

ARTHUR OF THE LITTLE ROUND TABLE
By Norman Weinstein

ACT ONE
Scene 1

(Scott Joplin's "Fig Leaf Rag" is playing fairly loudly before and while lights come up. ARTHUR HONEYCUTT is moving about his small shop in bouncy step as he adjusts various items. Mission furniture and other Arts and Crafts pieces such as linens and pottery dominate the scene. His wife PENNY soon joins him; he grabs her to dance about to the tune. She reluctantly cooperates.)

ARTHUR

(Over the music and dancing.)

A lucky Friday the thirteenth. Our grand opening! Haven't been this excited since I told Carlson to shove it.

PENNY

Hey, Arthur, come on, cut it out!

(Stops their dancing.)

Can't you turn this stuff off? It's too ping-pingy. My God!

ARTHUR

Atmosphere, Penny. Music right out of Gustav Stickley's time. 1905, I'd say. Put our customers in a buying mood. Listen to that rag! Wow! But all right, I'll turn it off...until customers start coming.

(Turns off the CD player.)

You'll see, we're going to take off. No one's selling Mission in this neighborhood. We'll be known for great inventory...and wonderful atmosphere.

PENNY

Known? Who by?

ARTHUR

Our customers, that's who! We'll have mailing lists, we'll run ads. Already have. I've practically memorized *Be Your Own Boss*, and I intend to be.

PENNY

We have children, Arthur, remember? They like to eat.

ARTHUR

How can I forget we have children? Especially Jenny!

PENNY

Now why do you always bring Jenny up? The child was born fifteen years ago.

ARTHUR

You made me watch. You made me go to those damn sessions. "Mona's husband's doing it," you said. Who the hell was Mona anyhow?

PENNY

Greatest moment in his life, he said, and you ran out screaming you felt sick just when I was pushing out that child.

ARTHUR

I wasn't screaming. Having that baby took a lot out of me.

PENNY

Then you exacted promises because your manhood was compromised. Well, here we are, Arthur's Consignment Shop, devoid of nothing but customers.

ARTHUR

We literally just opened, Penny. What do you expect?

PENNY

Arthur, I expect you to know that this agreement is my one and final payback for causing you embarrassment before the grown-ups.

ARTHUR

Yeah, but aren't you really glad I'm done with Zodiac Insurance, really?

PENNY

You were good at what you did, and you earned a fine living.

ARTHUR

A dying, you mean. Actuarial and demographic studies! You like being a legal secretary, but I hated what I did. I made people worth more dead than alive. Now look at me, look at what I'm doing. I'm saving bits and pieces of a special past.

PENNY

Sure, we buy junk, we sell antiques.

ARTHUR

No, we search for Mission castaways. We're treasure hunters, Penny, Arts and Crafts treasure hunters. And these pieces we're collecting speak. They say, "I was right there, I saw it all, I heard ragtime just when it was happening!" Like what I've been telling you, Penny.

PENNY

Yep, often.

ARTHUR

Teddy Roosevelt went after the slums and the big trusts and they passed child labor laws and there was police reform and the settlement houses started and...

PENNY

And Gustav Stickley and his little elves went to work at midnight with hammer and nails, right?

ARTHUR

Exactly.

PENNY

That chair over there, that one, chair with an attitude, right? A philosophy?

ARTHUR

Absolutely! No, these aren't just things, Penny, these were new and important and honest expressions. Yeah, there was mission oak and pottery like Rookwood and Weller and copper by Roycroft and embroidered linen. We're significant, Penny.

PENNY

I do hope we will be.

ARTHUR

Yes, we offer treasures to the world. Just look at this little beauty here.

(Holds up a tiny wood and leather footstool.)

PENNY

I'm looking. It's awful little, isn't it?

ARTHUR

Gustav Stickley, right as rain. See that red decal? 1904, give or take. Is that exciting, or is that exciting? Penny, we're it for this whole damn county. Genuine Gus, this stool. And over there, that's an L. and J.G. Stickley chair. We have it all, Stickley Brothers, Limbert, Roycroft. Darwin was wrong about those damn monkeys of his. We're descended from squirrels. Collectors'll go nuts here! I mean it!

PENNY

Yeah, well, okay, calm down, Honey.... Listen, no one wants more than me for you, for us, to succeed. Boy, do we need the money! Meanwhile, thank God, I have my job, and so I'm off to work. Think you'll be all right here alone all day?

ARTHUR

I'll be fine, don't worry. I've got to clean and wax.... Hey, hey, look out there, look!

(Stares out over audience.)

Our first customer!

(Switches on the CD player again and Joplin's "The Ragtime Dance" plays.)

PENNY

What do you know? Except...his van's rusted, it's missing the front bumper, the rear glass is broken.... Better get out your big-ticket items...and hide them.

ARTHUR

Maybe he's eccentric. Lots of collectors are, especially Mission collectors.

PENNY

Honey, this ain't no collector. He must've escaped from a cornfield!

ARTHUR

Cut it out! Our first customer, he deserves respect.

PENNY

An eccentric millionaire if I ever saw one.

(The front door swings open, with the attached bell loudly ringing. An unshaven MAN in floppy and stained overalls steps in and sizes up the scene.)

ARTHUR

Welcome.... You're our very first customer.

MAN

Yeah? What? Can't hear you with that damn music!

ARTHUR

Oh, well, here, I'll switch it off. From Gustav Stickley's time, you know.
(Turns off the player.)

MAN

(Looking around.)
Yeah, better.... Hmm, just what I thought.
(PENNY goes behind the jewelry counter, closes the door behind it and locks it.)

MAN

Yeah, I was waiting for you to open. Come by twice when you weren't here. See what kind of stuff you got. You'll get to know me pretty well pretty soon.

ARTHUR

Why is that? Are you into...?

MAN

Mission? Oh, yeah...oh, yeah. Name's Willowtree, Guy Willowtree. Call me Guy or call me Willowtree, don't matter.

ARTHUR

I'm Arthur Honeycutt. That your real name, Guy Willowtree?

WILLOWTREE

What, Guy or Willowtree?

ARTHUR

Willowtree.

WILLOWTREE

Oh, yeah...yeah, that's me. Flexible's my motto....

(Wanders about touching at the various Mission items.)

I'm a picker.

ARTHUR

My wife, Penny.

WILLOWTREE

Glad to meet you.... Yeah, picker. Important one. I go places. Ask the others.

PENNY

Others?

WILLOWTREE

Dealers, collectors. Ask any of 'em. Ask Dillsworth, ask Castagna, ask Munson.

ARTHUR

You know them? You know Jeffrey Dillsworth?

WILLOWTREE

Who you think gave them their start?

ARTHUR

They're big time.

WILLOWTREE

Don't I know it? Now that there, that table there...

(Points to a lamp table.)

That G. and J.G. Stickle?

ARTHUR

That's...yeah, well, it's L. And J. G. Stickle's lamp table, catalogue number 573.

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, yeah, just what I was saying.... Yep, you'll get to know me right well.

PENNY

I've got to run, I'll be late.... Nice meeting you, Mr. Willowtree.

(Shakes his grimy hand, then gives ARTHUR a peck.)

Bye, Dear. Good luck.

ARTHUR

(As she exits.)
Bye, Honey.

WILLOWTREE

Pretty little woman.
(PENNY exits.)

I once had one. Left me. Said I was spending too much time picking. I pick everything, but Mission's special. I know where to find it.

ARTHUR

Where?... I mean, any places in particular?

WILLOWTREE

Me to know, and don't never tell nobody who you got it from.... You do business with Willowtree, that's my rule...plus cash. You hear?

ARTHUR

Of course.

WILLOWTREE

Wait here. I got something.

(He exits while ARTHUR pulls out his wallet and a wad of bills, which he counts and puts away just as WILLOWTREE returns holding a tabouret, a small, dark, round mission table, 20 inches high. He sets it down, gives it a loving wipe with a dirty handkerchief and then steps back dramatically.)

WILLOWTREE

Walla!

ARTHUR

Wow!

(Lifts it and examines it lovingly.)

Gustav Stickley! Tabouret 603. Nice top, dark original finish, barely stressed, tight! 1907, I'd say.... Yeah, 1907 tabouret! There it is, the little red decal on the stretcher.

WILLOWTREE

Oh, sure. What did I tell you? I only get the best. You know your stuff, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Yeah, well, I'm learning.... You selling this by any chance?

WILLOWTREE

Thought I might take it downtown. Dillsworth and them's always interested.

ARTHUR

I'm willing to pay well. You might want to try me. I got cash, right here.
(Pats his back pocket.)

WILLOWTREE

Like twelve hundred big ones?

ARTHUR

Twelve?

WILLOWTREE

Well, since this may be the start of...okay, say nine.

ARTHUR

Oh, no...I mean, I don't have that kind of cash. Check, yeah, but cash?...

WILLOWTREE

What've you got?

ARTHUR

(Looking down longingly at tabouret, he pulls out his wallet.)

Thirty-five twenties is all I got.

WILLOWTREE

Thirty-five twenties?... Oh, boy...oh, boy...I don't know.... Well, Arthur, tell you what. You owe me one. Yep, you owe me a big one.... She's yours.

(Takes ARTHUR'S wad of bills.)

ARTHUR

(Triumphantly hoists the tabouret.)

Wow!

WILLOWTREE

You ought to do great with this baby.

ARTHUR

Oh, I think you're right! Can't go wrong with this, can I?

WILLOWTREE

No way.

LIGHTS

ACT ONE
Scene 2

(Joplin's "A Breeze from Alabama" is playing as lights come up on the shop the following morning. PENNY idly flips through the consignment book while ARTHUR, la-de-dahing and moving to the tune, glances down at his new tabouret and pats it.)

PENNY

You're chipper.

ARTHUR

It's Saturday. Antiquers do their greedy little thing on Saturdays.

PENNY

Your lips to God's ears. Yesterday was zilch, except for that fetish you're stroking.

ARTHUR

Spend money, make money, and look what I got.

PENNY

You got a little round table.

ARTHUR

Gus original. You should've seen how I bargained Willowtree down. I was tough.

PENNY

Arthur, look, someone's pulling in.

ARTHUR

That's a Mercedes convertible! God!

(Leaps to the CD player and turns up the volume of the rag.)

PENNY

Better a customer.

(The door opens, jangling the bell. HARRIET VANDERHORST enters grandly. She gazes imperiously over the shop.)

HARRIET

Good afternoon.

ARTHUR

Hello. As you can see, we have a special interest in American Arts and Crafts.

HARRIET

Why I am here. My friend informed me.... Is that noise necessary? I can't think!

ARTHUR

Oh, yes, sure. Here, I'll switch it off.

(Switches off the player.)

It's for atmosphere. Stickley's era, ragtime, right as rain.

HARRIET

Is it? Have you read *The Craftsman*? I assume you know Gustav's magazine.

ARTHUR

Oh, I've read a bunch of the articles. Haven't seen them all, of course, but...

HARRIET

Well, there's one you should read – December, 1915. Jeffrey told me about it. The author expresses how vulgar and lowdown he finds that honky-tonk stuff you were playing. Worthless! Probably Stickley's opinion, too, since it was in his magazine, after all.

ARTHUR

Oh, well, I...anyhow, maybe he didn't read through all his magazines, and...I'm Arthur Honeycutt and this's my wife, Penny, and over there's a Limbert sideboard.

HARRIET

No interest whatsoever.

ARTHUR

Oh? Maybe Stickley Brothers?

HARRIET

Absolutely not.

ARTHUR

L. And J.G. Stickley...Roycroft?

HARRIET

Occasionally.

ARTHUR

Gustav all the way, huh? Like that two-door bookcase over there, his number 717?

HARRIET

I have the piece. Mine is very dark, very early, mint, with mitered mullions. Yours is too late. I collect early Gustav, with Jeffrey Dillsworth's assistance, of course.

ARTHUR

Hear that, Penny? Jeffrey Dillsworth!

PENNY

I heard. And you are?...

HARRIET

Harriet Vanderhorst.

ARTHUR

Harriet Vanderhorst?... Your collection's one of the greatest! My God, your Gustav Stickley china cabinet, your Gus even-arm settle! Wow!

PENNY

Arthur's very enthusiastic about Arts and Crafts.

HARRIET

(Glancing down at the tabouret.)

And what have we here?

ARTHUR

Super, huh? Just got it. Gus 603. One hundred per cent right. 1907, I'd say.

HARRIET

I might be able to use this. Could work by my bow-arm.

ARTHUR

You have a Gus bow-arm Morris chair, too?

HARRIET

Early one, with the inverted-tapered legs.

ARTHUR

Hear that, Penny, with the tapered legs?

HARRIET

How much for this?

ARTHUR

I think our best price is...well, eighteen hundred.

HARRIET

Let's do nine.

ARTHUR

Thousand four?

HARRIET

Thousand one.

ARTHUR

All right, one one.

(Glances happily at PENNY as he picks up a sales slip.)

Let me write it up for you.... With tax that'll come to...

HARRIET

Oh, I never pay sales tax. If you need a dealer number, I'll give you one. Here.

(Hands him a slip of paper from her purse and then proceeds to write a check.)

Please keep me in mind. Remember, for me it's Gustav Stickley, early. And of course it goes without saying...there is that mystery piece...always the mystery piece.

ARTHUR

Mystery piece?

HARRIET

You really are new to this.... Think Holy Grail and Gustav Stickley.

(HARRIET lifts the tabouret and turns to leave when the bell jangles. MARCIA STEINHARDT enters.)

MARCIA

Well, look who's here.

HARRIET

Because of you, Marcia dear.

(Gives MARCIA a quick peck, then turns to PENNY and ARTHUR.)

She told me about you. This is Marcia Steinhardt.

(To MARCIA, indicating the tabouret.)

And look what I got.

MARCIA

I won't try again to tell you how awful I think that stuff is, but I'm glad you're pleased.

HARRIET

I must run, dear, and show this to Jeffrey.... Goodbye now.

(Exits.)

MARCIA

What a sweet, gentle person Harriet is, and so serious about her collecting. I don't want to insult you, but I will never understand how otherwise bright, sensitive human beings can appreciate that ugly brown furniture.

ARTHUR

We must work on you, Ms....Ms?...

MARCIA

Mrs. Steinhardt...Marcia Steinhardt.... It won't do any good, I assure you.

PENNY

Hi. I'm Penny and this is Arthur. Do you collect anything?

MARCIA

Oh, of course, jet and Bakelite jewelry...and Depression glass...and Tiffany, of course.

PENNY

We aren't just Mission, you know, we're also a consignment shop, and so...
(Points out where the jewelry is.)

ARTHUR

I'll leave you two. I'm off to our back room for a little hands on. I'm about to rush a Stickley Brothers side chair myself, Mrs. Steinhardt. I've been reading up on it. From actuarial researcher to restorer of Mission furniture...quite a leap, huh?

MARCIA

Forward I'm not so sure.

(ARTHUR departs for the back room, on the way switching on "A Breeze From Alabama" at low volume from the point left off while PENNY conducts MARCIA to the jewelry case and begins pulling out pieces.)

MARCIA

Ah, this is pretty. Jet's light as air, isn't it? Now this brooch is very Victorian..... Do you like jet? Used for mourning jewelry, of course. Oh, please let me see that Deco bracelet over there, the Bakelite yellow one.... I think collecting offers a wonderful control over husbands.

PENNY

(Turns off CD.)

Don't you need their cooperation? I mean, when you bring your goodies home?

MARCIA

Oh, no, husbands are always guilty about something, so when they react negatively to your purchases, you just go silent and stare. Their beady eyes will tell you something's afloat on a stream of guilt. Tit for tat is now at work.

ARTHUR

(Yowling loudly from offstage.)

Ow!...Ow!... Holy shit!... Damn it all to hell!

(Appears, clutching his hand.)

Tacked my finger! It's killing me! And I can't stand blood!

PENNY

I'll get a Band-Aid.

(To MARCIA as she exits to back room.)

He has a very low pain threshold.

MARCIA

Most of 'em do.

(To ARTHUR.)

I'm so sorry you're injured. So much for do-it-yourself, I guess.

ARTHUR

I won't give up!... But God, it really hurts!

PENNY

(Reappears with a box of Band-Aids and works on ARTHUR'S hand.)

You got blood on the rush you were using.

MARCIA

Should tell your customers how committed you are.

(The door opens. ANDREW CANNON, a rough-hewn man, enters, carrying a large cardboard box, which rattles metallically as he sets it down.)

CANNON

Remember me?

ARTHUR

You brought us those repro mechanical banks, right?

CANNON

Yep, Andrew Cannon. No more'n a week ago. I don't deal in junk. Those repros are close to genuine, good stuff, but you got to know what you can charge.

ARTHUR

Yeah, right, I guess I thought maybe...

CANNON

Naw, the real stuff goes for thousands. You got 'em marked out as repros, right? Man sold 'em to me thought he'd trick me. "Willowtree," I said, "you're full of it! Here's what I'll give you for them repros." He didn't argue, not with me.

ARTHUR

Guy Willowtree?

CANNON

Not sure of the *Guy* part. You gotta know your stuff. You don't want to get the wrong reputation. We've had our share of crooks around here. Me, I'm honest to the core.

MARCIA

Just what I like to hear, Mr....er... We need lots more like you.

PENNY

Willowtree, Mr. Cannon? Yep, I agree, only way to be, honest.

CANNON

Wouldn't come here if I thought otherwise.

(Stoops down by the box and throws it open.)

Now this here's not a reproduction.

(Lifts a cowbell and shakes it, the sound unbelievably loud.)

What do you think this is?

ARTHUR

Bell?

CANNON

Ever hear of Switzerland?

MARCIA

Heidi...chocolate, you mean?

PENNY

Money laundering?

ARTHUR

Cut it out, Penny. We may be onto something here.

CANNON

Lots of cows. Whole collection of bells here. Know why?

(Pauses but gets no answer.)

Six of 'em, all sizes. Cow gives the most milk gets the biggest bell.... Make sense?

Then there's the mountains. Stupid cows get lost. This way you hear 'em. Got to charge big for these. Let's hang 'em where people'll bump up against 'em. People like cowbells, believe me.

(Again the jangling doorbell. In march HARRIET VANDERHORST and JEFFREY DILLSWORTH, an impeccably dressed man, silk scarf around his neck. He sizes up the place, his attention focusing for a moment on PENNY. HARRIET glances adoringly at him. He carries the tabouret in one hand.)

DILLSWORTH

Did you sell this to Mrs. Vanderhorst?

ARTHUR

Yes.

HARRIET

Mr. Honeycutt, in all my years as an Arts and Crafts collector, I have never been defrauded. And no louse is going to start now! I just knew that!...

ARTHUR

I...

HARRIET

How can you look a decent person in the eye?... You can't answer, can you? Jesus Christ, the nerve of this man!

DILLSWORTH

Just look at this thing, you.

(Holds out the tabouret toward ARTHUR.)

MARCIA

Oh, Harriet, I feel responsible for whatever's happened. It's this ugly furniture.

CANNON

Couldn't agree more.

HARRIET

I suspected all along. Jeffreys' only confirmed it. Tell him, Jeffrey

DILLSWORTH

Look at this, Honeycutt. Look at this damn thing closely. This leg isn't white oak.

(Turns the tabouret upside down.)

This metal piece holding the top. It's not Gustav.

PENNY

Can you be so sure?

DILLSWORTH

(Smiling sadly at PENNY and moving close to her.)

Afraid so. Long experience and a keen eye.

HARRIET

Go on, Jeffrey. Tell the creep.

DILLSWORTH

See this sloppy tenon?.... Honeycutt, I don't like my friend being stiffed!

(Again offers PENNY a sad little smile.)

HARRIET

I have never been stiffed before, humiliated! I really knew better.... Where's my check?

(ARTHUR rushes to the money box to retrieve her check, which he hands to her. She rips it up and dramatically drops the pieces on the floor.)

DILLSWORTH

I suggest you leave the selling of mission to others, Honeycutt. Anything else you trying to pass off here as genuine?... Those banks over there, are they fakes too?

CANNON

Repros.

DILLSWORTH

Figures.... Come on, Harriet, we'd best get the hell out of here.

MARCIA

I suppose we all should, Jeffrey.

(Gives PENNY a sympathetic look.)

CANNON

Yeah, you're right. I'll leave those bells, Honeycutt, but no funny stuff, you hear?

ARTHUR

Hold it, everyone!... Look, Mrs. Vanderhorst, everyone, I'm awful sorry. Maybe I got taken, okay, but it won't happen again, I promise!... Look, I'll make it up. Here...

(Fetches an embroidered linen runner from a rack and hands it to HARRIET.)

This is for you, with our compliments. Real Arts and Crafts. Please, take it. My way of saying I'm sorry.

DILLSWORTH

Where'd you get that tabouret anyway?

ARTHUR

I...I'm not really free to say.

DILLSWORTH

Oh, yeah? Well, whoever it was, I'd kick his butt and warn everyone about him.... That linen looks all right, Harriet, if you want it.

HARRIET

I can use it.... Mr. Honeycutt, you obviously have much to learn, but I am a very gentle and forgiving person. We'll see what the future holds.

DILLSWORTH

Remember, Honeycutt, first you crawl, then you walk. And you might just take a look at *The Hidden Treasures of Arts and Crafts* by Malcolm Sanderson.

(Looks at PENNY and smiles knowingly at her.)

Once you've learned to walk, Harriet and I might discuss our wants with you, including, of course...

ARTHUR

The mystery piece?

DILLSWORTH

Right.

CANNON

You be careful with them bells. You hear me, Honeycutt?

(All leave, except for PENNY and ARTHUR. He furiously smacks his right fist into his left hand.)

ARTHUR

Two days in business and my reputation's ruined! I'll get that dirty sonofabitch! I'll get Willowtree! And one of these days I'll put Dillsworth in his place, too! Arrogant bastard!

PENNY

He seemed pretty decent to me, considering how angry he was, and knowledgeable.

ARTHUR

Decent? You call that sonofabitch decent! He was drooling over you!

PENNY

I didn't notice. Besides, why didn't you at least tell him where you got that tabouret?

ARTHUR

Dealers aren't supposed to say where things come from. It's a matter of honor.

PENNY

I hope heredity's exaggerated. My poor children!*

ARTHUR

I'll find Willowtree! I'll show Dillsworth and Vanderhorst just what I'm made of. Believe me, Penny, I'm not washed up, no way! You'll see!

(ARTHUR angrily switches on loudly Joplin's "Combination March" before marching offstage, PENNY following.)

LIGHTS

ACT ONE

Scene 3

(Joplin's "Combination March" fades as lights come up dimly. All is quiet except for chirping insects. We see a shed, half offstage, in the moonlight. ARTHUR hides behind a bush before creeping toward the shed, flashlight in hand. Suddenly PENNY'S voice sounds from offstage.)

PENNY

Hey, Arthur!...

(ARTHUR jumps up and dashes back behind the bush.)

ARTHUR

Shut up, for Christ's sake!... Where're you?

PENNY

(Appears, making no attempt to hide.)

Where'd you go?

ARTHUR

I'm behind the damned bush! Shut up, will you? Hide!

PENNY

There you are! You hopped off like a scared rabbit.

ARTHUR

Why're you here, Penny? This is a man's work.

PENNY

You told me exactly where you were going. You honestly thought I'd let you go out and get killed? You and your theories. Dillsworth is Svengali.

ARTHUR

Exactly. He's infantilized Vanderhorst. I thought about it... and, well, that tabouret may not be perfect, Penny, but it's not what he says. Willowtree might be kind of a con artist, but I sense there's something sincere about him when it comes to Mission.

PENNY

Yeah, masculine intuition. Sincere, sure, like Enron CEOs. Why not just say to Willowtree, "Hey, Dillsworth says that little round table's a fake?"

ARTHUR

You don't go around offending pickers. They're your life's blood. I'm going to check it out for myself. If Willowtree's halfway clean, I think our Mr. Dillsworth's going to shrink an inch or two. I'm going into that shed and I'm going to check it out.

PENNY

You're nuts, you know that? When I said I'd go along with this business, I didn't think it would include breaking and entering. As a legal secretary...

ARTHUR

You're chicken. You'll see what I'm made of.

(Moves toward shed in a crouch, PENNY following.)

And don't think I've forgotten the way that sonofabitch looked you over, like you were some kind of tabouret, or something.

PENNY

Yeah, I've got a great patina!

ARTHUR

(Now by side of shed and looking up.)
That window's high, and the front door's padlocked.

PENNY

So you're climbing up through that window?

ARTHUR

I am.
(Stands below side window and stretches up to reach the sill.)
Damn! I need a ladder or a stool or something.

PENNY

Oh, all right, I'll help you. Maybe my boss'll be my defense lawyer.

ARTHUR

Here, stand right there and give me a boost.

PENNY

We're the Bonnie and Clyde of Arts and Crafts, and may not live a hell of a lot longer.
(Stoops slightly, forming a foot rest with her hands.)
Okay, chimpo, up you go.

ARTHUR

(Sets one foot in her hand sling and rises as she does. He leaps offstage and speaks from there.)
Got it!... I'm in, by God!
(Light from the flashlight bounces about at the shed window.)

PENNY

What do you see?

(Sounds of thumping about, chains rattling, etc., as ARTHUR explores.)

ARTHUR

Funny things. Chains and stains and busted-up mission furniture. There's a tub with water and a mission stool.

PENNY

Apologies?

ARTHUR

It's not definitive.
(Distant sound of a car engine, growing steadily louder.)

PENNY

It's a beginning, or is that a new way of cleaning furniture?

ARTHUR

There's some new mission stuff around. Here's a clip-cornered lamp table.

PENNY

What do you know?

ARTHUR

But it's kind of beaten up on top, with...

(Brakes squeal loudly.)

PENNY

Oh, my God! Arthur, a van's pulled up! Get out, quick!

(PENNY hides while ARTHUR douses his light before appearing just as GUY WILLOWTREE, shotgun in hand, bursts onto the scene. ARTHUR freezes.)

WILLOWTREE

What sonofabitching whore's son, clap-ridden, spinning turd of a bastard's up there?

ARTHUR

I can explain!

PENNY

(Leaping from behind a bush.)

Me too!

WILLOWTREE

Jesus! You're all over the place!... Stay there!

ARTHUR

Don't shoot her!

WILLOWTREE

(Spinning around with gun to face ARTHUR.)

Stay, you asshole scumbag!

ARTHUR

I'm really not so bad! I can explain everything, Willowtree!

WILLOWTREE

I know you. That guy at the new place.... Couldn't wait for me to bring you things, huh? Had to break in my place, yeah? How'd you know I was here?

PENNY

Please put away that gun.

WILLOWTREE

When I'm ready to.... My neighbor saw you. What were you two stealing?

ARTHUR

Oh, no, Mr. Willowtree, no, no...we weren't here to steal anything. We were here to...

PENNY

To save you.

ARTHUR

To save your reputation.

WILLOWTREE

My reputation don't need saving. Jim Willowtree's word's his bond.

ARTHUR

Jim? Not Guy?

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, Guy, then.

PENNY

You were being compromised, Mr. Willowtree.

ARTHUR

Yeah, you really were. And that's why we...

PENNY

To prove you're a straight arrow.

ARTHUR

Right. I mean, that tabouret you brought us the other day...

WILLOWTREE

That I didn't charge you much for? That the one?

ARTHUR

That's the one.

WILLOWTREE

Beauty.

ARTHUR

Well, yeah, we sure thought so, but you see, Dillsworth, Jeffrey Dillsworth, well, he...

WILLOWTREE

Sonofabitch...what'd he want?

PENNY

He came in with Mrs. Vanderhorst...and the tabouret. He didn't think the piece was exactly right. You know, a little flaw here and there.

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, like what?

ARTHUR

Oh, wrong leg, wrong finish, wrong...just some stuff like that.

WILLOWTREE

Sonofabitch! Don't have to go to no stable to see a horse's ass, just find Dillsworth.

ARTHUR

So that's why we sneaked over here. We came to prove he was wrong about you. I came to find evidence that would support you, so then I'd...

WILLOWTREE

What'd you find?

ARTHUR

Well. Nothing really. Yeah, I mean...yeah...nothing, except I was wondering a little about the footstool, soaking in that tub of water. I was just sort of wondering, is that a new way of cleaning Mission oak?

WILLOWTREE

Oh. yeah, yeah...and tightening up the joints...you know, make 'em swell.

ARTHUR

Oh, right.... See, Penny, just what I was saying.

WILLOWTREE

With Willowtree you get it straight.

PENNY

We were wondering, too, about those chains in there.

WILLOWTREE

Sure, for locking up merch at outside shows.

ARTHUR

Well, sure. I mean some people might think it's for stressing new stuff, you know?

WILLOWTREE

Only fools would think that.... You satisfied now, you two?

ARTHUR

Oh, yes. I intend to tell that bastard Dillsworth a thing or two.

WILLOWTREE

You stay away from that prick. He'd lie his way out of a straitjacket. We'll keep our business to ourselves.

ARTHUR

Okay. And who knows, Willowtree?... You get around a lot, see a lot of people...maybe we can help each other look for...you know...the big one.

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, the mystery piece, that one? Know all about it. Been looking for it a long time now.

ARTHUR

I've been reading about it. Most important sideboard Gus ever made. Hundred years old now. Been missing an awful long time,.

WILLOWTREE

What the hell you think antiques is all about anyhow, Honeycutt?... Long times. Yeah, you and I might just team up. Could take a wad of money we ever find that sucker, but we might just team up, you and I. I got ideas.

PENNY

Ideas, Mr. Willowtree?

WILLOWTREE

Call me Bobby.... Yeah, ideas. Like places here and there to look. Maybe we'll talk later, you and me.

ARTHUR

Okay, be seeing you, Willowtree...Bobby. See you real soon.

(PENNY and ARTHUR wave goodbye to WILLOWTREE and exit.)

WILLOWTREE

(Picks up his shotgun and watches them off.)

Distrusting me like that. Well, ole George here'll just teach them new partners a thing or two.

LIGHTS

ACT ONE

Scene 4

(Joplin's "Swipesy" is playing somewhat loudly in the shop as ARTHUR examines The Hidden Treasures of Arts and Crafts. ANDREW CANNON walks in carrying a box, which he sets on the counter.)

CANNON

Don't see my bells. Sell 'em?

ARTHUR

Not yet, but people've looked at them. They're hanging upstairs.

CANNON

What's wrong with down?

ARTHUR

Mostly here I want to concentrate on Mission.

CANNON

My father used to throw that stuff out after he tried painting it.

ARTHUR

I like it. I respect it. Beginning of American modernism, you know that?

CANNON

Beginning of the end of good taste. Besides, can't hardly hear you over that music. It's not much better'n that furniture.

ARTHUR

(Switching off the CD.)

Maybe you've got a thing or two to learn, Mr. Cannon. Maybe you should keep your eyes open. You travel all over. Find me some good Mission, I'll pay you well.

CANNON

I'd look for a rat's ass first.

ARTHUR

All right, you see that fainting couch over there? Look at that quarter-sawn oak. L. and J.G. Stickley, signed. Great condition! You bring me things like that, we'll do business. And there's a mystery piece out there, too. Maybe you'll find it. Here...look in here, *The Hidden Treasures of Arts and Crafts*. This drawing.

(Shows him a page in the book.)

CANNON

Big brown box with legs is all. Besides, bird in the hand's what counts

(Pulls out from his box some old Christmas ornaments.)

Very collectible these. Hang 'em down here where people can see 'em.

ARTHUR

Yeah, maybe.

CANNON

All right, you write 'em up while I go upstairs to see what you did with them bells. I'm here to make money, Honeycutt. Thirty percent for you, seventy for me.

(ANDREW CANNON exits, and as he does we see GUY WILLOWTREE signaling to ARTHUR from the window partially offstage.)

WILLOWTREE

Psst! Psst!

(ARTHUR moves toward WILLOWTREE, who motions him to go back and puts a finger up to his lips.)

ARTHUR

Why're you at that window?

WILLOWTREE

(Points off and speaks in a loud whisper.)

Dillsworth! Watch out! He coming in. Bastard! I saw him. Be careful.

(Ducks out of sight.)

(As WILLOWTREE vanishes, JEFFREY DILLSWORTH enters, rapidly glancing about as he approaches ARTHUR.)

ARTHUR

Hello, Dillsworth.

DILLSWORTH

Where're your customers? There's an old van and a car out there.

ARTHUR

Andrew Cannon's upstairs...and van? Someone must've just parked it out there.

DILLSWORTH

(Pointing at the book ARTHUR had been studying.)

I see you've got Sanderson's book.

ARTHUR

Great stuff in it.

DILLSWORTH

Yeah, and maybe great Arts and Crafts stuff elsewhere, huh?... Where's the lamp?

ARTHUR

Lamp? We're a consignment shop and we take in many things.

DILLSWORTH

Like a lamp maybe by Dard Hunter? You know, as in Dard Hunter of the Roycrofters?

ARTHUR

How did you know that? No one knows. Only Penny and my...my...

DILLSWORTH

Picker? Or maybe one certain scumbag dealer up in Peekskill?

ARTHUR

But how did?...

DILLSWORTH

I know everything that happens with Arts and Crafts, hear me? Everything, Honeycutt! I need that lamp! Why didn't you call me right away?

ARTHUR

Another collector heard about it and called me. I don't know how he knew, but he did. Arts and Crafts people just seem to know stuff. Instincts, or something.

DILLSWORTH

Who was it? Was it Munson, was it Castagna? Tell me!

ARTHUR

Privileged information, I can't...

DILLSWORTH

Privileged, huh? That rotten dealer must've.... Have you forgotten that maybe, just maybe, you owe Harriet Vanderhorst and me something more than an Arts and Crafts rag? Remember that miserable so-called Gus tabouret of yours?

ARTHUR

Frankly, Mr. Dillsworth, I am of the opinion that it happens to be...

DILLSWORTH

There is no second or third or fourth opinion on that flimflam piece of shit, you hear me? You don't fool Jeffrey Dillsworth ever, not when it comes to Arts and Crafts.

ARTHUR

Well, experience is the name we give to our mistakes. I read that once.

DILLSWORTH

Then you're sure as hell gaining lots of it...fast.... Don't fool with me, Honeycutt! That lamp should've been mine!... By the way, what's your markup, huh? Ten percent? Less? Pitiful!

ARTHUR

Look, tell you what. I just got that L and J.G. Stickley fainting couch over there. It's mint. Signed with Handcraft decal. I made a good buy, and I'll pass it along to you.

DILLSWORTH

Well, goody-goody gumdrops!... Honeycutt, you're looking at the hardest goddamn sell in the Mission business. Maybe L. and J.G. made those damned things, but Gustav didn't, ever! Ridiculous! That slanting back! Hah! I wouldn't cart it out of here if you slipped me a thousand dollars. Useless piece of crap!

ARTHUR

Useless?

DILLSWORTH

Even moron collectors wouldn't buy it.... Like I said, Honeycutt, I want that lamp. Now where the hell is it?

ARTHUR

It's promised, it's not here, it's home.

DILLSWORTH

How much?

ARTHUR

Privi...

DILLSWORTH

God, Honeycutt, cut that garbage! How does eleven sound?... As in eleven thousand?

ARTHUR

(Shuffles about uncomfortably before muttering.)

Already promised, that's how I work. One sold not so long ago for twenty-five.

DILLSWORTH

Twelve, goddamn it!

(Slams down fist on table top.)

Thirteen, and that's final!... L. and J.G. fainting couch! You got to be out of your mind!

ARTHUR

The lamp's sold, like I said. I'll try to find another one for you.

DILLSWORTH

By Dard Hunter? Why not Dirk van Erp, too, while you're at it, pal? Find another one!

(CANNON appears. DILLSWORTH and ARTHUR nod at him.)

CANNON

Okay, Honeycutt, I made some changes up there. Didn't like the way you showed my bells. Got to put 'em where people bump against 'em.... Hang 'em right, eh, Dillsworth?

DILLSWORTH

Yeah, sure. Hang cow bells right.

CANNON

There, you see? They're hanging now where they should be. Prioritize, Honeycutt. Ask any Swiss cowman, he'll tell you.

(Walks toward exit and leaves.)

DILLSWORTH

Yeah, just what I was saying, Honeycutt. Prioritize.... You'll hear more from me! I want that lamp!

(Goes to door and exits.)

ARTHUR

Sonofabitch! Authority, expert! What's he know about fainting couches or...

(WILLOWTREE suddenly appears from offstage.)

ARTHUR

Where the devil did you?...

WILLOWTREE

Window. Saw that bastard coming down the road so I took off. Didn't want to see him. He ask about my van?

ARTHUR

I didn't say anything.... I thought you said you got him started?

WILLOWTREE

Did, but he don't remember. He's evil, that rat. No appreciation.

(Marches around looking here and there, obviously determining if they're alone.)

No one's here, huh?

ARTHUR

No one.

WILLOWTREE

Remember I said that night you broke in we might be teaming up?

ARTHUR

Yeah?

WILLOWTREE

I ain't totally sure the time's right yet, but just maybe...just maybe you and I...

ARTHUR

You and I what?

WILLOWTREE

How'd you like to torture that bastard, huh? I mean, Honeycutt, make him squirm and beg and maybe even take a lot of his money. Sound nice?

ARTHUR

He really is one certified horse's ass.

WILLOWTREE

Revolving turd if I ever saw one. And you could make him crawl across this very floor.

ARTHUR

He really is one arrogant sonofabitch.

WILLOWTREE

(Again marches about, setting up a dramatic moment.)

Told you, Honeycutt, stick with me and you'll be riding right up there higher'n the sky.

ARTHUR

Damn it, Willowtree, what's up?

WILLOWTREE

Come here, Honeycutt. I got something to show you.

(Pulls from his shirt pocket a crumpled photograph as ARTHUR draws close.)

ARTHUR

Show me.

(Reaches for the picture, which WILLOWTREE snatches back.)

WILLOWTREE

Easy now. Look real careful, real careful.

(Slowly brings the photo close to ARTHUR'S eyes.)

What d'you see, Honeycutt? Tell me what you see.

ARTHUR

Awful fuzzy.... No. Is it? Can't be. Too fuzzy, out of focus...but...can it be...is it?... Tell me, Willowtree, is it...is it? Tell me, is it?

WILLOWTREE

Ain't saying nothing. Just keep on looking, and think big, Honeycutt, think real big.

ARTHUR

It's almost like the picture in the book!

WILLOWTREE

(Reaching into a different pocket.)

I happen to have a few more.

(Pulls out several photographs and waves them before ARTHUR.)

ARTHUR

Hey, what the hell? I thought you and I had an understanding?

WILLOWTREE

Look, I ain't got too much against you personally, but you do stupid things.

ARTHUR

Like maybe buy that tabouret from you? That kind of stupid, you mean?

WILLOWTREEEE

Hey now, Big Buddy, where'd that come from? Thought that long done and gone.

ARTHUR

Damn it, you know where I'm coming from! I'm becoming paranoid!

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, yeah, all right. Yeah, I know. Paranoid ain't always so bad, I say.

ARTHUR

Maybe I got some things to learn, but stupid I'm not, Willowtree. Honorable and honest, yes, but not stupid. You even told me you liked me honest.

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, yeah, mostly.

ARTHUR

Know what I did just now with Dillsworth while you were hiding out? Want to know?

WILLOWTREE

What?

ARTHUR

Gave him a lesson in decency, that's what. I could've gone back on my handshake and taken his money and made lots more, but I didn't. Lamp's already sold, I told him. Take your thirteen thousand and shove it!

WILLOWTREE

Thirteen thousand big ones? And he was giving you lots more than somebody else? And you tell me, Honeycutt, I should be trusting you when you do shit like that?

ARTHUR

Hell yes, Willowtree, hell yes! What I did was honest and right.

WILLOWTREE

What you did was stupid and wrong. Naw, this is why I've been moving slow with you.
(*Begins putting away the photographs.*)

ARTHUR

No you don't, damn you! You show me what you got, right now! Hear me, Willowtree? Damn it all! I'm ready to kill!

(*Takes a determined step toward WILLOWTREE.*)

WILLOWTREE

Well, you gonna get huffy, well, then, here.

(Takes the photos and begins slowly handing them one by one to ARTHUR.)

ARTHUR

Oh, God, oh, my God! It *is* the picture in the book! Show me more, quick!

(Greedily absorbing each picture.)

Oh, man, so simple, so grand! Even has Harvey Ellis medallions! Look!

WILLOWTREE

Ain't no words for it, huh? Look at them cobbles there.

ARTHUR

You mean those corbels under the top and the bottom? They're absolutely right. They offer strength but announce without shame they're there.

WILLOWTREE

Don't know nothing about shame and all, but this here's it...all the way. And see them tendons there, top and bottom across the front.

ARTHUR

The through-tenons you mean?

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, the through-tendons, whatever. And it's got Gus's big red horseshoe mark.

ARTHUR

Yeah, saw it on one of the pictures. Look at those strap hinges, those butterfly joints. Awesome! William Morris himself would've loved this one!

WILLOWTREE

My kind of guy, Billy Morris!

ARTHUR

The proportions, Willowtree! Gus all the way. And look at that hammered copper hardware, that chamfered splash, the patina! Perfect...perfect, by God!

WILLOWTREE

Only one could've made this little sucker.

ARTHUR

Even the condition seems so good. I see a nick here and there, sure, a tiny gouge, a stain now and then, of course, but that's only character, Willowtree. That's time itself.

WILLOWTREE

Ain't nothing like that kind of character.

ARTHUR

Oh, man...oh, man.... If only...if only...oh, man!

WILLOWTREE

Yeah, what? If only what?

ARTHUR

It's too good to be true! I mean, Willowtree, I've only been in the business a few weeks, and...why me? I can't believe it, but there it is! Gus's own lost treasure!

WILLOWTREE

(WILLOWTREE nods meaningfully and begins picking at his teeth.)

Been after it years, me and others, pickers all, trackers all. You come along just right, and, as them froggies like to say...*walla!* You're one lucky dude you met Willowtree.

ARTHUR

(Suddenly grabs WILLOWTREE'S shoulders and begins shaking him.)

Where is it, Willowtree, where the bloody `hell is it?

LIGHTS

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene 1

(In the shop on Saturday morning, PENNY is examining pieces of jewelry MARCIA STEINHARDT is pulling out of a small box.)

PENNY

I wish Arthur were here to see these, but he's out hunting again.

MARCIA

Your Arthur hunting?

PENNY

Antiques.

MARCIA

Oh, he didn't strike me as the killer sort.

PENNY

Oh, no, not at all. He's very sweet and gentle, you know. I'm sure he'll be back this afternoon.... These are such pretty things, Marcia.

MARCIA

Aren't they, though? I thought, well, since I'm meeting Harriet here I might as well bring them by for consigning. Marcasite's very collectible. Poor girls' diamonds, you know. Little polished chunks of iron, really.

(The phone rings and PENNY answers.)

PENNY

Hello, Arthur's Consignment Shop, specializing in Arts and Crafts, may I help you?... Yes, I am Mrs. Honeycutt.... Oh, Mr. Dillsworth, how do you do?... Oh, all right, Jeffrey then....

(To MARCIA, hand over speaker.)

Excuse me just a minute. Sorry...

(Into phone again while MARCIA drifts off, obviously all ears.)

Why, no, he's gone upstate...you know, hunting. I'm covering.... Mrs. Steinhardt's here with me.... You what? You are? You?...

(PENNY stares out just as the door swings open with the usual jangling of the bell. In walks a grinning JEFFREY DILLSWORTH, cell phone pressed to ear.)

DILLSWORTH

(Putting away his phone.)

Hello, Marcia...Mrs. Honeycutt. Just making sure we might be able to talk at some length.

(Hearing "talk", MARCIA walks over to join PENNY and DILLSWORTH.)

MARCIA

How nice, Jeffrey. Harriet'll be along soon.

DILLSWORTH

I thought, Marcia, I might chat a bit with Mrs. Honeycutt here, you know, privately about...well, maybe about a little surprise for Harriet. You understand, I'm sure.

MARCIA

Of course I do.

(As DILLSWORTH smiles sweetly at MARCIA, she drifts off, still obviously all ears. DILLSWORTH turns confidentially to PENNY.)

DILLSWORTH

You know, Mrs. Honeycutt...may I call you Penny?... Good.... You see, Penny, I've just had a very serious talk with your husband, and frankly I'm a little alarmed.

PENNY

Alarmed?

DILLSWORTH

In a manner of speaking, yes. Penny, I'll cut to the quick because that's really the kind of person I am, and certainly when I am addressing a mature and intelligent person.

PENNY

Oh, why thank you, Mr....Jeffrey.

DILLSWORTH

The simple truth?... I am alarmed because I believe your husband is possibly shortchanging himself and you. He is new at all this, and...well, just as he had a problem with that tabouret, well, then, he may be having one with a certain lamp.

PENNY

Oh, the table lamp by that Roycroft man? Very, very important, Arthur says. Oh, don't tell me it's a fake!

DILLSWORTH

Oh, no, no, not at all. It isn't that.

PENNY

Well, I am so relieved.

DILLSWORTH

Penny, first I offered him eleven thousand for it.

PENNY

You did?

DILLSWORTH

Then I went to twelve and then...

PENNY

Yes? And?...

DILLSWORTH

Thirteen, Penny, thirteen thousand. He wasn't interested. Said he'd already sold it.

PENNY

He wasn't interested? He wasn't? Well, yes, he did sell it and Arthur is very straightlaced about things like that, but he turned down thirteen thousand, too?

DILLSWORTH

I don't know to whom he sold it. I don't know for how much, but I suspect...

PENNY

Yes...yes, you're right, Jeffrey. He didn't sell it for that much, no. He...

DILLSWORTH

How does sixteen thousand sound to you?

PENNY

Am I hearing you right? Sixteen?... But he sold it already...to Walter Munson. Oh, my.... Sixteen thousand?

DILLSWORTH

Sixteen thousand, yes. And has Munson picked it up yet?

PENNY

No, tonight he's coming to our place. It was an agreement, a telephone handshake, I guess you'd say.

DILLSWORTH

This is why I said I am alarmed. Now perhaps you understand why.

PENNY

Well, yes, I do, but...

DILLSWORTH

You are in business, my dear, and I think you know what that means.... Penny, I'll do even better.

(Leans close to her while MARCIA strains to see and hear.)

Make it...

(MARCIA , startled at PENNY'S shout, drops some jewelry to the floor.)

PENNY

Oh, my God! Seventeen!...

(Notices MARCIA and drops her voice way down.)

Seventeen!... You are a very persuasive man. It's done! Yes, it's done! Seventeen thousand! Arthur should be...well, I'll take care of it.... Okay, I'll close up for a few minutes and bring the lamp here later this morning, by 11:30. It'll be here, I promise.

DILLSWORTH

(Almost kisses her as he places both hands on her shoulders.)

Wise as well as attractive. Oh, yes, very wise, very attractive. I'll see you later then, my dear.

(Goes to the door.)

Oh, Marcia. Maybe I'll see you later, too...and Harriet, of course.

(Exits.)

MARCIA

(Rushing over to PENNY, who is still stunned.)

Marvelous man, isn't he? You know, Miss Penny, not for me to say, but I do think Jeffrey was giving you a very glad-eye.

PENNY

Oh, really, Marcia, it was all business.

MARCIA

Hmmm, maybe, but Jeffrey's a very versatile man. He can do more than one thing at a time, you know.... Oh, but let's get back to our business. Just you look at this marcasite brooch. Cost only pennies in its day, and now...well...

PENNY

Arthur told me that that Gustav Stickley china cabinet sold for about forty dollars in 1907, and we're asking almost seven thousand.

MARCIA

I think forty's far more reasonable.

PENNY

Please don't say that to Arthur. He used to be very...well, resilient, when it came to anything doing with insurance and all. Like the time some man he was arguing with said, "You make people worth more dead than alive." He's been quoting it ever since. But when it come to his precious Mission oak, well...

MARCIA

A subject très délicat.

PENNY

Very très.... See that couch, the one with the sloping side, or back, or whatever?... Well, he's been ballistic ever since Jeffrey Dillsworth declared it utterly worthless.

MARCIA

Oh, dear, and Jeffrey's such a sweet, civilized man.

PENNY

Sweet...civilized?

MARCIA

Oh, yes, definitely.... Penny, now look at this Art Nouveau dragonfly pin. What a delightful cliché!... Well, yes, civilized and gentle in his way.

PENNY

In what way?... I do love dragonflies.

MARCIA

I believe the term I've heard is "alpha". Jeffrey's alpha through and through in many ways, even alpha-sweet, alpha-civilized. Très galant!

PENNY

Alpha-sweet? Is that possible?

MARCIA

I don't know but it might be. I mean, Jeffrey does and is everything. He's an alpha mountain climber. Mt. Mckinley and lots of others.

PENNY

Oh?

MARCIA

Penny, really, do you think Arthur might not want these things I'd like to consign?

PENNY

Not to worry. Or...maybe not to worry. We may be on the verge of a happening.

MARCIA

A happy one maybe?

PENNY

Not at all, I'm afraid...but about Jeffrey?

MARCIA

Oh, yes, well, he must be first in everything. As Harriet tells me, he was one of the very first to appreciate these missions things. Here I think acclaim is highly suspect. He even discovered some important fakery in a top auction house over a year ago. Nobody else had a clue. Also, Penny, he's even done exhibition ballroom dancing,

PENNY

Renaissance man all the way, huh?

MARCIA

I'd say so.... Don't you think Arthur might realize the value of this jewelry and want it?

PENNY

Marcia, it's not your jewelry. It's just that I did something that was maybe not awful wise, and it'll all be because of Jeffrey Dillsworth.

MARCIA

I did forget to add to his list of accomplishments that he does seem to fire up husbands sometimes, especially since his second divorce.

PENNY

Alpha husbands or the other kind?

MARCIA

Alpha, beta, gamma, they're all like those ducks in a shooting gallery.

PENNY

Harriet's husband, too?

MARCIA

Oh, no, no problem there since her big divorce. She and he are very close, and I don't think it's just her money he likes, but Jeffrey is very keen on money.

PENNY

He has lots of it?

MARCIA

Oh, my, yes. He was left a lot, but he knows how to earn it big time, too. Tell me, though, Penny, what was your sin, or is it too personal?

PENNY

You see, Marcia, we...that is, Arthur, got this super important lamp from some creepy low-end, bottom-feeder of a dealer, and he sold it to a big collector, à la Dillsworth. And Jeffrey...well, he's so damned logical and all. He made me know what a huge mistake Arthur made by underselling that lamp. So I said, "Okay, it's yours." Only...

MARCIA

Arthur will not be happy.

PENNY

If he were the murdering sort, he'd kill me.

MARCIA

And as it is?

PENNY

He'll kill me. He's very moral, you know, God-awful moral, and he'll say his deal with Munson was done with a handshake and what I've done isn't moral, and Jeffrey will be here real soon and take the lamp, and...to put it clinically, Marcia, I'm in deep doo-doo.

MARCIA

Oh, my, now Arthur's buyer will have to know.

PENNY

Yes, and other things are at work here, too. He didn't want Jeffrey to get it...no way!

(The door opens with its usual jangle and in walks ANDREW CANNON. Thinking it's DILLSWORTH, PENNY hugs him.)

CANNON

(Startled.)
Any bells sold?

PENNY

Don't think so, Mr. Cannon.

Christmas ornaments?
CANNON

Probably not.
PENNY

Antique milk can?
CANNON

Nope, definitely not.
PENNY

God's sake, doesn't anything ever sell here? Where's your husband? I am not happy!
CANNON

A little patience, Mr. Cannon. He'll be here later today.
PENNY

I got more patience than most doctors, but I ain't going to live forever. I want my things to sell!... You tell that husband of yours if he don't make some progress here I won't bring him my collection of door knockers. I'll tell him myself. I'll be back later.
CANNON
(*Storms out.*)

Look here, Penny, I won't be impatient like him. Awful man, really. Rome wasn't built in a day. Sometimes cow bells and marcasite need a bit more time, like Rome.
MARCIA

You're right, Marcia, I'll write up your marcasite even if...
PENNY

(*Sound of HARRIET'S car pulling in and a double honk.*)

Oh, look, there's your friend.
PENNY

Harriet all right. We often meet at different places on Saturday for girls' stuff.
MARCIA

(*HARRIET VANDERHORST enters.*)

Sorry I'm late, Marcia.
HARRIET

Hello, Mrs. Vanderhorst. Nice to see you again.
PENNY

HARRIET

(Looking while wandering about, especially interested in something offstage.)
What is that?

PENNY

Oh, Arthur's so proud of it. It's an L. and J.G. Stickley fainting couch, mint original.

HARRIET

Hmm, attractive.... Ah, but wait, isn't that the piece Jeffrey said was worthless?

PENNY

You could discuss it with Arthur when...

(Sound of ARTHUR'S car pulling in and honking.)

PENNY

...when he... Oh, my God, he's pulling in now! He's early! He's... Oh, Lord!

MARCIA

Arthur? He's back.

PENNY

Yes, he's back...he's back! I've got to make him happy!

(Rushes to the CD player and turns it on to Joplin's "Felicity Rag" while MARCIA and HARRIET glance at each other and PENNY.)

MARCIA

(To HARRIET.)

She's got problems.

HARRIET

Like that music?

(ARTHUR enters, obviously upbeat as he approaches the three women.)

ARTHUR

Penny, that's "Felicity Rag"! You're converted! Hah! I'd like to dance with each and every one of you lovelies gracing my humble bazaar.... Tell me, Penny, any interesting news to report in this dynamic world of antiques?

(Gives her a quick peck on the cheek.)

Did you see my fainting couch, Mrs. Vanderhorst?

HARRIET

She told me.

PENNY

Hi, dear, we were discussing all sorts of things.

MARCIA

Like a few odds and ends I thought I might consign, like marcasite.

PENNY

You're back early, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Doing what I have to do. Came back for my checkbook, but I'm off again in a few minutes. Tell me, Penny, any action?

PENNY

Andrew Cannon stopped by.

ARTHUR

About those damn bells?

PENNY

And the milk can and.

ARTHUR

Yeah, yeah, but any other action? You know, like sales maybe?

PENNY

Oh, sales, well, not exactly, except that...

(Looks pitifully at MARCIA.)

Well, in a way, yes, Arthur, a kind of big one.

ARTHUR

Big? Like really big?

PENNY

Depends on how you look at it.

ARTHUR

What do you mean? What sold, Penny? For God's sake, tell me, what sold?

PENNY

Honey, our biggest sale to date!... You know that lamp, the Roycroft one?

ARTHUR

Yes, of course I know, the Dard Hunter. I bought it and I sold it to...

PENNY

I did too, dear. I sold it to Jeffrey Dillsworth...for lots!

(Stares hard at PENNY. CD player turns abruptly off.)

LIGHTS

ACT TWO
Scene 2

(Same day a little later. All is quiet as the lights come up. PENNY and ARTHUR are in the shop alone. He stiffly clutches the back of a chair, angry. PENNY moves cautiously about, dusting furniture and attempting to hum a tune. A long silent moment passes.)

ARTHUR

My wife! Bribing me with my own music!

(PENNY continues dusting and humming tensely.)

ARTHUR

Mrs. Traitor Honeycutt! A Dillsworth special, my wife!

PENNY

God's sake, Arthur, I'll Dillsworth you! How dare you rant like this! Those women fled out of here. Marcia even forgot her marcasite.

ARTHUR

Damn Marcia's marcasite!

PENNY

Little polished chunks of iron.

ARTHUR

Don't you change the subject, goddamn it!

PENNY

Don't you curse at me, you creep!

ARTHUR

I don't see anyone else around. I'll curse at you as long as I want!... My wife!

PENNY

We've established that, I believe.

ARTHUR

Stop that dusting! Some collectors won't buy it if they know it's been dusted!

PENNY

That is sick!

ARTHUR

Way it is.... When's that sonofabitch coming?

PENNY

Soon.... He's expecting that lamp, and I said I'd have it here.

ARTHUR

You start out that door, Penny, by God, I'll...I'll...

PENNY

Deck me?

ARTHUR

Yes, maybe. My wife!... How could you? How the stinking hell could you, Penny?

PENNY

Easy. I listened to reason.

ARTHUR

Spelled D-I-L-L-S-W-O-R-?...

PENNY

No, spelled P-R-O-F-I-T...profit, Buster!

ARTHUR

Ever heard of decency? Ever heard of a gentleman's handshake? Huh? Have you?

PENNY

I have, El Creepo. And also I've heard of being intelligent. I've heard that one goal in business is to earn enough to be able to stay in business. Get it? You don't have to be a legal secretary like me to understand that simple principle, now do you?

ARTHUR

I understand one thing only - that is Munson's lamp! Period.

PENNY

We'll see about that, Arthur.... Maybe that seven thousand profit won't pay for all our kitchen remodeling or Jenny's orthodontics, but it sure will help, won't it?... Seven thousand, Arthur, that's how much more Jeffrey was...

ARTHUR

Oh, now it's Jeffrey?

PENNY

Who's got lots of money and a checkbook to go along with it.... Seventeen thousand he said, Arthur. Seventeen thousand! God's sake, we've run up all kinds of debt. We need that money. Look at what this damn business cost!

ARTHUR

Liars don't go to heaven! Hell's where people go who shake hands and don't mean it.

PENNY

Are you turning theological, or something? Heaven? Hell?

ARTHUR

Well, we'll see what he says after I'm done with him.

PENNY

But what about my word? I told him...

ARTHUR

Are you saying your honor's at stake? You are beyond belief, you, mother of my children!... And here's someone pulling in now.

PENNY

You better watch yourself.

(The bell jangles as ANDREW CANNON strides in.)

CANNON

Here I am, Honeycutt. Said I'd be back. And here I am, with some questions.

ARTHUR

No questions now. I'm busy.

CANNON

Doing what? You're never busy here. You ain't sold one thing of mine.

ARTHUR

You wanna take it back, take it back.

CANNON

Didn't say that. Only said it's taking a long time to sell things.

ARTHUR

Bring me the right stuff and maybe it'll sell.

CANNON

Nothing righter'n cow bells and milk cans, and maybe some door knockers some day.

ARTHUR

Yeah, and a Dard Hunter lamp or two. if you can.

CANNON

Well, all right, I'll keep checking in.

(The door bell jangles and DILLSWORTH enters. He and CANNON nod at each other in passing. DILLSWORTH dampens his shock as he spots ARTHUR.)

DILLSWORTH

Didn't expect to see you, Honeycutt.

PENNY

He came back early before he goes out again.

DILLSWORTH

Well, Mrs. Honeycutt?...

PENNY

Mr. Dillsworth, the situation has changed somewhat.

ARTHUR

Like completely.

DILLSWORTH

Meaning?

ARTHUR

No Dard Hunter for you.

DILLSWORTH

Here's my check.

ARTHUR

No lamp.

DILLSWORTH

Penny?...Mrs. Honeycutt?

(PENNY Shrugs and looks helpless.)

ARTHUR

That's right, no lamp.

DILLSWORTH

Why not?

ARTHUR

Call it a slight misunderstanding, sir. That lamp, you see, was already sold.

DILLSWORTH

To Munson, huh?

ARTHUR

As I believe I may have explained to you, sir, about privileged...

DILLSWORTH

Do I sense a certain renegeing here?

ARTHUR

On the contrary, sir, you sense the clean air of something quite the opposite. You sense an honorable transaction and a man exercising decency. Know the concept?

DILLSWORTH

Good God, Honeycutt, don't be so pompous! Jesus, your damn halo looks like a tourniquet choking your brain!... Mrs. Honeycutt, am I correct in believing?...

PENNY

You may be.

DILLSWORTH

And so here we have Mr. Morality, Mr. Chivalry, Sir Arthur of the Round Table himself, undermining an agreement his wife, his faithful wife, has transacted.

ARTHUR

Right on the money, Dillsworth, except for *faithful!*

DILLSWORTH

Hear me if you dare, Honeycutt.... What kind of person would denigrate the very person he has sworn to protect and honor and, yes, obey?... Shall I tell you?

ARTHUR

Spare me, Dillsworth.

DILLSWORTH

It's too depressing to contemplate.... I am sorry, Mrs. Honeycutt...

(Pulls out a check from his shirt pocket and slowly tears it in half, returning the two pieces to his pocket.)

Perhaps at some future time.

(Sadly shaking his head, DILLSWORTH departs, the door closing behind him.)

ARTHUR

Conceited bastard! Accusing me like that!

PENNY

I'm embarrassed beyond words, Arthur. That was mean and I'll never forget it...never! What Jeffrey said...what Dillsworth said was right. You've failed me!

ARTHUR

I've failed you?... You've destroyed my reputation, you've undermined my good word.... I'd rather fail in business than as a human being.

PENNY

You really are pompous, and you'll be bankrupt, too.

ARTHUR

Look, you, I've got to meet someone again. Do you think maybe, just maybe, I can leave you in charge without you doing God knows what? Can I trust you for maybe three or four hours while I tend to something very important?

PENNY

Trust me? Hell no, you can't trust me, especially if you're doing something very important! Maybe I'll give the whole shop to Andrew Cannon— Gustav Stickley and L. and J. G. and the whole rest of the wretched gang of wood choppers!
(Begins sobbing loudly.)

ARTHUR

No you don't! That doesn't cut any ice with me, girl. I've seen you boo-hooing before. Go blow your nose and try to tend this place without stabbing me in the back again!

(ARTHUR angrily dashes out, slamming the door behind him. PENNY sobs, sniffs a bit longer, stares out the window, then flops down in a Mission chair, looking deeply depressed. After a long moment, the door swings open and DILLSWORTH walks in determinedly.)

DILLSWORTH

Gone, huh? He said he would be and I waited.... For how long?

PENNY

Hours maybe.

DILLSWORTH

(Moving close to her.)

You've been crying, my dear.... I'm so sorry, Penny. He shouldn't have done that. That was wrong. Poor thing, I'm so sorry.

PENNY

(Rising from the chair.)

You're nice to say that.

DILLSWORTH

I mean it, too.

(Moves even closer and hugs her closely to him as she looks up at him.)

You've been through too much, poor dear.

PENNY

Yes, I have.

DILLSWORTH

Know what?

PENNY

What?

DILLSWORTH

I have an idea, one I believe will help us both.... That is, if you are...

PENNY

What?

DILLSWORTH

Willing.... Could you run home and get that lamp and I'll wait here...or better, I'll go with you. I have plenty more checks, you know, where the last one came from.

PENNY

(Drawing back from him.)

Oh, Jeffrey, I don't think...I don't think...I don't think...you'd better go with me.... The girls are home and the shop would be closed...and...I tell you what, Jeffrey, could you cover the shop for maybe twenty minutes or so while I?... I mean, I trust you, and there probably won't be anybody here anyhow. There never is very much.

DILLSWORTH

Oh, my dear, of course. And I trust you, too, so very much.

(Places his hands on her shoulders and smiles down at her.)

What a lovely person you are!

(DILLSWORTH pulls PENNY closely to him and kisses her briefly on the lips. He then releases her, and PENNY, gazing at him with deep regard, backs slowly toward the door. FELICITY RAG comes up slowly.)

LIGHTS

ACT TWO

Scene 3

(Saturday, after the previous scene. ARTHUR and WILLOWTREE enter and hold downstage. Upstage, by WILLOWTREE'S shed, a rope-bound tarpaulin completely covers a large box-shaped object.)

WILLOWTREE

Well, that woman of yours is one hell of a lot smarter'n you. You said she sold it for lots more'n you, right? And now you're all pissed off at her? I don't see how you have the nerve to tell me this.

ARTHUR

But I'd already promised it, I told you. I mean, my God, my reputation!

WILLOWTREE

I can spot foolishness a long way off, and you do have your share.... Now tell me again, make me feel real good, did anyone follow you here?

ARTHUR

Damn it to hell, Willowtree, I told you ten times no one followed me! I've been lying to Penny. She thinks I've been heading way Upstate, not to your lousy dump here.... I don't see how I can be more careful, and I still haven't seen the missing treasure, have I? It's mine, ours...yes? Tell me.

WILLOWTREE

Well, maybe, but like I been saying...

ARTHUR

Money...I know, money.

WILLOWTREE

Big time.

ARTHUR

But then all ours, or mine? Free and clear?

WILLOWTREE

Only way to have it, and I know McKenzie'll agree.

ARTHUR

McKenzie? Hold on now! Willard McKenzie? Wait a minute there! The greatest cabinet maker in America? He's a genius, but isn't he the one who?...

WILLOWTREE

One who what?

ARTHUR

Who maybe faked that piece Dillsworth caught in auction? Isn't he the one they called the Hans van Meegeren of furniture but couldn't prove it?

WILLOWTREE

The Hans van who?

ARTHUR

Faked Vermeers for years, his own originals in Vermeer's style, and had the experts fooled all to hell. Total genius!

WILLOWTREE

He did that to Vermeer? Bastard! But McKenzie, he ain't that Hans van whatever, and he ain't Vermeer neither, but he's been looking, too, and he and I and one other guy, we found it because we been listening and looking and working our contacts real hard.

ARTHUR

And McKenzie, what does he say about it?

WILLOWTREE

Only the finest Gus ever seen, and we need a lot of money for it. We ain't getting this baby at no yard sale, you know.

ARTHUR

All right, you say it's not fake even though Willard McKenzie...but suppose it is? Just suppose it is, what with McKenzie and all?... Suppose? Tell me, Willowtree, please!

WILLOWTREE

You ever seen something McKenzie's done?

ARTHUR

Yes, an inlaid chair and inlaid cabinet. Totally one hundred percent magnificent. Beyond belief! Perfection!

WILLOWTREE

What'd'ya know?... So if this little mother's a fake, which of course it ain't, then you got one magnificent sucker to call your own and sell like you want. A masterpiece by a genius! You hear me, Honeycutt?

ARTHUR

How much for it?

WILLOWTREE

Take a quick one.

ARTHUR

Thirty big ones? I don't know.... Forty maybe?... Forty-five?... All right, how much, Willowtree?

WILLOWTREE

How much you think you can sell it for?... You come with me now, Honeycutt, come on. I guess it's time.

(WILLOWTREE points upstage to the roped, tarpaulin-covered object. ARTHUR is both tense and ecstatic. The two of them head toward it to pause before it.)

ARTHUR

This is it? This is it, Willowtree? Oh, God! Is it?

WILLOWTREE

This is it, my friend.

ARTHUR

(Approaches the object reverentially and then struggles with the rope.)
Help me! Damn thing's too!...

(WILLOWTREE joins him and they finally undo one rope. ARTHUR lifts up a portion of the tarpaulin and studies the piece.)

ARTHUR

(Spinning around to face WILLOWTREE.)
Yes! Yes! It's right! It seems right! I'll have to see it all, but McKenzie's right!

WILLOWTREE

Like I was saying, worth lots, huh?

ARTHUR

Lots.... All right then...sixty thousand?... No?... Sixty-five do it? Seventy? Is seventy it? Is it, damn it?

WILLOWTREE

Seventy-five, and that'll buy us out, and it's all yours.

ARTHUR

I've got to think, I need time.

WILLOWTREE

(Shakes his head sadly as ARTHUR again pokes about under the tarpaulin.)
McKenzie and my other partner, we got to move quick, or we might lose it.... What you say?... What's it really worth?... You know, if you're a little patient, play it right? Hundred, hundred-fifty, two mighty big ones?... Well?

ARTHUR

(Facing WILLOWTREE.)
Oh, God, oh, God!... It's does seem completely right. Is it right, Guy?
(Holding and shaking WILLOWTREE'S shoulders.)
Tell me! Is it?

WILLOWTREE

Word of honor, and Willowtree's honor is known far and wide.

ARTHUR

Look, I got twenty-five right off, and then I'll take out a mortgage, no problem. But tell me, Guy, when is it mine? When?

WILLOWTREE

Tomorrow? No, tomorrow's Sunday. Ain't no banks...you tell me.

ARTHUR

I can have all the money on Monday. And I'll give you a deposit later today.

WILLOWTREE

Then on Monday it's yours. I'll tell McKenzie right away. He don't like to fool around none. I'll go right up there and tell him. How's that sound, Honeycutt?

ARTHUR

Oh, Willowtree, sounds good, sounds real damn good.
(They slap hands triumphantly.)

ARTHUR

Back to the shop now. Penny owes me a big one, Guy, but how'm I going to tell her? Seventy-five thousand, Lord! Willowtree, how'm I going to tell her?

WILLOWTREE

Be a man, big buddy. I know women real good. She'll love you for it. Trust me.

(FELICITY RAG comes up again.)

LIGHTS

ACT TWO

Scene 4

(Inside the shop, no one is visible, but sounds can be heard from offstage.)

PENNY'S VOICE

Oh, Jeff, you are one real kisser, you really are!

DILLSWORTH'S VOICE

Not so bad yourself, sweet and twenty, and you ain't seen nothing yet!...

ARTHUR

(Knocking loudly at the door and yelling from offstage.)
Why's the door locked? What the hell's?...

PENNY'S VOICE

He's back! He's back! Oh, Lord, he's back, Jeffrey! You hear me?

DILLSWORTH'S VOICE

My God, how could he do this? Bastard! Course I hear you!

PENNY'S VOICE

Sometimes he's sneaky, but to do this! I really didn't think he'd...

(ARTHUR appears at the window and crawls through just as DILLSWORTH enters, neatening himself while PENNY follows wiping her mouth.)

ARTHUR

You fucking bastards!

DILLSWORTH

Not quite. How'd you get in?

ARTHUR

By the window, you sonofabitch! You see a chimney?

DILLSWORTH

Funny!

ARTHUR

Worthless, huh? My L.. and J.G. fainting couch worthless! Good for some things, huh?

DILLSWORTH

Has its uses, Honeycutt, but damned uncomfortable.

(Roaring like an angry beast, ARTHUR grabs a vase from a nearby shelf, lifts it high and leaps toward DILLSWORTH. PENNY rushes between them.)

PENNY

No, Arthur, no, that's a Fulper! We can explain, I swear we can!

(He quickly sets it down and then grabs another vase.)

PENNY

No, no! It's Rookwood, Arthur, Rookwood! Stop it! We can explain!

(ARTHUR also sets down this vase, then punches DILLSWORTH on the nose. Clutching his nose, DILLSWORTH sinks to his knees.)

DILLSWORTH

You sadistic, rotten rat, you've damaged my profile! I'll sue you! I'll kill you, by God. From limb to limb! I'm black belt!

ARTHUR

Screw you, asshole!

(Steps back and dramatically clenches his fists in fighting pose, but in the process spills out of his chest pocket the photos of the Stickley treasure.)

DILLSWORTH

(Clumping about on his knees, closes in on ARTHUR as the photos fly about.)
You're dead, Honeycutt! Dead!

(PENNY screams, but DILLSWORTH halts in his tracks, looking down.)

DILLSWORTH

What the!... What is this?
(*Snatches up one of the pictures.*)
Good Lord! No!

ARTHUR

(*Bends down and grabs away the picture.*)
No you don't, Dillsworth!

DILLSWORTH

(*Moving about quickly on both knees toward other spilled pictures.*)
Don't do this to me, Honeycutt!
(*Grabs up another photo, devouring it with his eyes as he staggers to his feet.*)
Sweet Jesus, this is it!... Honeycutt, let's move on! This is what counts!

ARTHUR

(*Grabbing the photo from DILLSWORTH.*)
No you don't!

DILLSWORTH

I was just trying to cheer her up. And I sold those damned cow bells while she was out. Ask her. Didn't I sell them? To a guy in a circus.

PENNY

He did, Arthur. The sales slip's over there. He did sell 'em.

ARTHUR

While you were out? Out? Doing what?

PENNY

I was...I was...

DILLSWORTH

She was getting that Dard Hunter lamp, Honeycutt. I only wanted to look at it, touch it, be a little part of it. You understand, don't you? You and I, we're lovers!

ARTHUR

Lovers? Us? Damn you, Dillsworth! You wanted that lamp for one of your clients!

DILLSWORTH

No, no! It's sitting out there in her car in its box, I swear.

PENNY

It was all so innocent, Arthur. He only wanted to cheer me up after you...

DILLSWORTH

Come on now, Honeycutt, please...please show me those pictures. Forgive, forget.

(Steps toward ARTHUR and snatches at the photographs he's holding.)

I could've killed you...really! And I didn't. I don't deserve this. Honeycutt...Arthur, we're in this together. We're one and the same. What's mine is yours, and...

ARTHUR

What's mine is sure as hell not yours, you bastard!

DILLSWORTH

But don't you see, Honeycutt, we're the same person. We're the same person. You and I, we're collectors, and Mission's our goal, our passion! We can't help it!

ARTHUR

Don't talk passion to me, Dillsworth.

DILLSWORTH

I think you've broken my nose!... But, Honeycutt...Arthur, I forgive you. I didn't see much of that picture, but I know what I saw is...

ARTHUR

Beyond significant?

DILLSWORTH

Oh, Arthur, yes, yes, oh, my God, yes! Way beyond! It's the missing treasure!... Where is it, where? Won't you at least hint? And how did you?...

ARTHUR

Yes, how did I, poor ignorant slob who buys worthless couches that're only good for screwing other people's wives, how did I discover the Holy Grail? Want to know?

DILLSWORTH

I'll absorb your insults because as aficionado I must.

ARTHUR

Because I'm decent and honest and so people come to me with what they have.

PENNY

Arthur, have I been misreading you?

(There is a banging at the door.)

PENNY

It's still locked.

(Opens the door to reveal ANDREW CANNON, who storms in.)

CANNON

Told you I'd be back, Honeycutt. I've decided I've had it. I'm taking back my bells.

PENNY

They're gone, all six of them, gone. Sold. By him.
(Points to DILLSWORTH.)

DILLSWORTH

(Dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief.)
Some circus guy wants to turn them into a carillon.

CANNON

Ah hah! See, everyone? Didn't I say them bells were special? You didn't believe me. All right then, Honeycutt, I'll bring you my door knockers. You'll love 'em!

(To DILLSWORTH.)
Your nose's bleeding!

DILLSWORTH

How much is it going to be, Honeycutt? Is it yours? Where is it? Near or far? What's the condition? Can't you show me those pictures?

(Moves closer to ARTHUR.)
Are we talking lots of money here? Are we talking maybe sixty?

ARTHUR

I'm insulted. Maybe you should get going before I deck you again.

DILLSWORTH

Eighty, then? More? What? Tell me.... Look, you may have some grievances with me, granted, but I am losing patience. You're diddling around, Honeycutt. Now come clean, how much will it go for? There's no one willing to go further than me, no one. Munson, Castagna, they're penny-ante.... Are we thinking a hundred thousand maybe? More? More? Believe me, I understand.

PENNY

Hundred thousand? Oh, Arthur!...

ARTHUR

(Gazing out.)
Well, Dillsworth, look who's here. Think Harriet Vanderhorst might be interested?

DILLSWORTH

No you don't! She's my client all the way!

(HARRIET VANDERHORST and MARCIA STEINHARDT enter.)

HARRIET

Here I am, Jeffrey, come for the lamp. My first Dard Hunter! I am so terribly excited!

DILLSWORTH

(As ARTHUR moves in on him.)
I know what you're thinking, Honeycutt, but... Hundred-five maybe?

ARTHUR

The Dard Hunter, huh?

DILLSWORTH

One-ten?

PENNY

One-ten? Oh, my God! Arthur, did you hear him?

ARTHUR

I'm not deaf.

HARRIET

What is going on here exactly?

MARCIA

Why is your nose bleeding, Jeffrey?

HARRIET

And it's all puffy. Where is my lamp?

CANNON

This place's a loony bin.

MARCIA

Yes, isn't it?

HARRIET

(Heavily emphasizing each word.)

Jeffrey, I...do...want...that...lamp. You hear me? Now!

DILLSWORTH

Forget the damn lamp, woman! Damn it, forget it!

HARRIET

You say *damn it* to me? To Harriet Vanderhorst you say *damn it*? What the hell is this, Jeffrey? No one says *damn it* to me!

DILLSWORTH

I just did and I'll say it again if I have to! One...there is no lamp, there won't be a lamp! Is that clear? Two...

HARRIET

But you told me...you told me less than two hours ago I'd have that Dard Hunter lamp. No one lies to Harriet Vanderhorst. Do you hear me, Jeffrey? Do you hear me, man?

MARCIA

It's this disgusting Mission stuff. It makes people behave nasty.

CANNON

Couldn't agree more, lady.

DILLSWORTH

Yes, you bat, I hear you loud and clear, and I don't give one damn shit about that lamp any more! I got better things to think about. Like the mystery piece! You hear?

HARRIET

The mystery piece? You're trying to trick me again, aren't you? First that lamp, now.... You've turned bad, by God! Bad, Jeffrey Dillsworth!

CANNON

Tell him, lady. He's no gentleman, that one. Knew it all along!

DILLSWORTH

Yeah? You don't know the half of it, Cannon. Harriet, you're one spoiled woman, and a not very bright one.

MARCIA

Jeffrey Dillsworth, you are being vile! And what I told Penny here about what a...

HARRIET

Horse's ass he is.

MARCIA

I said you were alpha through and through, just alpha everything, and I was right because now here you are, alpha vile. Shame on you, shame on you!

DILLSWORTH

Oh, for God's friggin' sake, knock it off! You're as bad as she is!

CANNON

I ought to flatten your nose! You're no gentleman, that's for sure.

DILLSWORTH

And what the fuck are you, you miserable cow-bell, milk-can-toting idiot?

HARRIET

(Sidling up to CANNON.)

Don't listen to the miserable creep.

(All burst into a cacophony of words. PENNY steps forward.)

PENNY

Stop it, all of you! Just quiet down! Now!

(Again the cacophony. This time ARTHUR takes charge.)

ARTHUR

Shut up!... This is a business establishment, not a wrestling ring. Now shut up!
(As CANNON steps forward to object.)

You, too, Cannon. I couldn't care less about your damn milk cans and your door knockers and your whining and your...

PENNY

Cow bells!

ARTHUR

Yeah, lousy cow bells!

CANNON

You sold 'em, you made good money!

ARTHUR

Well, okay on that one, but I don't want to hear any more of your complaints, you hear me, Cannon?

CANNON

Yeah, I guess.

HARRIET

(Her arm through CANNON'S.)

You poor thing, he's bullied you. Place is full of bullies.

CANNON

Don't you worry none about me, Mrs. Vanderhorst. I can take care of myself.

MARCIA

Little power goes a long way, you ask me.

ARTHUR

Who's asking you?

DILLSWORTH

Right. Who the hell's asking? Now for Christ's sake, Honeycutt, let's get to it, all right?... Hundred-fifteen. You hear me? Answer, damn it.

ARTHUR

I don't respond to commands, Dillsworth. Would you maybe like to reword that?

PENNY

You tell him, Arthur!

HARRIET

Right. Don't take his guff!

DILLSWORTH

What guff? I don't have guff. I don't do guff.

ARTHUR

Yeah, guffless wonder, huh?

DILLSWORTH

One-twenty, Honeycutt, yes or no? Tell me now!

HARRIET

One twenty? One twenty what? For what?

ARTHUR

One hundred and twenty thousand dollars, that's what!

DILLSWORTH

For the goddamn mystery piece! That's what! Okay? Now shut up and let men work!

HARRIET

Good God in heaven! Did you hear that, Marcia, did you?

MARCIA

I did indeed.

HARRIET

Did you hear that, Mr. Cannon?

CANNON

Sure did. Disgrace. Nasty man this one!

HARRIET

The mystery piece, the Gustav Stickley mystery piece! That's what he said! Christ!

DILLSWORTH

Yes! Now will you for God's sake pipe down? This is serious business here. One-twenty, Honeycutt. Did you hear me?

HARRIET

(Raising her arm.)

One-twenty-five!

DILLSWORTH

By God, you bitch!... One-thirty, Honeycutt, take it or leave it!

HARRIET

(Again her arm raised high.)

One-thirty-five!

Thousand? MARCIA

Thousand. HARRIET

You are one rotten, damn!... DILLSWORTH

(*Moving close to HARRIET.*)
Watch your language, sir! CANNON

Screw you, maniac!
(*To ARTHUR.*)
One-forty! DILLSWORTH

Hmmm. ARTHUR

Oh, my God! One-forty! PENNY

One-forty-five! HARRIET

One-fifty! DILLSWORTH

(*Grabbing for HARRIET'S arm as she begins raising it again.*)
Don't, Mrs. Vanderhorst! Don't do it! My daddy used to burn that stuff! Please don't! CANNON

Wise man your daddy, Mr. Cannon. MARCIA

Sold to the man with the puffy nose! One-fifty.
(*Smacks his hand down loudly on a table top.*) ARTHUR

Hah! There you are, Harriet Vanderhorst! DILLSWORTH

(*Still restrained by CANNON.*)
If it hadn't been for this...this...gentleman, then I'd...I'd have it! Damn you, Jeffrey! HARRIET

DILLSWORTH

Thank you, Cannon. You do have some uses.

(To ARTHUR.)

One condition, however - I check it with a fine-tooth comb.

ARTHUR

Take your comb and shove it! Here, look at these pictures and salivate! Phooey to you and your lousy condition!

DILLSWORTH

(Greedily poring over the images ARTHUR has handed him.)

Oh, Lord, oh, Lord! It is the greatest! Yes, the greatest! And I own it! Oh, Honeycutt, is it for real? What do you think?

ARTHUR

What do those pictures tell you?

DILLSWORTH

Yeah, right! Okay, shake on it.

ARTHUR

(Refusing to shake.)

Penny'll write up an agreement. You come back in two hours and sign. I assume you're serious, of course, and if not, well, I'll be taking Munson his Dard Hunter.

DILLSWORTH

I thought handshakes meant everything to you.

ARTHUR

Sometimes.... I'll see you here in two hours.... Goodbye, everyone. Mr. Cannon, Mrs. Steinhardt, Mrs. Vanderhorst, please stop by again soon.

HARRIET

Oh, Mr. Cannon, how I wish you hadn't...

CANNON

Felt it was my duty, Mrs. Vanderhorst. Just protecting you is all.

HARRIET

Oh, I know, I know, but still...but I'm not really angry at you because...

(Moves close to him.)

CANNON

Ladies should be protected from people like him.

(Indicates DILLSWORTH.)

HARRIET

I agree. We should be.

(HARRIET and CANNON exit, he taking her arm.)

MARCIA

Still, Jeffrey has suffered.

(Opens up her purse and pulls out a tissue.)

Here, Jeffrey. Here's a clean tissue for your nose.

DILLSWORTH

Thank you, Marcia. Nice to discover a little decency around here.

MARCIA

I don't like people to suffer.

DILLSWORTH

In the heat of the moment, Marcia, I said things I didn't mean, at least to you. Forgive?

MARCIA

Of course I forgive, Jeffrey.

(Sidles up close to him.)

Maturity goes such a long way. I always forgive.

ARTHUR

As I said, everyone, please stop by again soon as you can. Until then, goodbye. See you, Dillsworth, in two hours. Okay?

(Looking puzzled and mumbling indistinguishably, MARCIA and DILLSWORTH exit, DILLSWORTH escorting her.)

PENNY

(Staring in disbelief at ARTHUR.)

Arthur, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars?

ARTHUR

Sounds about right.

PENNY

Oh, Arthur, you didn't want to keep that piece for yourself, at least for a little while?

ARTHUR

I am a businessman, Penny, after all, and we do need the money badly. Then, too, I will have touched the thing, become a little part of its history and sent it on its way...even though its way is to a fourteen-karat horse's ass.

PENNY

Oh, Arthur, are you sure it's the real thing? I mean, was Guy Willowtree involved? Remember that tabouret he?... Oh, Arthur, you haven't sold a fake, have you?

ARTHUR

It's a real pretty thing, Penny. Jeffrey will love it because it's one magnificent sucker, the best.... Ever heard of Hans van Meegeren?.... Ah, well, doesn't matter. Just write up an agreement of indisputable benefit to Arthur's Consignment Shop.

PENNY

Aye-aye, honey.

ARTHUR

No, hold on.

PENNY

Yes, dear.

ARTHUR

You lock the door, I'll do the windows.

PENNY

The windows? What?...

ARTHUR

But first I'm turning on my ragtime, you hear? I don't care if Gus didn't like it.

(Switching on the CD player and Joplin's "The Strenuous Life", but not loudly.)

It belongs and it's gonna stay! And, Penny, to hell with Dillsworth! My fainting couch can't be *that* uncomfortable!

(ARTHUR, unbuttoning his shirt, heads toward the window, PENNY toward the door. She pauses.)

PENNY

Oh, Arthur, love-making to ragtime? That's sure different! Honey, you've changed! You've become...you've become...

ARTHUR

Yes? What?

PENNY

Worthy.

LIGHTS

END OF PLAY

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