ON FIRST PHONE AGAIN) How safe is not completely safe? (ON SECOND PHONE) Pregnant women and young children should not drink the milk or eat leafy vegetables. For everyone else it's safe. (ON THIRD PHONE) No risk to public health, none. A few

isolated cases, perhaps, but no more than that. (ON FOURTH PHONE) Human error, unavoidable, that's all, everyone makes mistakes, it's part of life. (ON FIFTH PHONE) What happened in Arizona last week? Nothing happened in Arizona last week. They needed a little gasket. That's all. (LIGHTS COME UP ON DR. C STANDING AMONG THE OBJECTS IN THE GROTESQUE STILL LIFE. JILL FURTIVELY ENTERS AND HIDES BEHIND AN OVERSIZED CABBAGE) (ON FIRST PHONE) What about the water? (ON SIXTH PHONE) Though there is no evidence that the water has been contaminated, it is recommended that for a short time people within the vicinity use bottled water for drinking and refrain from eating fish. I repeat - this does not mean that the water is unsafe. (ON FIFTH PHONE) Authorize emergency rescue squads? Done. (ON THIRD PHONE) You can print that although we've sent in the emergency squads, there is absolutely no danger to anyone. We're playing it safe, even though it is safe. Only minor injuries reported. No danger, no fatalities. (ON FIRST PHONE AGAIN) What should people do if it's not completely safe? (ON SIXTH PHONE) Broadcast immediately. Interrupt all programs. The accident is over. Everything has been contained. Do not panic. All safety requirements have been met. No one has been exposed to unsafe levels of radiation. However, if you would prefer to be doubly safe, though we can assure you that you are perfectly safe as it is, it is advised that you immediately swallow a megadose of potassium iodide, incinerate all clothing worn at the time of the accident, and scrub exposed areas of the body with a stiff scrubbing brush and though it is unnecessary, scrub and scrub and scrub — *THE SIREN SHRILLS. DEAL PULLS ALL THE WIRES FROM THE PHONES AND PUTS EAR PLUGS IN HIS EARS.*

DR. C (PLUCKING THE PETALS OF A GROTESQUE DAISY) He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not, (etc.)

JILL (HIDDEN BEHIND THE CABBAGE, SPEAKS QUIETLY INTO A TAPE RECORDER) June 19. She is plucking the petals of an irradiated daisy. I have discovered that she is not sure of her lover.

DR. C (PLUCKS THE LAST PETAL) He loves me not...? (STUDIES STEM) How do I dispose of an irradiated daisy?

JILL (ECHOING; INTO HER TAPE RECORDER) She is worried about disposal of the irradiated daisy...

DR. C If I bury it, the soil will be contaminated...

JILL ... buries it, the soil contaminated...

DR. C If I burn it, the wind will carry particles of radioactive dust to god knows where —

JILL ... burns it, wind will carry particles of radioactive dust...

DR. C If I throw it into the river, the water will be polluted and the fish tainted...

JILL ... in river, water polluted and fish tainted...

DR. C So... (OPENS HER DOCTOR'S BAG) Come on in. (THROWS THE DAISY INTO THE BAG; STARTS TO WALK OFF)

JILL (QUIETLY INTO TAPE RECORDER) She's getting weird. Took the damn daisy with her.

DR. C (TURNS BACK) All of you. You mean you can't walk? Oh well, maybe in your next mutation... Come on. (STUFFS ALL THE IRRADIATED FRUIT AND VEGETABLES INTO HER BAG, AND WALKS OFF)

JILL (SHOUTING INTO TAPE RECORDER NOW) I've been contaminated, Deal, do you hear? My insides are sizzling with radiation! I'm no dupe! From now on, I spy on men only! At least what guys put inside me doesn't kill!

LIGHTS DIM THERE AS DEAL STANDS, SMILING.

MR. DEAL Let me reassure you. Since the nuclear industry began, I can state categorically that there have been no deaths, I repeat, *no* deaths in this country that are the direct result of radiation. Looked at realistically, the outcome of any nuclear accident is not death but a small decrease in life span. Someone who would otherwise have died at age 77, for instance, might die at 72. We are all going to die, we must face that fact. One little aspirin now and then doesn't kill you, does it? A hundred aspirins might, a thousand certainly would — but one little aspirin? Well, that's the amount of radiation you might expect to receive from a lifetime of x-rays or from your nearest nuclear plant. One little aspirin puts no one at risk. Look. Look. (OPENS A BOTTLE OF ASPIRIN, TAKES ONE) Would I put myself in danger? Rest assured, everything is under control.

AS HE SWALLOWS THE ASPIRIN, HE KNOCKS OVER THE FISHBOWL ON HIS DESK. THE WATER AND FISH SPILL OUT ONTO THE FLOOR. HE DOESN'T NOTICE.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE NINE

SPOTLIGHT ON DR. C BRUSHING HER HAIR, HER HEAD BENT FORWARD. BEHIND HER IS THE PAINTING OF CASSANDRA. STRANDS OF HAIR PULL FROM HER HEAD BUT SHE DOESN'T NOTICE. WHEN SHE LIFTS HER HEAD, SHE SEES THE CLUMPS OF HAIR IN THE BRISTLES OF THE BRUSH, AND MORE HAIR LITTERING THE FLOOR. SHE IS SHOCKED.

TITLE. CASSANDRA'S CROWNING GLORY

DR. C First my hair will fall out, then my teeth, then I'll lose my eyesight and my vision; then I'll lose heart —

LIGHTS UP IN ANOTHER AREA ON DR. AP.

DR. AP Do you have palpitations?

DR. C No.

DR. AP Does your heart skip beats?

DR. C No, no.

DR. AP Do you experience chest pains, shortness of breath, pressure in the area of the heart?

DR. C Why must you be so *literal*?!

DR. AP Because the body *is* literal. If your heart is defective, there are clear and obvious signs.

DR. C But that's not what I meant.

DR. AP Then you have to make a distinction between metaphor and fact.

DR. C (HOLDING UP STRANDS OF HAIR) What about this, then? My hair is falling out. That's fact, isn't it? But it's also metaphor.

DR. AP Animals go through moulting seasons —

DR. C No, it's radiation. It must be.

LIGHTS UP ON JILL.

JILL Everything's radiation to you! You had a permanent, didn't you? Well, didn't you?

DR. C (POINTING TO FIGURE OF CASSANDRA IN PAINTING) Ask her.

JILL Paintings don't talk.

DR. C Then why do artists make them? Of course paintings talk. Not *literally*, however.

JILL The fact is that permanents weaken the hair. Everyone knows that. Lots of women lose hair after a permanent.

DR. C It's radiation.

JILL And after childbirth, too. There are natural causes for biological changes. So why blame everything on radiation?

DR. C Not everything. Just these moles sprouting over my body. Just these eyes that don't see as well as before.

JILL So get glasses. Then look around. You're in trouble.

DR. C What do you mean, trouble?

JILL Don't you read the newspapers? Don't you hear what they say about you? The press reports that you correspond with the Russians. That you give late abortions to —

DR. C Only when there's danger of chromosomal damage or —

JILL It's illegal. And have you wondered how the government knows that you've stopped using x-rays?

DR. C They know that?

JILL What little bird tells them and feathers a nest with their gratitude?

DR. C You've been with me. You've been doing the same work. Are you under surveillance, too?

JILL Things are not what they seem. Get those glasses. And remember — trust is an outmoded sentiment. (TAKES A FLASH PHOTO) Got you.

BLACKOUT ON HER.

DR. AP You refuse to x-ray?

DR. C How do you know?

DR. AP I've had a complaint. Everything passes through my office. Is it true?

DR. C A single x-ray to the pregnant uterus increases the chance of cancer in the off-spring by 40%. I only x-ray when essential.

DR. AP Essential! Is a television essential? A radio? A telephone? You'd banish them all, wouldn't you, put us back in the dark ages with a life expectancy of 41! X-rays save lives. You know that. You'll be accused of malpractice. You'll be barred from the medical profession. You might even be jailed.

DR. C That shouldn't worry you. There are plenty of fish in the sea.

DR. AP There are.

DR. C Lately, however, the fish are developing cataracts.

DR. AP Is that so? All the fish?

DR. C Many... Some.

DR. AP From radiation, I suppose.

DR. C Yes, we suppose.

DR. AP Suppose, but don't know.

DR. C Oh God, why must you be so pedantic?

DR. AP Scientific. Objective. Moral.

DR. C You're giving me another migraine.

DR. AP Take an aspirin.

DR. C I don't keep aspirin.

DR. AP Then you should see a doctor.

DR. C And what will a doctor do? X-ray?

DR. AP You're impossible! I'll have to stop seeing you. I can't take the risk.

DR. C What a joke. You haven't taken a risk in years.

DR. AP I go on living.

DR. C I want to live, too!

DR. AP But look what's happening to you.

DR. C (TRANSFORMING) I look. I do. I look and I see —

DR. AP (TRANSFORMING; FORCING HER TO FACE HIM) You see me.

DR. C (CASSANDRA) I see... an empty plain. Buildings shattered. The rubble-of-cities. Stones and blood.

DR. AP (APOLLO) You see ME!

DR. C (CASSANDRA) No! You don't understand? I can't see you. If I do, everything — everyone — is lost.

DR. AP (APOLLO) You are lost then. How dare you break your promise? How dare you say 'no' to ME? (FORCES HER FACE NEXT TO HIS AND

SPITS IN HER MOUTH) Now the world will say 'no' to YOU!

DR. C (CASSANDRA) (LOST IN HERSELF) Lost. Lost. Everything lost. (TOUCHES HER HAIR; TRANSFORMS GRADUALLY BACK TO DR. C) I'll lose more hair, all of it, and then my sight, hearing, teeth, everything, and then, if I haven't died from all those losses, I'll lose my mind — (COMES OUT OF HERSELF) I don't want to! (TURNS TO AP) Ap. Let's not fight. I need you. (BUT HE HAS GONE) Ap, don't leave me alone!

JILL (SUDDENLY POPS UP FROM UNDER THE BED) You're not alone. Here. Have an apple.

DR. C I don't have an appetite. Thanks.

JILL Go on. I bet you haven't eaten in days.

DR. C Do I look that bad?

JILL I hate to say it, but you would be greatly improved by the addition of rouge. (POINTS TO THE PAINTING) Even Greek women employed cosmetics. Made them out of herbs and flowers. Guess they didn't have red dye nos. 1,2,3,4,5 etc... Why do you keep that over your bed? You have rape fantasies?

DR. C It's the only one of Cassandra I could find. She was a prophetess.

JILL Oh, great. A prophetess that no one believed.

DR. C All her prophecies came true, you know.

JILL But what happened to *her*? She was locked up and then killed. It's a waste. Why throw yourself away? You could do anything, you're so intelligent and energetic. Sometimes you have to sell your soul in order to stay afloat; souls are heavy, you know.

DR. C Are you talking about yourself?

JILL Me? Oh, I never had a soul to begin with.

DR. C There you go, deprecating yourself. Haven't you put your whole heart into this work? Haven't you gone everywhere with me, putting yourself in danger? You can't do that without a soul.

JILL ... My husband doesn't think so. He wants a divorce.

DR. C Great. Now you can throw away that rouge! He never appreciated your virtues. You can work full time with me.

PUTS HER ARMS AROUND JILL.

JILL I think you're pretty terrific, too. (THEY KISS. JILL BREAKS AWAY) But please, bend a little. Be... discreet.

DR. C Now *you* sound like a man!

JILL We need men. They're like bombs. You have to harness their energy and use them for your own purposes. That's the only way to be successful. Believe me.

DR. C That's old-fashioned talk.

JILL The world's old-fashioned, honey. Take it from me. You want to survive? Play ball. (THROWS THE BALL TO C) Catch.

BUT C MISSES. SHE LOOKS FASCINATED AT THE APPLE.

DR. C The apple... That's it! Gravity and inertia. Simple physics. The heavier an object (or a problem), the greater its inertia, and the greater push or pull is needed to change its direction. And what, scientifically, is the best means of overcoming inertia? Not sweet talk. Not compromise. But friction.

JILL (TO HEAVEN) She'll never learn.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TEN

TITLE. THERE'S THE RUB

LIGHTS UP ON MR. DEAL AT HIS DESK, LISTENING AS THE LAST TAPE IS REPLAYED. JILL STANDS BESIDE HIM, STILL IN HER PHOTOGRAPHER MODE, HER BIG EAR COCKED TOWARD HIM.

DR. C'S VOICE (ON TAPE) ... and the greater push or pull is needed to change its direction. And what, scientifically, is the best means of overcoming inertia? Not sweet talk. Not compromise. But friction.

MR. DEAL (SHUTS OFF MACHINE; RUBS HIS CLAWS TOGETHER) Friction! Hah! (GUFFAWS)

JILL She rubs everyone the wrong way.

MR. DEAL She doesn't rub her boyfriend anyway anymore. (GUFFAWS AGAIN) He won't even put his name next to hers on a petition!

JILL She's got a one track mind. She loves the people, but individuals? She doesn't give a damn. I tell her I'm getting a divorce; she doesn't bat an eye.

MR. DEAL You're not married.

JILL She doesn't know that. She's a fanatic. Why, she would eliminate the sun, if she could, because it might, it might, cause melanoma. If I want to sunbathe, I ought to have a choice. But if she had her way, no one would be free.

MR. DEAL (RISING) She has a totalitarian mind. She must be exposed. Give me the evidence.

JILL (HANDING HIM A LETTER) Here is a letter she received from Russia.

MR. DEAL From Russia? Good, good. (HE TAKES IT IN HIS HAND AND SITS DOWN. HE LEAPS UP AGAIN, SCREAMING. HE TAKES SOMETHING FROM HIS CHAIR, STUDIES IT, AND PUTS IT IN A HALF-FILLED CONTAINER. THEN HE LOOKS AT THE LETTER) What does it say?

JILL I don't know. It's in Russian.

MR. DEAL (RISING AGAIN; FURIOUS) What good are you?

JILL You expect me to read the language of our enemies? Don't you keep files on everyone who learns Russian? who goes to Nicaragua? I'm a good citizen.

MR. DEAL (THUNDERING) You? You are nothing but my weapon in the war against subversion! When I aim you, you shoot! If you have no bullets, you get them. If you cannot buy them, you make them. If you cannot make them, you invent them! Do you understand?

JILL You mean you want me to *kill* her? I won't.

MR. DEAL You will do exactly what I instruct you to do. Divorce does not exist in your profession. But don't worry. We have quite sophisticated garbage disposals.

JILL She's not garbage.

MR. DEAL Is she seducing you? (SITS; JUMPS UP SCREAMING; FINDS BEE, ETC)

JILL Mr. Deal. What's the matter with you?

MR. DEAL Everyone's got a bee up my ass, that's what's the matter! They leave 'em around with their initials on them. (EMPTY CONTAINER) See? The EPA, the AMA, the NRC, you name it! Don't you see the pressures on me?

JILL But if she's so deluded, why do they care?

MR. DEAL She upsets people. She stirs up anxiety. She creates distrust in government. Listen! (PICKS UP A BEE; READS) Here's what the energy people say. She's irrational, emotional, negative and — how do you say that word, dour — so it rhymes with power, or dour with whore, or sewer — dour and shrill. (PICKS UP ANOTHER) The religious groups call her a prophetess of doom, whining and wailing — (SITS; LEAPS UP AGAIN, SCREAMING. PICKS UP ANOTHER "BEE") Even the doctors condemn her! They say she's abrasive, tactless, hyperbolic — and negligent.

JILL But she has her advocates.

MR. DEAL Discredit her, and they'll waver. Once they waver, we give a push — and they all fall down. Faith in government must be restored.

JILL What do you want from me?

MR. DEAL Dirt. If you don't have enough, go digging. If there is none, create it. Use Ap.

JILL Aha. The lover knows.

MR. DEAL Exactly. And he's also President of the Medical Society. He has a position to maintain.

JILL How do I... encourage him?

MR. DEAL Use your own position. (GUFFAWS) Positions. (BECKONS HER CLOSER, THEN GRABS HER EAR) Give me your ear.

IT COMES OFF IN HIS CLAW. HE DOESN'T NOTICE BUT STARTS WHISPERING INTO IT, AS IF JILL WERE STILL ATTACHED.

JILL This requires no boning up at all.

MR. DEAL He loves women.

JILL Right. But I'll need my ear.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE ELEVEN

OFFSTAGE. MUSIC FROM A SINGLE INSTRUMENT - A FLUTE, A GUITAR, A VIOLIN, ETC.

DR. C IS EXAMINING HERSELF WITH A SPECULUM.

DR. C Inside myself. Looking. Eyes inside myself, to see. No one else there. Nothing else there. Post the notice,

NO TRESPASSING. Beware of the dog. He'll mangle you. Your body is open. Here is the entrance, lips major and minor. Major, minor — how will history write me? A figure in other people's stories? A voice without a name crying out in the wilderness, or a name without a voice, without the word that could have saved us. A higher mouth, a lower one. Only women have two. But if both are silenced? Deeper. Inside the lips, folds of flesh, no tongue. Philomela had a tongue, once. She was raped, her tongue cut. But she sang her grief, a nightingale. I wanted to see and tell. Show and tell. Kiss and tell. That's what *he* did. The bastard. I wanted to move out of myself. But the path isn't marked. A long tunnel, dark. Does it lead somehow to the heart? Is it all connected? Yes, all connected. Then why am I so alone?

TITLE. INTROSPECTION, RETROSPECTION; OR, IN BED WITH A MYTH

There's the mouth of my womb, closed like a fist. No life took root inside, no life pushing out, no life. I have no life! But I could have, if I played the game. If I did what women do. Smile and say yes. Smile and speak softly. But who would have heard me then? Who can hear a whisper in the roar of the world? Put your words in a man's voice, that's the ticket. But every ticket has a price. You can't ride the train for free. That's right, that's right. Maybe I should have paid... But where's the line between paying out and selling out? I can't see any further. It's dark. But far ahead, at the tunnel's end, there's a little hole of light. That's all I want - to make the light brighter, bigger, to make it last. I want to let the world in but I'm afraid, I'm afraid it will trample me. I want to take off like a bird on a blue flight but it's lonely up there in the sky, I know that, no one to sing with me, no one to even understand my song, no one to protect me from the vicious winds or talk me through the clouds and then, it's inevitable, the sun, the sun will burn my wings, I'll fall. Oh, it's no good, it's no use. (LIGHTS UP IN DR. AP'S HOME. IT IS HE WHO IS PLAYING THE INSTRUMENT) There's nothing at the end, only an echo. The darkness is rolling in. I don't want to fall. Someone, help. I don't want my light extinguished. Help me. Help us. Someone.

LIGHTS DIM THERE AS DR. C LIES BACK IN THE BED. IN AP'S SPACE, THE DOORBELL RINGS. HE GOES TO THE DOOR.

DR. AP Yes? Who's there?

JILL (IN A FRANTIC WHISPER) I'm in danger. Please. Let me in. (DR. AP OPENS THE DOOR. JILL, ATTIRED AS SHE FIRST APPEARED — MONUMENTAL BREASTS AND ASS, ETC. — BURSTS IN) Help! A man is following me.

DR. AP Why?

JILL Why? You see me. It happens often. I go for a walk. I forget to conceal myself. I allow my... body its freedom. A man follows me. I take refuge, like this. Thank you.

DR. AP (GOES TO DOOR) Let me see if —

JILL (INTERVENING SO THAT HER BREASTS TOUCH HIM) No, no! Let him pass by, let us make sure. He may be searching for the door that opens even a crack.

DR. AP What does he want with you?

JILL STARES AT HIM INCREDULOUSLY.

IN C'S ROOM. DR. C IS NOW ASLEEP IN BED. A TAPE OF TWO VOICES, C'S AND JILL'S, PLAYS OVER HER SLEEP.

TAPE What does one do to wake oneself up? One pinches oneself perhaps. Perhaps one bolts upright in bed (C BOLTS UP, THEN HUDDLES BACK TO SLEEP) or has another pour cold water on one. But then of course there are two waking one up. Two waking one up, two...

DR. AP Well then. Come in.

JILL Thank you so much. And is it all right if I smoke?

DR. AP If you like.

JILL I only do what I like. (LIGHTS UP)

IN DR. C'S ROOM, C TWISTS AND TURNS.

TAPE Waking — by water by ice by fire by steel by rats by a smiling inquisitor inching a cigarette toward one's eyes. But these are tortures. These are tortures, of course.

DISTORTED TAPED VOICE This is the electric company speaking.

DR. AP How about a drink?

JILL Oh no. No. I need an unclouded mind. I have to return to the library.

DR. AP The library!?

JILL Why yes. I work there.

DR. AP You don't look like a librarian.

JILL Things are not always what they seem. Let's take you.

DR. AP At your disposal.

JILL You look like a Greek God. Now, now, don't protest. You know it's true. But the fact is, you're a doctor.

DR. AP How did you know that?

JILL Oh — a touch of clairvoyance.

DR. AP You probably saw my medical bag when you walked in.

JILL No. But I saw — (GESTURES TO THE PHOTO OF DR. C) — that. Who's she?

DR. AP Another clairvoyante. (TURNS PHOTO TOWARD WALL)

TAPE Wake up! Wake up! into the chill of morning and the glow of

evening and the clamour of voices and the 'pass the salt' and the 'I love you' and the promise of what? and the terror of what?

JILL (TURNING PHOTO BACK) Good looking woman. Great hair.

DR. AP She's a doctor.

JILL Your wife?

DR. AP I thought you had second sight. Surely you can see that I'm unmarried.

JILL I was hoping my vision wasn't clouded.

TAPE If I were to open my eyes, what would I see? If I were to open my ears, what would I hear? If I were to open my mouth, would a song fall out, or a scream?

C BOLTS UP IN BED, HER MOUTH WIDE OPEN.

JILL What kind of doctor is she?

DR. AP Gynecologist, obstetrician.

JILL Really? Well, isn't that a coincidence. I've been looking for a female doctor. What's her name?

DR. AP Dr. C... I don't think she's taking new patients. She's very busy.

JILL If she's that busy, she must be good.

DR. AP She has a lot of outside interests... What kind of work are you doing at the library?

JILL I'm a classicist. I'm doing research on Greek mythology... You don't recommend Dr. C?

DR. AP Not at the moment... What aspect of Greek mythology?

JILL The stories of two women — Pandora and Cassandra. (LOOKING AT THE PHOTO AGAIN) You know — it's amazing... her hair is exactly the same length, the same texture as Cassandra's in existing paintings of her...

DR. AP Talk of amazing... Her given name is Cassandra.

JILL No!

DR. AP Yes.

JILL Well then, you must be... Apollo.

DR. AP I do love music... And women.

JILL Oh yes. I know. Sun God. Got inflamed as easily as a match. (TAKES ANOTHER CIGARETTE) Light me up, will you?

HE DOES. THEY BEGIN MAKING LOVE.

IN DR. C'S ROOM, A CATTLE PROD HELD BY A HOODED FIGURE PROBES THE SPACE.

DISTORTED TAPED VOICE Is your phone working? Your lights? toaster? television? refrigerator? blender? vacuum? shaver? hair curlers? electric knife? cattle prods?

THE CATTLE PROD MOVES THROUGH THE ROOM AND FINALLY STOPS AT THE PAINTING OVER C'S BED. IT TOUCHES THE HEAD OF THE CASSANDRA FIGURE, CAUSING A LOUD ELECTRICAL BUZZ.

AT THE NOISE, DR. C WAKES, TURNS ON THE LIGHT; THE HOODED FIGURE SLIPS OUT. SHE JUMPS OUT OF BED AND SEARCHES THE ROOM. IN THE PAINTING, SHE DISCOVERS AN ELECTRICAL BURN WHERE CASSANDRA'S FACE HAD BEEN. THERE IS A BURN ON HER OWN FACE. SHE QUICKLY DIALS AP'S NUMBER. THE PHONE RINGS IN AP'S ROOM.

JILL Don't answer.

DR. AP I'm a doctor, remember? (PICKS UP) Yes?

DR. C Ap. It's me. Hole in the head. Burns. Torture. They're after me.

DR. AP What? Calm down.

DR. C I was sleeping... There were instruments of torture, then an awful sizzling sound and —

DR. AP A bad dream. Go back to sleep.

DR. C I can't. I'm afraid.

DR. AP It's very late...

DR. C I could have been killed!

DR. AP You exaggerate. As usual.

DR. C You don't love me at all, do you?

DR. AP You'll feel better in the morning.

DR. C What if there is no morning?

SLOW BLACKOUT THERE.

JILL (LIGHTS A CIGARETTE) Cassandra? (AP NODS) Maybe I'd better leave.

DR. AP No, no. She's hysterical, that's all.

JILL Do you think she's really in trouble?

DR. AP She's always in trouble.

JILL She's done something illegal?

DR. AP Something? Everything.

JILL Then you're in trouble, too!

DR. AP Oh no. Not any more. I'm out of it.

JILL But don't you have any letters of hers? Papers? You could be incriminated.

DR. AP You're right. (JUMPS OUT OF BED, GETS STACK OF PAPERS, ETC)

JILL I'll help. (HOLDS HER CIGARETTE TO FIRST LETTER. AS IT CHARS) God! She says here she stole a warhead from—

DR. AP (SNATCHING IT AWAY FROM HER) These are private.

JILL Sorry. I'm addicted to research.

DR. AP Am I research material too?

JILL You've taught me a thing or two. (BURNING MORE PAPERS) Of course I'm an insatiable student.

DR. AP I love big appetites. (TAKING OUT A LOCKED BOX) I don't think this will burn.

JILL What is it?

DR. AP I don't know. A box she left here.

JILL Let's see. (TRIES TO OPEN IT BUT CAN'T) Must contain her prophecies. Top secret, right? (AP SHRUGS) I really have something to live up to - an oracle. I never competed with one of those before.

DR. AP The love affair's over. I told you. (TOUCHES HER) Would you care for tangible proof?

JILL If you can give it.

DR. AP I can do anything I want. (PULLS HER TOWARDS HIM, ROUGHLY)

JILL I see you like power.

DR. AP Don't you?

JILL How should I know? I don't have any.

DR. AP (IN A MOCK-GANGSTER VOICE) Stick with me, baby.

JILL Is that what you told your Cassandra?

DR. AP Forget about her. (STARTS KISSING HER)

JILL Do we have time?

DR. AP (CONSULTS HIS WATCH; WRYLY) Like my watch?

JILL Looks expensive.

DR. AP It was. Very. (THEY START MAKING LOVE. THE DOORBELL RINGS. THEY BOTH FREEZE) I'll put everything in my bag. No one will suspect me. (CRAMS THE BOX, PAPERS, LETTERS IN BIG BAG)

DR. AP Who's there?

DR. C I had to come. Let me in. Please.

JILL (MOUTHING) Cassandra? (AP NODS) I'll hide. (STILL SMOKING, SHE DOES)

AP OPENS THE DOOR. DR. C STANDS THERE. FROM THIS POINT UNTIL THE END OF THE PLAY SHE IS CONTINUALLY SHUTTling BETWEEN HER CONTEMPORARY AND HER MYTHICAL ROLES. DR. C AND CASSANDRA, FROM SENTENCE TO SENTENCE AND EVEN MOMENT TO MOMENT.

DR. C It's coming to an end. It's over. The sun is setting, our sun. Do you understand? Look at me. (THERE IS A BURN ON HER FACE. SHE'S GAUNT) The Trojan Horse is inside our gates.

DR. AP You're hallucinating.

DR. C No. It's real. The end is here. Can't you smell the fumes? Can't you taste the poisons on your tongue? I know. I know. That's why they want to destroy me.

DR. AP People like you sound the alarm before the fire breaks out.

DR. C And you don't see the flames until your house burns down. (NOTICES SMOKE FILTERING OUT FROM UNDER THE BED) Look! It's happening NOW! (RUNS TO BED, LOOKS UNDER IT, DISCOVERS JILL STILL SMOKING)

JILL Fools rush in.

DR. C You...!?!?

JILL I could have left you with your illusions. Why did you have to lose your cool?

DR. C Why are you blushing?

JILL Heat rises. (GLANCES AT AP)

DR. C But... you don't know him.

JILL I just had the pleasure.

DR. AP You know her?

DR. C There's that old bible talk again... (PAINED) But with her. With her! ... She works for me.

DR. AP You do?

JILL I'm a free agent.

DR. AP So you didn't come here by accident?

JILL There are no accidents.

DR. C Except in nuclear plants.

JILL Spare me.

DR. C That was always my intention. But you - I thought you were my friend.

JILL I am. But you can't eat friendship.

DR. C You mean you live on lies? Both of you?

DR. AP I never lied to you.

JILL Cassandra promised Apollo she'd sleep with him in return for the gift of prophecy. She got her gift and then reneged. That's lying.

DR. C That's prostitution. I didn't need a god for that. But then — you know all about whoring!!

JILL A job's a job. I make a contract, I keep it.

DR. AP I can't believe it. I've been used. I've been had. By both of you. I thought I understood women.

JILL Experience and understanding are different. Take it from me.

DR. C Don't either of you have feelings?

JILL Sure I have feelings. But they don't rule me. I told you once, C, I think you're terrific. But a girl's gotta live.

DR. AP (TO C) She's right. You've ruined everything with your "emotion," with your panic and fear. No wonder no one listens. Hundreds of groups

all over the world are fighting the same fight. But you! You don't reason, you don't try to persuade, you just scream. You're like chalk scraping on a blackboard.

DR. C Aha. Loud female equals chalk. Loud male equals Parker Pen.

JILL Difference is, chalk can be erased.

DR. C All of us — erased. The horse — the doors are opening. Death is sneaking out, minute by minute. There's nothing left on earth. Raindrops of poison. Sun deadly. Mother's milk contaminated. Ozone thin, thin as my smile —

JILL Your smile will evaporate if you stick around any longer. Get moving. Fast. (GRABS AND KISSES HER HARD) I'll see you in another life.

DR. C (PUSHES HER AWAY) Your mouth is a grave.

JILL I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you.

DR. C Make up. Make-up. You're wearing rouge again. Don't kill yourself. Don't.

DR. AP (GUIDING HER TOWARD THE BED) Come here. Lie down.

DR. C In your bed? With all that hair? There's nowhere to sleep, nowhere to live, nothing to eat — nothing nothing even to wear. This dress — cotton — but who knows what plant, I mean nuclear, has leaked its gases onto the plant where the cotton blossoms? Into the soil where the silkworms breed. . . the hides of cattle— (STARTS PULLING OFF HER CLOTHES) It's killing me. I'm on fire. we'll all die.

AS SHE STRIPS, JILL CRAMS REMAINING INCRIMINATORY ITEMS IN HER BAG AND SLIPS OUT. DR. AP PICKS UP THE PHONE, DIALS.

DR. AP Dr. Ap here. Send an ambulance. To my place. Someone has to be committed.

DR. C (EXCITEDLY; TO AP) Yes, yes, you're right. We have to be committed! We have to fight. I knew you'd see the light, darling. I knew it! (RUNS TO EMBRACE HIM)

THE SOUND OF A SIREN.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWELVE

LIGHTS UP ON THE PAINTING OF CASSANDRA ATOP A PILE OF JUNK. WHERE CASSANDRA'S FACE USED TO BE, THERE IS ONLY A SHANK OF LONG HAIR LIKE A CURTAIN. A RAIN OF FINE DUST FALLS AROUND THE PAINTING.

ELSEWHERE, LIGHTS COME UP ON MR. DEAL'S OFFICE. WITH HIS Pincer HE IS PRYING OPEN THE BOX THAT JILL HAS BROUGHT HIM. SHE STANDS NEAR, SMOKING.

TITLE. OUT OF THE PICTURE

MR. DEAL This is all?

JILL I tried to tell you. Everything she does is public.

MR. DEAL No wonder she failed. (PRIES LID OPEN) Now what have we here? (TAKES ITEMS OUT) — Three, five, seven, eight baby teeth. Baby teeth! (TAKES OUT STEM OF A PRESERVED DAISY) One daisy, minus petals.

JILL An irradiated daisy.

MR. DEAL Baby teeth, daisies. What a sentimentalist! (LIFTS OUT A SPECULUM) What's this thing?

JILL A speculum.

MR. DEAL What's it for?

JILL To look inside.

MR. DEAL To look inside what?

JILL . . . The mystery of woman.

MR. DEAL Oo! Disgusting! (LETS IT DROP) Pack it up. Put everything in her file.

JILL She could have had a great career. Could have been a Joan of Arc, a Madam Curie, a —

MR. DEAL She was just a Cassandra. Minor character. (HANDS JILL MONEY) Take a vacation. Lie on a beach. You deserve it.

JILL Thanks. I'll stick to the mountains. (PAUSE) Mr. Deal, I'd like to take a leave.

MR. DEAL What? Impossible. We have a Presidential candidate who needs your services.

JILL I've lost my taste for government.

MR. DEAL But government has not lost its taste for you, my sweet.

JILL This job soured me.

MR. DEAL No more women. I promise.

JILL There aren't any women left. If they're like C, you cut out their tongues. If they're like me, you cut out their hearts. There's gotta be a better way.

MR. DEAL You're not in a position to find it, I'm afraid.

JILL Not if I stay on my back.

MR. DEAL (GRABS HER WITH HIS CLAW) You'll stay where I put you.

JILL I thought you might try that. (PULLS A NUTCRACKER OUT OF HER BAG AND CRACKS HIS Pincer. HE HOWLS) I've been dreaming of this. . . ! (PULLS OFF HER BIG PADDED RUMP AND TOSSES IT IN HIS FACE AS SHE MAKES HER GETAWAY) Nice ass, isn't it?

MR. DEAL You're nothing without us, nobody — (TRIES TO PICK UP PHONE BUT HIS BROKEN CLAW WON'T GRIP IT)

LIGHTS OUT THERE AND UP BRIGHTER ON THE PAINTING. JILL RUNS TO IT.

JILL Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair. (TAKES OUT HER

CAMERA. THE FIGURE RAISES ITS HANDS AND PARTS THE CURTAIN OF HAIR SO THAT ITS FACE IS VISIBLE - A SKELETON. JILL GASPS. THE SKELETON PEELS OFF ITS MASK; IT IS A MASK OF DR. C WEARING A MUZZLE) Your name is Cassandra, right? (THE MUZZLED FACE PEELS OFF THE MUZZLE. IT IS A MASK OF DR. C WITHOUT A MOUTH) Right. Only you can't talk. (THE MASK IS PULLED AWAY; BENEATH IT IS THE STYLIZED BIG-EYED FACE OF DR. C. SHE YANKS BRUTALLY ON THE TWO HANKS OF HAIR; THEY FALL TO THE GROUND, LEAVING HER BALD) Don't worry. Pictures talk. Hold it like that. (SHE RAISES HER CAMERA. THERE IS A FLASH AS SHE TAKES A PICTURE OF DR. C. THEN DR. C PULLS OFF HER BALD CAP AND PEELS OFF THE FALSE EYES. WE SEE THE FACE OF THE ACTRESS PLAYING DR. C. JILL OPENS HER PORTFOLIO) Look. You'll be part of my portfolio. (TAKES OUT THE PHOTOS OF NUCLEAR VICTIMS. SHE HANGS THEM OVER THE FIGURES OF AJAX, ATHENA, ETC. ON THE CANVAS) I think I'll have an exhibit. Not bad, huh? Out of all this mess, I saved something.

*JILL STAMPS OUT HER CIGARETTE. THE TWO WOMEN SMILE AT EACH OTHER. BUT THE DUST CONTINUES TO FALL.
BLACKOUT.*

