

At rise: MOTHER is sitting in an armchair, stage C. She appears to be asleep. After a few moments, however, she suddenly raises her head and yells at the top of her voice.

MOTHER

Margaret!
(pause)
Margaret!
(pause)
Marr-r-greeeet!

MARGARET enters hurriedly from stage R.

MARGARET

Yes, Mother, what is it?

MOTHER

What the hell took ya so damn long?

MARGARET

I'm...I'm sorry, Mother. I came as quick as I could. I was washing ya bed sheets downstairs.

MOTHER

Bed sheets? What d'ya mean *bed* sheets? What other kinda sheets are there, idiot?

MARGARET

Well, I...anyway...it's hard to hear with all the noise of the machines an' the water an' what-not.

MOTHER

Stop ya blatherin' girl. I don't wanna hear ya problems or excuses – they're always the same.

MARGARET

But it's the truth, Mother. Them machines are old an' they make such a noise ya can hardly hear yourself think.

MOTHER

Well, I can't see as how that would cause you too much of an inconvenience. Not like there's much goin' on up there to begin with, is there?

MARGARET

(defensively)

Yes. Yes, there is, Mother. I've a good mind, I know I do. I just...never had the opportunity, that's all.

MOTHER

For what?

MARGARET

An education. A proper education. Ever since ya problems started, I've had to—

MOTHER

Oh, so now I'm the reason ya stupid?

MARGARET

No, it's not...I'm not saying that, of course not. It's just...if I'd had the chance, I think I could've...well...I think I could've done quite well.

MOTHER

Ya got no skills, girl — 'cept lookin after me — an the sooner off ya realize that, the better off we'll all be.

MARGARET

I know I'm not stupid, Mother. I know I'm not. I don't have no certificates or fancy embossed papers sayin otherwise, but I know I'm not stupid.

MOTHER

Well...as long as you believe it, honey, I guess that's all that matters. Now, if ya wouldn't mind switchin the thoughts goin on in that tiny little mind o' yours to start thinkin 'bout me for just a second or two here, I'd greatly appreciate it.

(beat)

For Christ's sake, I'm the one dyin here!

MARGARET

I'm sorry, Mother. I-I got a bit carried away. What is it ya need? Is it a drink? Ya want me to fix ya another drink?

MOTHER

No! No, I don't want another damn drink! Is that what you want? Ya wanna poison ma liver an' keep pushin me a little closer to the grave? Is that it?

MARGARET

No, Mother, I—

MOTHER

When I wanna 'nother damn drink you'll damn well know it!

MARGARET

Of course, Mother.

(beat)

Is it ya pills, maybe? Can I fetch ya pills for ya?

MOTHER

Oh yeah, you'd just love that, wouldn't you? Fetch Mama some more pills so ya can knock her out for another couple of hours.

(beat)

Well, guess what? It ain't gonna happen this time, sweetheart.

MARGARET

Mother, all I was trying to do was—

MOTHER

Don't tell me what you was tryin to do! I know all your little schemin' ways an' tricks, an' don't ever think I don't.

(beat)

Thing of it is, though...none of it matters no more.

(beat)

'Cause I want out.

MARGARET

Out?

MOTHER

You heard right, missy — *out!*

MARGARET

You...ya wanna go outside for a bit? Ya wanna get some air?

(gesturing to help her)

If ya grab your stick an' put your arm 'round ma shoulders, I'm sure maybe we can—

MOTHER

Get away from me, girl!

MARGARET

But I...I thought ya—

MOTHER

I don't mean outta this *house!* I mean outta this god-damned, lousy, miserable *play!*

MARGARET

(aghast)

Mother! How...how can you say such a thing?

MOTHER

'Cause I gotta mouth an' I can make it say stuff, that's how. An' I've had it! I'm up to here with it. An' I want out!

MARGARET

You don't mean this, Mother, I know ya don't. You're just tired is all.

MOTHER

Ya got that right – tired o' this miserable, stinkin family. Tired of all its damn problems. Tired of sittin in this chair night after night spittin ma bile an' resentment at anyone in sight.

MARGARET

But...but ya can't just up an' leave, Mother. You're the center of the family. What on earth would we all do with you gone?

MOTHER

Well, I guess you an' all the rest o' this sorry, messed up clan are gonna have to start figurin stuff out for yourselves, aren't ya?

MARGARET

I-I just don't understand. What's brought all this on so sudden?

MOTHER

Ain't nothin sudden about it. Been a *long* time comin. I guess I just reached that point where enough's enough.

MARGARET

Are ya...are ya not happy here, Mother?

MOTHER

Well, now...why don't ya just reflect a while on that there question ya just posed to me, young Margaret, an' I've a feelin you'll have your answer in no time at all...bein so smart an' all.

MARGARET

I know it ain't all fun an' games, but we–

MOTHER

No, it ain't! It's nothin but a bunch of unfulfilled lives simmerin with resentment, day in an' day out. An' that's what I want – out!

MARGARET

But why now?

MOTHER

While I still got some life in me, that's why now. I'm old, alcoholic, addicted to prescription drugs, an' this soul-destroyin, downer of a play's suckin the life outta me!

MARGARET

But where would ya go? What would ya do?

MOTHER

I'll find my self somethin better, that's what. A musical, maybe. Somethin where everyone's singin an' dancing an' havin a good time of it.

MARGARET

A...a musical? But that's fluff, Mother. It ain't nothin. Why would ya wanna be in somethin like that?

MOTHER

So I could enjoy myself, stupid. So I wouldn't have to sit around here starin at your long, loveless face six nights a week, plus matinees.

MARGARET

But surely you're too...

MOTHER

Too what? *Old?*

MARGARET

Well, ya ain't exactly–

MOTHER

Don't you worry that tiny little mind o' yours about that, my girl. Still plenty of old croaks out there makin the rounds.