

(SHE leads the SENATOR off to a bedroom, and MONA is left alone on the stage. JEWEL brings her wheelchair and a ledger book. MONA puts on her reading glasses, and sits and begins to go over her books. JEWEL exits as the SHERIFF comes quietly in behind MONA.)

START

SHERIFF. Howdy . . .

MISS MONA. Hello, Ed Earl. How's tricks?

SHERIFF. That's just what I was fixin' to ask you.

MISS. MONA. (*Archly.*) The children are nestled all snug in their beds.

SHERIFF. No sign of that television idiot creepin' around anywhere?

MISS MONA. Haven't seen hide nor hair of him.

SHERIFF. Well I been out prowlin' the back roads and everthang seems quiet. But I don't know, I just get this feelin' that he's out there somewheres. Same Goddamn feelin' I got durin' the Hitler war, just before they hit us at the Battle of the Bulge.

MISS MONA. Well, now, if it'll help you relax any, I still got some of that snake bite medicine in my private stock.

SHERIFF. (*Sitting down.*) Naw, naw, naw, I've give plumb up on whiskey. Hell, that stuff'll make you fight your people.

MISS MONA. I remember a time when that didn't worry you much.

(*The SHERIFF laughs.*)

MISS MONA. (*Continued.*) Hey, Ed Earl, I remember one New Year's Eve you come rollin' out here before the sun went down. You had already been samplin' that Early Times bottle. By the time the midnight kissin' got started you didn't know if you were fish or fowl.

SHERIFF. Didn't much care, neither.

MISS MONA. It took Miss Wulla Jean and two of us girls to pull your boots off.

SHERIFF. Yeah, when I woke up, I felt so terrible I just knowed I'd had a mighty good time.

MISS MONA. And I remember hearing tell about a terrible fuss you stirred up at the Pecos Rodeo.

SHERIFF. Now don't go remindin' me of that. Hell, I been tryin' to forget that for fifteen years. (*He laughs.*) Oh Lordy, Lordy, we've been some miles, ain't we, Mona? Hell, I recollect when you first come to work here for Miss Wulla Jean . . . That

musta been, what, twenty years ago? Why, you wudn't no older than that youngun Shy you took on last week. When I seen you climb down off the Greyhound at the Texaco station, I figured you needed some lookin' after.

MONA. Ed Earl, you always did get sentimental after midnight. Come on back to the kitchen and I'll fix you some coffee.

SHERIFF. I hope it's better than that stuff Doatsey Mae makes.

ACT ONE

SCENE 12

The stage is left in half light for a brief moment. The COUPLES are in the rooms in shadows. SOME half dressed. We see parts of bare bodies, arms, legs, backs. All this through venetian blinds.

Then suddenly, outside, a flashlight flips on. The beam sweeps the audience and we know the WATCHDOG has arrived.

The flashlight motions to FOUR SHADOWY FIGURES in overcoats and THEY scamper up next to him. FIVE COMMANDOS tiptoe into the silent house. MELVIN searches the dark with his light, then shines it on the upstairs rooms and starts them up the stairs.

THEY position themselves outside the rooms, and on cue THEY pop the flash cameras on the loving COUPLES. Screams and EVERYONE scrambles. The PHOTOGRAPHERS flee as MELVIN waves them out.

AGGIES and GIRLS run wildly about and off. JEWEL runs out and rings the bell. MONA and the SHERIFF run out of the kitchen as MELVIN is disappearing. The SHERIFF fires his pistol in the air.

The last PHOTOGRAPHER snaps MONA's picture and runs.

The SHERIFF runs Off after them firing in the air.

MONA runs after him, screaming "Ed Earl."

Spotlight on the BANDLEADER as the stage empties.

END