

MODERN WARFARE

a play by Tom Baum

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Characters (in order of appearance)

BETTY (PARSONS). Age 62. Proprietor of the Betty Parsons Gallery.

CLARICE 25. A discovery of Betty's.

JEANNE (MILES) 53. One of Betty's artists.

FREDERICA 45. Sutton Place matron.

HAROLD (ROSENBERG) 56. A famous art critic.

DUNCAN 52. A manic-depressive painter.

ELLSWORTH (KELLY) 49. One of Betty's most famous artists.

SIDNEY (JANIS) 66. A rival gallery owner.

The play is set in Betty Parsons' New York gallery. The year is 1962. The action is continuous.

(The stage is divided into three large spaces, representing Room 1 of the Betty Parsons gallery, which opens on the unseen street, Room 2, and Betty's spacious office.

In Room 1 are paintings by several of the following: Pollock, Rothko, Newman, Still, Hoffman, Steinberg, Walter Murch, Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, Ellsworth Kelly, De Kooning, Robert Motherwell,; and one painting by an unknown artist.

In Room 2 are paintings by several of the following lesser-known artists: Pousette-Dart, Okada, Ossorio, Feeley, Congdon, Youngerman, Little; and one by Jeanne Miles. There is also a bar.

Betty's office has a desk, several chairs, a cellarette containing liquor bottles and a small fridge, as well as two sketches of Betty, one by Saul Steinberg, the other by Philip Guston. On top of the cellarette is a Ouija board. Leaning next to it are two framed watercolors.

Lights up on BETTY, age 62, in her office, elegantly dressed. CLARICE, age 25, attractive, is setting up a drinks table in Room 2.)

BETTY: —Darling, I've done all I can, I don't know what more I can do. I let my assistant go last month, I have zero payroll to meet, can't you stall the insurance company till the opening?...What cash reserves? I spent my last pennies mounting this show. Sandy Calder once made me a toilet paper holder, I suppose I could sell that, if the Pollock doesn't move....Yes of course I'm joking, call the Chubb people, tell them I'm showing all the heavyweights, Pollock included, I expect the show to sell out...Don't tell me I'm dreaming, just do it. *(sees CLARICE about to enter, abruptly changes her tune)* Oh, that's such marvelous news.... we're cresting on the same day! Can't wait to see your gorgeous shining face. Must run now, darling, love to you and yours...Ciao.

(CLARICE enters.)

CLARICE: I put out four bottles of white and three of red, do you think that'll be enough?

BETTY: Never red at openings.

(BETTY and CLARICE move into Room 1.)

CLARICE: Clashes with the Rothko?

BETTY: *(indulgently)* Oh that's so amusing. Spillage, dear.

CLARICE: Will he be coming?

BETTY: Who, Rothko? Mark's in Paris. (*ruefully*) Clyfford Still I haven't seen in years. Jackson's in heaven, Barney Newman's laid up again, poor thing, Ellsworth Kelly's visiting his folks in Jersey, so we'll be somewhat light on artists. Just as well, I suppose, they put my darling Freddy off her feed. Now what are we forgetting? (*regretfully*) Oh yes, the damn benches.

CLARICE: Museums have benches.

BETTY: And there the people sit, instead of pretending to look at the art. But Freddy wants benches, so benches we will have.

(JEANNE, age 53, has entered Room 1 from outside, dressed to the gills in full bohemian garb.)

CLARICE: Hello, may I help you?

BETTY: It's all right, I've got this. (*to JEANNE*) Hello, darling. Didn't expect to see you so early.

JEANNE: I wanted to have a look before the evening rush. How are you doing, dear?

BETTY: Hoping for the best, prepared for the worst. Look at you, you look fantastic. (*re necklace*) Is that an Art Smith? It's gorgeous.

JEANNE: It's costume and you darn well know it.

BETTY: (*peering*) Ah, so it is. Um, Clarice?

CLARICE: What?

BETTY: The benches? They're in the storage room. One in here, one in there.

(CLARICE hesitates, then turns on her heels, exits through Room 2 into an unseen corridor. During what follows, she emerges with first one bench, which she places in Room 2, then goes to get another.)

JEANNE: I thought you couldn't afford an assistant. Isn't that why you let Davina go?

BETTY: Shh. Loose lips sink ships. (*brightens*) I'm so happy to see you, Jeanne, I've missed you so much!

JEANNE: None of your soft-soap, Parsons. Where have you got me?

BETTY: Perfect setting. You're next to a John Marin. I so love these mandalas you've been doing! I'm almost afraid to get too close, it's so hypnotic.

JEANNE: So hypnotic you have me in the back room.

BETTY: Oh that was inevitable.

JEANNE: What, that the front room was only for the Giants?

BETTY: No, that you'd feel slighted, when there's absolutely no reason. I have bills to play, darling. Can't afford an assistant, can't pay my insurance. Hence this shrine to male ingratitude.

JEANNE: Except for Barney Newman.

BETTY: Barney and Saul Steinberg. They've been loyal.

JEANNE: And Ellsworth Kelly.

BETTY: And Ellsworth. So far.

(JEANNE is studying the Ellsworth, a yellow-on-white color-field painting that resembles a rear end on its side.)

JEANNE: Does Ellsworth know he's being figurative?

BETTY: He'd be the first to deny it.

JEANNE: What are these, but a pair of buttocks?

BETTY: Don't you dare say that to Ellsworth. Or anybody else. Come, let's get you something to drink.

(BETTY takes JEANNE's hand, starts to escort her into Room 2. JEANNE stops to look at the painting by the unknown artist.)

JEANNE: This one I don't recognize.

BETTY: New client.

JEANNE: I hope he appreciates the push you're giving him. Let's take a look at where you've got me.

(BETTY follows JEANNE into Room 2, past CLARICE, who is hauling the second bench into Room 1. JEANNE stops at her painting, the nearest one to the unseen corridor that leads to the unseen storage room.)

JEANNE: Siberia.

BETTY: Oh don't be silly, it's the first thing you see. *(office phone rings; calls)* Clarice, please get that?

(CLARICE *puts down the bench, enters the office, picks up the phone.*)

CLARICE: (*in office; into phone*) Parsons Gallery.

(JEANNE *is glancing around at the paintings in Room 2.*)

JEANNE: I seem to be the only woman. (*wryly*) I suppose I ought to be flattered.

BETTY: You should be flattered, but not for that reason.

JEANNE: You mean there's another woman here? I don't see her. Where's Ethel Schwabacher? Where's Hedda? Where's Adeline?

BETTY: Darling, if they gave me Grand Central Station, I'd hang the lot of them.

CLARICE: (*in office; into phone*) Hold on, please, I'll see if she's available.

(BETTY *has headed into Room 1, followed by JEANNE. CLARICE enters from the office.*)

CLARICE: It's your lawyer.

BETTY: (*dissembling*) I don't believe it, is he finally coming to an opening?

CLARICE: He didn't say. Apparently it's urgent.

BETTY: Probably asking what to wear. Lawyers are so insecure, it's a wonder they have the nerve to get before a jury. (*to JEANNE*) Jeanne, excuse me, I'll get rid of this, then we'll bicker some more.

(BETTY *enters her office, picks up the phone.*)

BETTY: (*into phone*) Yes, Lloyd, what is it that's so important?

(BETTY *settles into her office chair, listening. In Room 1, JEANNE and CLARICE regard each other awkwardly.*)

CLARICE: I'm so sorry.

JEANNE: Sorry for what?

CLARICE: You're Jeanne Miles. That's your painting by the...in there. Oh gosh, I'm your greatest admirer.

JEANNE: Really. Have you compared notes with my other admirers?

CLARICE: No, how could I? Oh. Sorry. You were joking.

JEANNE: (*dryly*) Yes, I was joking. Do you think you could find me a club soda?

CLARICE: Oh. Yes. Happy to. I'm so embarrassed.

(*CLARICE exits into Room 2, searches for the bottle opener, doesn't find it, exits into the unseen corridor to the unseen storage room, leaving JEANNE to examine the paintings in Room 1. She pauses in front of the one by the unknown artist. Doesn't look happy about it.*)

BETTY: (*in the office; into phone*) Lloyd, enough, let's get our facts straight. I'm not subletting from Sidney Janis, he sublet the space from me, and took over the lease when I wasn't looking. First Sidney poaches on my artists, then my real estate...Well, if someone fires on me, I fire back...I know a lawsuit will cost me, you're already overcharging for this phone call, put on your thinking cap and find a way to beat him...Goodbye, darling.

(*BETTY hangs up, goes to the cellarette, takes out a bottle, pours herself a stiff Scotch.*)

(*During the above, FREDERICA, age 45, enters Room 1 from outside. She's stunningly attractive, expensively dressed, patrician.*)

FREDERICA: (*warily*) Hello. Um...I'm here to see Miss Parsons.

JEANNE: Miss Parson's on the phone. With her lawyer, I believe. Courreges?

FREDERICA: Excuse me?

JEANNE: Your dress.

FREDERICA: Oh. No. Marc Bohan.

JEANNE: You left your Shih Tzu at home this time. Or is it a Bichon Frise? I get so terribly confused.

FREDERICA: I'm sorry, have we met?

JEANNE: I must have left a delible impression. 1958. You avoided me at Theora Hamblett's show. You and your pooch.

(*BETTY has knocked back her drink and now enters Room 1.*)

BETTY: Freddy, darling! I'm so glad you made it. Jeanne, you remember Frederica.

JEANNE: If only Freddy could say the same.

FREDERICA: Betty, can we talk privately?

BETTY: Of course. Jeanne, do you mind?

(BETTY hustles FREDERICA into her office.)

JEANNE: (*calls; to FREDERICA; wryly*) Nice running into you again!

(JEANNE exits into Room 2, picks up a still-capped bottle of club soda, as BETTY shows FREDERICA to a chair.)

BETTY: You could try to hide it, you know.

FREDERICA: Was I terribly rude?

BETTY: No, I suspect she was.

FREDERICA: I know civility is terribly bourgeois, but really.

BETTY: Chin up, darling. One day I'll have the perfect gallery: two levels, one catering exclusively to the wealthy, so you and your friends will never have to mingle with the riffraff. You look ravishing, by the way.

FREDERICA: How far do you go back with her?

BETTY: Jeanne? Very far.

FREDERICA: I see.

BETTY: No, you don't see. I've never....no. Not with...never my clients.

FREDERICA: It's none of my business, really.

BETTY: Of course it's your business, you wouldn't be human. Jeanne's a dear friend and a wonderful artist, and I hope to God that mandala of hers will sell, I hate picturing Jeanne at that Village hash-house. Her work should appeal to what's-her-name, your friend with the plumed hat—

FREDERICA: Morgana. Yes, it's not as aggressive as some of these others.

BETTY: And therefore more suitable to Sutton Place. I assume they're all coming? Muffy and Duffy and Fluffy?

FREDERICA: I've asked them to. There's a frost in the air these days.

BETTY: Oh you know how your friends are with rumors.

FREDERICA: Yes, and now they rumors are getting back to me.

BETTY: Not via Grayson, I hope?

FREDERICA: Not yet, God no, I pray that never happens. He's kept me on such a long leash till now.

BETTY: Darling, it's your money, not your husband's. Can you never get that through your pretty skull?

FREDERICA: It felt like mine before we married. Now...I don't know why...it doesn't anymore.

BETTY: You're a woman, that's why. That's your blessing and your curse.

FREDERICA: I can't seem to put my needs above Grayson's without feeling horribly guilty.

BETTY: False consciousness, dear. You have absolutely nothing to feel guilty about.

(FREDERICA suddenly bursts into tears.)

BETTY: Dearest, it's all right, what's the matter? Please don't cry.

FREDERICA: I feel so lost. I feel as though the slightest wind might blow me away.

BETTY: Shh, no, don't make things harder than they are.

FREDERICA: I'm not courageous like you. You're counting on me to keep you solvent....no, don't deny it, it's true...and I just know I'm going to let you down!

BETTY: No, Freddy, you're not going to let me down. Shh, darling, dry your eyes. Go look at the paintings in the back room. I'm sure you'll find something for Muffy or Duffy.

(BETTY escorts FREDERICA out of the office. FREDERICA heads into Room 2, where JEANNE has been making a tour of the paintings.)

BETTY returns to her office, gulps her Scotch.

In Room 2, CLARICE has entered with the bottle opener, pours JEANNE her club soda. FREDERICA keeps her distance, takes a notebook out of her bag, and starts making notes on the paintings.)

CLARICE: Sorry for the delay. Couldn't find the opener.

JEANNE: It's yours, isn't it?

CLARICE: Is what mine?

JEANNE: “Is what mine.” The abstract in the front room.

CLARICE: Oh. Yes, that’s my painting.

JEANNE: You’re in very exalted company, aren’t you? And you’re showing your gratitude by helping out.

CLARICE: (*tightly*) I’m filling in while her secretary’s having his tonsils out.

JEANNE: That’s what Betty told you?

CLARICE: Yes, and I’m sorry I didn’t identify myself right away. She makes me feel like such a lackey, I almost forgot I was an artist.

JEANNE: That’s just one of Betty’s many charming mannerisms. I wouldn’t take it personally. She grew up ordering servants around.

CLARICE: Yes, I thought I smelled money.

JEANNE: It’s a lingering odor. Her family lost a fortune in the Depression. (*confidingly*) Clarice, do you mind a little advice?

CLARICE: I need all the help I can get.

JEANNE: Enjoy your front-room status while you can. Betty tends to lose interest, unless you break through in a big way, and how many women does ever that happen to?

CLARICE: We’re the only women in the show, aren’t we?

JEANNE: We’re the lucky exceptions that prove the sacred rule. Though when you think about it, why shouldn’t Betty favor men? They earn so much more than we do.

CLARICE: But that’s circular reasoning. If she showed more women—

JEANNE: —we’d make more money. You’re catching on. My personal theory? I think Betty has a bit of a grudge against our sex. Her mother was such a thoroughgoing bitch.

(*JEANNE exits Room 2. HAROLD has entered Room 1 from outside. He’s a large, burly man with a bushy mustache. One of his legs is fused at the knee. He walks with a cane, and still manages a charismatic swagger. He’s been taking silent note of all the paintings in Room 1.*

JEANNE *enters.*)

HAROLD: Well hello Miles.

JEANNE: Hi there. Didn't expect to see you here today.

HAROLD: Any reason I shouldn't be here?

JEANNE: On the contrary. All your friends are here. Front and center.

HAROLD: So I see. A very good Pollock, a B-plus Rothko, a passable Clyfford Still.... Newman, Saul Steinberg...Ellsworth Kelly...good God, it's old home week. Where has she got you, Miles? Or are you just here for moral support?

JEANNE: If this were a restaurant, I'd be next to the kitchen.

HAROLD: That's too bad. You deserve better.

JEANNE: Tell that to the boss. Or didn't you really mean that?

HAROLD: No reason to feel insecure. I've always liked your work.

JEANNE: First I've heard of it. Am I wrong? I don't think you've ever publicly praised a painting by a woman.

HAROLD: I'd have to go back and check.

JEANNE: Well, you can start with that famous Action Painting article. You left out Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning—two wives, for heaven's sake—and Joan Mitchell too.

HAROLD: *Mea culpa. Mea maxima culpa. (stops at Clarice's painting)* What have we here?

JEANNE: Betty's newest discovery. Care to take a closer look at mine?

HAROLD: All in good time. *(pause)* Well, hello.

(CLARICE has entered Room 1. HAROLD swiftly switches his attention from JEANNE to the much younger woman.)

HAROLD: Who might you be?

CLARICE: I'm Clarice. Can I get you something from the bar?

HAROLD: *(to JEANNE)* I thought Betty let her assistant go.

CLARICE: No, he's in the hospital. Having his tonsils out.

HAROLD: And a sex change, presumably?

CLARICE: A sex change? No. Oh gosh. (*puzzled*) I was sure Betty said “he.”
May I offer you a glass of white wine?

HAROLD: No thank you. Bad for my gout.

CLARICE: Oh, I’m sorry. Are you in the show?

JEANNE: You’re always part of the show, aren’t you, darling?

HAROLD: It’s the cross I bear. (*glancing into Room 2; to JEANNE*) That is you,
isn’t it, all the way at the end? So unfair. Tell me, are you still living in the
Village?

JEANNE: Yes. West 3rd and Sixth.

HAROLD: What luck. I’m just a stone’s throw from you. Why don’t you come
around sometime?

JEANNE: Thanks, Harold, I’d love to.

HAROLD: I’m going to hold you to that.

JEANNE: I hope you will.

(*JEANNE squeezes HAROLD’s arm and exits into Room 2.*)

CLARICE: “Harold”? I don’t remember hanging any Harolds. Which room are
you in?

HAROLD: At the moment I’m here with you.

(*CLARICE is looking around at the paintings, wondering which of them might
have been painted by the man in front of her.*)

HAROLD: I’ll say this for Betty. She always hangs them right side up. (*off her
look*) Oh you’d be surprised. Peggy Guggenheim didn’t. Betty inherited four of
these guys from Peggy—Pollock, Rothko, Stills, and Newman. And they all
deserted her except Barney. Misogyny, to hear Betty tell it.

CLARICE: Oh isn’t that interesting. Jeanne accused Betty of being a misogynist.

HAROLD: Jeanne tends to overstate things. Now if she brought that exaggeration
to her work, she might be here in the Pantheon. How’s Betty been treating you?

CLARICE: Well, she can be a little bossy. But no, she’s been very kind.

HAROLD: If you don't mind coolie wages.

CLARICE: Oh she isn't paying me.

HAROLD: Why not?

CLARICE: I feel as though I owe her. It's my first show, after all.

HAROLD: Ah. (*pointing to her painting*) This is you. We've been toying with each other, haven't we?

CLARICE: You're not any of these people.

HAROLD: I may have helped them to some degree, but no, I'm none of these people.

CLARICE: Oh, how stupid of me. You're Harold Rosenberg! Oh but you did so much more than help them. You...you put them on the map. You drew the map.

HAROLD: Dirty work, but someone had to do it.

CLARICE: And you made them rich.

HAROLD: No, dear. *Life Magazine* made them rich.

CLARICE: Because you wrote about them. I adore your writing. Even when I understand it.

HAROLD: Word of advice? Stop reading me. It's a mistake for artists to read critics. Especially women.

CLARICE: Why women?

HAROLD: They face so many handicaps as it is. Men can't make babies, so they make art instead. Women? They don't need to make art, they have wombs. They're nurturing by nature, which makes it harder for them to hate. To make great art you have to be willing to hate. (*with another look at her painting*) You're hiding your influences very well. Almost too skillfully.

CLARICE: Really? Who do you think are my influences?

HAROLD: You grew up admiring Rockwell. In your teens you discovered Monet. Then you fell for Magritte. Hello, Betty.

(*BETTY, nursing her drink, enters.*)

BETTY: Harold, you handsome devil, are you tormenting this poor girl?

CLARICE: *(to HAROLD)* You can say anything you want about my work. I still think you're a genius.

BETTY: Don't try to kiss his ass. Fight him, that's all Harold respects. Go see if Frederica needs anything. *(sotto)* If she shows the least sign of leaving, come get me right away. Come along, Harold.

(CLARICE exits into Room 2.)

HAROLD: *(to CLARICE, as she goes)* You're very gifted, Clarice. *(to BETTY, sotto)* But then I don't see as well as I used to.

BETTY: I said stop that. What can I give you to make you more agreeable?

HAROLD: My usual, please.

(BETTY escorts HAROLD into her office, slides an ottoman under HAROLD's game leg as he sits, then begins mixing him a martini.)

(Meanwhile, JEANNE goes up to CLARICE in Room 2.)

JEANNE: Are you all right? You're looking a little shaken.

CLARICE: I was feeling so happy and now I feel miserable. Harold Rosenberg said I was facile!

JEANNE: That's just Harold's way of flirting.

CLARICE: Pretentious jerk.

JEANNE: Isn't he, though. Matisse said the tongues of artists should be cut out. He forgot to include the critics. Come, let's look at the paintings.

CLARICE: *(pause)* Can he make love with that gimpy leg?

JEANNE: Harold? He's legendary. Why?

CLARICE: I knew a boy who came home crippled from Korea. He couldn't... perform.

JEANNE: Well, don't take up a collection for Harold. He's doing very well on that front, I promise you. Here, cheer up.

(JEANNE pours CLARICE a glass of wine. In the office, BETTY hands HAROLD his martini.)

BETTY: I wasn't sure you'd be coming today. We haven't seen that much of you lately.

HAROLD: So much to see, so little time.

BETTY: Sidney's Pop Art show, for example?

HAROLD: He's not calling it Pop. Claims he doesn't like the word. He's calling it the New Realists.

BETTY: Heaven help us.

HAROLD: I told him that won't stick, the term doesn't apply. He wouldn't listen.

BETTY: Sidney never does. Who's in the show?

HAROLD: Dine, Segal, Indiana...mostly Lichtenstein and Warhol.

BETTY: God help us, Warhol? The man can't even draw shoes.

HAROLD: Yes, Andy's post-Art. The Leonardo of boredom. Sidney predicts the show will sell out.

BETTY: It's so depressing. Where's the emotion? Where's the mystery?

HAROLD: Ah well, the Age of Obscurity is over. We've had unintelligible poetry, atonal music, and Finnegans Wake. All that has run its course. We are entering the Age of the Obvious. I don't often give business advice, Parsons, but if you want to stay afloat in this shitstorm? Marry a rich man.

BETTY: I tried that once. He lost all his money in the Crash. The same year my family lost theirs.

HAROLD: Meanwhile, there's always Frederica.

BETTY: Well there I'm on rather thin ice.

HAROLD: I'm sorry to hear it.

BETTY: She's getting cold feet. Afraid her husband will find out about us, and force her to pull the plug. I can really use your help, Harold. I mounted this show with you in mind.

HAROLD: And here I thought you'd forgotten me.

BETTY: I'm not asking you to review it. I know that's beneath you.

HAROLD: You want me to browbeat some hack into doing a feature article.

BETTY: If that's what it takes.

HAROLD: Let's see how the day goes. Jeanne's looking well, isn't she? Not to mention this new find of yours.

BETTY: Does that mean what I think it means?

HAROLD: (*mock outrage*) Parsons! What do you take me for?

BETTY: You must think you're irresistible. Which of course you are.

(*The phone rings.*)

BETTY: Excuse me, darling. (*answers phone; changes her voice*) Parsons Gallery. (*darkly*) Sidney?! Yes, this is Betty, why the hell are you calling?...You bet I'm suing you, the loft belongs to me, you took over the lease the way you took over my artists...Rothko, yes, I'm showing a Rothko...And a Pollock, and a Clyfford Still....I have good-faith agreements with every artist in the show, so please keep your ridiculous threats to a minimum....

(*In Room 1, a gaunt man, age 59, has just entered, dressed all in white, like a hospital orderly. This is DUNCAN. He clutching an unframed canvas backwards to his chest. He starts peering at the paintings in Room 1. He's quite agitated.*)

BETTY: (*into phone*) ...Fine, Sidney, if that's the way you want to play it, I'll alert my lawyer.

(HAROLD *signals he wants to talk to Sidney.*)

BETTY: There's a man here who'd like a word with you.

(HAROLD *takes the phone.*)

HAROLD: (*into phone*) Sidney, *bubbie*, why don't you give our mutual friend a break?

(HAROLD *signals to BETTY that Sidney is running his mouth.*)

(*Spotting DUNCAN, CLARICE enters Room 1.*)

CLARICE: Can I help you with anything, sir?

DUNCAN: Yes, you can. You damn well can. I've brought your employer something important.

CLARICE: Well, we've already hung everything we're going to hang, so if you don't mind, we're really not open for business yet—

DUNCAN: You don't know who I am, do you?

CLARICE: No, I'm afraid I don't.

(DUNCAN *pats the back of the painting he's holding.*)

DUNCAN: I'm the Ghost of Christmas Future.

CLARICE: (*playing along*) Sounds exciting. May I take a look?

DUNCAN: Not a chance. For her eyes only. I really dig this place, don't you? It's got class. More than Peggy ever had. Peggy, that crazy broad, she used to mount her art on baseball bats. All that played-out surrealist jazz. No wonder the woman gave up. Peggy saw the writing on the wall, and it said get your ass to Paris. Where's your mistress?

CLARICE: I believe Miss Parsons is on the phone. If you'd care to wait?

(*In the office, HAROLD is trying to get a word in edgewise.*)

HAROLD: —Sidney, sweetheart, take a breath. You have the world by the balls, stop trying to humiliate the competition, you're not a *shmatta* salesman anymore.

(JEANNE *spots DUNCAN, enters Room 1 from Room 2.*)

JEANNE: Duncan?!

DUNCAN: Jeanne!!

(JEANNE *hugs DUNCAN. FREDERICA hesitantly enters Room 1.*)

DUNCAN: (*to JEANNE*) What happened? Where've you been keeping yourself? I thought you'd given up on me.

JEANNE: Oh Lord, did I miss visiting day? I lost all track of time, oh I'm so sorry, you must have been furious with me. But you're here now! How are you?

DUNCAN: I'm fantastic. Never better. How's your daughter doing?

JEANNE: Joanna? She's thriving. She's with Strasberg, she's getting TV roles, I couldn't be prouder.

DUNCAN: (*to FREDERICA*) And you must be her latest Katinka.

FREDERICA: I'm sure I don't know what that is.

DUNCAN: Then you are one. (*calls*) Betty? Get off the phone, I need to show you something.

JEANNE: Shh, Duncan, calm down. We can all hear you.

(JEANNE *starts massaging* DUNCAN's *shoulders. In the office:*)

HAROLD: (*on phone*) Of course I'm coming to your show...but Betty's will be hard to top....It's definitive, all the greats, plus one interesting newcomer, don't try to steal her, if you value your *cojones*....Well I don't think Betty wants to talk to you, Sidney, I think she's made her position clear.

(BETTY *nods yes.*)

HAROLD: Goodbye for now, *bubbeleh*.

(HAROLD *hangs up.*)

BETTY: Thank you, Harold.

HAROLD: I meant every other word. (*looks up, sees DUNCAN*) God in heaven, look who's here!

BETTY: Duncan!?

(BETTY and HAROLD *enter Room 1. DUNCAN continues to hide the painting against his body.*)

DUNCAN: 'Lo, Harold. (to BETTY) Nice place you've got, have I ever been here?

BETTY: You've shown here, darling. Did that hospital give you a job?

DUNCAN: What? No. No job. Didn't apply for one.

BETTY: Then why are you dressed like an orderly?

DUNCAN: Only clothes I have. The rest are at Mother's. It's a treat to see you, Parsons.

BETTY: Clarice, this is one of my oldest dearest friends.

DUNCAN: And one of your oldest clients too.

CLARICE: Yes, I'm sorry I didn't recognize you.

DUNCAN: Why should you recognize me?

CLARICE: From your picture in *Artforum*.

DUNCAN: They've got my mug shot in *Artforum*? I'm always the last to know. There weren't any copies in the dayroom.

BETTY: Clarice, why don't you get Duncan something to drink? You're allowed to drink, aren't you, Duncan? It won't clash?

DUNCAN: What, with the pills? Not a chance. I've been cheeking my meds for weeks.

CLARICE: What would you like?

DUNCAN: Ask me in an hour, when my blood sugar drops. (*to BETTY*) What happened to your old assistant?

HAROLD: Seems she's having her tonsils out.

BETTY: Clarice is in the show.

DUNCAN: Quid pro quo. Good for you, honey.

BETTY: Now don't start that. Clarice is in the show because she's a brilliant new artist. And this is my dear friend Frederica.

FREDERICA: We've met. He called me a Katinka.

DUNCAN: (*to FREDERICA*) It's an honorific, honey, don't get your tits in a twist. Betty's always looking for help from powerful aristos. Dunno why she calls them Katinkas, I think it's her way of insulting them. You don't actually look that powerful, come to think of it. You look downright scared. We frighten you, is that the problem?

FREDERICA: Frankly, yes, you frighten me. Is that what you wanted to hear?

DUNCAN: All painters or just the crazy ones?

FREDERICA: Is there a difference?

DUNCAN: I like that. I like this Katinka. Yes, there's a difference. The crazy painters are the ones who know the score. They know what we do is a racket. Writers, poets, composers, they have to dream up new ideas all the time. Painters do the same damn painting, different colors. Not me. I refuse to ride that gravy train.

HAROLD: Fine. Now stop beating your gums and show us what you're up to.

BETTY: Yes, are you going to keep clutching that painting to your chest or can we all have the pleasure?

DUNCAN: Promise you'll laugh?

(DUNCAN shows his painting—Mickey Mouse bursting out of an abstract-expressionist background.)

HAROLD: That's worth a chuckle. Nicely done, Duncan.

CLARICE: "Ghost of Christmas Future." Is that the title?

DUNCAN: No. I went with *Mickey #1*.

HAROLD: No. Not *Mickey #1*, just *Mickey*. Leave numbers to the delicatessen.

BETTY: When did you do this, Duncan?

DUNCAN: In Art Therapy. Six months ago. My headshrinker had a field day with the mouse. "Isn't your mother's name Minnie?" I said, "You're missing the point entirely. God painted this picture. All I did was hold the damn brush."

BETTY: It certainly makes a statement. I'm thrilled you're working again.

DUNCAN: Don't humor me, Betty. If there's one thing that can send me over the edge, it's a woman's condescension. I get enough of that from Mother.

BETTY: Duncan, shh, I like your painting.

DUNCAN: Enough to hang it?

BETTY: Today? That's an awful lot to expect.

DUNCAN: What does the Katinka think?

BETTY: Freddy?

FREDERICA: Won't Walt Disney sue?

DUNCAN: I'm counting on it. Would you buy it, hon?

FREDERICA: No...I...no.

DUNCAN: How about your rich friends?

FREDERICA: I don't really think so, no. They can't...they don't know anything about Pop Art. They think it's....Betty, help me out here...

BETTY: An endorsement of all that's cheap in our culture.

DUNCAN: I knew it. You hate it.

BETTY: I don't hate it, and stop asking me to. Where are you sleeping these days?

DUNCAN: Some flophouse in the Bowery, I don't remember the address. I'm looking for a place to work.

BETTY: What happened to your mother's place?

DUNCAN: I can't go back to Mother. Mother thinks I'm still in Creedmoor. Where Mother put me.

HAROLD: Why aren't you still there? Painting masterpieces.

DUNCAN: It was a matter of personal survival, Harold, and you can take your tongue out of your cheek. Carlos, this amazing cat, he took a liking to my work. Said he'd pay me twenty bucks to sketch him. I told him, Carlos, you're gonna sell that sketch for a hundred times what you paid for it. So he traded me his clothes and unlocked the art room.

HAROLD: But won't they miss you at Creedmoor?

DUNCAN: Carlos will. The rest of the staff? Glad to be rid of me. How's your work coming, Betty? (*to the others*) We've always dug each other's work. Up to now, that is. (*to BETTY*) Remind me, did we ever sleep with each other? I've had so much shock therapy I can't remember.

BETTY: Not even once.

DUNCAN: Don't shit where you eat, that's Betty's policy vis a vis her clients. And I'm not as gorgeous as Garbo was alleged to be.

BETTY: What makes you think I slept with Garbo?

DUNCAN: Just good friends, yeah yeah, I know that song. Robert Benchley, was he just a "good friend" too? Always thought Benchley was light on his feet. Did he make you dress like a man?

BETTY: No, but he bought my paintings anyway.

DUNCAN: (*to CLARICE*) Betty dressed like a man all through school. Her family tried to scold her into being feminine. She wanted to go to Bryn Mawr, but they wouldn't pay for it, thought it would turn her queer. Betty had her revenge. She became a painter.

CLARICE: (*to BETTY*) I didn't know you were an artist.

DUNCAN: Betty? All her life. We had some great times in Paris, didn't we? I still see Isadora now and then. She's still got that bruise on her neck, and she kept the scarf.

FREDERICA: (*tightly; sotto to BETTY*) Betty, I can't take much more of this.

BETTY: (*sotto*) Shh, yes you can.

DUNCAN: But then everybody was French in those days.

BETTY: Except my artists. They couldn't afford to go to Paris.

DUNCAN: "So they created American art." You were afraid to insult me to my face, so you did it in a magazine. What was I, if not one of your artists?

JEANNE: You're not the only one she left out. I went to Paris too.

BETTY: Oh you know how it works, you say one thing, they print another. (*to DUNCAN*) You were one of my great ones. And you'll be great again.

DUNCAN: Listen to that. Vintage Parsons. She plays her part and yours and doesn't let you breathe. (*re Mickey*) Where would this look best?

BETTY: (*evasive*) Don't rush me, Duncan.

DUNCAN: Parsons, I need this gig.

BETTY: And I need to sit with it awhile. Clarice, put Duncan's painting in my office. And that larger watercolor by the cellarette? Wrap it for delivery to Atlanta.

CLARICE: Is that painting one of yours?

BETTY: Yes, I'm being shown there.

CLARICE: Why didn't you ever tell me?

DUNCAN: Our Betty's a modest. With much to be modest about, as Oscar Wilde said.

BETTY: It was Winston Churchill who said it, and I'll put you over my knee if you keep this up.

DUNCAN: Is that a promise?

FREDERICA: (*sotto, to BETTY*) That's it. No more. Goodbye.

BETTY: (*sotto, to FREDERICA*) No, stop it, you're not leaving! (*to JEANNE and HAROLD*) Keep an eye on Duncan, all right? Don't let him get too close to the art.

(*CLARICE takes DUNCAN's canvas into the office. HAROLD props himself on the bench in Room 1, massaging his game leg. While BETTY hustles FREDERICA into Room 2, DUNCAN takes JEANNE aside.*)

DUNCAN: (*to JEANNE*) Are you still doing headstands?

JEANNE: Every day.

DUNCAN: Without the undies?

JEANNE: That you remember.

DUNCAN: Some images are shockproof.

(*DUNCAN makes a tour of the paintings in Room 1, singing softly to himself.*)

DUNCAN: (*sotto*) "Full moon...and empty arms....The moon is there for us to share...But where are you?..."

(*JEANNE sticks close to DUNCAN. In Room 2, BETTY is trying to keep FREDERICA from bolting.*)

FREDERICA: Have you lost your mind? You're actually letting that man stay here?

BETTY: Where would you like him to go? Back to that flophouse?

FREDERICA: How about the asylum he came from?

BETTY: Creedmore? It's absolute hell on earth.

FREDERICA: Fine. Do what you have to. It's all beyond me. We're just too different, Betty.

BETTY: Nonsense, we're peas in a pod. My grandfather designed the Confederate flag, for heaven's sake.

FREDERICA: Well, there you are. My great uncle was victorious at Gettysburg.

BETTY: And now we're fighting on the same side, so you mustn't give in to your husband. I know what it's like to live with weakness. Father was a raging alcoholic, and Mother was a narcissistic horror. They taught me to recognize my enemies. (*pause*) Sidney's forcing me to sue him over the lease.

FREDERICA: “Forcing you”?

BETTY: And if I back down, he’ll come after me with both barrels. I need to pay the lawyers. Grayson need never know.

FREDERICA: Ask someone else to help.

BETTY: Who?

FREDERICA: That Newport woman, your last Katinka, what was her name?

BETTY: Dumpy Ehrenreich is a hideous anti-Semite.

FREDERICA: So was Cezanne, you told me.

BETTY: So was Renoir. So was Degas. Do you see any Impressionists on my walls? I’m not taking another dime from Dumpy Ehrenreich.

FREDERICA: All right, then Susan.

BETTY: Susan who?

FREDERICA: The one you toured Europe with? She was hoping to learn about art. Said you didn’t know marble from glass. Anything before 1950, you didn’t have anything to teach.

BETTY: That’s why I could never stand the Met. Just a lot of white sculpture and brown paintings. Who’s been feeding you this rubbish?

FREDERICA: She said you specialize in being a guest. And you’re stingy and demanding when you visit other people’s houses.

BETTY: Well, all right. You’ve talked yourself into leaving me, why don’t you just go now.

FREDERICA: Please don’t react like that.

BETTY: How do you expect me to react? I’m hanging by a thread, Harold is willing to publicize the show, and now I have to listen to these borrowed insults.

FREDERICA: I didn’t know Harold did publicity.

BETTY: He doesn’t. Not directly. He’ll find a way to do it so it won’t sully his precious reputation.

FREDERICA: In return for what?

BETTY: Three guesses. Come on, darling, don't you love this show? Isn't it the best we've ever done? Did you like the Marin? What about the Okada? Let's see what you wrote about the Okada.

(BETTY steers a still-resistant FREDERICA toward the paintings, takes FREDERICA'S notebook out of her bag. They move from one painting to the next.

In Room 1, meanwhile, DUNCAN has been making a tour of the paintings, humming to himself, shaking his head in approval or disapproval at each one. He stops at a painting by Clyfford Still.)

DUNCAN: *(to JEANNE)* OK, this one makes me very sad. You know the amazing thing about Clyfford? He can actually draw. Then why is he doing this crap? *(to HAROLD)* Where's the gesture? What's the event? A record of boredom? It's so damn calculated, right, Harold? And here's Rothko. Glowing with self-infatuation. So overrated.

HAROLD: Who isn't?

DUNCAN: So true. Picasso's overrated. I'm overrated. How's the leg, by the way? Is it true it aches whenever you see a masterpiece?

HAROLD: No, just the unearned masterpieces.

DUNCAN: Now this Pollock is a different story. This painting was a record of a real event. What if I slashed it with a pen-knife? Wouldn't that be the record of another event? What's the difference?

HAROLD: You come within three feet of that painting, I'll cut you to ribbons.

DUNCAN: Why, is there a blade concealed in that cane? Don't worry, Harold, they took away all my sharps when they admitted me. I won't slash this painting, but I'm going to do Jackson one better. Jackson painted on the floor, but he didn't let people walk on his paintings. I'm going to exhibit my next five paintings on a gallery floor, and insist that people walk on them. Footprints on the art...as part of the art. I'm talking to you, Harold, where are you going?

HAROLD: *(with a wink at JEANNE)* To see if I can find you some lithium.

(HAROLD goes into the office, where CLARICE is wrapping Betty's painting. JEANNE stays behind in Room 1, keeping a close eye on DUNCAN.)

CLARICE: *(re Betty's painting)* Beautiful, isn't it? The New Art Gallery in Atlanta is showing it. And Betty never said a word to me about it.

HAROLD: It's very pretty. So unlike her taste in painting, which is nothing short of perfect.

CLARICE: I could try to take that as a compliment.

HAROLD: Take it any way you like. Tell me, do you know Magritte's "*La trahison des images*"?

CLARICE: "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe.*" "This isn't a pipe." I adore that painting.

HAROLD: It's one of the most trivial pieces of art ever to be taken seriously, with the possible exception of Baldacinni's "Yellow Buick." A compacted car on a pedestal? The people at MOMA have lost their marbles.

CLARICE: Are you saying my painting is trivial?

HAROLD: I'm not questioning your talent, just your taste. In my experience they seldom coincide.

CLARICE: OK, I admit I like Magritte, but he's not one of my "influences." The ones you think I'm hiding.

HAROLD: Well, I haven't seen all your work.

CLARICE: I hope you'll have a chance to.

HAROLD: So do I. Where's your studio?

CLARICE: In Manhattan.

HAROLD: What part of Manhattan?

CLARICE: The upper East Side.

HAROLD: And all I can boast of is a walk-up in the Village. Your parents must be rolling in it.

CLARICE: It's my roommate who's rich.

HAROLD: You have a roommate.

CLARICE: She's my cousin.

HAROLD: Your cousin. Is she an artist too?

CLARICE: No, she works at Chase Manhattan.

HAROLD: Keeps regular hours?

CLARICE: Why?

HAROLD: Just curious.

(CLARICE continues to wrap Betty's painting, smiling at HAROLD from time to time. Meanwhile ELLSWORTH, age 53, a pleasant-looking man, conservatively dressed, has entered Room 1 from outside.

DUNCAN is standing in front of Ellsworth's yellow painting. Neither he nor JEANNE has seen ELLSWORTH.)

DUNCAN: *(to JEANNE)* This color-field crap I don't get. Reminds me of kindergarten. I know it's supposed to shock, but Ellsworth is too genteel to bring it off.

JEANNE: I like it.

DUNCAN: You're not serious. How can you love me and like this?

JEANNE: I can't help it, Duncan. I'm fickle.

DUNCAN: All this yellow is making me squint. Ellsworth's new boyfriend must be Japanese.

JEANNE: Now you're just being silly.

DUNCAN: For how much?

ELLSWORTH: Take the bet, Jeanne.

JEANNE: *(turns)* Ellsworth!

ELLSWORTH: Hello, Jeanne.

JEANNE: How nice of you to come. I don't think Betty was expecting you.

ELLSWORTH: *(uneasily)* I could hardly stay away, could I? Hello, Duncan. When did you get out?

DUNCAN: In the nick of time, thanks for asking.

ELLSWORTH: Pretty grim place, Creedmoor. Or so I've heard.

DUNCAN: Grim and stupid. I was a Cro-Magnon among Neanderthals. They said my thoughts were too complex, so they were fixing to disconnect my prefrontal cortex with an ice pick. Betty, sweetheart, look what the cat dragged in!

(BETTY has entered from Room 2, followed by FREDERICA, and, from the office, HAROLD and CLARICE. Everybody converges on the celebrated painter.)

BETTY: Ellsworth, you dear man, I thought you were trapped in New Jersey, how wonderful to see you!

ELLSWORTH: Always lovely to see you, Betty.

HAROLD: Hello, Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH: Harold. Nice to see you as well.

HAROLD: Been to your *landsman's* show?

ELLSWORTH: What *landsman*? What are you talking about?

HAROLD: Andy Warhol. At Eleanor Ward's. Soup cans, coke bottles, dollar bills, Marilyn Monroe.

ELLSWORTH: I believe Warhol is from Pittsburgh. I'm from Newburgh.

DUNCAN: But you're both from Queerburgh. I think that was Harold's point, wasn't it, Harold?

BETTY: Quiet, Duncan. (to ELLSWORTH) He's been looking for a spanking all day.

CLARICE: (to ELLSWORTH) I'm Clarice. I adore your work.

ELLSWORTH: Well, thank you, Clarice.

DUNCAN: (to CLARICE) Honey, don't ever do that.

CLARICE: Do what?

DUNCAN: Introduce yourself. Pretend people already know you. That's the only way to prosper in the art world, right, Ellsworth? Ellsworth comes on like Jimmy Stewart, but his ego's as big as Alaska. You never paint the same color twice, do you, Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH: Not if I can help it. Betty, can I have a word?

BETTY: Yes yes, I need to talk to you as well. (to FREDERICA) Finish making those notes, will you, darling?

FREDERICA: I think I'm finished.

BETTY: Let me see. (*takes notebook from FREDERICA*) What are you saying, you've scarcely begun. What about the Congdon? And the John Little? It's a street scene, for heaven's sake.

FREDERICA: All right. This one last time. No more.

BETTY: Suit yourself. I'm tired of begging. (*sotto; to JEANNE*) Try to get Duncan to relax. If he flies any higher he'll be depressed for weeks.

(*FREDERICA retreats to Room 2, continues to make notes on the paintings. JEANNE and DUNCAN head into Room 2.*)

DUNCAN: (*to JEANNE*) Are you part of this extravaganza? Oh yes, there you are, in oiga-poiga land. Jeanne, you're far too good for this show.

JEANNE: If you're going to be grandiose, Duncan, I'm glad it's on my behalf.

(*JEANNE takes DUNCAN's arm, and they start to make the rounds of the paintings in Room 2. BETTY and ELLSWORTH have entered the office.*)

BETTY: So what are you drinking these days?

ELLSWORTH: Whatever your usual is.

(*BETTY pours two Scotches. In Room 1, CLARICE watches HAROLD studying her painting.*)

ELLSWORTH: Looks like a bang-up show, Betty.

BETTY: (*sotto*) Tell that to Frederica. She's about to jump ship.

ELLSWORTH: Freddy? I don't believe it. Freddy adores you.

BETTY: Not as much as she fears her husband. And her social reputation.

ELLSWORTH: That's always a problem with these rich ladies, isn't it.

BETTY: I thought Freddy might be different, but no, she's a prisoner of her class. I'm the bloody flagship of modernism and I'm taking on water faster than I can bail. This show will make or break me, Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH: (*uneasily*) Well I'm proud to be a part of it...and in such good company.

BETTY: You tower above them, darling.

ELLSWORTH: Well, I don't know about that. But I'm glad to see you're showing them.

BETTY: I can't afford not to. Greatness doesn't stop being great, even when character goes to the dogs.

ELLSWORTH: Betty...really...you must try not to be so bitter.

BETTY: Why, after all I did for them?

ELLSWORTH: Those men were broke. Starving, some of them.

BETTY: What did they expect, overnight success? I didn't sell a painting for more than a thousand dollars, until *Life Magazine* ran that story about Jackson Pollock. Henry Luce told the bourgeoisie it was OK to like abstract expressionism, and of course that's when Sidney Janis pounced.

ELLSWORTH: Yes, I know Sidney did that, but—

BETTY: But what?

ELLSWORTH: He was offering them stipend.

BETTY: What did they need contracts for? I got them to where they were household words. Now they're accusing each other of selling out, and they're right. They've all sold out. Except you, dearest.

(BETTY *grasps* ELLSWORTH's *hands*.)

BETTY: Your very first show was with me, do you remember? Your first two shows.

ELLSWORTH: (*uneasily*) Yes, I know.

BETTY: '56 and '57. Both triumphs.

ELLSWORTH: I know. I'm so grateful. Without you....I don't know where I'd be.

BETTY: You'd have found a way. But thank you.

ELLSWORTH: No, I mean it. Who's done more for modern art than you? You're a marvel.

BETTY: You're the marvel. So calm. So balanced. Not like those rutting woman-hating pigs.

ELLSWORTH: Oh I hope not.

BETTY: It's thrilling, your sense of beauty. You could turn your saliva into art if you chose.

ELLSWORTH: Very kind of you to say so. *(uneasy pause)* Can I have a refill?

(ELLSWORTH disengages awkwardly from BETTY, points to the other framed watercolor by the cellarette.)

ELLSWORTH: Is that one of yours?

BETTY: Yes, I've been painting more lately, thank heaven.

ELLSWORTH: Let's have a closer look.

(ELLSWORTH picks up BETTY'S painting, while BETTY pours him another drink. In Room 1, HAROLD has pulled himself away from CLARICE's painting, seating himself on the bench.)

CLARICE: Does it hurt much?

HAROLD: To hear artists bicker? It comes with the territory.

CLARICE: Silly, I meant your leg. How did it happen?

HAROLD: Osteomyelitis.

CLARICE: That's serious, isn't it.

HAROLD: You bet it is. They couldn't wait to amputate. I found one surgeon who disagreed, but at the price of fusing my femur to my kneecap.

CLARICE: How awful.

HAROLD: I've been told it adds to my appeal. I'm tall, dark, handsome, and a poet. And I've got this wound. What woman could resist that?

(CLARICE picks up HAROLD's cane.)

CLARICE: Anyway, I'm sorry.

(HAROLD watches as CLARICE raises the cane to her lips, then hands it back. She rises, heads for Room 2, looking back at HAROLD; then, as he struggles to his feet, continues on past FREDERICA, past DUNCAN and JEANNE, who have stopped in front of JEANNE's painting.)

DUNCAN: This one I really dig. This one I'll buy.

JEANNE: If only you could. But I love you for saying it.

(HAROLD, *following CLARICE, limps toward Room 2.*)

DUNCAN: What's Betty asking? I'll get double from the resale, pay you back in two months.

JEANNE: (*humoring him*) Oh dear, you have this all figured out.

DUNCAN: (*fiercely*) Stop patronizing me, Miles, I'm serious!

JEANNE: How do you know it will double in value?

DUNCAN: Because Harold's going to praise it, aren't you, Harold?

HAROLD: Praise what?

DUNCAN: Jeanne's remarkable canvas.

HAROLD: Well, that all depends, doesn't it?

(HAROLD *gives JEANNE a smile. JEANNE watches CLARICE disappear in the direction of the unseen storage room.*)

DUNCAN: Jeanne, wake up, you gonna sell it to me or not?

(JEANNE *watches in dismay as HAROLD disappears in pursuit of CLARICE.*)

JEANNE: I can't give you an answer right now.

DUNCAN: Why not? What's the matter? Never mind. I'll ask someone who can.

(DUNCAN *exits into Room 1.*)

(*In the office, ELLSWORTH puts BETTY's canvas aside.*)

ELLSWORTH: You should show this canvas to Sidney.

BETTY: You do know I'm suing the man.

ELLSWORTH: In that case maybe I should buy it.

BETTY: As an apologetic gesture?

ELLSWORTH: Of course not. What do I have to apologize for?

(DUNCAN *bares through Room 1 into the office.*)

DUNCAN: How much are you asking for the Miles?

BETTY: Why?

DUNCAN: Why, because I want to buy it. Goddamit, woman, name your price.

BETTY: Where are you going to get the money?

DUNCAN: From the sale of my canvas. Unless, of course, you've ruled out a whole school of painting, which I know you're famous for—

BETTY: First of all, Pop Art is hardly a school—

DUNCAN: So you're ruling it out.

BETTY: I never rule anything out.

DUNCAN: So long as it's "Modern Art."

BETTY: So long as it's modern, that's right.

DUNCAN: Christ, Parsons, don't you know there's no such thing? You know what they're showing at MOMA? A 3,000-year-old mask from Borneo and a piece of driftwood from Pismo Beach. Everybody's an artist these days. Puppeteers. Crooners. Hat designers. Are you gonna hang my painting or not?

BETTY: I can't make any decisions right now.

DUNCAN: OK, how about I sketch you, you can hang that instead.

BETTY: (*re sketch on wall*) You'll never do better than Saul.

DUNCAN: That's you? I thought it was a picture of Steinberg's Afghan.

BETTY: Darling, I treasure your insults, I truly want to help you, but at the moment I'm fighting for my own survival.

DUNCAN: In other words, forget it. I can take a hint.

(DUNCAN *picks up his painting.*)

BETTY: Duncan, what are you doing? I didn't say I wouldn't hang it. Who doesn't love Mickey Mouse?

(DUNCAN *exits into Room 1, with his painting. JEANNE comes storming past him into the office.*)

BETTY: (*calls*) Duncan, come back! (*to JEANNE*) Keep humoring him. I'm afraid he'll jump off a bridge with that infernal painting in his arms.

JEANNE: (*calls*) Duncan, stay right there, don't leave! (*back in office*) I think Harold's willing to negotiate.

BETTY: About what?

JEANNE: Tit for tat. Or tat for tit, in this case.

BETTY: Why, are you thinking of getting in business?

JEANNE: Only as a last resort.

ELLSWORTH: (*to JEANNE*) You're not seriously considering—

JEANNE: Yes, and it doesn't leave this room.

ELLSWORTH: I didn't realize Harold was so venal. Hardly seems fair of him—rules out half the artist population. Unless, of course, Harold's womanizing is simply a form of denial.

BETTY: Yes, people always say that about Don Juans, don't they? Meanwhile they're having the time of their lives. (*to JEANNE*) What happens now? Are you going to his place?

JEANNE: I may have to take a number.

BETTY: Don't tell me. Oh the little minx. Where is he taking her, not the Village, I hope, I need her to tend bar.

JEANNE: I believe they were headed for the storage room.

BETTY: Good Lord, I hope they don't get too acrobatic. There's scarcely room to breathe in there. What's Duncan doing? He didn't leave, did he?

(*JEANNE peers into Room 1. DUNCAN is sitting against a wall, cradling his Mickey Mouse painting in his arms.*)

JEANNE: Still there. He looks perfectly miserable.

BETTY: Maybe I can find room for him.

JEANNE: Today? With Mickey Mouse? That's like hanging a crucifix in a synagogue.

BETTY: I could promise him a future show.

JEANNE: A whole roomful of Duncans? They'll send you to Creedmoor.

BETTY: I have to tell him something. We don't want to be the last ones to see him alive.

ELLSWORTH: Oh, he's hardly suicidal. He on cloud nine.

JEANNE: That's exactly the problem. He crash-lands. Goes crawling home to Mother. And the vicious cycle starts again.

(BETTY gulps her Scotch, laughs to herself.)

JEANNE: What? What is it?

BETTY: Between Duncan and Freddy and Harold and the rain...I was wondering, what would Jackson say?

ELLSWORTH: What's Jackson got to do with it?

BETTY: Do you think he'd like Duncan's painting?

JEANNE: Drunk or sober?

BETTY: Take your pick.

JEANNE: I think he'd be horribly insulted.

(BETTY has gone over to the cellarette. She picks up the Ouija board, places it on her desk.)

ELLSWORTH: Oh Betty, you're not serious.

BETTY: You don't know me very well, do you, Ellsworth?

JEANNE: Betty's devoted to the spirit world.

BETTY: I've done Oriental meditation, I've done Subud, I was a French countess in a former life.

ELLSWORTH: Now you're just teasing.

BETTY: *(flatly)* I lived in Provence and I dined with the peasants. *(calls)* Duncan, sweetheart, we're going to try to contact Jackson.

(In Room 1, DUNCAN waves her away.)

JEANNE: He says go ahead without him.

(BETTY places her hands on the planchette.)

ELLSWORTH: I don't think I want to be here for this.

BETTY: Then leave. *(to the air)* Jackson, are you there?

JEANNE: *(to ELLSWORTH)* It works right away or not at all.

BETTY: Nothing's coming through. Rats. *(then)* Wait.

(The planchette veers violently--toward yes.)

ELLSWORTH: Oh good grief.

BETTY: Jackson says yes. He's here. Hello, Jackson.

(BETTY signals for everybody to say hello.)

JEANNE: Hello, Jackson.

BETTY: Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH: I can't. I feel too silly.

JEANNE: You'll feel even sillier when a demon takes hold of your body.

ELLSWORTH: *(quickly)* Hello, Jackson.

BETTY: How are you, old friend? Are there drunken dancing parties where you are? Is there a Cedar Tavern in Artist Heaven?

JEANNE: Betty, stop, now you're being frivolous.

BETTY: Jackson, do you regret leaving me in the lurch?

(The planchette moves.)

BETTY: No, I didn't think you regretted it. Jackson, will I ever get out of this hole I'm in? Should I sell the gallery?

JEANNE: Betty, for goodness' sake—you never joke with a Ouija board. *(calls)* Jackson, Duncan's here. He's out of the loony bin and he brought Betty a painting, can you see it from where you are?

(The planchette moves.)

BETTY: Jackson says yes.

JEANNE: To what?

BETTY: To what, Jackson? Sell the gallery?

(Planchette moves. JEANNE peers.)

JEANNE: Oh Betty, don't listen to him.

BETTY: Why not? Half my artists never go anywhere. The other half I bludgeon ignorant socialites into buying their work.

JEANNE: That's the Scotch talking. No, don't you dare.

(BETTY has reached for the bottle. JEANNE snatches it out of reach.)

BETTY: Sometimes I think....if I'd rejected the artists I took on, and shown the ones I rejected, I'd be exactly where I am today. On the verge of losing everything dear to me.

JEANNE: I said that's enough of that!

ELLSWORTH: Yes, put away that toy and stop feeling sorry for yourself.

BETTY: It's not a toy! My God, don't you ever have melancholy thoughts? No crisis of faith at three in the morning? No, you're too....too upstate New York.

ELLSWORTH: Newburgh isn't that far upstate.

BETTY: I'm referring to your vanilla-flavored psyche.

ELLSWORTH: Oh my. What on earth's gotten into you, Betty?

(BETTY puts her hands on the planchette again.)

BETTY: Jackson, is it all completely random? Am I actually a fraud? On a scale from 1 to 10. *(planchette moves)* He says I'm a 7. A minor fraud.

ELLSWORTH: He's one to talk. Max Ernst invented drip painting.

BETTY: Jackson, what do you say to that? *(planchette moves)* He admits it. Death has taught you modesty, Jackson.

(BETTY picks up her other watercolor.)

BETTY: This painting looks unfinished, doesn't it.

JEANNE: It's lovely, it's you, and stop fishing for compliments. You know who never think of themselves as frauds? No-talents. *(calls)* Jackson, isn't that right? Isn't Betty Parsons the mother of us all?

BETTY: Shh, Jackson's trying to tell me something. (*planchette moves, spelling out a word*) U...R...A...

(DUNCAN, *who's been eavesdropping, now tiptoes past the office, sees HAROLD and CLARICE are gone, goes into Room 2. In the office:*)

BETTY: ...C...T...I...O...N.

JEANNE: "You Are Action." (*calls*) Jackson, yes, that's exactly right. (*to BETTY*) Your life is an action painting. One passionate gesture after another.

BETTY: Thank you, Jeanne.

JEANNE: Don't thank me, thank Jackson. Now quit being so hard on yourself.

ELLSWORTH: And put the board away.

JEANNE: Not without saying goodbye. That's very dangerous.

BETTY: Wait, Jackson wants to say something else.

(*The planchette moves.*)

BETTY: P...O...P... Oh don't tell me....

(*In Room 2, DUNCAN starts to take Jeanne's painting down from the wall.*)

FREDERICA: What are you doing?

DUNCAN: I just bought it.

FREDERICA: Stop...where are you going?

(DUNCAN *exits in the direction of the storage room, with Jeanne's painting. FREDERICA hurries out of Room 2. In the office:*)

BETTY: ...G...O...E...S...T...

JEANNE: Pop Goes the Weasel? Oh well now he's just screwing with us. Please say goodbye before we all get possessed.

(FREDERICA *rushes into the office.*)

FREDERICA: Betty, what's going on here?

BETTY: We're saying goodbye to Jackson. Jackson, wherever you are, I hope you can find good oils. (*to FREDERICA*) What's the matter, my sweet? You missed all the fun.

JEANNE: Betty, we all have to say goodbye. Otherwise a demon could enter our lives.

FREDERICA: I hate to be the one to break the news, but a demon already has.

BETTY: If you mean Duncan, he was here before we summoned Jackson.

FREDERICA: (*to JEANNE*) Did Duncan just buy your painting?

BETTY: Don't be silly, how could he, no.

FREDERICA: Well, he said he did.

BETTY: I wouldn't take Duncan too literally.

JEANNE: It's mania, dear.

FREDERICA: Whatever you want to call it, he took your painting down and left with it.

JEANNE: What?!

BETTY: Oh good God.

(BETTY bolts out of the office, sees JEANNE's painting is gone from the wall in Room 2.)

BETTY: (*calls*) Duncan?!

(No answer. BETTY re-enters the office.)

FREDERICA: What do we do now, do we call the police?

BETTY: That's exactly what we don't do.

FREDERICA: Well, we have to do something. (*to JEANNE*) Aren't you the least bit worried about your painting?

JEANNE: Not enough to call the cops.

BETTY: They'll just ship him back to Creedmoor. His mother will say yes to a lobotomy, and he'll never paint again.

(In Room 2, DUNCAN has entered furtively from the unseen corridor, hung his Mickey Mouse painting—newly framed—where Jeanne's painting was hanging. Now he heads out the back again. Meanwhile, in the office:)

FREDERICA: What if you never recover the painting? Jeanne could sue you for negligence. Yes I know you'd never do that, what if Duncan decides to steal another one? Remind me, who insures you? I'll call them.

BETTY: Don't do that, my sweet, it's futile.

FREDERICA: (*pause*) You let the policy lapse, didn't you?

BETTY: It was that or default on the rent.

FREDERICA: Why didn't you come to me?

BETTY: Because, my sweet, you're on the brink of pulling out, and I didn't want to hasten your departure.

FREDERICA: So you're just going to ignore the situation? What if Duncan mutilates the painting?

JEANNE: Why would he mutilate it? He said he could sell it for twice what Betty's asking.

ELLSWORTH: And you believed him. A lunatic on a manic binge.

JEANNE: Yes, and he's a dear dear friend whose life means more to me than a piece of art, I don't care if I painted it or not.

BETTY: We always give genius the benefit of the doubt.

ELLSWORTH: You have more faith in genius than I do, Betty.

JEANNE: Exactly. That's why you went with Betty. She believes in her artists, she believes in Duncan, she believed in you more than you believed in yourself. And now you have a fortune to show for it.

ELLSWORTH: A fortune? Hardly.

BETTY: But you wouldn't say no to a fortune, would you, Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH: I'm not a Communist, if that's what you're asking.

BETTY: That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking why you've been pussyfooting around since the minute you arrived, when I didn't even expect you here, offering to buy my painting when I know for a fact you despise watercolors, what is all this in aid of, Ellsworth, what is it you're not telling me?...Oh good Lord.

(SIDNEY, a handsome, dark-haired man age 62, has entered Room 1 from outside, quickly checking out the art. BETTY has just spotted him.)

BETTY: Sidney?!

(BETTY enters Room 1.)

BETTY: I don't recall sending you an invitation.

SIDNEY: Didn't expect one, didn't get one.

BETTY: Did you come to see the artists or to steal one?

SIDNEY: You wouldn't talk sense on the phone. I was hoping you'd be more reasonable in person. My limo's outside, do you want to go for a drive?

BETTY: I'd rather take my life. (*beckons*) In here.

(SIDNEY peers in the office, sees ELLSWORTH, JEANNE, and FREDERICA.)

SIDNEY: I'd prefer we did this in private.

BETTY: I have no secrets from my friends. (*as he hesitates*) Well, make up your mind, Sidney, stay, go, it's all the same to me.

(BETTY re-enters her office. After a hesitation, SIDNEY follows.)

BETTY: You know Frederica. And Jeanne. And Ellsworth, of course.

ELLSWORTH: Hello, Sidney. (*pause; uneasily*) Long time no see.

SIDNEY: (*tightly*) Yes, we should really catch up sometime. And Jeanne, yes, good to see you, are you in the show?

JEANNE: I was.

SIDNEY: Was?

JEANNE: It's already been bought.

SIDNEY: Well, that's interesting. Who bought it?

JEANNE: None of your beeswax, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*to BETTY*) How about the Rothko I saw out there? And the Pollock? Are they spoken for? You know I represent both those artists.

BETTY: I own those paintings, Sidney.

SIDNEY: You must really be in difficulties, if you're willing to part with them prematurely. Are you hoping the sales will finance your lawsuit? You know your lawyers don't think you can win. This is pure vindictiveness on your part.

BETTY: You call it vindictive. I call it justice.

SIDNEY: Nonsense. I didn't steal your real estate and I certainly didn't steal your artists. They left because you ignored them. Ellsworth, you can back me up on that.

ELLSWORTH: No. Ignore me? She hasn't.

SIDNEY: Miles?

JEANNE: I wouldn't be here, would I?

SIDNEY: (*to BETTY*) Where are the women on your walls? You claim you've sold one of Jeanne's, I don't see any others out there.

BETTY: You're wrong about that, Sidney, but don't expect me to set you straight.

SIDNEY: Aha. You mean the one I didn't recognize.

BETTY: And you can leave now, Sidney.

SIDNEY: How long have you been showing her?

BETTY: Go.

SIDNEY: Fine. If that's how you want to be....I'll see you in court.

(*SIDNEY starts out, then doubles back.*)

SIDNEY: Do you want to know the real reason those men left you? They were ashamed to be seen here. You started showing trivial artists. (*with a look at JEANNE*) I won't embarrass anyone by naming her.

JEANNE: Fuck you, Sidney—in the heart, if you had one.

SIDNEY: Listen to that. Such fire from such a mild little artist.

JEANNE: You're a fake, Sidney. A blatant amateur.

ELLSWORTH: Now that's not quite fair, is it.

JEANNE: What are you talking about? It's true.

ELLSWORTH: Sidney has written extensively on art theory. The fusion of the abstract with the surreal...do I have that right, Sidney?

SIDNEY: Exactly. That's what produced abstract expressionism.

ELLSWORTH: Brilliant insight, really.

SIDNEY: Thank you, Ellsworth, very kind of you.

JEANNE: *(to ELLSWORTH)* Why in heaven's name are you sticking up for him?

BETTY: *(wryly)* Why indeed.

SIDNEY: I wasn't just an enthusiast, like some I could name. I at least knew how to write.

BETTY: And I at least know how to paint.

SIDNEY: What, those dreary watercolors of yours? Call me an amateur? You're the pretender. Heedless with your feelings and reckless with your praise. If you're failing in business, Parsons, it's your own damn fault.

JEANNE: *(to BETTY)* I knew we should have said goodbye to Jackson. *(to SIDNEY)* Was it Betty's fault she was born a woman?

BETTY: In a world men are so desperate to keep for themselves.

SIDNEY: Like it or not, we made this world. *(to FREDERICA)* Does Grayson know the straits your partner's in?

FREDERICA: Leave my husband out of this, please.

SIDNEY: *(to FREDERICA)* You'd be wise to get out now. This movement Betty represents has had its day, and I'm sorry it's been such a struggle. If you wanted justice, you should have avoided the arts.

BETTY: But it's no struggle for you, is it, Sidney. Your artists are going to be rich right out of the gate.

JEANNE: Speaking of triviality.

SIDNEY: Enough. I've had all the female intransigence I can take. Nice seeing you again, Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH: *(uneasily)* Yes...it has been far too long.

(During this, HAROLD has emerged from the unseen back rooms. SIDNEY exits the office and comes face to face with HAROLD.)

HAROLD: Sidney! What an unexpected treat. To what do we owe this honor?

SIDNEY: (*heads past him*) Harold, I'm not in the mood.

HAROLD: Oh, have the ladies been rude to our Sidney? I'll have to have a word with them. How's the Pop show coming together?

SIDNEY: For the last time, Harold, stop calling it Pop. It's an exclusionary term.

HAROLD: Yes, it leaves out the sun, the moon, and the stars.

SIDNEY: If you're saying my artists are earthbound, I accept the insult on their behalf. The show is going to be fantastic, thank you very much. I understand this movement. It's going to take the world by storm.

HAROLD: And what better way to prove you understand a subject than to make money out of it? What are you actually doing here, Sidney? Not looking for someone else to sign, I hope.

BETTY: He won't have the chance, he was just leaving....

(*BETTY has entered Room 1, followed by JEANNE, FREDERICA, and ELLSWORTH.*)

BETTY: ...Harold, I'm sorry you missed the séance. Jackson spoke to us.

HAROLD: Really. What did "Jack the Dripper" have to say?

BETTY: He said I should sell the gallery, move to Paris like Peggy, and do nothing but paint for the rest of my life.

HAROLD: Can you afford that?

SIDNEY: Parsons can always afford to sponge.

HAROLD: Sidney, for God's sake, lay off.

SIDNEY: Why don't you stay out of this, Harold.

HAROLD: Why don't you *kish mir in tuchus aran*. [kiss my ass]

SIDNEY: *Gai kukken afen yam!* [go shit in the ocean]

HAROLD: *Ess drek und shtarbn!* [eat shit and die]

(*CLARICE, who has emerged from the unseen corridor into Room 2, now enters Room 1. HAROLD is bellying SIDNEY toward the exit.*)

CLARICE: Oh my. What's going on here?

(HAROLD *backs off*.)

HAROLD: (*to SIDNEY*) You've said your piece, you can go.

SIDNEY: (*re CLARICE*) Not before I've been introduced.

CLARICE: I'm Clarice. Can I get you something to drink?

JEANNE: That's all right, dear. You've performed enough services for one day.

CLARICE: Implying what? Never mind, I know what. Are you very upset about it, Betty?

BETTY: Please, I'm not your mother. What you do with your time is your business.

CLARICE: Well, I have a bone to pick with you. Your assistant isn't a man and she's not having her tonsils out. You let her go because you couldn't pay her.

JEANNE: Sounds like there's been some pillow talk.

CLARICE: What if I'd refused to do your scutwork? Would you have pulled my painting off the wall and told me to get lost? (*to SIDNEY*) Sorry, I didn't get your name.

SIDNEY: I'm Sidney, and this fellow is Harold. You know the phrase, "the herd of independent minds"? Harold coined that phrase. Harold is the sheepdog of that flock.

CLARICE: I've met Harold. (*sweetly, to HAROLD*) I've read Harold.

HAROLD: This is the famous Sidney, Clarice.

CLARICE: Sidney Janis, yes, I've heard of you. (*pointing*) That's my painting.

SIDNEY: Yes, I know. Very nice.

CLARICE: Just nice? Not Poppy enough for you?

SIDNEY: Oh, has Harold been in your ear? Are you as anti-Pop as Parsons? (*to BETTY*) You see a certain way because you paint a certain way. A style that died years ago. You're like a child imitating Cezanne...because, at heart, you are a child.

HAROLD: All right, that tears it—

(HAROLD *starts toward SIDNEY again. CLARICE steps in his way*.)

CLARICE: Harold, no. *(to SIDNEY)* Do you think abstract painters are passé too? Does Rothko know you talk like this?

BETTY: Yes, and that's how Sidney will talk about you, Ellsworth, after he hands you your check.

ELLSWORTH: Oh dear.

BETTY: Tell me, are you in Sidney's new show? No. You're not a "New Realist." But you're going with him anyway.

ELLSWORTH: Betty, I don't know what to say.

BETTY: Why not the truth for a change?

ELLSWORTH: It was a purely financial decision.

SIDNEY: The best he'll ever make.

BETTY: *(to ELLSWORTH)* Yes, and if I'd promised you an advance against sales, you still would have left me. You're afraid of looking like a pouf, so you join those posturing he-men Sidney filched from me.

HAROLD: What cowards artists are, eh, Parsons?

JEANNE: And the bigger they are, the greedier.

HAROLD: You've made a grave mistake, Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH: Oh, does that mean you're going to pan my Giant Yellow Ass?

HAROLD: Now that you mention it, I just might. Why don't you try sucking up to Clement? He's always given you the benefit of the doubt.

ELLSWORTH: I don't have to suck up to Clement Greenberg or anybody else, least of all you, Harold. Your pet artists had so much sex, they left it out of their canvases. All that bohemian excess drained the life out of their work, so all they could paint were splotches and drippings.

(DUNCAN, who, during this, has entered Room 2 from the unseen corridor, hanging back, now enters Room 1.)

DUNCAN: Unlike your work, hmm, Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH: Oh give me strength.

JEANNE: Duncan? Where on earth have you been? Where's my painting?

HAROLD: (*looks into Room 2*) Duncan, you didn't.

CLARICE: (*looks into Room 2*) Oh God.

DUNCAN: (*to JEANNE*) Don't worry about your painting.

BETTY: Where is it, Duncan?

DUNCAN: In safe hands, I guarantee. As for Ellsworth here...can you believe it?...Ellsworth wants his paintings to be "voluptuous." Ellsworth actually told that to some art weenie at the *Tribune*. Ellsworth wants folks to go ooh and aah, the way they do at the movies, he wants them to faint dead away. And of course they never do. Not for Rembrandt, not for Dali, not for Jackson, and God knows not for Ellsworth. They don't shriek or cry or weep or moan or pass out. Now and then they chuckle. Or wave their hands in dismissal. Look at this one, so impersonal. So pre-determined. There's no point in an act if you already know what it contains, isn't that right, Harold? You have to take to the canvas the way Melville's Ishmael took to the sea.

ELLSWORTH: First I'm accused of painting my lover's bottom, now you say I'm impersonal.

HAROLD: I wonder...did he recognize his ass?

ELLSWORTH: (*to HAROLD*) And you. You're going to end up reviewing art for some bourgeois magazine.

SIDNEY: My money's on the *New Yorker*.

DUNCAN: Oh hey, it's Sidney. How are they hanging, my friend?

SIDNEY: I couldn't be better, thank you. I heard you escaped from Creedmoor.

DUNCAN: Who'd you hear that from? As if I didn't know.

SIDNEY: Your mother called me when they found you missing.

DUNCAN: Why, did she think I'd come straight to you? Were you upset when I didn't? Don't be offended. Your show isn't until next month. I needed an immediate response, I wanted to see my old friends, and here you all are. All the folks I love and admire. That includes you, Harold.

HAROLD: I thought you never read the critics.

DUNCAN: I don't. I'm talking about your real contribution to American culture. This man...this dean among tastemakers...this critic's critic...Dig it...While Harold was working for the Advertising Council...he created Smokey the Bear.

SIDNEY: No, did you actually design the poster? Oh don't tell me...are you by any chance a Sunday painter? I'd buy tickets to that. A cripple trying to tap-dance.

(HAROLD smiles, taps his cane like Fred Astaire, does a quick two-step, and swats SIDNEY across the face with his cane. He tosses the cane aside, lunges at him. HAROLD and SIDNEY grapple, with HAROLD getting the best of it. Ad lib shouts and protests.)

DUNCAN, meanwhile, edges toward the Pollock. Takes a spray can out of his pocket. Only FREDERICA sees him.)

FREDERICA: Stop! What are you doing?!!

DUNCAN: Jackson missed a spot.

JEANNE: [screams]

ELLSWORTH: Oh my goodness!

BETTY: Duncan, behave!

(BETTY grabs DUNCAN, pulls him away from the Pollock. HAROLD, meanwhile, has knocked SIDNEY down. He has him by the throat.)

FREDERICA: Let go of him, stop, you're choking him!

(SIDNEY is struggling to breathe. FREDERICA picks up HAROLD's cane.)

FREDERICA: Let him up or I'll knock your brains out.

(Startled, HAROLD lets SIDNEY loose a moment. SIDNEY smacks him across the face. FREDERICA brandishes the cane.)

FREDERICA: Did you hear me? I said stop. My God, I haven't witnessed so much childish hostility since I graduated from Miss Chapin's. You put my husband and his pals to shame, and you're not even drunk. Get up, both of you. Act your age.

(HAROLD and SIDNEY rise. FREDERICA hands HAROLD back his cane.)

BETTY: Well done, darling.

JEANNE: [shrieks]

FREDERICA: Oh gracious, what now?

(JEANNE points toward Room 2...where Duncan's Mickey painting is hanging.)

SIDNEY: My oh my. What's this?

BETTY: It's *Mickey #1*.

DUNCAN: No, Harold's right. No numbers. Just *Mickey*.

SIDNEY: Whose is this? Is this yours, Duncan? You painted this?

(Everybody drifts into Room 2.)

DUNCAN: Why, do you like it, Sidney? Betty doesn't care for the message.

SIDNEY: How long ago did you do this?

DUNCAN: I dreamed the image in '48. God painted it six months ago.

SIDNEY: Then it's more than a message, it's prophecy.

JEANNE: Let's hope he's a false prophet. Duncan—pay attention—have you actually sold my painting?

DUNCAN: First tell me you're not calling the police.

BETTY: That rather depends. You haven't defaced it, have you?

DUNCAN: Hell no. Jeanne's not famous enough.

BETTY: Where is it, Duncan?

DUNCAN: Can I be in the show?

BETTY: No.

DUNCAN: No?

BETTY: Because you're going to be in Sidney's. Isn't that right, Sidney?

SIDNEY: Well, I'd have to think about that.

BETTY: Oh spare me. You know it's brilliant.

DUNCAN: You really think it's brilliant?

JEANNE: Quiet, Duncan, let Betty do what she does best.

BETTY: *(to SIDNEY)* I'll drop the lawsuit if you'll include Duncan with Lichtenstein and Warhol and all the rest of them. *(to DUNCAN)* But first you have to return Jeanne's painting.

JEANNE: Well, not if he's sold it.

BETTY: Have you, Duncan?

DUNCAN: I do have a couple of buyers in mind.

BETTY: Where is Jeanne's painting?

DUNCAN: In your storage room?

BETTY: You don't sound so sure.

JEANNE: Do you remember putting it there?

DUNCAN: Wait. Yes. I do remember. It was either there, or the men's room at the Houston Street Sunoco, and I didn't like my odds.

CLARICE: I'll go check.

(CLARICE exits in the direction of the storage room.)

JEANNE: You really think you can sell it?

DUNCAN: Well, if Harold gave us both a mention, that might grease the wheels. Hey, but Harold would never compromise himself. Imagine the firestorm at *Partisan Review*.

BETTY: Harold?

HAROLD: If a painting isn't hanging in a show, I can't tell anyone to flog it.

BETTY: Jeanne, what do you think?

JEANNE: *(to DUNCAN)* I think Sidney should hang it, and Betty should get the commission.

DUNCAN: Sounds fair to me. Betty?

(CLARICE emerges from the unseen corridor with JEANNE's painting, holds it up for inspection.)

BETTY: Done.

DUNCAN: Sidney, you heard Betty, she'll call off her lawyers, if you'll buy my painting.

SIDNEY: It's a suit she can't possibly win, so why would I ever make that deal?

DUNCAN: Because otherwise Harold will smite you with his trusty sword, isn't that right, Harold?

SIDNEY: Never mind the threats. What do you want for it?

DUNCAN: (*re BETTY*) Speak to my rep.

SIDNEY: That's like asking a blind man to appraise a Van Gogh.

(*HAROLD raises his cane.*)

FREDERICA: Harold!

SIDNEY: Don't hit me, I meant it as a compliment. Van Gogh's canvases are like Braille—

BETTY: Shut up, Sidney. Three thousand.

SIDNEY: Fifteen hundred.

DUNCAN: Five thousand.

BETTY: Duncan, am I representing you or not? Two thousand, not a penny less.

SIDNEY: It's a deal. Send it over by messenger.

BETTY: C.O.D. Now go.

SIDNEY: Yes, it's time I stopped profaning this temple of art. Did I say temple? I meant tomb.

(*HAROLD brandishes his cane again.*)

SIDNEY: Only kidding! Ellsworth? My limo will take you anywhere you want to go.

ELLSWORTH: Betty?

BETTY: What?

ELLSWORTH: I feel so wretched. Sidney, I think Harold's right. I may have made a mistake.

BETTY: It's a little late for regrets.

ELLSWORTH: No—the contract's still on my desk. I haven't signed it yet.

BETTY: Sign it.

ELLSWORTH: Oh dear. Are you sure?

BETTY: Ellsworth... even if I could afford to give you a stipend, I wouldn't take you back.

ELLSWORTH: I wouldn't insist on a stipend.

BETTY: Just go, dear.

ELLSWORTH: I'm so sorry.

BETTY: You still have your genius. Be careful with it. Beware of Agent's Revenge.

HAROLD: Wise words, Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH: Very well. Frederica, I hope we haven't seen the last of each other.

FREDERICA: (*with a fond look at BETTY*) I'm not going anywhere.

ELLSWORTH: (*to CLARICE*) And I'm sorry, I've forgotten your name.

BETTY: You'll hear it on people's lips soon enough. Go on, Ellsworth, Sidney's waiting.

SIDNEY: Yes, you'll feel better once you're outside. (*to HAROLD*) No hard feelings, I trust?

HAROLD: If you're worried I'm going to pan your show, don't be. I'm bemused by Pop Art, but I wouldn't deign to scold it.

SIDNEY: Betty? I'm glad we saw eye to eye at last.

BETTY: Yes, it's a pleasure to get the better of a cheater.

SIDNEY: Now now. Those men would have been fools not to go with me, and that's all there is to that.

BETTY: Men being the operative word.

SIDNEY: Yes, you can ride that hobbyhorse into the grave. Duncan, I'll look forward to seeing that painting in my shop. Goodbye, all.

(Before ELLSWORTH exits with SIDNEY, he turns to look back at BETTY. FREDERICA watches BETTY fight back emotion.)

FREDERICA: Oh that Ellsworth, I could just strangle him. How could he do that to you?

BETTY: *(too brightly)* *C'est la guerre.* *(off FREDERICA's look)* Of course it hurts, why do you think I've been drinking so much? But it's a red-letter day for you, Duncan, isn't it?

DUNCAN: Please don't congratulate me. Too many good things happening.

BETTY: Better get yourself to bed then. Jeanne?

JEANNE: Here you go, sweetheart.

(JEANNE has already taken a key from her purse, hands it to DUNCAN.)

FREDERICA: Do you remember where she lives?

DUNCAN: Christ, I should, but no. I can't picture the street or the place.

(JEANNE hands him a card.)

JEANNE: Here's the address. Walk one block west, take the D train to 4th Street.

(FREDERICA has opened her bag, hands DUNCAN a five.)

FREDERICA: Better yet, take a cab.

DUNCAN: Is there room for me to paint?

JEANNE: Yes, you can paint my apartment.

DUNCAN: Is that my punishment?

JEANNE: No, that's instead of helping me with the rent. Make yourself at home, there's half a chocolate cake in the icebox.

DUNCAN: Chocolate cake?

JEANNE: With butter frosting. It will raise your blood sugar, help drive away the thunderclouds.

DUNCAN: My psychiatrist never prescribed chocolate cake.

JEANNE: I'm your new headshrinker. Try to get some rest, don't start ordering things by phone. I'll be there after the show, we'll move some furniture around.

DUNCAN: I love you, Miles.

JEANNE: I've always loved you, Duncan.

DUNCAN: I'll look forward to those no-undies headstands. Harold, I hope to see you wrestle in the Paralympics. My money's on you for the Gold.

HAROLD: Careful crossing streets, Duncan.

DUNCAN: My peripheral vision is as keen as my genius. Bye all.

(DUNCAN *exits.*)

HAROLD: I should be going too.

BETTY: Thanks for going to bat for me, darling.

HAROLD: Long overdue. And I'd keep an eye on *Artforum*. There should be a nice piece about the show, if I have anything to say about it. And I generally do. Who knows? The show might even sell out.

JEANNE: That's good news for you, isn't it, Clarice?

BETTY: I think we'll all sleep better tonight.

HAROLD: Not that it matters, in the grand scheme of things. There's such a vast public for art now...not like when you were getting started with your Giants. They've been to college, this generation, they've taken a semester of Art History, they think they know something. They want art that can be taken in at a glance....glamorous colors....inflated reputations. Art as magic and celebration...we may have seen the last of it. From now on...nothing but celebrity. Still and all...nice work, Miles. Definitely worth an endorsement. Did I mention we live within three blocks of each other? My door's always open.

JEANNE: I'll keep it in mind.

HAROLD: Clarice, take care you don't turn into a commodity.

CLARICE: I'll try not to, Harold.

HAROLD: Goodbye, Betty.

BETTY: *À bientôt, mon cheri.*

(*They kiss. HAROLD exits through Room 1.*)

JEANNE: That must have been one fantastic blowjob.

BETTY: Clarice? Care to comment?

(CLARICE has gone into Room 1 with JEANNE's painting, takes her own painting down. BETTY, JEANNE, and FREDERICA enter Room 1.)

BETTY: Clarice, what are you doing?

(CLARICE is hanging JEANNE's painting where hers was. She enters Room 2, takes down Duncan's Mickey Mouse painting, hangs her own painting there instead. BETTY, JEANNE, and FREDERICA have followed her into Room 2.)

JEANNE: Very generous of you, Clarice.

BETTY: Yes, Clarice, thank you.

CLARICE: For what?

BETTY: For saving my gallery, you coy little thing!

CLARICE: We only talked. Who wants wine? Frederica?

FREDERICA: White, please.

CLARICE: White is all there is. Betty?

BETTY: I'll stick with Scotch.

CLARICE: Jeanne? Soda water?

JEANNE: You only talked?!

(CLARICE, having poured the drinks, takes her glass of wine and Duncan's painting into the office, starts wrapping it. BETTY, JEANNE, and FREDERICA follow.)

BETTY: What did you talk about?

CLARICE: About what the world would be like if women ran it. He seemed quite amenable to the idea.

JEANNE: In other words he couldn't get it up. His gout acts up and he loses focus.

CLARICE: For the record, we both got cold feet. We ended up looking through the paintings in the storage room. He called it "apocalyptic wallpaper."

BETTY: So he hasn't gone totally soft.

JEANNE: I wonder if Harold will mention me.

BETTY: He's usually as good as his word.

FREDERICA: Does his word still count?

BETTY: Not the way it used to. He'll climb on the Pop Art bandwagon, but who's going to care? Pop Art is critic-proof.

FREDERICA: Does that mean we're going to show it?

BETTY: Only if you want to.

FREDERICA: Maybe...if the artist's a woman?

BETTY: Ah, but that will never happen. Pop Art will be even more male than abstract expressionism. The pictures will get bigger and bigger, the more nervous men become about their place in the world.

JEANNE: They'll turn to pornography.

BETTY: Enormous pornographic paintings, covering whole walls.

CLARICE: Then they'll stop making pictures at all.

JEANNE: They'll hang their ideas on the wall instead of their paintings.

BETTY: And then, since they'll never learn to share, we'll be forced to stage a coup. And I will be ready for that battle. I'm going to start a great big canvas.

FREDERICA: About what?

BETTY: I have no idea.

JEANNE: Always the best way.

CLARICE: The only way.

BETTY: But it's going to be monumental.

FREDERICA: Monumental, but not male.

BETTY: No, my sweet. Not male.

(BETTY reaches for the Ouija board.)

JEANNE: Betty, what are you doing?

BETTY: Let's try to reach Jackson again. Clarice and Freddy missed hearing from him.

FREDERICA: Oh please yes, let's do that.

BETTY: After all, if it hadn't been for Jackson—

JEANNE: And *Life Magazine*—

FREDERICA: And you, Betty darling.

JEANNE: Where would we all be today?

BETTY: I shudder to think. Here we go.

JEANNE: And this time let's not invite any demons.

(The four women gather around the Ouija board.)

BETTY: Hello? Anybody out there? Jackson? Please tell us. What's going to happen to our world?

(The planchette starts to move. In Room 1, four patrons have entered the gallery: SNOW WHITE, FELIX THE CAT, BETTY BOOP, BUGS BUNNY. They make the round of the paintings, as the lights fade on the women in the office. END OF PLAY.)