

The Last Decent Crooks



**Carol Costa**

Music and Lyrics by Ken Eberhart

Norman Maine Publishing

Copyright © 2009, Carol Costa

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

**The Last Decent Crooks** is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A "performance" is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted.

The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Norman Maine Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL."

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Norman Maine Publishing Company, [www.NormanMainePlays.com](http://www.NormanMainePlays.com), to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

**Norman Maine Publishing  
P.O. Box 1400  
Tallevast, FL 34270**

*For Christopher Costa,  
a brilliant actor  
and the best "Louie" ever*

## The Last Decent Crooks

Winner, Robert J. Pickering Award for Playwriting Excellence, 1987.

**MUSICAL.** It's 1933 and the music is hot and lively at Big Al's, a Chicago funeral home, which serves as a front for an illegal speakeasy. Here, the coffins are more likely to contain the inebriated rather than the deceased, and mob boss, Albertina (aka "Big Al"), is rolling in dough selling illegal whiskey to her faithful customers. But the good times soon end for Big Al when a rival mob boss is found dead and mobster Rats Branigan sets his sights on taking over the speakeasy for his illegal gambling operation. Then to make matters worse, Big Al discovers her daughter is secretly engaged to a cop—of all people!— and her right-hand man is in love with a runaway nun. But nothing has prepared Big Al for the biggest surprise of all—the end of Prohibition! This delightful musical features eight original songs, a strong ensemble cast, hilarious one-liners, and a genuine mystery for the audience to solve if they can stop laughing long enough to catch the clues.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 90-120 minutes.

## Characters

(5 M, 4 F, extras)

**ALBERTINA "BIG AL":** Mob boss who runs Big Al's, a funeral parlor that serves as a front for a speakeasy; overprotective mother who runs off any man in pursuit of her daughter Rosa.

**LOUIE:** Mobster who serves as Big Al's right-hand man.

**SUE:** Mysteriously appears at Big Al's dressed as a nun.

**ROSA:** Big Al's daughter who is desperate to find a boyfriend.

**OFFICER WALTER O'MALLEY:** Dimwitted cop with a big heart.

**RATS BRANIGAN:** Slick mobster who runs a gambling operation and would like to put Big Al out of business.

**MAX BENNET:** Big Al's best customer.

**BLANCE BENNET:** Max's nagging, overbearing wife.

**BARNEY:** Member of Big Al's gang; wears rumpled clothes.

**EXTRAS:** As mourners, speakeasy patrons, singers, dancers, and wedding guests.

## Songs

1. "Al's Joint" (Louie)
2. "It's a Miracle" (Louie, Max, Blanche, O'Malley)
3. "Pay Your Respects" (Big Al)
4. "Just Looking for My Number One" (Rosa)
5. "I Just Don't Know" (Louie, Sue)
6. "When Nothing Else Was Right" (Sue)
7. "The Last Decent Crooks" (Rats, Louie, Big Al)
8. "I'm in Love" (Louie, Sue, O'Malley, Rosa)
9. "Al's Joint" Reprise (Big Al)

## Setting

1933, Chicago's South Side during Prohibition.

## Set

A mortuary that serves as a front for Big Al's speakeasy. The mortuary has a coffin, flowers, and chairs for the mourners. Off to one side is a window and a large desk cluttered with papers, assorted objects, and a telephone.

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT I

**Scene 1:** Mortuary, evening.

**Scene 2:** Mortuary, the next morning.

**Scene 3:** Mortuary, the next day.

**Scene 4:** Mortuary, one week later, evening.

### Intermission

### ACT II

**Scene 1:** Mortuary, the next day.

**Scene 2:** Mortuary, a few days later, evening.

**Scene 3:** Mortuary, the next day.

**Scene 4:** Mortuary, two days later.

**Scene 5:** Mortuary, one week later, December 5<sup>th</sup>.

## Props

Coffin	Bath towel
Coats and hats, for "Mourners"	Torn, tattered, sooty clothes, for Louie
Party clothes, for "Mourners"	Torn, tattered, sooty clothes, for Sue
Funeral attire, for Louie	Burnt and banged up license plate
Half-empty bottle of whiskey	Handkerchief
Broom	2 Drink glasses
Desk	Large glass of water
Desk chair	Sign that reads, "Closed Until Further Notice"
Desk telephone	Crumpled-up pieces of paper
Hat with a large feather, for Blanche	Handcuffs
Large hatpin	Minister's garb, for Max
2 Guns	
Nun's habit, for Sue	
Old set of men's clothes, for Sue	
Bloody shirt, for Barney	

## Sound Effects

Solemn organ music	Loud pounding on the door
Ringling telephone	Blast of music from speakeasy
Explosion	Gunshots
Sirens and a large crowd	

"It seems as if our world  
is turning upside down.  
and we're the last  
decent crooks in town..."

– Big Al

# ACT I

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Mortuary, evening. Solemn organ music is heard. There is a coffin with its lid closed. Mourners dressed in coats and hats begin to enter. Some of the men stop by the coffin and remove their hats while others take their seats and wait. Louie enters dressed in somber attire and takes his place next to the coffin. As the funeral music stops, all the Mourners look at him expectantly.)*

LOUIE: Good evening, ladies and gentleman. On behalf of the family, I thank you for coming. *(He turns and opens the lid of the coffin. It is empty. He turns back to the Mourners.)* Since the deceased couldn't make it tonight, we'll dispense with the service. Refreshments will be served in the backroom. *(As Louie motions toward SL, Mourners remove their coats and hats to reveal party clothes. Song: "Al's Joint." Sings.)*  
Come on in, have a seat  
Start the band, tap your feet  
If the sound is right on top  
You can dance into the night till you drop.

If you find after all this fun  
You're as thirsty as the sun  
Let Al pour you a nice cool drink  
You're feeling better before you can blink.

*(Instrumental music continues as couples dance. As he sings the following, Louie leads everyone offstage to the speakeasy.)*

Come on in, have a seat  
Start the band, tap your feet  
If the sound is right on top  
You can dance into the night till you drop.

The Last Decent Crooks

11

*(Lights are lowered. After a few seconds, Max staggers in, carrying a half-empty bottle of whiskey. He is soon followed by Louie and Barney.)*

MAX: *(Slurring his words.)* Got to get home. The little lady is waiting for me.

*(Max heads for the outside door and then passes out. Louie and Barney exchange looks.)*

BARNEY: *(To Louie.)* What do we do now?

LOUIE: Help me get him up. We'll stash him in the coffin till he sobers up.

*(Louie and Barney help Max to his feet, drag him over to the coffin, and help him inside. Barney picks up the bottle and tosses it inside the coffin. They then return to the party in the backroom. Blackout.)*

## Scene 2

*(Lights come up slowly. Mortuary, the next morning. Louie enters with a broom and goes over and looks at Max, who is still sleeping in the coffin. Louie shrugs and begins to sweep the floor. The telephone on the desk rings. Louie hurries over to answer it.)*

LOUIE: *(Into phone.)* Rest in peace at Big Al's. You shoot 'em, we plant 'em...Oh, hi, Big Al. How are things in Miami?...You heard right. Elliot Ness is at it again. Got all the local cops acting like gangbusters, but you don't have to worry about this place. That flatfoot, O'Malley, couldn't find a hemorrhaging elephant in a snowstorm...Hey, boss, you should have seen the joint last night. It was really jumping. Max got so drunk, he's still here sleeping it off...Don't worry, we put him in the coffin. Anyone comes around, they'll think he's a stiff...Yeah, okay, boss, see you in a few days...Bye. *(Louie hangs up and returns to sweeping. He pauses to look at Max in the coffin.)* What a sucker! Hey, Max, I hear your old lady is so mean she makes King Kong look like a sissy.

*(Louie laughs, but Max doesn't stir. Louie sets the broom against the coffin and exits to the speakeasy. A few seconds later, Max groans, stretches, and sits up.)*

MAX: Wow! What a great party! *(Yells.)* Hey, Blanche, how about some coffee? *(Realizing that he is in a coffin, Max gets a frightened look on his face.)* Holy smokes, this isn't my bed. It's a coffin! *(Slowly.)* I must be dead. *(He looks around incredulously.)* So this is what it feels like. I'd better lay back down. *(Max lies down and then quickly sits up again.)* Wait a minute. If I'm dead, why do I have to go to the bathroom?

*(Louie enters.)*

LOUIE: So, you finally woke up.

MAX: (*Indignant.*) What's the big idea of putting me in this coffin? That is no way to treat a good customer like me.

LOUIE: Look, pal, during the day this establishment has to look like a respectable joint. We can't have drunks lying around on the floor. Besides, it's nice and cushiony in there. I thought you'd be more comfortable.

MAX: Okay, but get me out of this thing. I have to go to the bathroom.

*(As Louie starts to help Max out, there is a loud pounding on the outside door.)*

O'MALLEY: (*Offstage. Shouts.*) Police! Open up in the name of the law!

LOUIE: (*To Max.*) Oh no, what does that flatfoot want now? (*Yells to O'Malley.*) I'm busy, officer. What's the trouble?

O'MALLEY: (*Offstage.*) Open up. I've got a lady who says her husband came here last night and never came out again. His name is Max Bennet.

BLANCHE: (*Offstage. Yells.*) That's right, and I'm very worried.

MAX: (*Nervous.*) It's my old lady. Geez, if she finds me in here looking like this, she'll kill me.

LOUIE: Oh yeah, well if O'Malley finds out what's in the backroom because of your old lady and her big mouth, Big Al will kill you.

MAX: I'd better hide. Help me out of here.

*(More loud pounding on the door.)*

LOUIE: (*Yells to O'Malley.*) Just a minute, officer. (*Urgently to Max.*) Now listen to me, Max, you just stay put. I'll close the lid on the coffin, and they'll never know you're in there. All you gotta do is keep quiet.

MAX: No. Don't close me in here. I told you I have to go to the bathroom.

*(More pounding on the door.)*

LOUIE: *(Threatening.)* I'm warning you, pal. You lie down and play dead, or you'll be needing this coffin for real. *(Frightened by Louie's threat, Max quickly lies down. Louie closes the lid and hurries to the door as more loud pounding is heard. Yells to O'Malley.)* Hold your shirt on, I'm coming!

*(Louie opens the door and O'Malley and Blanche enter. Blanche is wearing a hat with a large feather.)*

O'MALLEY: What took you so long?

LOUIE: I was busy.

O'MALLEY: Louie, isn't it?

LOUIE: Yeah, that's right. I'm the funeral director.

BLANCHE: *(Upset.)* Where's my husband? And don't you lie to me, Louie. I know he came in here last night. He's always telling me he has to go to a wake, then he comes home drunk. Oooh...he's such a bum. Last night I followed him and waited across the street for him to come out, only he never did. So he's got to be in here.

LOUIE: I'm sorry, lady, you must be mistaken. There's no one here except me.

O'MALLEY: Was there a wake here last night?

LOUIE: As a matter fact, there was, but the deceased... *(He pauses and places his hand over his heart. O'Malley quickly does the same.)* ...may he rest in peace, was buried this morning.

BLANCHE: But you must have seen Max. I saw him come in here.

LOUIE: Perhaps you did, ma'am. The deceased had many friends.

BLANCHE: But he never came out again, so where is he, huh?

O'MALLEY: *(To Louie.)* Yes, how do you explain that?

LOUIE: I can't keep track of everyone who comes and goes here, especially the live ones.

O'MALLEY: All right then, I'll just have to search this place from top to bottom.

*(O'Malley heads toward the speakeasy door.)*

LOUIE: *(Nervously.)* No! I mean...eh...wait a minute. I think we just got a little misunderstanding here, yeah, that's what it is. The lady is right. Now that I think about it, her husband *was* here last night. *(To Blanche.)* Kind of an ugly mug, right?

BLANCHE: That's my Max. So where is he now?

LOUIE: He's gone.

O'MALLEY: You're a big help, Louie. *(O'Malley walks over to the coffin and Blanche follows him.)* What's in this coffin?

LOUIE: Eh...just another customer. No one you'd be interested in.

O'MALLEY: Is that so? Well, I'll just open it up and see for myself.

*(As Blanche peers over his shoulder, O'Malley raises the lid on the coffin. Louie braces himself.)*

BLANCHE: *(Screams.)* It's Max! My husband!

*(Blanche is crying hysterically. O'Malley confronts Louie.)*

O'MALLEY: I thought you told us her husband was gone.

LOUIE: That's what I said. The poor man, as you can see, is gone, kaput, dead. I was trying to break it to her gently.

BLANCHE: *(Still crying.)* Oh, my poor Max. All the time I thought you were out boozing it up and you were dead. Can you ever forgive me?

*(Max is lying very still. Louie goes over to comfort her.)*

LOUIE: Lady, lady, don't take it so hard. Of course Max will forgive you..eh, if he were here that is...

BLANCHE: Please, tell me how it happened.

LOUIE: Certainly, but let us step away from the deceased. Max made me promise I wouldn't let people stare at him.

*(Louie leads Blanche and O'Malley away from Max and the coffin. When their backs are turned, Max sits up and wipes his brow.)*

O'MALLEY: All right, Louie, quit stalling. How did the man die?

LOUIE: It was his heart. He went very quickly.

*(Max breathes a sigh of relief and lies down again, but as he does, he bangs the side of the coffin. Blanche and O'Malley spin around to look, but Max is playing dead again.)*

BLANCHE: What was that?

LOUIE: I didn't hear anything.

O'MALLEY: Sounded like it came from the coffin. *(O'Malley walks back, peers inside the coffin, and pulls out the half-empty bottle of whiskey. Louie cringes.)* And what is this?

*(Louie quickly snatches the bottle from O'Malley.)*

LOUIE: Embalming fluid. My last bottle. I must have left it in there by mistake.

*(Louie takes the bottle and puts it in his desk drawer, as O'Malley draws Blanche aside for a private chat. Max sits up again, and Louie shakes his fist at him.)*

O'MALLEY: Mrs. Bennet, I think we should make sure your husband is dead. Why don't you go over there and give Max a big kiss.

*(Blanche stares at O'Malley in disbelief.)*

BLANCHE: Are you crazy or something? I'm not going to kiss him.

*(As Blanche and O'Malley continue to talk, Max makes a face at Blanche behind her back. Louie threatens Max by running his finger across his throat. Max quickly lies down again.)*

O'MALLEY: Why not? You must have kissed him all the time when he was alive.

BLANCHE: No, I didn't. Kissing Max was like puckering up to a wet mop. Yuck! *(Max pops up again and makes another face behind Blanche's back. Louie waves him back down. Blanche thinks for a second, and then pulls a large pin from her hat. She holds it out to O'Malley.)* Here, stick him with my hat pin instead.

O'MALLEY: All right, just to make sure he's really dead.

*(O'Malley approaches the coffin, but Louie quickly blocks his way.)*

LOUIE: Now wait a minute. I cannot allow you to touch the corpse.

O'MALLEY: And why not?

LOUIE: Because...because he's dead, and dead people must rest in peace. That's our motto at Big Al's.

O'MALLEY: Either you let me stick Max with this pin, or I'm going to take that embalming fluid to the station and have it checked out.

*(Louie smiles weakly and steps aside. O'Malley walks over to the coffin with Blanche right behind him. O'Malley sticks Max with the pin, but Max doesn't move.)*

BLANCHE: He didn't move. He's really dead.

*(Blanche begins to cry. Louie turns to O'Malley.)*

LOUIE: Now are you satisfied?

O'MALLEY: No.

*(O'Malley yanks the feather out of Blanche's hat. She immediately stops wailing.)*

BLANCHE: Hey, what's the big idea? This hat cost a lot of money.

O'MALLEY: I need it for the tickle test.

*(Louie tries to block his way again.)*

LOUIE: Really, officer, I must protest.

*(O'Malley brushes past Louie and begins to tickle Max with the feather.)*

O'MALLEY: Tickle, tickle, tickle, koochy, koochy, koo...

*(Max still doesn't move. Blanche is now furious. She runs over and pushes O'Malley aside.)*

BLANCHE: The tickle test. How stupid. Max was never ticklish. You want a test? I'll give you a test.

*(Blanche grabs Louie's broom. O'Malley jumps out of the way as she starts swinging the broom, hitting the coffin and Max. Louie is yelling and trying to stop her.)*

LOUIE: Are you crazy, lady? Stop it! You're going to dent my coffin.

*(Suddenly, Max sits up and grabs the broom away from Blanche.)*

MAX: *(Yells.)* Now you did it, Blanche! *(In shock, O'Malley and Blanche back away from the coffin. Max stands up and the front of his pants are all wet.)* You made me wet my pants!

*(Louie helps Max out of the coffin. O'Malley finally recovers.)*

O'MALLEY: So, Louie, what do you have to say now?

*(Louie stares from one to the other for a moment, shrugs, and breaks into a smile.)*

LOUIE: *(Shouts.)* It's a miracle!

*(Song: "It's a Miracle.")*

LOUIE: *(Sings.)*

Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
I cannot believe my eyes.  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
Good news falling from the skies.

MAX: *(Recites.)*

I was paying my respects to a long-lost friend,  
when I got this pain in my head.  
The room grew dark and began to spin,  
then I heard someone say, "He's dead."  
The next thing I knew, I was at those gates,  
begging for another chance.  
St. Peter, himself, said, "Okay, Max,  
we'll send you right back to Blanche."

MAX/LOUIE: *(Sing.)*

Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
I cannot believe my eyes.  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
Good news falling from the skies.

BLANCHE: *(Recites.)*

I was going to collect his life insurance,

and dress myself in black.  
My friends would gather at the service  
and pat me on the back.  
Then good old Max came back to life,  
and once again we're a pair.  
Instead of a widow, I'm a wife,  
Now tell me, is that fair?

LOUIE/MAX/BLANCHE: *(Sing.)*

Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
I cannot believe my eyes.  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
Good news falling from the skies.

O'MALLEY: *(The last to be convinced. Recites.)*

Come Sunday next when I go to church  
I'll say a special prayer.  
For Max, and Blanche, and Louie too,  
and the blessings that we share.  
The Lord above looked down on Max,  
and waived his mighty hand.  
We've witnessed here, the four of us,  
a miracle that's grand.

ALL: *(Sing.)*

Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
I cannot believe my eyes.  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
Good news falling from the skies.

Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
I cannot believe my eyes.  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a miracle,  
good news falling from the skies.

*(As the song ends, O'Malley runs toward the exit.)*

O'MALLEY: *(Shouts.)* It's a miracle! It's a miracle!

*(O'Malley exits. Blanche and Max exit after him. Louie breathes a huge sigh of relief and sinks into the chair behind the desk. Telephone rings. Louie answers it.)*

LOUIE: *(Into telephone.)* Rest in peace at Big Al's...No, Al's not here. Who is this? *(Sarcastic.)* Oh, Mr. Branigan, how nice to hear from you again. *(As Louie listens to Branigan on the telephone, he becomes angry.)* I talked to the boss this morning, and nothing was said about it, and until I get the word from Big Al, you ain't steppin' foot in this joint...Oh, yeah, well you just try it, Branigan, and it'll be the last thing you ever do. *(Louie slams the phone down and goes over to the door that leads to the speakeasy. Yells.)* Hey, Barney! Wake up, and get in here...and bring your piece!

*(For a few seconds, Louie paces. Then a rumpled Barney runs in with his gun drawn. He rushes around the room waving the gun.)*

BARNEY: *(Doing a poor Jimmy Cagney impression.)* All right, you dirty rat...come out and face the music. I'm going to fill you so full of holes, you'll look like Swiss cheese.

LOUIE: Barney! Hold it! No one's here yet.

*(Barney stops short but is still looking around suspiciously.)*

BARNEY: When he gets here, I'll be ready for him. Who is he anyway?

LOUIE: Bats Branigan.

*(Barney freezes and looks at Louie in disbelief.)*

BARNEY: Bats Branigan! Are you nuts? I'm not going to shoot Bats Branigan. His boys will rip me into little pieces and feed me to the fish in Lake Michigan. Come on, Louie, anybody but Bats Branigan.

LOUIE: And what do you think Big Al will do to you if you let Branigan take over this place?

BARNEY: Why would he want to do that? He's got his own place on his own side of town.

LOUIE: Not anymore. The cops found a dead body in there yesterday, and they closed him down, so now he figures that he's going to run his gambling operation out of here. Says Big Al gave him the okay, so he's coming right over.

BARNEY: Gee, that was nice, and I thought that Al didn't like Bats...

LOUIE: Al hates his guts! Use your head, Barney. Al would never okay something like that, and that's why you're going to keep Bats out of here. Now, get over there and keep guard by that window. I'm going in the back to call the boss and some of the other boys. If Branigan tries to storm this place, we're going to need help.

BARNEY: Hey, wait, Louie, don't leave me here all by myself.

LOUIE: I'll be right in the back. If you see Branigan's car, just yell and I'll be right out to back you up.

BARNEY: Yeah...yeah...I got it, but hurry up, will you? *(Louie shakes his head and exits. Barney takes his post by the window. Talking to himself.)* Shoot Bats Branigan...sure, like he was some ordinary sucker. I shoot Branigan, and I'll be a marked man...course on the other hand, if I don't shoot him, and he gets in here, I'll still be a marked man. Big Al will give me a pair of cement shoes, and they'll be singing "Anchors Away" at my memorial service. What am I going to do? Either way, I'm a dead man. *(He turns around and looks at the coffin.)* Oh, no...I could be having that for a permanent bed....oh, no...not me...I'm getting out of here.

*(Barney tiptoes to the outside door and exits. Louie enters.)*

LOUIE: We're in trouble, Barney. The lines were busy. Barney? Barney! Where the heck did he go? *(Louie looks around the mortuary.)* Why, that yellow-bellied coward. *(He*

*goes to the window and looks outside.) And here comes Bats, right on cue. (Louie runs to the desk, opens a drawer, and takes out his gun. He checks to see if it's loaded, and as he does, a loud explosion is heard. Louie runs back to the window.) Holy smokes! Branigan's car blew up. What a lucky break!*

*(Louie continues to look out the window. The sound of sirens and a crowd are heard. Then there is a loud pounding on the door. Louie turns around, debating whether to answer.)*

SUE: *(Offstage. Shouts.)* Please open up! It's an emergency!  
*(Louie goes to the door. Sue, dressed in a nun's habit, runs in.)*  
Oh, bless you, sir.

LOUIE: You all right, sister?

SUE: Yes, I'm fine.

LOUIE: So what can I do for you?

SUE: *(Nervous.)* I need a place to stay.

LOUIE: Why? I thought all you nuns lived together in one of those covenants.

SUE: *(More nervous.)* That's "convents," and yes, ordinarily we do, but...eh...ours burned down, and that's why I need a place to hide...I mean *stay*.

LOUIE: *(Suspicious.)* Wait a minute, sister. It just occurred to me that you showed up here at almost the precise moment that Mr. Branigan's car, with him in it, blew sky high.

SUE: Oh, I'm sorry. Was Mr. Branigan a friend of yours?

LOUIE: Not exactly, let's just say he was a business associate.  
So, sister... *(More loud pounding on the door.)* Now what?

*(Louie turns toward the door, but Sue grabs his arm and stops him.)*

SUE: Please don't answer it. No one must see me in here.

O'MALLEY: *(Offstage.)* Police! Open up in the name of the law!

LOUIE: Oh, geez, it's that flatfoot O'Malley again.

SUE: You've got to help me. Where can I hide?

LOUIE: Look, sister, this ain't no boarding house.

SUE: Is anyone in that coffin?

LOUIE: Not at the moment. *(More pounding on the door. Sue runs toward the coffin and starts to open it. Louie grabs her arm and stops her.)* Oh, no...I went through this once already today. Get under the desk over there.

SUE: Oh, thank you. You don't know how much this means to me.

LOUIE: Sure, sister... *(Aside.)* I must be nuts!

*(Sue hides under the desk. Louie goes to the door. O'Malley stomps in.)*

O'MALLEY: I'm looking for a nun. Did she come in here?

LOUIE: I ain't seen none.

O'MALLEY: Always the joker, right, Louie? Well, I've been thinking about what happened before, and I think that Max was alive all the time. Maybe Blanche Bennet fell for your miracle routine, but not me.

LOUIE: Oh, is that why you were running down the street shouting, "It's a miracle"?

O'MALLEY: You know, I could really learn to dislike you, Louie.

LOUIE: All right, don't get excited. I was just joking.

O'MALLEY: What do you know about the explosion?

LOUIE: Very unfortunate. I take it that Mr. Branigan was killed instantly?

O'MALLEY: So you did know him. I figured he was coming here to see you.

LOUIE: Yes, he was. He wanted to make funeral arrangements for that dead man they found in his factory yesterday.

O'MALLEY: Oh, yeah...I forgot about that.

LOUIE: Have you cops identified the body yet? Got any clues as to who stiffed the man?

O'MALLEY: His name was Romeo Brown. The word is he worked for Bats, but it was a real clean job—no clues, no murder weapon.

LOUIE: Was he shot to death?

O'MALLEY: Yes, and it was the strangest thing... *(Realizes.)* Hey, I don't have to answer your questions. You're supposed to be answering mine.

LOUIE: Right, officer. What is it you want to know?

O'MALLEY: I want to know if you've seen a nun. Witnesses saw her getting out of Branigan's car about a block from here, just before it blew up, and now she's disappeared.

LOUIE: Must be lots of those nuns out on the street since the convent burned down.

O'MALLEY: Burned down? The convent didn't burn down. Where'd you get a crazy idea like that?

LOUIE: Just popped into my head. Look, O'Malley, I can't help you. I don't know anything about anything.

*(O'Malley shakes his head and then suspiciously approaches the coffin.)*

O'MALLEY: Mind if I have a look in here again?

LOUIE: Not at all.

*(O'Malley lifts the lid of the coffin and looks inside. Satisfied that it is empty, he closes the lid.)*

O'MALLEY: Don't go anywhere, Louie. I'll want to talk to you again.

LOUIE: *(Sarcastic.)* I shall look forward to it.

*(O'Malley exits. Sue cautiously comes out from under the desk.)*

SUE: *(Flirtatious.)* "Louie," that's a nice name...and you're a very nice man.

*(Louie shifts uncomfortably under her gaze of admiration, then remembers what O'Malley told him about her.)*

LOUIE: All right, sister, don't be trying to butter me up with compliments. O'Malley's gone and you can leave, too.

SUE: I can't. Please. I don't have anywhere to go.

LOUIE: *(Sarcastic.)* Oh, that's right. I forgot. You did tell me that the convent burned down.

SUE: I'm sorry. It was a stupid lie, but I'm desperate.

LOUIE: Don't worry, if you're the one who knocked off Branigan, I won't tell a soul. You did me a big favor. Now, would you please get out of here? I got work to do.

SUE: I'm not responsible for Mr. Branigan's death. On the contrary, I am fortunate that I am not sharing his fate.

LOUIE: What were you doing with a bum like him anyway?

SUE: I can't tell you that.

LOUIE: Suit yourself, sister. Like I said before, I got work to do, so you'll have to get out.

*(Sue runs over and throws herself in Louie's arms. She is near tears.)*

SUE: *(Pleads.)* Please let me stay. I'll do anything, anything you want.

*(Uncomfortable, Louie disengages himself from her grasp.)*

LOUIE: Now wait a minute here...a young, attractive girl like you shouldn't be making rash promises. Besides, you're a nun, or is that a lie, too?

*(Sue moves closer to him and smiles seductively.)*

SUE: Not exactly...I mean, I am committed to the religious life, but I haven't taken my final vows.

*(Louie pushes her away.)*

LOUIE: Then I suggest you toddle on back to the convent before it's too late.

SUE: I can't. Don't you understand, that's the first place the police will look for me.

LOUIE: Not O'Malley. Looking for a nun in a convent wouldn't even enter his mind.

*(Sue bursts into tears.)*

SUE: I've made such a mess of everything. Please, Louie, just let me stay long enough to sort things out. You said you had work to do. I'm a very good worker. I'll do whatever you say.

LOUIE: There you go making rash promises again. Look, sister, you can't stay here. This place ain't what it appears to be.

SUE: I suppose you're referring to the fact that this mortuary is only a front for the speakeasy in the backroom.

*(Louie is surprised and defensive.)*

LOUIE: Who told you that?

SUE: The other sisters.

LOUIE: The other nuns? The nuns in the convent talk about things like nightclubs? They should be ashamed of themselves.

SUE: They pray for you, Louie. They pray for you and Big Al and all your customers, that you will someday be saved from the evils of alcohol.

*(Louie nods.)*

LOUIE: Personally, I'm not a drinking man. I just work here.

SUE: I can tell you're a very decent man. That's why I'm asking for your help.

*(Louie walks over and looks out the window.)*

LOUIE: Still quite a crowd of people out there. If you were to go out there now, someone would be sure to spot you.

SUE: *(Hopeful.)* Then you'll let me stay?

LOUIE: *(Gruff.)* Yeah, okay. You can stay, but just until we can figure out something else.

SUE: Thank you, Louie.

LOUIE: Don't thank me. You're going to earn your keep, sister, and you can start by cleaning up my desk over there. And after that, there're dishes to be done in the back.

*(Sue hurries over to the desk and begins to straighten it. Louie watches her for a moment, shakes his head, then exits. Blackout.)*

### Scene 3

*(AT RISE: Mortuary, the next day. Max is sleeping in the coffin. Louie enters, walks over to the coffin, reaches in, and shakes Max.)*

LOUIE: Hey, Max, wake up. Come on, before your old lady comes looking for you again. *(Max doesn't stir. Telephone rings. Louie goes over to answer it. Into phone.)* Rest in peace at Big Al's...Yes...I see...I'm sorry, ma'am, but we can't accommodate you...Yeah, that's right, we're booked solid for the next two months.

*(Louie hangs up as Big Al and Rosa enter. Rosa throws her arms around Louie and he squirms to free himself.)*

ROSA: Louie, Louie, it's so good to see you. I missed you something terrible.

BIG AL: Knock it off, Rosa.

*(Reluctantly, Rosa lets go of Louie.)*

LOUIE: Hey, boss, what are you doing here so early? I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow.

BIG AL: As soon as I heard about Bats, Rosa and I headed for home. I'll be expected to attend the funeral.

*(Song: "Pay Your Respects." Sings.)*

When a boss checks out,  
whether you like him or not,  
there's only one course to take.  
Pay your respects to his family,  
and go to the gawd-awful wake.

You ask if there's anything you can do,  
and before they can reply,  
you pick up all of their business,

and watch them stand there and cry.

This is simple business,  
no need to look down your nose.  
We all play by the same set of rules,  
those who can't take it, go.

This is simple business,  
it's hard being tough, gawd knows.  
We all play by the same set of rules,  
those who can't take it, go.

I dream of the day when I'm on top,  
and I can sit back with a grin.  
Don't think for a minute I'll let down my guard,  
'cause I play this game to win.

This is simple business,  
no need to look down your nose.  
We all play by the same set of rules,  
those who can't take it, go.

This is simple business,  
it's hard being tough, gawd knows.  
We all play by the same set of rules,  
Those who can't take it...  
Those who can't take it...  
Those who can't take it, go!

LOUIE: Yeah, that's right, boss. Hey, Al, you should have  
seen it. Right in front of this joint, Bats got blown to hell.

BIG AL: Good place for him. What else is going on here?

*(Rosa is looking at Max in the coffin.)*

ROSA: *(To Big Al.)* Mama, look over here. There's a body in  
the coffin.

LOUIE: It's just Max. He'll be leaving soon.

ROSA: He's kind of cute.

BIG AL: Leave him alone. How many times do I have to tell you not to talk to strangers?!

LOUIE: Forget it, Rosa. He's married and his wife is definitely the jealous type, always checking up on him.

*(Rosa shrugs and walks away from the coffin.)*

BIG AL: Who else is here?

LOUIE: No one, boss, except the new cleaning girl I hired. She's working in the back.

BIG AL: Can she be trusted?

LOUIE: Sure, boss, she's a nice girl. You'll like her.

ROSA: Why don't you hire some new *men*?

BIG AL: Shut up, Rosa... *(To Louie.)* I suppose the cops have been around asking questions about Bats.

LOUIE: Yeah, yesterday afternoon and last night, too. Needless to say, we didn't do much business with all those flatfoots hanging around here.

*(Dressed in an old set of men's clothes, Sue enters carrying a broom. She is startled to see Big Al and Rosa.)*

SUE: I'm sorry. I didn't know there was anyone here.

*(Louie takes Sue by the arm and guides her over to Big Al and Rosa.)*

LOUIE: Sis...eh, I mean, Sue is the new cleaning girl I told you about. Sue, this is Albertina and her daughter Rosa.

SUE: How do you do.

ROSA: Hi.

BIG AL: *(To Sue.)* Tell me, girlie, are you smart enough to know what happens to little girls with big mouths?

SUE: *(Puzzled.)* Pardon me?

LOUIE: *(To Big Al.)* Sure she is, boss. I told you the kid can be trusted. She's in kind of a bind right now, so I'm letting her stay in that little room behind the storeroom.

BIG AL: All right, Louie, I'll leave it up to you. I'm going up to rest for a while. Have Barney bring my luggage upstairs. It's in the hallway out back.

LOUIE: *(Nervous.)* He's not here right now, but I'll bring it up right away.

*(Rosa runs over and grabs Louie's arm.)*

ROSA: I'll help you, Louie.

*(Big Al pulls Rosa away.)*

BIG AL: Louie's a big boy. He doesn't need your help.

ROSA: Ouch! Mama, you're hurting my arm.

*(Big Al and Rosa exit. Sue looks nervously at Louie.)*

SUE: You called that old woman "boss."

*(Louie quickly puts his hand over her mouth.)*

LOUIE: Sssh! Don't ever refer to Big Al as an old woman.

SUE: *(Shocked.)* That was Big Al? I don't believe it. I thought Big Al was a man.

LOUIE: A lot of people confuse the boss with her nephew and namesake. But don't underestimate Albertina, she's one tough lady.

SUE: I don't think she liked me.

LOUIE: Don't worry about it. As long as you do your job and keep quiet, you'll get along fine...I'd better get that luggage. You can sweep in here now.

*(Louie exits. Sue sweeps around the coffin. Max wakes up and sees her, but Sue is not paying any attention to him. Sue bends over to pick up something. Max reaches out, pinches her, and then lays still again.)*

SUE: Ouch!

*(Sue looks around, but thinking that Max is a corpse, she shrugs and continues to clean. When she bends over again, Max pinches her again. This time she turns around quickly and catches him sitting up. Shocked that he is alive, she screams, which scares Max and he screams too. Louie runs in.)*

LOUIE: What is going on in here?!

*(Sue points to Max.)*

SUE: He pinched me. Twice!

MAX: Sorry, Louie. I was just having a little fun.

LOUIE: Get out, Max!

*(Max climbs out of the coffin and makes a hasty exit.)*

SUE: He scared the hell out of me. I thought he was a corpse.

LOUIE: Scared the hell out of you? That's a fine way for a nun to talk.

SUE: You're right, excuse me. I'm sorry for making a fuss. Of course you wouldn't have real corpses because this isn't a real mortuary.

LOUIE: And keep your lip buttoned about that, too.

*(Sue is hurt and turns away from him.)*

SUE: I'm sorry. I can't seem to say or do anything right.

*(Louie regrets being harsh with her and puts a comforting hand on her shoulder.)*

LOUIE: It's okay, sister. I know you're having a rough time right now. *(Sue turns to face him and their eyes meet.)* You sure are a pretty thing. Even in those baggy clothes, you're a great looking doll...eh...I mean...eh...I'm sorry, sister.

SUE: Don't apologize. It was a nice compliment. Thank you, Louie.

*(Impulsively, Sue kisses Louie's cheek and then runs out of the room. Louie places his hand where she kissed his cheek and stares dumbly after her.)*

LOUIE: *(To himself.)* Forget it, Louie. The girl's a nun for cripes sake, and for all you know, she might be a murderer, too. *(Rosa runs in and throws her arms around him. Louie struggles to free himself.)* Cut it out, Rosa. If your mother comes in here, she'll have a fit.

*(Rosa releases him.)*

ROSA: Mama doesn't let me have any fun. There were the cutest guys in Florida, but she wouldn't let any of them come near me.

LOUIE: She's just trying to protect you.

ROSA: Is it okay if I use the phone in here?

LOUIE: Yeah, go ahead. I've got work to do in the back.

*(Louie exits. Rosa walks around thoughtfully for a few seconds as music begins. Song: "Just Looking for My Number One.")*

ROSA: *(Sings.)*

Mama,  
you're not letting me have any fun.  
I'm just lookin' for my number one,

The one who's right for me...

Oh! Mama,  
You've forgotten what it's like to be  
a girl who's just beyond her puberty,  
lookin' for your number one.

He's gonna be tall and dark and handsome,  
and have dreamy baby-blue eyes.  
We'll get married and build a family,  
and he'll be home ev-er-y night.

Mama,  
you're not letting me have any fun.  
I'm just lookin' for my number one,  
The one who's right for me...

He'll bring me candy, flowers, and diamonds,  
and treat me like a movie queen.  
When we step out, every head will turn  
'cause we'll be riding in a lim-o-sine.

Oh, Mama,  
can't you see it's simple destiny?  
I'm just lookin' for a guy to be  
the one who's right for me.

Oh! Mama,  
you're not letting me have any fun.  
I'm just lookin' for my number one,  
The one who's right for me...  
The one who's right for me!

*(Rosa sighs and goes to the desk to use the phone. Into phone.)*  
Operator, give me Fairfax 4435...Hi, Lulu? Yeah, I just got  
back. How's everything?...Oh, yes, there were lots of cute  
guys, but you know how my mother is... *(There is a loud*

*banging on the door.) Hold on, Lulu, someone is at the door. (Rosa goes to the door, and Barney staggers in, clutching his chest, which is full of blood. He tries to grab hold of Rosa for support, but she is too intent on getting back to the telephone and doesn't notice his condition. Barney is mouthing the words "help me" but no sound is coming out.) Hi, Barney. Mama was looking for you. She's upstairs... (Rosa picks up the phone. Into phone.) Okay, Lulu, I'm back. So, tell me, what's been happening there? (Rosa listens to her friend, while responding "uh-huh" and giggling all the while Barney gasps and lunges around the room. Barney falls face down at Rosa's feet and she finally notices that something is wrong with him.) Just a sec, Lulu... (Puts phone down.) Barney, are you all right? Barney? Gosh, Barney, why have you been drinking so early in the day? (Into phone.) Hang on, Lulu. (Rosa puts the phone down, turns Barney over, sees the blood, and screams. Then, remembering Lulu is still on the phone, she runs over and picks up the phone again. Into phone.) Lulu? I'll call you back. (Rosa slams the phone down. Yells.) Louie! Mama! Come quick!*

*(Louie rushes in. Rosa points to Barney on the floor, and Louie bends over him. A few seconds later, Big Al enters.)*

BIG AL: What's all the yelling about?

*(Rosa points to Barney. Louie looks up at Big Al.)*

LOUIE: He's dead, boss. Somebody shot Barney.

BIG AL: Darn it. Who'd do a thing like that to Barney?

LOUIE: Off the top of my head, I can only think of ten or 12 people.

BIG AL: That's what I mean. He didn't have many enemies.

LOUIE: I don't like this, Al. Three murders in less than a week.

BIG AL: I want Barney's body disposed of immediately before the cops get wind of this and start snooping around here again.

LOUIE: Okay, boss.

ROSA: *(Almost in tears.)* Poor Barney. What an awful thing to happen to an eligible bachelor...

BIG AL: Quit sniffin' and go in the back and get that girl. *(Rosa exits.)* Louie, help me drag Barney into the back.

*(Louie and Big Al start dragging Barney toward the backroom. Blanche and O'Malley enter.)*

BLANCHE: *(To O'Malley.)* I'll bet anything Max is hiding out in here again. Check that coffin.

*(Big Al and Louie stop and look at the intruders. O'Malley notices what they are doing.)*

O'MALLEY: *(Shouts.)* Stop in the name of the law!

BIG AL: Who the heck are you?

LOUIE: This is Officer O'Malley...you know, the cop I told you about...

*(Blanche peers around O'Malley.)*

BLANCHE: Is that my Max you two are dragging around?

BIG AL: *(To Louie.)* Who's she? *(Louie leans over and whispers into Al's ear. She nods in response, then speaks to O'Malley and Blanche again.)* Get out of here, both of you. Can't you see we're busy?

O'MALLEY: It looks like this man has been shot.

BIG AL: Well, aren't you the observant one?

BLANCHE: Where's my Max?! And don't give me any of your stupid explanations, Louie. I want the truth.

*(O'Malley bends over to take a look at Barney.)*

LOUIE: Max isn't here. He left about a half hour ago.

*(O'Malley stands up.)*

O'MALLEY: That man is dead.

BIG AL: Of course he's dead. This is a mortuary. What did you expect to find in here, hardboiled eggs?

O'MALLEY: That's a very good point, ma'am.

*(Rosa enters.)*

ROSA: I can't find Sue anywhere.

O'MALLEY: Who's Sue?

LOUIE: The cat. She's been lost for hours.

BLANCHE: *(To O'Malley.)* I think they're lying.

*(Big Al clenches her fist and waves it in Blanche's face.)*

BIG AL: Who are you calling a liar?

*(Blanche backs away from Big Al. Rosa walks around O'Malley, taking a great interest in him.)*

ROSA: *(To O'Malley, flirtatious.)* What's your name, big boy?

*(O'Malley smiles at her, forgetting about everything else.)*

O'MALLEY: It's Walter, Walter O'Malley. What's yours?

ROSA: Rosa...I'm awfully glad to meet you.

*(Rosa extends her hand and O'Malley takes it. Big Al steps in between them, breaking their hands apart.)*

BIG AL: This ain't no tea party. I asked you to leave, O'Malley, and take the dumb broad with you.

ROSA: *(To O'Malley.)* Oh, I'd love to go with you...

BIG AL: Not you, Rosa... *(Points to Blanche.)* ...her!

BLANCHE: *(Insulted.)* Don't you call me names, you old bat.

*(A scuffle ensues between Big al and Blanche. Big Al tries to slug Blanche but Louie stops her. Rosa and O'Malley don't notice as they only have eyes for each other.)*

LOUIE: *(To Blanche and Big Al.)* Ladies, please, there's no reason to fight. Blanche was leaving anyway.

*(Louie takes Blanche by the arm and begins dragging her off.)*

BLANCHE: All right, don't wrinkle the dress. Come on, O'Malley.

*(O'Malley is still gazing at Rosa, so Louie grabs him by the arm and leads him toward the door along with Blanche. Rosa is waving and throwing kisses at O'Malley until Big Al stops her. Blanche and O'Malley finally exit.)*

BIG AL: *(To Rosa.)* What's wrong with you? Are you crazy?  
Trying to cozy up to a cop!

ROSA: That dreamboat was a policeman?

LOUIE: Didn't you notice the uniform?

ROSA: Oh, yes, I love a man in uniform.

BIG AL: Get in the back before I slug you. *(Rosa makes a hasty exit. Big Al turns back to Louie.)* And where's that cleaning girl?

LOUIE: I don't know, boss. Let's get Barney stashed in the back, and then I'll go and look for her.

*(Grumbling, Big Al and Louie drag Barney offstage. A few seconds later, Rosa sneaks back in and goes to the telephone.)*

ROSA: *(Into phone.)* Operator, give me the police station...No, it's not an emergency, just ring the number...Hello, do you

have an Officer Walter O'Malley?...Oh good, I want to leave a message for him. Tell him Rosa called and he should meet me on the corner of 63rd and Halsted at midnight. Thank you.

*(Rosa hangs up, pleased with herself. Song: "Just Lookin' for My Number One.")*

ROSA: *(Sings.)*

He's gonna' be tall and dark and handsome,  
and have dreamy baby-blue eyes.  
We'll get married and build a family,  
and he'll be home ev-er-y night.

Mama,  
can't you see it's simple destiny?  
I'm just lookin' for a guy to be  
The one who's right for me...  
The one who's right for me!

*(Rosa runs off. Blackout.)*

## Scene 4

*(AT RISE: Mortuary, one week later, evening. There is a blast of music as Sue enters from the speakeasy. She is now dressed in regular clothes. The music stops abruptly as she closes the door behind her. Sue crosses to Louie's desk, opens the drawer, and takes out his gun. She is examining the gun when another blast of music signals Louie's entrance from the back. Sue quickly puts the gun away and tries to look innocent.)*

LOUIE: What are you doing over there?

SUE: Nothing. It's so noisy back there. I just wanted to be alone for a while.

LOUIE: You're real good at doing a vanishing act, like last week...you know, the day Barney got stiffed.

SUE: Please, Louie, you're not going to start that again.

LOUIE: Yeah, I'm going to start that again. You've been hiding out here all safe and cozy while me and the boss have been taking a lot of heat from the cops.

SUE: I know the police have been around asking questions about the murders.

LOUIE: And about the pretty little nun who mysteriously disappeared from the convent. You know, the same pretty little nun who was seen running from Bats Branigan's car just before it blew up.

SUE: Stop it, please.

LOUIE: Look, baby, up till now, I've been covering for you. Not that I mind lying to the cops...it's Big Al I'm worried about.

SUE: She's very special to you, isn't she?

LOUIE: She's the closest thing I ever had to a mother...took me in when I was a snot-nosed kid, raised me like I was her own. I owe her a lot.

SUE: And I owe you a lot. You're the most wonderful man I've ever met.

*(Louie shifts uncomfortably.)*

LOUIE: If I'm so wonderful, why don't you be honest with me?

SUE: Oh, Louie, if only I could...

*(Louie takes hold of her and looks into her eyes. Song: "I Just Don't Know.")*

LOUIE: *(Sings.)*

In my line of work,  
I've found over time a quick and simple rule.  
Trust your first reaction,  
And you'll seldom play the fool.  
Let me tell you, Sue,  
Just how I react to you...

My heart skips a beat...  
When you walk in the room  
Or say my name  
Or give your smile to me  
I don't know, I just don't know.  
You make me think about love  
Is it in your eyes?  
Or in your touch?  
Or in the things you say?

I don't know, I just don't know.  
I don't know just how to react  
When my heart takes the lead  
But if you say the word  
I'm willing to proceed.

SUE: *(Sings.)*

My heart skips a beat...  
When you walk in the room,  
Or say my name

Or give your smile to me  
I don't know, I just don't know.  
You make me think about love  
Is it in your eyes?  
Or in your touch?  
Or in the things you say?  
SUE/LOUIE: *(Sing.)*  
I don't know, I just don't know.  
I don't know, I just don't know.

*(As the song ends, Louie takes hold of Sue again.)*

LOUIE: Look, I don't care what you've done. A girl like you getting mixed up with a guy like Branigan, anything could happen and it wouldn't be your fault. Just be honest with me, please.

*(Sue pulls away from him.)*

SUE: You be honest with me, Louie. You think I put that bomb in Bats Branigan's car, don't you? And you think I had something to do with Barney's murder, too. *(Louie shrugs and looks away, avoiding her eyes.)* I thought so...well, hey, why stop there? What about Romeo Brown?

*(Louie looks at her, shocked.)*

LOUIE: You stiffed him, too?

SUE: Would it make a difference?

LOUIE: No, it doesn't. There's only one thing I really have to know.

SUE: What's that?

LOUIE: Do you really have feelings for me, or am I just a sucker you're using to get out of the hot water you're in?

SUE: Oh, Louie, I'm supposed to be a nun. If I hadn't run away, I'd be taking my final vows next week.

LOUIE: But you did run away, and now you're here with me.  
And I want an answer to my question.

*(There is a sudden blast of music as Max comes staggering in from the speakeasy.)*

MAX: *(Slurring his words.)* And what do we have here. Hey, Louie, old pal, it's about time you got a live one, if you know what I mean.

*(Max laughs, but Louie is not amused.)*

LOUIE: Get lost, Max.

MAX: Well, pardon me. *(Max staggers toward the outside door and then turns again.)* Hey, Louie, if my old lady comes looking for me, I was never here, okay?

LOUIE: Sure, Max. Now, will you get lost?

MAX: I'm going...I'm going...

*(Max exits. Louie looks into Sue's eyes again.)*

LOUIE: I still want an answer to my question.

SUE: Does this tell you anything?

*(Sue slides her arms around Louie's neck and kisses him. While they are kissing, Rats Branigan enters from the outside.)*

RATS: What a touching scene. Why didn't I bring my camera?

*(Startled, Louie and Sue jump apart.)*

LOUIE: How did you get in here, Rats?

RATS: That drunk who just staggered out of here held the door open for me. You really should be more careful, Louie.

SUE: I'd better get in the back.

*(Louie nods. Sue turns to leave but is stopped by Rats.)*

RATS: Don't leave on my account, sister. I'll bet life in the convent was never like this. *(Sue and Louie both seem surprised that he recognized her.)* Suppose you tell me what your part was in my brother's murder...how much did Big Al pay you to blow up his car?

SUE: *(Nervous.)* I don't know what you're talking about.

RATS: Don't deny it, sister. You were the last person to see Bats alive, but don't worry, I know you weren't working on your own. Big Al put you up to it, didn't she?

*(Sue appears frightened, and Louie steps in front of her to shield her from Rats. Big Al enters.)*

BIG AL: Time to call the exterminator, Louie. A big fat rat is in my place.

LOUIE: Sue, go in the back.

*(Sue exits quickly, and Rats swaggers over to Big Al.)*

RATS: Thought you could get away with blowing up my baby brother, huh, Al?

BIG AL: I didn't know you were out of jail, Rats. Just in time to take over your brother's business and just in time to shoot Barney.

RATS: I didn't shoot Barney.

BIG AL: And I didn't blow up Bats.

RATS: No, you put that nun up to it instead. You should be ashamed of yourself, Al, using a nun to do your dirty work.

BIG AL: I don't know any nun.

LOUIE: He's crazy, Al. Making wild accusations. Don't pay any attention to him.

RATS: Something tells me that Louie, here, is planning on getting into the habit.

*(Rats laughs. Louie punches Rats, knocking him down. Big Al pulls a gun out of the desk drawer and points it at Rats.)*

BIG AL: Now you listen to me...if I see your ugly face around here again, you'll be pushing up posies at the cemetery!

*(Frightened, Rats gets up and runs out.)*

LOUIE: Good work, boss.

BIG AL: The nerve of that creep, accusing me of stiffing his brother...not that I hadn't considered it. But then Bats was staying on his own side of town, running his own joint.

LOUIE: Until that Romeo Brown guy got killed and the cops shut the place down.

BIG AL: Who was Romeo Brown anyway?

LOUIE: I don't know. I never heard of him.

BIG AL: You sure none of our boys knocked him off to make trouble for Bats?

LOUIE: Positive, boss.

BIG AL: This whole thing stinks. In fact, I smell a rat—a big brother Rat. He's the one person who had everything to gain. I'll bet he set up his brother by killing Brown in his place, then put a bomb in his car. Barney probably saw him do it, so he shot him, too. Now Rats has the family business all to himself.

LOUIE: You could be right. I left Barney watching for Bats through the window, and when I came back, he was gone. He probably saw Rats planting the bomb, and that's why Rats shot him. Yeah...it all makes sense.

BIG AL: What about that nun the cops are looking for? You think she had something to do with this?

LOUIE: No, I doubt it.

BIG AL: It's late. We'd better start hustling the drunks out of the back. By the way, I came in here looking for Rosa. Have you seen her?

LOUIE: Not since this afternoon.

*(Louie and Big Al exit to the speakeasy. Rosa cautiously enters from the outside door and looks around. Satisfied that no one is there, she motions for someone to join her. O'Malley enters and Rosa happily throws her arms around him.)*

O'MALLEY: Are you sure there's no one around?

ROSA: Don't worry. They're all in the back.

O'MALLEY: Doing what?

ROSA: Who cares? It can't be as much fun as what we're doing.

*(She kisses him, but O'Malley pulls away.)*

O'MALLEY: You're some girl, Rosa. I've never known anyone like you before.

ROSA: This last week has been heavenly. I wish we could be together like this always.

*(Rosa hugs him again.)*

O'MALLEY: Me too.

ROSA: I accept, Walter.

O'MALLEY: *(Puzzled.)* Accept what?

ROSA: Your proposal. I'd be honored to be your wife. I thought you'd never say, "Will you marry me, Rosa?"

O'MALLEY: When did I say that?

ROSA: Say what?

O'MALLEY: "Will you marry me, Rosa?"

ROSA: Yes, I will. Oh, Walter, that was so romantic!

O'MALLEY: *(Confused.)* But...but...what about your mother? I don't think she likes me.

ROSA: Mama doesn't like anybody. Please, Walter, don't let her ruin our happiness.

*(She kisses him again.)*

O'MALLEY: Wow, when you kiss me like that, I can't think straight.

BIG AL: (*Offstage. Yells.*) Who's out there? Is that you, Rosa?

(*Rosa and Walter are both startled.*)

ROSA: (*Urgently.*) Quick, Walter, Mama mustn't see you. Hide under Louie's desk.

(*O'Malley hides under the desk. Big Al enters.*)

BIG AL: I thought I heard you out here. Where have you been?

ROSA: Lulu and I went to a movie.

BIG AL: This late?

ROSA: It was so good, we stayed and watched it three times.

BIG AL: Make sure that outside door is locked and come in the back. Louie and I need some help cleaning up.

ROSA: Yes, Mama.

(*Rosa pretends to check the door as Big Al exits. Rosa then runs off after Big Al. O'Malley pops up from behind the desk, but he hears a noise and ducks down again. This time, Sue enters and tiptoes across to the outside door to let Rats in. Rats enters.*)

RATS: Where's Louie and the old battle-axe?

SUE: In the back. I can only talk to you for a minute. They'll be looking for me.

RATS: What have you found out?

SUE: So far, nothing.

RATS: You and Louie were awful cozy when I was here before. You're not falling for that guy, are you?

(*Rats grabs her arm roughly.*)

SUE: No, of course not. Let go of me.

RATS: Just remember what Big Al did to us.

SUE: I don't think Louie had anything to do with it.

*(Rats tightens his grip on her arm.)*

RATS: So you are falling for that creep!

SUE: No, he thinks I'm the one who put the bomb in Bats' car.

He questions me about it all the time. And he was really mad about Barney. I was out talking to you when it happened, so he suspects me of that, too.

RATS: *(Sarcastic.)* And I suppose when I walked in before, that lip lock you were in was a form of torture to get the truth out of you.

SUE: That was my idea. I had to do something to stop his questions. And you coming in and accusing me of killing Bats didn't help any.

RATS: After tomorrow, there won't be any more questions. I'm going to knock off Big Al and take over this joint. Then, it's going to be you and me, baby.

*(Rats tries to kiss her, but she pushes him away.)*

SUE: Stop it. I only agreed to come here to find out who killed my brother. And when his death is avenged, I'm going back to the convent.

*(Rats laughs.)*

RATS: Sure you are.

SUE: Have you found out who Bebe is? She could be the key to all of this.

RATS: I've asked all over town. No one seems to know anything about her.

SUE: What do we do next?

RATS: Tomorrow, you get Louie out of the way so I can take care of Big Al once and for all.

SUE: Are you sure she is responsible for the murders?

RATS: Of course she is. She's the one person who had everything to gain. Greedy old broad wants to run the whole town.

SUE: But what about Barney? She wouldn't shoot her own man.

RATS: You wanna bet? That old lady is ruthless. Probably didn't like the way Barney combed his hair so she shot him.

SUE: I'm worried about Louie. He's very loyal to Big Al.

RATS: Once Al is gone, Louie won't be a problem. He'll probably work for me.

SUE: I don't know, Rats. I'm just not sure...

RATS: You just do your job tomorrow and get Louie out of the way. You owe it to your brother.

*(Sue nods and watches Rats exit.)*

SUE: *(Aside.)* Oh, Louie, I don't know...

*(Song: "I Just Don't Know." Sings.)*

My heart skips a beat...

When you walk in the room

Or say my name

Or give your smile to me

I don't know, I just don't know.

You make me think about love

Is it in your eyes?

Or in your touch?

Or in the things you say?

I don't know, I just don't know.

*(Sue exits. O'Malley comes out from under the desk. He looks confused.)*

O'MALLEY: *(Aside.)* Something real fishy is going on here.

I'd better get to the station and talk to the captain. I think

Rosa tricked me into proposing to her. I'll tell the Captain about it. He'll know what to do.

*(He exits. Blackout. Intermission.)*

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**