

**PIPE DREAM
or
A Critique of Pure Reason**

**a play
by Edward Mast**

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Professor
The Law Student
The Lady
The West Coast Visitor
The Woman
The Cop
The Old Friend
The Masked Intruder

The time is approximately the present.

The action takes place on a single night in a city which resembles Boston, Massachusetts.

An earlier version of PIPE DREAM was performed by students at UCLA in 1979, at Fullerton College in 1985, and in a non-Equity workshop at Royal Court Repertory in 1986.

ACT ONE
Scene One

(In darkness: a doorbell rings. Lights up.

Inside Professor Peregrine Drake's study. A small square empty space. Preferably defined only by lighting, with two masked entrances. A desk or worktable. Two chairs. A desk lamp.

Drake is sitting at his desk, writing. His coat is hung on the chair behind him. Just as he chuckles at something he has written, enter Jay, a young student, with a sheaf of mail.)

JAY

This evening's mail, Professor Drake.

DRAKE

(without looking up)

Thank you Jay. Leave it here.

(Jay stands beside Drake, sets mail on desk; turns to go, walking rather quickly toward the door. Drake speaks--still without looking up)

DRAKE

And may I have my watch back please?

(Jay freezes. He hesitates, then turns around with resignation, takes a gold pocketwatch from his pants pocket)

DRAKE

Thank you Jay. Leave it here.

(Jay sets the watch on the desk, turns away glumly, starts to leave; but turns back)

JAY
How did you catch me this time?

DRAKE
(still not looking up)
Objectivity and observation.

JAY
You couldn't have felt it.

DRAKE
(finally looks at him)
I didn't. Your fingers are far too skillful for that. Objectivity and observation, Jay. The two foundations of the scientific method. First, detach yourself from the issue and empty yourself of biases; second, observe your surroundings carefully.

JAY
But how did you know I took your watch?

DRAKE
When you entered the room, what was I doing?

JAY
Writing.

DRAKE
Did I pay attention to you?

JAY
No.

DRAKE
Wrong. There's a bias. You assumed I was too engrossed with my writing to notice you. In the same way, when you entered--bringing in the mail, correct?

JAY
Yes.

DRAKE
Had I assumed--assumed, Jay--that your mind was engrossed with that task, I would have let a bias abuse my judgement. Do you see?

JAY
I suppose.

DRAKE
In fact your mind was not on the mail at all: you didn't even mention this telegram.

(Jay winces)

DRAKE

You were almost certainly thinking of further adventures. Coupling this with your previous attempts at picking my pockets, what might I infer?

JAY

That I was going to try again.

DRAKE

Especially as the opportunity appeared so inviting: you saw me writing at the table, apparently engrossed--wrong assumption--with my vest pocket clearly accessible. All this registers in my mind as you enter. May I therefore assume you will make an attempt?

JAY

Yes.

DRAKE

Wrong. It is merely *probable* that you will try to take the watch. Probability is not fact, Jay. However: the chance is proven by action when you stand directly beside me, instead of at the usual distance of a foot or two which most people quite rightly maintain between themselves and others.

(reenacting, with some zest)

Therefore I know without feeling that you will set down the mail, leaning over me; as your hand withdraws, it will fall to my side, reaching the watchpocket with deft fingers which have practiced through numerous failed attempts to extract the watch from the pocket; lift it, unfelt, concealing it in the palm of the hand. The attempted theft is further confirmed when you make for the door--making sure to mask the tension of theft from the face--without first telling me who rang the doorbell a moment before you entered.

(Jay winces again)

DRAKE

Is it someone to see me?

JAY

Yes. A lady--

DRAKE

She'll wait. Now Jay, if you've followed this far, you'll see how important is the role of observation, and how small the role of feeling. Any questions?

JAY

Yeah. If you know you can catch me every time, why do you want me to keep stealing your watch?

DRAKE

The lesson is not for me. The lesson is for you. It's a valuable exercise for physical discipline and for the observation of rational method. This is essential to the practice of law. Do you imagine that I hire a student to live in my house just to file papers and shuffle trivia?

JAY

I guess not.

DRAKE

Don't guess. It's a bad habit. I've invited you to earn your education in law while training in some subtle aspects of reason which Harvard, though excellent, cannot supply. Do you understand?

JAY

Sure. But wouldn't it be less demoralizing for me if maybe you let me get away with it once in a while?

DRAKE

(irritated)

There you go again, Jay! Involving yourself in it, getting all depressed. Don't you see that whenever you want to address a problem straight on without confusion, the crucial requirement is the elimination of yourself. The instant you allow your subjective perception to shape your appraisal, you've biased it, you've lost that purity, that absolute objectivity which is the single sound foundation for knowledge. Now don't mistake me, Jay: emotion and suchlike have their place. Nobody's perfect. But your education and these exercises are too important to muddy them up with personality.

JAY

Eliminate myself?

(Drake exhales sternly, until an idea strikes him. He leads Jay's gaze around the room describes with some relish)

DRAKE

Take my study as an example. This room contains no books, no artworks, no windows, no telephone, nothing unnecessary to distract my mind from the matter at hand, whatever it may be. I spend a good portion of each day in this room, solving problems with nothing but my powers of reason: for in this room there is nothing to give insidious shape to rational method. The room is empty, as am I, of bias.

JAY

(looking around)

Isn't it . . . dull, a little?

DRAKE

(stares at him, then turns away , pointedly clearing throat)

I do keep forgetting that you are a student. I am unfair to expect you to comprehend me fully. Who was at the door?

JAY

(realizes he's said the wrong thing)

A lady to see you.

DRAKE

Anyone important?

JAY

She wouldn't give her name.

DRAKE

Well show her in.

JAY

(goes to the door, stops, turns back plaintively)
I'm sorry if I can't always keep up with you, Professor.

DRAKE

Don't let it bother you, Jay. Quite frankly, in all my years I've known only one man who could.

JAY

Who was that?

DRAKE

Oh, years ago at Harvard. A classmate. (pleasantly) The point is, Jay, that I'm not just a lawyer: I'm a teacher as well, as is any lawyer worth his tweed; and you must do me the favor to forgive me if I occasionally forget myself and treat you like an old friend.

JAY

(soberly)

Right Professor. I forgive you.

(He leaves. Drake stares after him, shakes head, then puts on coat. Jay reenters with the Lady)

DRAKE

Good evening Madam. Welcome to my study.

LADY

(surveying the room with disdain)
For such a big fancy house this sure is a dull little room.

DRAKE

(clears throat)

I must apologize for making you wait, but Jay and I had matters to transact. Won't you sit down?

LADY

I will, if I please.

DRAKE

Please do.

LADY

Perhaps.

(She does not sit.)

DRAKE

May I ask your name?

LADY

Yes. Eventually. Meanwhile let me state my business.

(She looks at Jay, who stands uncomfortably)

DRAKE

You can speak in front of Jay, Madam. Think of him as my secretary, please. He is entirely trustworthy. I assure you, nothing ever leaves this room.

LADY

We'll see.

(Jay reaches in coat pocket; Lady sees this gesture, whirls to face him, stiffly. He freezes, then timidly pulls out a pencil. Her eyes narrow)

LADY
(icily)

Don't try that again.

(She turns back to Drake)

LADY

You are Professor Peregrine Drake?

(pronounces it with a long 'i')

DRAKE

Peregrinn, thank you.

LADY

Mister Peregrinn Drake, I want it clearly understood from the start that I don't especially need your help.

DRAKE

I'm relieved to hear it.

LADY

Ordinarily I handle my own affairs, and handle them well, without the aid of a man.

DRAKE

Admirable.

LADY

But occasionally one is forced to enlist the services of others, and some of those others must unavoidably be male.

DRAKE

I see. What services of mine do you need?

LADY

None.

DRAKE

Oh.

LADY

I want that understood.

DRAKE

Perfectly. What is it of mine which you don't need, but might require?

(She chuckles drily. He chuckles back. She chuckles again, slightly longer. He chuckles back slightly longer still; she chuckles slightly longer, he chuckles again, sbut she suddenly interrupts)

LADY

Do you know a man by the name of Robin Swift?

DRAKE

Robin Swift. Why do you ask?

LADY

(patiently)

Because I would like an answer. Do you know him?

DRAKE

I did know a man by that name.

LADY

Do you remember him?

DRAKE

I could hardly forget him. (looks at Jay) Years ago at Harvard, he and I were classmates.

LADY

Do you know what became of him after leaving Harvard?

DRAKE

Not precisely. I understand he fell in love, quite torrentially, with a lady from . . . the western states somewhere. I believe he followed her to California or Arizona or some such place. He left before graduating and did not receive his degree.

LADY

Have you heard of him since then?

DRAKE

No. He never came back. It was a great shame, too: Robin had the makings of a brilliant lawyer. It's a waste when men of potential stature dilute their talents by falling in love. I always pity them.

LADY

Are you impervious to love, Mister Drake?

DRAKE

Love is the ultimate bias, Madam. I am not impervious to it, but neither do I allow it to dominate my actions. Robin was a different sort. His wasteful passions, though interesting, always led him by rudder. If I were to give myself over to love, I might end up wandering wasted as he has, following his ladylove to who knows where.

LADY

You never met her?

DRAKE

Oh, no. Why should I have? She was most likely a silly little trollop of some sort.

LADY

(pleasantly)

Mister Drake, you are looking at that silly little trollop.

DRAKE

(pauses a moment to absorb this; then)

Oh.

LADY

My name is Catherine Jaeger, and I am the lady Robin Swift followed across the country.

DRAKE

I see. (clears throat) You will realize, I hope, Miss Jaeger, that my remarks were purely . . . generic.

LADY

Of course. I suggest, however, that you be more careful with your descriptions.

DRAKE

I have apologized, madam; but after all, you did, in a sense, lead Robin astray.

LADY

(evenly)

I didn't lead him anywhere. When I went back to Los Angeles, he apparently thought I was being coy, and he followed me against my will.

DRAKE

He was always an impulsive sort.

LADY

He kept on pestering me until I flat out told him to leave me alone. I never saw him after that, but he kept on writing letters.

DRAKE

Which you read?

LADY

A few. They depressed me. He drifted through Arizona and Mexico like an invalid, looking for any kind of work. Then he stopped writing and some time passed before I heard of him at all. He recently wrote me a short letter, and then I was contacted by someone looking for him. I gathered he had become involved with a

gang of smugglers in Central America.

DRAKE

The authorities were looking for him?

LADY

No. Members of the gang. He had apparently double-crossed them and hightailed it north.

DRAKE

He was never dependable.

LADY

The smugglers thought he would come to me. I think he will come here.

DRAKE

Poor Robin. What the passions will do if uncontrolled.

LADY

Professor, do you think I am in any way to blame for what happened to Robin?

DRAKE

No. You are free from fault. This was Robin's doing entirely.

LADY

Well I disagree. It is possible that I did--unintentionally--lead him on. Maybe I was too gentle. It certainly was not my intention to ruin the life of such a lively and . . . intelligent man.

DRAKE

Hm. And now you are determined to find and help him.

LADY

Yes.

DRAKE

Why?

LADY

I just told you.

DRAKE

Ah, yes. May I ask . . . do you love him?

LADY

Love him? Ha ha. Ha ha ha. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha--

DRAKE

Do you?

LADY

Do I what?

DRAKE

Love him.

LADY

Love him? I pity him. I am sad for him. I even feel guilty for him. Love him? Ha ha ha. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha--

DRAKE

You never returned his affections?

LADY

His affections? Ha ha. I was--and am--quite careful about that sort of thing, regardless how . . . appealing or . . . intelligent the subject might be.

DRAKE

There was nothing between you?

LADY

What are you implying, Professor?

DRAKE

Nothing really. If I may have a few facts, Miss Jaeger, I will attempt to find him for you.

LADY

Find him? Do you think you can?

DRAKE

Why not?

LADY

All I'm asking is that you contact me if he comes to you. After all, I wouldn't want to drag you out of your little study.

DRAKE

You underestimate me. I have no need for the messy outdoors. I can find him in this room, possibly, without leaving it.

LADY

Oh really?

JAY

The Professor solves all his cases in here.

DRAKE

If I leave this room I'll clutter my senses with swarms of unnecessary data. I do my best work alone in this study, Madam. Bring a single significant fact in here, and with my unhampered reason I'll bit by bit construct an answer to your question.

LADY

You seem to have great confidence in yourself.

DRAKE

As do you, Madam. Now I will ask the questions for a moment, if you please.

When exactly did you last see Robin Swift?

LADY

Two years ago.

DRAKE

And last heard from him?

LADY

A month ago.

DRAKE

What sort of communication was that?

LADY

A letter.

DRAKE

Do you have it?

LADY

It's in Los Angeles.

DRAKE

I see. What makes you think he came here to Boston?

LADY

A phrase in that letter.

DRAKE

Repeat it for me please.

LADY

"Robin is dead. Robin is alive. Robin is back where he started."

DRAKE

Verbatim?

LADY

As near as I recall. It's been a month.

DRAKE

Well then, Miss Jaeger, have no fear.

LADY

I have none.

DRAKE

I will find him, or he will find me.

LADY

Will you need a fee?

DRAKE

What for? I'm not a detective, I'm a lawyer.

LADY

That's what I mean.

DRAKE

This is a favor for an old friend. Where will I contact you when I find him?

LADY

(takes a slip of paper from her purse)
If you find him, use this phone number.

DRAKE

Where are you staying?

LADY

By that phone.

DRAKE

Yes I see that. Please keep yourself instantly available. Information may arrive at any moment.

LADY

As soon as that?

DRAKE

Robin is an old friend, Miss Jaeger. My powers of logic will be aided by knowledge of his habit.

LADY

About that, Professor. He may have changed when you see him.

DRAKE

How so?

LADY

His last letter sounded . . . It was short but it was . . . uncontrolled.

DRAKE

Say what you mean, please.

LADY

The pressures of Robin's life have begun to unhinge him, I'm afraid. He may seem delirious when you see him, even violent.

DRAKE

Ah. Thank you for the warning.

LADY

That's not all. Robin is probably being chased by the gang because he is carrying something which belongs to them. His life is in danger as long as he has it. If you see him, get it away from him any way you can, even if he himself gets away.

DRAKE

And give this something to you, I suppose?

LADY

You have not met these smugglers, Professor. I have. They are bloodthirsty and merciless. Robin is in no condition to deal with them without my help.

(Doorbell rings. Lady jumps into Drake's arms. Instantly she pushes him away)

LADY

(hissing)

Take your hands off me!

DRAKE

(nods)

Jay, see who is at the door.

JAY

Right.

(He leaves)

DRAKE

What exactly is this object, Madam?

LADY

(trying unsuccessfully to appear calm)

I'd rather not involve you further. You have my instructions. Is there another way out of here?

DRAKE

There's a back door.

LADY

(snorts)

It figures.

(Lady hurries to the back door, stops short; turns casually)

LADY

It is understood that I could manage without your help?

DRAKE

Transparently. Out this door, then left.

LADY

Thank you.

DRAKE

I will see you later, Madam?

LADY
Will you?

(She leaves. Drake stares after)

DRAKE
An extraordinary woman. I can almost see why Robin . . .

(Jay enters, interrupting)

JAY
I told him to wait until Miss Jaeger . . . left . . .

(looks around)

DRAKE
What do you make of her story, Jay?

JAY
I don't know. I didn't know Robin Swift. The name sure rings a bell, though.

DRAKE
No doubt. I've mentioned him often enough.

JAY
You have?

DRAKE
Of course. My brilliant classmate at Harvard, Robin Swift. An exceptional mind. By his example we must always protect ourselves from becoming involved where it least serves us. No matter how beautiful the temptation.

JAY
What did she, go out the back door or something?

DRAKE
The back door. Very good. Her motive for following Robin seems a bit vague, don't you think?

JAY
There's someone to see you, Professor.

DRAKE
Oh, not now . . . Wait: who is it?

JAY
A mister Tanager Finch. Attorney, he says.

DRAKE
You doubt it?

JAY
Sort of. He doesn't have a briefcase.

DRAKE
I see. Let's inspect him then.

(Jay leaves. Instantly Tanager Finch slithers in the doorway and closes it behind him. Finch is dressed loudly, with a bright paisley tie.)

FINCH
A good evening to you, Professor Drake.

DRAKE
(stares at him; guardedly)
Thank you. Have a seat.

FINCH
I will.

(He does not sit)

FINCH
My name is Tanager Finch, sir. Attorney at law.

(flashes out a card, hands it to Drake)

DRAKE
What a coincidence. I'm an attorney myself.

(takes out card, hands it to Finch)

FINCH
And a very respected one. This should make our dealings most efficient.

(Jay sticks head in, reenters, puzzled)

DRAKE
It should indeed. What can I do for you, Mister Finch?

FINCH
(glaring at Jay with some malice)
Can we talk in private?

DRAKE
Jay is my secretary. Jay, take notes.

JAY
Oh.

(Drake has to hand Jay a pad. Finch observes, smiles, begins moving about the room, casually inspecting as if for hidden listeners)

FINCH

Alright then. I am representing a certain party who shall remain unnamed for the moment. I'll refer to him her or them as Mister Bunting.

DRAKE

Fine.

FINCH

(staring intently at Drake)

This Mister Bunting--that's Bunting--has recently suffered the loss of a possession which, though valuable perhaps only to himself, is nonetheless precious.

DRAKE

Of course.

FINCH

In short, Mister Bunting is willing to give considerable monetary reward for the return of said article.

DRAKE

I see.

FINCH

Considerable reward. Reaching perhaps to a number with--well, several figures.

DRAKE

I understand. And how does this involve me?

FINCH

(moves at him almost with threat)

We thought you might know where it is.

DRAKE

Me? Mister Finch, you haven't even told me what it is you're looking for.

FINCH

Well, it's long . . . thin . . . round . . . cylindrical, that is . . .

DRAKE

(bewildered)

A weapon, of some sort?

FINCH

Only implicitly. You're being cagey.

DRAKE

About what?

FINCH

I might add, Mister Drake, that no questions will be asked upon its return.

DRAKE

I am totally in the dark, Mister Finch.

FINCH

Are you? Probably just this dingy little room. Step by step then. You do not deny that you know Robin Swift.

DRAKE

Oh. Oh! Robin Swift, of course. Have you got that down, Jay? Profound apologies for my obtuseness, Mister Finch. You have been assuming that I have the article--

FINCH

Or know where to get it.

DRAKE

--because Robin Swift stole the article from your Mister Bunting, and, since he was an old friend of mine, you thought he brought it to me. Well I'm sorry, Mister Finch, but I haven't seen Mister Swift in years upon years, much less received stolen goods from him.

FINCH

And yet you seem unsurprised at the mention of his name.

DRAKE

I was told just tonight by a mutual friend--

FINCH

Who?

DRAKE

Never mind. I was told that Robin Swift was in town and I've been expecting him to look me up. It's no news that he's been dealing for years with . . . shady types from the West: therefore there is no surprise to your request. May I ask though: what was the connection of Robin Swift to your Mister Bunting?

FINCH

He was an employee of Bunting's for a short time.

DRAKE

Ah yes. And now he's skipped town with the boss's stolen . . . what was the object?

FINCH

You swear you haven't seen him recently?

DRAKE

We are not in a courtroom just now, Mister Finch. However, if you want my word of honor, you may have it. I haven't seen him in years, nor have I touched this sacred object.

FINCH

(angry, studies him a moment, then smiles)
Right then. I've made my offer. If you're not interested in money, I won't waste your valuable time until I can show you a more . . . compelling argument.

DRAKE

Goodnight, Mister Finch.

FINCH

Good night yourself, Professor Drake.

(turns to leave, glares at Jay as he exits.
Drake motions to Jay to see him out: Jay
leaves reluctantly. Drake closed door behind
them)

DRAKE

What an irritating liar! He even forced me to make a guess at something. Poor Robin.

(Suddenly a dark-haired woman bursts into
the room through the back door. She carries
a long thin box, as for flowers)

WOMAN

(whispers urgently)

Is he gone?

DRAKE

(startled)

What? Who are you?

WOMAN

Quiet! Is he out of the house by now?

DRAKE

Who, Finch? Yes, probably. Settle down. How did you get in?

WOMAN

The back door was open. Can I trust you?

DRAKE

What an extraordinary question. Can I trust *you*?

WOMAN

You are Peregreen Drake.

DRAKE

Peregrine, I think. Did you break in here for a reason, Madam?

WOMAN

Robin Swift.

DRAKE

What a surprise.

(Jay comes back in. She starts, jumps behind
Drake, pulls out a pistol)

JAY

I remember where I heard that name, Mister Drake--

WOMAN
Get him out of here!

DRAKE
Jay! Stop!

(Jay freezes; Woman jabs Drake with pistol)

DRAKE
Turn around quietly and wait outside.

JAY
What's wrong?

DRAKE
(as Woman jabs him)
Nothing. I'll tell you in a moment.

JAY
Professor Drake--

DRAKE
(as she jabs him)
Jay, please! Do it.

(Jay turns uneasily, exits. Woman
straightens, goes to lock door behind him)

DRAKE
You know, he might call the police.

WOMAN
(fumbles with box and gun, sets gun on desk)
Let him. I'll be gone by the time they get here. You know Robin Swift?

DRAKE
Intimately.

WOMAN
(thrusts parcel at him)
Here. Take this. Hide it. He told me once you could be trusted. Keep this safe for a while.

DRAKE
(takes it)
Just a moment, ma'am. For whom am I keeping this?

WOMAN
(grabs it back)
For me! (calms down) For your good friend Robin, who is in danger of his life, though he doesn't seem to know it. Please, take it.

DRAKE

May I ask what it is?

WOMAN

(grabs it back)

No! (sets it gently on the desk) Just keep it.

(She surveys the room carefully, stalks about, pauses to pull her hair out of her eyes and think desperately)

DRAKE

(venturing)

This is Robin's you say? How did you get it?

WOMAN

(distracted)

I was trying to help him. I took it.

DRAKE

You stole it.

WOMAN

Yes.

DRAKE

From whom?

WOMAN

From him. From them. It doesn't matter! It's not his anyway. They thought they had me, they thought I was nothing, and before they knew it I took it. Much good it's done me. I have to find him now. Maybe he can help me.

(turns on Drake)

Has he come here yet?

DRAKE

What makes you think he'll come here?

WOMAN

He said so in his letter. This is where he started, isn't it?

DRAKE

You've seen his letter?

WOMAN

(threatening)

Has he come here yet?

DRAKE

No.

WOMAN

When he does, tell him I'm looking for him.

DRAKE

And who are you?

WOMAN

Nobody. Understand?

DRAKE

Lucidly. Who will I tell him--

WOMAN

He'll know.

DRAKE

I see. If he comes here, should I give him the box?

WOMAN

(darts to table, grabs up box, accidentally sweeping off some papers)
No! They're mine now! What's in this box belongs to me! Don't open it. Don't touch it, not till I come back for it.

(sets it carefully on the desk)

I'll tell Robin in my own good time. Got it?

DRAKE

Got it.

WOMAN

There's more at stake here than a class reunion, Professor. You're a safety box, that's all, because you were given a good reference. Open that box, or stick your nose further into this, and you won't come out of it.

DRAKE

Where are you going?

WOMAN

To find Robin. I'll be back. Keep it. I'll be here.

(She darts out. Drake stares after, then at box. He walks about, looking at it. He picks it up, holds it before him. Fingers the top. Cautiously, he begins to open it. Jay comes in behind him)

JAY

What was that?

DRAKE

(jumps, snapping box closed, shouts)
What!

(calms down, panting)

Don't sneak up on me like that!

JAY

Who was it?

DRAKE

A woman looking for Robin.

JAY

Your old friend Robin? Was this about him?

DRAKE

Isn't everything?

JAY

Wait! If she's looking for him, then she could lead us to him.

DRAKE

She could.

JAY

Then we'll follow her and find him!

DRAKE

Of course not. That would be juvenile. We'll find Robin easily enough right here. Just wait.

JAY

I called the police anyway.

DRAKE

The police?

JAY

Well, yeah. They'll be here in a--

DRAKE

We don't need the police . . . never mind. I'll call them. I have to call Miss Jaeger anyway. Start picking up these papers.

JAY

Are you okay?

DRAKE

Yes. But I don't think Robin is.

(He leaves with the box. Jay looks around, stoops, picks up a handful of papers. He sets them on the table, straightens them, notices a lump. He lifts the papers and uncovers the gun which the woman left on the table. He puts papers aside, stares at it; picks it up gingerly, by the barrel; holds it before him, whistles with awe)

JAY

Maybe I should have gone to med school after all.

(Drake reenters still holding box)

DRAKE

What is that?

JAY

Looks like a gun. Is it yours?

DRAKE

No. She must have forgotten it. Quite a flustered lady. Put it down now.

JAY

Gladly.

DRAKE

(stashes the box on the desk chair, looks at floor)
This won't do, Jay. Need some help?

(Jay and Drake stoop to pick up papers)

DRAKE

We must learn from this, Jay. All this turbulence has arisen because of the whimsical and reckless choice my old friend Robin made years ago; and now he's sunk in beyond his depth, I'm afraid, what with these fraudulent lawyers and women bearing gifts.

JAY

Finch wasn't a lawyer?

DRAKE

Oh seriously Jay. Paisley? Actually: all this reminds me somewhat of the mind games we used as exercises, Robin and I. Yes, Jay, I did exercises too, at your age. Imaginary crimes, alibi breaking and the like. We called Robin Master of Disguise at Harvard because he would go to any lengths to befuddle opposition.

(standing, remembering)

I have not since found so worthy an opponent.

JAY

I know!

DRAKE

Kind of you to understand.

JAY

I know where I heard that name before. This telegram is from Robin Swift.

(He hands it to Drake)

DRAKE

What does it say?

JAY

I didn't open it.

DRAKE

How do you know who sent it?

JAY

I had to accept the charges. It was sent collect.

DRAKE

(nodding quickly)

It's from Robin.

(as he opens it:)

Did I tell you? We will discover him yet, without budging.

(stops, looks at envelope)

This was sent from Boston.

JAY

Why would he send a telegram just across town?

(Drake opens, reads)

DRAKE

ROBIN IS DEAD STOP ROBIN IS ALIVE STOP THE MOON IS OUT
GO

I was right. Robin is in danger and needs my help.

(doorbell rings)

JAY

Oh now who's that gonna be?

DRAKE

You can go and find out . . . as soon as you return my watch.

JAY

(stops, astonished; then returns watch)

How . . . did you . . .

DRAKE

Bending over there across from me shoulder to shoulder you saw your chance when most probably the chain drooped from my pocket. But the rustle of papers triggered my memory to your last attempt. Hop to it, Jay.

JAY

Right.

(He leaves. Drake rereads telegram)

DRAKE

Why else would he want me to go outside?

(Jay bursts in backwards, having been shoved aside by the Lady, who stomps in, rapidly looking around the room, then at Drake)

LADY

Where is he?

DRAKE

I haven't found him quite yet, Madam.

LADY

(stops; forces herself to relax; casually)
Of course you haven't. How could you have?

DRAKE

I have a few questions to ask you. Sit down, if you please.

(She does not sit. Drake sighs)

DRAKE

You have not been entirely open with me, madam, and if I am to spend further time on this matter, I would like you to clarify one or two points.

LADY

No one has asked you to give up more of your precious time.

DRAKE

But here you are, nonetheless. Since you left us earlier this evening I have twice been visited by people you know. The first was a man who called himself Finch.

JAY

Tanager Finch.

LADY

I've never heard it.

DRAKE

An alias, no doubt. He was representing a man he called Mister Bunting, who had lost--

LADY

Bunting?

DRAKE

Yes. Why?

LADY

Nothing.

DRAKE

You know Bunting?

LADY

Know Bunting?

DRAKE

Yes.

LADY
Me, know Bunting?

DRAKE
Yes.

LADY
You can't be serious.

DRAKE
Do you know Bunting?

LADY
(takes a beat)
Yes. A man named Bunting is one of the smugglers chasing Robin. It was probably him.

JAY
Why would he give us his real name?

DRAKE
It is odd. But he probably thought I would recognize the name if Robin had seen me. Bunting is probably another alias, at any rate---Catherine, are you all right?

LADY
(nervously glancing about)
Of course I'm all right. Don't I look all right? I am perfectly all right.

DRAKE
You're safe here.

LADY
Of course I'm safe here. Why shouldn't I be safe here? You don't have to tell me I'm safe here--

(She is trembling as she fiddles with her purse. Drops a lipstick, which she bends to pick up as Drake does the same. Their eyes meet: freeze. She snatches the lipstick, rises, turns away)

LADY
You were visited twice, you said. Who else?

DRAKE
Yes. right. Yes, a lovely dark-haired lady dropped in. A dark-haired lady?

LADY
Did she say who she was?

DRAKE
Do you know her?

LADY

(knowledgeably)
Am I to keep track of all your . . . visitors?

DRAKE
She was looking for Robin.

LADY
(inflexible)
Hm. He's been busy.

DRAKE
Hm. You left the last letter from Robin in Los Angeles?

LADY
Yes.

DRAKE
How did this dark-haired lady see it?

LADY
She saw it?

DRAKE
She quoted to me from it.

LADY
Imagine that.

DRAKE
I suggest you be honest with me on this matter, madam. Who is this dark-haired woman?

LADY
If you must know: her name is Harriet Raven. She was a leader of the organization which Robin doublecrossed.

DRAKE
So you have met her?

LADY
She broke into my house. Held me at pistol point while she searched. She saw the letter then.

DRAKE
Why was she after Robin?

LADY
He doublecrossed her gang.

DRAKE
How?

LADY
I don't know. I think she was part of it. It involved that stolen object.

DRAKE

And what was the object?

LADY

I've never seen it.

DRAKE

Hm. Have you withheld anything else from me?

LADY

Of course not. Why should I?

DRAKE

(stares hard at her)

I see. You never saw the article Robin stole?

LADY

No.

DRAKE

Then I suppose you wouldn't recognize it even if you saw it before you.

(As he says this he picks up the box, holds it before her. She tenses)

LADY

Where did you get that?

DRAKE

From Miss Raven.

LADY

What will you do with it?

DRAKE

I'm not sure yet.

LADY

(calming down)

Hmmm. How curious. What is it, do you know?

DRAKE

Do you or do you not know what is in here?

(At that moment there is a thud: Jay is knocked over from behind by someone who has just leaped in. It is a person dressed entirely in black: black topcoat going all the way to the floor, black hat, black scarf or mask covering the entire head. This intruder holds a pistol pointed downward at Jay. The Lady has disappeared: at the first noise she leaped behind Drake's desk)

JAY

What the hell--

DRAKE

Quiet Jay. You know, this used to be my private study.

(Intruder aims gun at Drake, beckons toward the box. Drake holds it out: intruder snatches it away. The intruder then looks toward the desk; moves slowly toward it, pistol ready, tense as if about to spring. Suddenly a doorbell rings; distant sound of pounding, police whistle. The intruder turns, looks around quickly, backs out of the room and disappears)

DRAKE

(to Jay)

Get the door.

JAY

Right, right. Who is it now? How'd that guy get in--

DRAKE

Whoever it is, stall for a moment.

(Jay exits. Drake calls out)

DRAKE

Miss Jaeger?

(Lady hops up from behind the desk, stiffly calm)

LADY

I'm right here. Don't shout.

DRAKE

Are you--

LADY

(slowly losing her battle to remain casual)

Yes of course I'm all right why did you give it to HIM!

DRAKE

He was pointing a pistol at me.

LADY

(suddenly calm again)

Of course. Perfectly understandable. No problem. I'd have done the same in your case. I don't even know what it was. Must go. Bye now.

(turns to go)

DRAKE

I can get it back.

LADY
(whirls)

Get what back?

DRAKE
That box, and Robin both.

LADY
(trembles with agitation: then calms; mildly impressed)
Imagine that. Can you really?

DRAKE
Yes. Clearly this house is watched. We'll pick a meeting place away from here. Some place you know. Ah: the Old North Church. At just eleven thirty tonight--

LADY
Where is the Old North Church?

DRAKE
My, you are from California, aren't you. Old North Church is at the north end of Hanover Street. Not far from here.

LADY
Will you be there?

DRAKE
I don't know yet. In any case, madam, you will be there at eleven thirty, and you will wait inside exactly ten minutes before leaving. Is that clear?

LADY
Clear enough. I suppose it will be worth my time to see what you can do.

DRAKE
Be careful how you travel.

LADY
(smiles)
I am more careful than you know.

(Just as she leaves the back way, Jay and Officer Mallard burst in)

MALLARD
I won't be kept waiting longer. Let off!

DRAKE
Why, Officer Mallard, have you been kept waiting? Shame on you, Jay. Never postpone the police.

MALLARD
(with an habitual little military salute to Drake)
Thank you, Professor Drake.

DRAKE

What can I do for you, Officer Mallard?

MALLARD

(removes hat, takes a stance, pronounces)

Wellsir, it's no easy thing, I know it. You know it, I know it. We both know it. Am I right?

(Pause. Drake stares blankly)

MALLARD

(with a little salute on "yourself")

I mean, sir, a man respected as yourself, you know, and who am I but an honest cop? But still sir, in America we're all equal. If you catch my meaning.

DRAKE

Not precisely.

MALLARD

Well . . . I mean . . . I have to treat you sir same as everyone else; and when a crime's committed I'm forced to investigate no matter who it may be crosses my path.

DRAKE

Oh is that all? Well no crime has been committed, Officer.

MALLARD

No crime? Well, now, I know where I am, sir. You know where I am. We both know where I am, do we not sir? (holds up hand) You don't need to answer that, but nonetheless, regardless of what we do or do not know, the plain fact is this: a murder here on Beacon Hill is just as much a murder as in a dirty slum.

DRAKE

(astonished)

Murder? Someone hurt?

MALLARD

Dead. On your street, near your house. And I cannot help but begin investigation here--

(little salute on "here")

DRAKE

Who? Who is dead?

MALLARD

A woman, sir--

DRAKE

Good Lord!

MALLARD

A lady with dark hair, sir. Stabbed. In the throat, I'm afraid. Y'see, we got your call, and were coming when we saw the body. Lying right down on the street outside. Dead as they come.

DRAKE

This is an issue then, isn't it. Did you see who did it?

MALLARD

Almost: but no sir. Therefore sir, in the name of the Law of the Land and such--well you know the law of the land as well as I do, of course--better, probably: you being a lawyer and all--but you know that, of course--

DRAKE

You'll need a statement.

MALLARD

Right, sir--

DRAKE

I understand perfectly.

MALLARD

Also if you might step outside for identification purposes--

DRAKE

I'm not ready to go outside just yet, Officer Mallard. If you'll wait just a little while longer, I'll give you a full statement.

MALLARD

Thank you sir. I knew a man like yourself would be far above any pettiness or lack of--

DRAKE

In the hallway, Officer. Just for a moment.

MALLARD

(salutes)

Right sir. Whatever you, absolutely. Yep. Yep.

(Drakes catches himself saluting back.
Mallard glares at Jay as he leaves)

JAY

Do you know the lady who was killed?

DRAKE

Hm? Oh yes. The woman who was here earlier. A mobster, murdered, no doubt, by a mobster. I'll think of a story for Mallard in a moment.

(looking at the gun on the table)

Robin has embroiled himself deeply in this trouble, I can see. I will not let him down. I will do what I can to pull him out of this, even if I have to decipher this problem . . . outside.

(He walks to the door, gazes at it)

JAY

Outside?

DRAKE

(turns back with a gleeful new thought)

Unless . . . is it possible? Could all of this be another game?

JAY

A game? Someone's been killed, Professor.

DRAKE

No stakes were too high for Robin. He would do anything to confuse and entrap me. If Catherine is correct about his mental decay, why, he could easily be playing with his own life, or the poor woman's life. Or, for that matter, my life.

JAY

Sounds like a real sportsman.

DRAKE

(pacing hungrily as he pieces it together)

He might even be using me as part of some grand doublecross! You may say, Jay, that I always do my purest work in this room, and you're right. You may say that outside is only a jumble of sweating and messy distractions. But the fact is, Robin Swift is back, and I'm already using parts of my mind that I haven't needed for twenty years. All restrictions must be set aside if I'm to compete with Robin. And now, more than ever, I must remain objective. No biases. No biases! Eliminate myself and see it clearly, even outside at night. If Robin truly needs my help, I will be there. But if, as I fear, his wanderings have reduced him to a mobster, or a psychopath, then he will not take me in so easily. I will set him a test. How fortunate that Harriet Raven brought me that box!

JAY

Lot of good it does you now.

DRAKE

(turns to him)

Why?

JAY

(surprised by Drake's attention)

Well . . . that burglar took it.

DRAKE

Jay, is that the best you can do? You'll have to pay better attention than that. A life may depend on it.

JAY

A life?

DRAKE

Get my nightcoat, will you? Robin will be waiting, and I have several things to do before we leave.

JAY

Right.

DRAKE

Jay? Who do you think was behind the mask?

JAY

Well . . . Finch, I figured.

DRAKE

Indeed. Catherine thought so. And she's a remarkable woman. Let's get going.

(Jay exits)

DRAKE

(holding up telegram)

Well, old friend. Thought to catch me off guard, did you?

(pause)

I will be ready for you. I think.

(He pockets the telegram, starts to go; stops, turns back to desk; picks up the woman's pistol. He looks at it for an instant, then puts it in his pants pocket. He walks out, closing the door behind him. Lights out)

ACT ONE
Scene Two

(Outside. Night. Under a streetlight.
Park bench, maybe two.
Enter Drake and Jay, dressed warmly)

JAY
Isn't it late for a walk in the park?

DRAKE
The night air's supposed to be good for you. (coughs)

JAY
It's less than an hour till you said you'd meet that Catherine Jaeger.

DRAKE
Plenty of time.

JAY
Where are we?

DRAKE
Near the corner of Commonwealth and Arlington.

JAY
Looks like a forest.

DRAKE
Or a jungle, perhaps, these days. Boston Common, Jay. At one time this was a park. Now

JAY
Well don't worry. I've got my hitchhiking knife.

DRAKE
Easy Jay. Put that away. Where are you from?

JAY
San Francisco.

DRAKE
That would figure. Well this is not your West Coast town. Boston may not be clean-edged haven it used to be, sadly enough, but this city is not yet quite the steaming petri dish you'll encounter in places like San Francisco.

JAY
Why are we stopping here?

DRAKE

We're waiting for Robin.

JAY

You've guessed he'll be here?

DRAKE

I never guess. Robin will be right here, and soon, unless we are too late due to your laxness in mentioning the telegram.

JAY

How do you know he'll be here?

DRAKE

Because tonight is the full moon. See it?

JAY

Oh. It looks like a streetlamp.

DRAKE

His message was clear. He wanted me to leave my house and meet him at the full moon under the Moontree.

JAY

What's a moontree?

DRAKE

Robin named it that. This tree here.

JAY

When?

DRAKE

The last time I saw him. When we were at Harvard, we spent much time together in Boston, and one of our favorite walks was this route up Commonwealth and through the Common toward the State House. Along this route we joined our fiercest debates and made our future plans.

JAY

Plans for what?

DRAKE

(stops, glances at Jay, then away)
If it matters, Robin and I had conceived the notion of founding an academy together.

JAY

A law school?

DRAKE

Partially. An academy of higher thought, which would include the study of law.

JAY

What happened to the plan?

DRAKE

Robin left, obviously. He stopped us here one night, right here. The moon was full and he said that the full moon was for changing your life by. He named this tree the Moontree, something about the moonlight making the branches shimmer, and stated that he was leaving Boston.

JAY

To follow Miss Jaeger!

DRAKE

He would hear no reason, and I have not seen him since that night. I daresay he regretted leaving. In fact, I rather hope he has come back to admit his error. That might be why he wants to meet under the Moontree.

JAY

Tonight, do you think?

DRAKE

Taken together, this full moon and the barrage of Robin's friends that descended on us all at once tonight lead me to conclude that he will be along here shortly, looking for his past life and wondering where his package is.

JAY

Someone's coming.

DRAKE

Did I tell you? Just on time, as well.

(He turns to see Finch strolling on)

FINCH

Good evening, Professor Drake.

DRAKE

Mister Finch.

FINCH

What brings you out of your study so late?

DRAKE

Just a breath of air, thank you.

FINCH

You weren't looking for me, by any chance?

DRAKE

No.

FINCH

Ah. For someone else then. I don't suppose you've anything to tell me about Mister Bunting's stolen article?

DRAKE

I'm sorry, but as far as you are concerned, Mister Finch, nothing has changed since the last time you were at my house.

FINCH

How unfortunate.

DRAKE

And you sir, why are you walking our streets so late?

FINCH

The enterprising attorney must keep all senses alert. I'm still on the same case, Professor. But I've heard your streets are quite safe.

DRAKE

Beyond reproach.

FINCH

So I've heard. Nevertheless one can't be too careful. A woman was killed just tonight, I'm told, on one of these streets. Near your house, wasn't it?

DRAKE

Yes.

FINCH

It's best to be cautious. Proximity of danger is dangerous itself. Good night, Professor Drake. Jay, wasn't it?

JAY

Yes.

DRAKE

Good night, Mister Finch.

(Finch strolls off)

JAY

Did you know it was Finch coming?

DRAKE

Never mind. I don't think I like him prowling about. But we're prepared for him.

JAY

We are?

DRAKE

Keep your voice down from here on. Ah! Now. This is Robin. I'm certain of it. Get out of sight for a moment.

JAY

Right!

DRAKE

Quietly!

(Jay steps outside the light. Drake turns to meet Officer Mallard entering)

MALLARD
(little salute)

A good evening to you, Professor Drake.

DRAKE

Officer Mallard. On duty as usual?

MALLARD

No sir. No sir, not as usual. Not usual at all. I'm no flatfoot pounding a beat, sir. I'm working on a case, sir, as you can well imagine. A murder.

JAY

(stepping into the light)

Who're you gonna murder, Officer?

(Mallard spins around, dives over, whipping out his pistol; hits the dirt aiming directly at Jay, who jolts up his hands and freezes)

MALLARD

Stand back!

(He looks at Jay, grimaces, stands up and holsters pistol)

MALLARD

Alright, at ease. I'd advise your butler or whoever he is to keep a civil tongue in his head, Professor. And never sneak up on a policeman. We are trained instruments of defense, you know.

DRAKE

Down, Jay. Any news, Officer Mallard?

MALLARD

No news, sir, nothing what you'd call news, as of yet. But trust us, sir. We won't stand by while ladies are cut down in the street. Not in Boston. Isn't it late for yourselves to be loitering about, Professor?

DRAKE

Until a moment ago I thought it was. But with you in the area, I'm not scared. As you say, not in Boston.

MALLARD

Most true, Professor. Your confidence inspires me. Just the same, though, you'd best be careful. Strange things have been happening lately. I never seem to quite catch them yet, but I will. Hoho, I will. Evening, Professor Drake.

(salutes; leaves with a glare at Jay)

JAY

Guess that wasn't Robin.

DRAKE

Did we arrive too late? This could ruin everything! All those people seeing me here and recognizing--

(Noise offstage)

DRAKE
Did you hear that?

JAY
What?

DRAKE
Get out of sight. This better be him.

(Jay hides. Drake hurries to a bench, sits facing the noise offstage; hurriedly arranges himself to look casual and calm. Sits. Silence.

All at once a dark figure pops up behind the bench; before Drake has time to squeal, an arm is tight around his neck and another arm jabs something in his back. Drake grabs the arm at his neck with both hands but freezes instantly, feeling something at his back. He is still, eyes wide. The figure behind the bench has a huge beard and is wearing an old black overcoat and hat. Frozen silence for a long moment; then a gravel-filled voice emerges from the man)

MAN
Scuse me mister. Got a light?

(Silence. Without moving, Drake responds in a gravelly voice)

DRAKE
Nope.

(pause)
See I'm just from prison and in terrible need of a drink. Think you could spare a coin or two?

MAN
Tough pal.

(Still gripping Drake in stranglehold, the man rises slowly, laboriously pulling Drake up with him)

MAN
(as they struggle upwards)
I've just been escaping myself, for days and weeks on end. I'm coinless and was just gonna ask you the same.

DRAKE
But I asked you first.

MAN

True enough.

DRAKE

Doesn't that give me first claim or something?

(By now they have sidled away from the bench and are standing, Drake still holding the arm gripping his neck)

MAN

If all was fair, brother, maybe. But justice doesn't apply to us, you and me.

DRAKE

Damn.

MAN

That's right. But let's go together for a while, friend, and perhaps we can rustle some handout to preserve your faith in justice, after all.

DRAKE

Right then, Robin!

(With surprising agility, Drake squirms downward and around, pulling the man's arm down, around, and up behind his back. The man is able to pull away, but not before Drake rips off the fake beard. Robin jumps back, crouching low, tensing as if to spring away. They freeze. Stare at each other, Drake holding the beard in one hand. Pause.)

DRAKE

For a master of disguise, this is pretty shabby.

ROBIN

(slowly, unmoving)

Peregrine Drake.

DRAKE

In the flesh.

ROBIN

Excellent. (pause) Are you scared?

DRAKE

Should I be?

ROBIN

No. Not if it works.

DRAKE

If what works?

(Without moving, Robin begins making a low growl in his throat. The growl grows louder until Robin is snarling with bared teeth at Drake, his crouch becoming an animal posture, not dog or panther, but some animal we've never seen, looking like he might leap for the kill. Drake stands frozen, hand at pocket.
Suddenly Robin stops snarling.
Straightens up, looking puzzled)

ROBIN

Well that's not it.

(Drake is dumbfounded.
Robin looks at him, steadily; slowly lifts one foot off the ground. Lifts the foot in the air behind him, slow and graceful like a ballet dancer or a yogi; grasps the foot in the air behind him with his hand, stands on one leg like a flamingo; slowly points free arm at Drake; tenses muscles. Trembles with the tension of his whole body; turns red, looks about to burst.
Stops trembling)

ROBIN

(still in pose)

Something's wrong here.

(Drops the pose, paces feverishly, puzzled)

ROBIN

I don't know what's wrong here.

DRAKE

Robin . . .

ROBIN

Moontree. Full moon. Right here, right now. Gotta be it. Right here. Something . . .

DRAKE

Robin . . . can you hear me?

ROBIN

(stops, stares at him)

Sure. Can you hear me?

DRAKE

Clearly.

ROBIN

(takes a beat)

You think I'm crazy, don't you.

DRAKE

Not crazy, necessarily. Bordering on the eccentric, perhaps?

ROBIN

(awestruck, delighted)

You're a gem, Perry. You know that? You're a model. You're just the one I need.

DRAKE

I'm not sure I follow--

ROBIN

That clocktick thinktank on your neck, it's perfect. Just like mine, only yours is perfect, it's beautiful, it's so beautiful, I just wanna . . . just wanna wrench it off and smash it on the ground in a million little crystals. Shall I do that for you? It'll only hurt for a second.

(smiles)

How long has it been, Perry?

DRAKE

How long has what been?

ROBIN

Since I saw you.

DRAKE

Ah. Years.

ROBINS

Decades it seems like. Centuries since we walked this street. And the moon pulled us our separate ways. You're a great lawyer now?

DRAKE

So I'm told.

ROBIN

Ever start that Conservatory for Strict Judicial Thinking, or whatever it was?

DRAKE

I don't remember calling it that.

ROBIN

(chuckles)

And you have a lawyer's house on Beacon Hill?

DRAKE

Yes.

ROBIN

With a study, am I right? That dull little study you always wanted?

DRAKE

(with a little sigh on "dull")

Yes.

ROBIN

No books, no windows, the whole nothing?

DRAKE

(turns to walk toward his house)

We can go there now, if you like. It's only two blocks--

ROBIN

(stiffens)

Oh, no!

(Drake stops. Robin glares at him as if to hold him in place with his stare, speaking like a desperate hypnotist)

ROBIN

I worked too hard to pull you out of that house. You have to face me here, Perry, out in this boundless dark, where an object will disappear if you look at it straight on, and everything multiplies and dissolves in shadows. I didn't come back to sit under some fluorescent light in that hard cold factual world of yours. I came to meet you here, under the Moontree.

DRAKE

(sobered by Robin's intensity)

Well then. We'll stay.

ROBIN

Good.

(Robin squats on the ground. Thinking)

DRAKE

(gently)

Robin . . . are you in some kind of trouble?

ROBIN

Trouble? Oh yes. We both are.

DRAKE

What kind of trouble?

ROBIN

(rises, steps closer to Drake, whispers)

We're being watched.

DRAKE

Watched? By whom?

ROBIN

By your friend over there in the bushes.

DRAKE

Oh. Jay, come out here.

(Jay enters)

DRAKE

Forgive me, Robin. This is Jay, a law student whom I am tutoring specially. Jay, this is Mister Robin Swift, about whom you have heard so much.

JAY

How do you do sir.

ROBIN

(laughs)

It's been ten years since anyone called me Sir. First year law at Harvard, Jay?

JAY

That's right.

ROBIN

Still time to drop out.

DRAKE

(chuckling drily)

We used to call Robin Chameleon at Harvard, Jay, for his tricks and his tricky mind. It's a shame to meet him in this shabby state. He didn't always resort to false beards and such.

ROBIN

Well, Perry, it's functional, you know. I don't have time for the old college tricks. Besides, I didn't expect to meet anybody who knew me, other than yourself.

DRAKE

Really? I'd have thought you couldn't avoid it. I've run into several of your friends already this evening. Friends and enemies.

ROBIN

Yeah? Like who?

DRAKE

A man named Finch . . . ?

ROBIN

Who?

DRAKE

Or Bunting, perhaps?

ROBIN

(astonished)

Nooooo! Here?

DRAKE

You know him then?

ROBIN

Bunting?

(caws and flaps his arms in a contemptuous bird imitation; then shrugs)
Sure, I did some legal work for him. In a past life. Who else?

DRAKE

A woman.

ROBIN

Who?

DRAKE

Harriet Raven, perhaps?

ROBIN

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh christ, is she still after me?

DRAKE

Not any more.

ROBIN

Good.

DRAKE

She's dead.

ROBIN

Harriet?

DRAKE

She was murdered a few moments after I saw her.

ROBIN

Harriet murdered? (delighted) HOO HOO what a turnabout! Who did it?

DRAKE

Bunting, perhaps?

ROBIN

Bunting killed Harriet Raven?

DRAKE

With a knife, apparently.

ROBIN

(whistles, chuckles)

She musta been stoned.

DRAKE

Why?

ROBIN

Harriet was a hawk, Perry. Next to her, Bunting's a gooney bird. WHEEEEE-
OOO! Murdered by Bunting! (laughs) Bet she was pissed.

DRAKE
She left something.

ROBIN
What?

DRAKE
A box.

ROBIN
What was in it?

DRAKE
Do you know what it might have been?

ROBIN
Was it for me?

DRAKE
I'm not sure.

ROBIN
Is it . . . what is it?

DRAKE
It's a pipe.

ROBIN
YEEEEEEEEOWAH!

DRAKE
A sort of Indian pipe. Is it yours?

ROBIN
YOOOOOOOOO bet it's mine!

DRAKE
She seemed to think it was valuable.

ROBIN
Valuable as night and day. Where is it?

DRAKE
Why is it so valuable?

ROBIN
(moving off eagerly)
I'll tell you on the way to getting it.

DRAKE
(unmoving)
You'll tell me now, before we get it.

ROBIN
(stops; hesitates)

It's a gift.

DRAKE
From whom?

ROBIN
You don't know her.

DRAKE
Who is it?

ROBIN
She lives in the mountains.

DRAKE
What mountains?

ROBIN
The Andes.

DRAKE
In Peru?

ROBIN
Yes.

DRAKE
Why were you in Peru?

ROBIN
I was sick.

DRAKE
Sick?

ROBIN
Real sick. Still am. You too. An old woman and her family helped me. They made me better. With the pipe. I got it from them. Okay?

DRAKE
If it's yours, then how might Harriet Raven have gotten it?

ROBIN
She was following me--

DRAKE
Why?

ROBIN
She thought I had something of hers, so she was chasing me. I left the pipe behind for a minute like an *idiot* and she caught up and found it and I couldn't get it back.

DRAKE

Why?

ROBIN

Perry, your vocabulary is deteriorating. I have told you the story; can we go to your house and *get it now*?

DRAKE

I'm sorry, Robin. The pipe is not at my house.

ROBIN

It's not? Where is it?

DRAKE

(enjoys a slight pause)

Right here.

(He draws the pipe up out of his pants where it has been hanging along his inseam. It is about eighteen inches long, a crude redstone bowl with a long thick tube wrapped in a leather thong. Not ornamental. Drake holds it up)

DRAKE

Is this it?

(Robin springs forward, grabs the pipe and leaps off, cradling it)

ROBIN

I knew you'd come back. I knew you'd find me.

(holds it up)

Doesn't seem like much, does it? I carved it like a beginner. Center's too wide. But it makes me whole. Thank you Perry. You too, Harriet.

DRAKE

Why is Finch after it?

ROBIN

Who?

DRAKE

Bunting.

ROBIN

Bunting? I don't know. I can't think what they'd want with it. This pipe . . . this pipe frees me from all the things of this world. I'm ready now. I can do what I came for now. Come here.

(kneels, holds out pipe vertically)

Come on!

(Drake reluctantly kneels beside him, puzzled)

ROBIN
Take this.

(holds pipe toward Drake, who puts one hand on it--rather lightly. Robin and Drake hold the pipe vertically between them. Robin's eyes are closed. Silence for a moment. Then)

DRAKE
Why does Catherine Jaeger want this pipe?

ROBIN
(eyes pop open)
Cathy Jaeger?

DRAKE
Yes?

ROBIN
You saw her?

DRAKE
For a moment.

ROBIN
Tonight? She's here?

JAY
At the Old North Church.

DRAKE
Thank you, Jay.

ROBIN
What's going on? Did you see her?

DRAKE
She came to see me.

ROBIN
Looking for me?

DRAKE
Yes, mainly. She'll be at the Old North Church at eleven-thirty.

ROBIN
(pauses; then stands, pulling pipe away)
I don't wanna see her.

DRAKE
Do you not?

ROBIN

No. I don't.

DRAKE

(glances at Jay, puzzled)

How odd. Of course you don't have to go.

ROBIN

Yes I do.

(looks like he might cry; holding up pipe)

Yes I do. I'm not ready.

(to pipe)

Why are you here if I'm not ready? But I have to go. Old North Church. Up on Hanover Street?

DRAKE

Do you remember how to get there?

ROBIN

I'll find it. Will you be there?

DRAKE

Later. Good luck.

ROBIN

It's not good luck. It's the worst luck in the world.

(turns to go; holds up pipe, speaks to it)

You shut up.

(Robin runs off howling.
Drake and Jay stare after for a moment)

DRAKE

Well *he* hasn't changed. For a moment I thought he wouldn't go.

JAY

How did you get that pipe back from that masked guy?

DRAKE

He never had it. I took it out of the box as soon as I got it. Fundamental precaution.

JAY

Why did you give the pipe to Mister Swift?

DRAKE

Pipe? Who cares about the pipe. What matters is *this*.

(He reaches in coat packet, pulls out a long thin tube or bag of white powder)

DRAKE

This is what they are all after. This was inside the pipe.

JAY
(takes it)

What is it?

DRAKE
An extract from the leaf of the coca plant.

JAY
Huh?

DRAKE
Snow. Nose candy. Big C. Cocaine, Jay.

(Jay hands it back hurriedly)

DRAKE
Thousands of dollars' worth. Grown and processed in South America, highly purified, powdered, hidden, bought and sold from there to Mexico, Arizona, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and even, preserve us, Boston.

JAY
Are you sure?

DRAKE
A small smuggled bag of white powder? What else would it be? Harriet Raven obviously doublecrossed her own gang and was using Robin's pipe--with its widened insides--to transport this across the country. Whether he knows it or not, Robin Swift and his sacred pipe have been smuggling drugs.

(He puts the bag back in his pocket)

JAY
He doesn't know it, if we can believe him.

DRAKE
Doesn't he? We'll see. He was always a trickster, old Chameleon. Nobody could show up his tricks, except me. Well he's dealing with me again now, and I have set him my test.

JAY
What test: You don't believe him?

DRAKE
Believe that story about a witch doctress and a magic pipe? Really, Jay. That story is phony as a third eye. Cathy didn't mention anything about that. He's a fine actor, is Robin Swift.

(Finch steps into the light, pistol at his side)

FINCH
And so are you, Professor Drake. I'm glad I waited another moment before following Swift. It paid me well.
(he raises gun with both hands, aims at Drake)
If you please, hand over the bag.

JAY

Is this a part of my education?

DRAKE

Quiet. I see no alternative, Mister Finch. That is, Mister Bunting.

(He pulls bag from coat pocket, hands it to Finch)

DRAKE

Though this does complicate matters.

FINCH

For you. Only because you're dealing in matters beyond your scope, my good professor. We both know a dark-haired lady who tried to meddle with something which didn't belong to her. Avoid her ending, I urge you, Professor.

DRAKE

I'm touched by your concern.

(Suddenly Jay flashes out his knife and leaps at Finch, who effortlessly grabs his wrist,

flips

him up, over his shoulder, and down to the ground on his back. Finch twists the knife away)

FINCH

Stupid young academic. Never carry a knife you don't know how to use.

DRAKE

That was unnecessary, Jay.

FINCH

For that, you get to stay with me, sonny, to insure your boss doesn't cause trouble. Got it?

DRAKE

Impeccably clear. If you'll allow Jay to return my watch, I'll be on my way.

(Jay groans, pulls out the watch; Finch lightens his grip and allows him to hand it to Drake)

FINCH

Get going, Professor. Remember, people die, even here in Boston.

DRAKE

Right then. Jay, this leaves matters in your hands. Pay close attention to what happens now: it will all be important later. I'm sorry I can't stay to see it myself. Good night, Mister Finch. Jay: you know where I'll be.

(he leaves)

FINCH

What was that about the watch?

(Jay is silent with fear. Finch laughs, lets go of him, pockets the knife)

FINCH

Now listen: just be quiet for a minute and don't try anything and you won't get hurt. Hands on head, please.

(Jay does so. Finch pockets gun)

FINCH

Your professor is quite a fellow, my boy: but inexperienced, like yourself. He'll get himself injured if he keeps it up.

(He is squeezing the bag, inspecting it. He notices something about it)

JAY

Is that really . . . er. . .

FINCH

Shut up. Dammit.

(he turns on Jay)

What do you mean: "Is that really?" What do you know about it? Do you know what this is? You're in on it, aren't you, you slimy little--

(A shot from offstage. Finch staggers, tumbles over, crumples to the floor, is dead, clutching the bag. Enter the masked burglar with revolver. Jay is frozen. The burglar squats beside the body, peels away Finch's fingers and grabs up the bag, looking down at it. Police whistle offstage. The burglar tenses, looks off, then at Jay, then runs off. Jay

stares

after, petrified, hands still on head. Police whistle again; Jay is startled into movement. He looks at the body)

JAY

(hoarse whisper)

Mister Drake. Mister Drake!

(He runs in a circle around the stage, finally running off calling out)

JAY

Mister Drake! Professor Drake! Professor!

(Just as he is off, Mallard runs on behind him blowing whistle)

MALLARD

You come back here! Just you come back here!

(Mallard stops, sees body, pulls out his pistol, takes deadly aim after Jay)

MALLARD

You stop right now or I'll--

(He pulls the trigger. It clicks. Clicks again. He looks at the gun, trembles with rage, holds it up as if to pronounce God's curse on it; then)

MALLARD

Shit.

(He runs off after Jay.)

end act one

ACT TWO
Scene One

(Inside Old North Church. A quiet, empty, spacious place, with pockets of shadow all around. A large door at one side. Footsteps, running. Then Jay bursts through the door)

Professor! JAY

(He stops, hushed. Looks around. Calls out quietly)

Professor Drake? Are you here? JAY

(He tiptoes around, stops, looks around; pauses, then shouts)

Professor Drake! JAY

(Drake steps out of the darkness behind Jay)

Quiet-- DRAKE

(Jay jumps; Drake grabs him)

I don't have it! He took it! I don't have it! JAY

Who took it? Jay, relax. It's me. DRAKE

You! Where were you? Hiding? Professor-- JAY

I was making sure we'll be alone. Robin will be here soon. Now, what happened? DRAKE

JAY

The mask! That man in the mask and-- Finch--

DRAKE

Calm down. The burglar all in black came again?

JAY

He shot Finch--Bunting--he shot one of the two and took the bag.

DRAKE

And?

JAY

And what?

DRAKE

Is he dead?

JAY

No, he escaped with the bag.

DRAKE

Finch, Jay, is Finch dead?

JAY

Yeah. He hadda be. He was shot.

DRAKE

What a nuisance. Did anyone see it?

JAY

No. Yes: Mallard maybe.

DRAKE

(nods)

Nobody saw it. But they'll find out sooner or later. What an extremity! Damn! I knew I should have stayed in my office.

(Footsteps outside)

DRAKE

Maybe it's not true. I owe Robin another chance. Stand back, Jay.

(Drake and Jay separate into the shadows.
The door opens slowly and Robin enters.
He takes a step in, calls softly)

ROBIN

Cathy?

DRAKE

(steps forward)

Not yet, Robin.

ROBIN

Perry! You're fast getting here. Did you fly?

DRAKE

You're awfully slow.

ROBIN

It's not time yet, is it? I circled around a little, you know, look at the old city again. It's still the same stuffy little Boston. I never thought I'd come back to here. You know, there's no smell of tar or salt out there in California, Perry. The sun dries it up. I'd forgotten it.

DRAKE

(venturing)

Robin, do you remember the night you got me drunk?

ROBIN

Yeah. (laughs) Yeah I do. You always were a sucker for a dare, Perry. Have you forgiven me yet?

DRAKE

(smiles)

No.

ROBIN

You shouldn't. The things you told me that night . . . and you still haven't become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?

DRAKE

Not yet.

(They share a laugh)

DRAKE

You and I know much about each other.

ROBIN

We do.

DRAKE

And it's because of that I ask you one last time. Tell me why the pipe is so important to you.

ROBIN

What do you mean? I told you.

DRAKE

Tell me again. Remember it's me you're telling, not a judge or a policeman. If your story makes sense, I'll believe it.

ROBIN

I told you the truth, Perry. What's this all about? The pipe is a gift. Where's Cathy?

DRAKE
Why were you in Peru?

ROBIN
I was sick.

DRAKE
Sick of being a smuggler?

(Pause)

ROBIN
Good guess.

DRAKE
I never guess.

ROBIN
Ever get tired of saying that?

DRAKE
I know about California and Mexico and Harriet Raven.

ROBIN
You got my whole story written then. Whaddya asking for?

DRAKE
What I don't know is why you left such a lucrative profession. It must have been glamorous.

ROBIN
It was a living. Well let's speculate. Where did you leave me? In the desert. So there I am. Mountains of Peru.

DRAKE
Sick.

ROBIN
Shot. Yeah. I like that. Shot by a Brazilian billionaire's personal bodyguard.

DRAKE
Is that what happened?

ROBIN
Could be. It's glamorous. Smuggling some Brazilian diamonds. I like it. So there I am, bleeding and stuff, and an old woman named Lorita finds me. Saves my life.

DRAKE
Pulls the bullet out.

ROBIN
That too. Sets me to work making this pipe. I work on it, I get healed, and she gives me . . .

(drifts off)

DRAKE

Yes?

ROBIN

A mirror. I look in the mirror, I don't see myself; I see a crow, a cactus plant, an owl, a red stone. I walk through that mirror, I'm not me anymore; I'm a bird, I'm a crow, I'm a rock, I'm not a body, none of us are bodies. I can jump off cliffs and float, I can fly, I can leave behind my body, I can go to other planets! We're not bodies, we're light, we're showers of light. Showers of light. Me, and you too, Perry. You too.

DRAKE

(takes a beat)

Did this process require ingesting anything?

ROBIN

(stares blankly)

Mean like an antibiotic? (shaking head wearily) The way you put things, Perry. See, that's why you need me. That's why I'm here.

DRAKE

Why?

ROBIN

To pull you out of it. To save you from your little brain. I'm here to save you.

DRAKE

Taken Christ into your heart, have you?

ROBIN

Christ? Nah, whaddy think I'm looney?

DRAKE

That's one possibility . . .

ROBIN

Perry Perry Perry, you can be free, don't you see? Beyond your little world, beyond reason, beyond desires, beyond everything?

DRAKE

As you are now?

ROBIN

Pretty much. I didn't believe it either at first--

DRAKE

Beyond reason?

ROBIN

Yes.

DRAKE

Beyond desire?

ROBIN
Yes.

DRAKE
Beyond Cathy?

(Pause)

DRAKE
Beyond any desire to see Catherine Jaeger--

ROBIN
Shut up shut up shut up! Gimme a minute, gimme a minute--

DRAKE
You seemed *eager* to see her a while ago.

ROBIN
She was right about you.

DRAKE
Catherine?

ROBIN
Lorita. She said you needed help. She said I should come here and help you.

DRAKE
Well thank Lorita for the thought, please. But I still don't see, if you're beyond all worldly desire, then why do you want to see--

ROBIN
(suddenly shrieks)
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH!
(instantly calms down: desperately casual though rapid fire)
Okay so I want to see Cathy, so what? She's an old friend, no big deal. So what? Want to see her, want to see you, old friends, let's have lunch, the three of us, whaddya say? No big deal. She coming here or what? Not that I care all that much. She comes, she doesn't come, pfff! Whatever . . .

DRAKE
Robin. Robin. I understand now.

ROBIN
Do you.

DRAKE
Yes. Why don't you tell me what really happened.

ROBIN
I just did.

DRAKE
(pause, nodding head; then)
Bullshit.

ROBIN

What?

DRAKE

Inventive, but bullshit. That story won't do.

ROBIN

Okay, let's think of a better one. Won't do? What are we, playing alibis?

DRAKE

Perhaps. If your story is true it should stand up to critical challenge.

ROBIN

HOOOOOOOOO you're the eighth wonder of the world. You know, I don't think Boston is good for you. You should get out of this Boston and wake up. You should--

(is struck with an idea)

You should come with me. Come with me, Perry. You'll never understand till you leave this place. Come with me. We can--

DRAKE

He's dead, Robin.

ROBIN

Who?

DRAKE

Finch.

ROBIN

Finch who?

DRAKE

Bunting.

ROBIN

Dead? How?

DRAKE

Robin, don't make me treat you like a pickpocket. If you give me the bag now--

ROBIN

What bag?

DRAKE

--I'll be willing to believe you didn't mean to kill him.

ROBIN

I didn't mean to kill him? Bunting?

DRAKE

You fell for my trick, Robin. How was I to know you'd go to such lengths to get it back?

ROBIN
Wait a minute. I killed Bunting?

DRAKE
Robin, I've got the proof. If you confess to me now I can still help you.

ROBIN
Why did I kill Bunting?

DRAKE
You know as well as I.

JAY
(steps into the light)
I don't.

ROBIN
Jay doesn't know either. Why don't you let us in on it, Perry.

DRAKE
You killed Bunting to retrieve a little bag of white powder. You thought it was in the pipe, but when--

ROBIN
In this pipe?

DRAKE
Yes. Hidden in the stem.

ROBIN
OOOOOOOOOH I could MURDER those thugs!

DRAKE
Never mind the masquerade. I foxed you, Robin. I gave you the pipe without the bag, and I kept the stuff. Nobody but you and I knew that I still had it. Jay didn't even know till I showed him. Only the three of us knew that Bunting robbed it from me. Jay, did you kill Bunting?

JAY
Me? No.

DRAKE
Did I?

JAY
No. You had just left the other direction.

DRAKE
That leaves you, Robin. It's hard and fast. Confess it.

ROBIN
(sober and frightened)
So I killed Bunting.

DRAKE

At least.

ROBIN

For a little bag of white powder.

DRAKE

Yes. The little bag which you and Harriet Raven smuggled across the country inside the pipe; which Harriet left with me to await your pickup; which you tried twice to get away from me, unsuccessfully both times. Bunting got it from me, but his good fortune killed him, for you had time to come back in disguise, see him take it from me, and shoot him to steal the bag. Only you knew he had it. Only you, Robin.

ROBIN

Sounds watertight.

DRAKE

It is. Where is the bag, Robin?

ROBIN

There's a problem with it, Perry. If Bunting's dead, and Harriet's dead, and I've gotten what I came for, then why did I come back here?

DRAKE

To see Cathy, possibly. But more likely, because you checked the bag and realized it wasn't this.

(He pulls a little bag of white powder from his coat pocket)

ROBIN

What's that?

DRAKE

The real bag. I gave Bunting the fake bag that I had prepared for you, full of white talcum powder. Now he's dead, and you have the fake, and you came back here to try again to get it from me. Where's the fake, Robin?

ROBIN

An exact copy of this little bag?

DRAKE

Almost exact.

ROBIN

And that's your proof?

DRAKE

Solid.

ROBIN

(laughs with relief)

Perry, you magnificent idiot! Jay!

JAY

Yessir.

ROBIN

Tell me something. If you had taken it, the bag I mean, from Bunting, dead Bunting, and then you discovered it was a worthless fake, what would you have done with the bag?

JAY

How do you mean?

ROBIN

If this worthless bag was proof that you killed Bunting, would you keep it on you?

JAY

Oh! Not on your life, Mister Swift. But I didn't kill Bunting--

DRAKE

So you threw the bag away?

ROBIN

No I didn't. I never had it. But I'll bet my shoes the murderer did. Anyone could have thrown it away, Perry! Why keep it? Your proof isn't worth the talcum powder it's made of. Search me, if you like. I don't have it.

(He smiles. Drake turns away, thinking.
Robin giggles, paces gleefully)

ROBIN

Whew! You really had me going, Perry. For a minute I thought I musta killed the poor chump. (laughs) You know, I'd forgotten how much fun this alibi game can be. Let's do some more. What's that stuff supposed to be, anyway?

JAY

Cocaine.

ROBIN

No kidding. Cocaine in my pipe. Let me see that.

(He takes it from Drake)

DRAKE

I see. I see. You're trying to confuse me. You're trying to ridicule my mental process. This experiment was set mistakenly, I'll admit it. But I'll prove the answer still. This is between you and me now, Robin. You're challenging me, trying to kill a man under my nose and render me unable to prove it. You think I won't find an answer. I will. I'll prove to you that I can prove it!

ROBIN

This is talcum powder.

JAY

What?

ROBIN

So much for your white powder, Perry. The talcum was nothing but packing for these.

(Robin suddenly turns the bag over, dumps its contents on the floor in a stream. Something solid falls out of the bag and clicks on the floor)

ROBIN

These are what Harriet Raven tried to smuggle. Poor lady.

JAY

Pearls?

ROBIN

More than that. I recognize these.

(The door swings open, and the Lady enters)

LADY

Hello Robin.

(Robin sees her; he freezes. She stares at him)

LADY

Thank you for your help, Professor Drake. You can leave us alone now.

ROBIN

Oh now this is trouble. This is serious trouble. Is this a setup?

LADY

Robin, don't you remember me?

ROBIN

(backs away from her, glancing fearfully around the room)
Stay away from me.

LADY

Robin, what have they done to you?

DRAKE

This is some kind of ploy, Catherine. I'm afraid Robin has caught himself up in a real murder, and he's looking for a way out.

ROBIN

Damn right I'm looking for a way out. What you call her?

LADY

I was too late then.

ROBIN

I get it. I get it. Jesus. Jay! Is Bunting really dead?

JAY

Yeah. I saw it.

ROBIN

And is anyone else dead?

JAY

Yeah. Harriet Raven.

ROBIN

What did she look like?

JAY

Tall, dark hair . . .

ROBIN

She was looking for me?

DRAKE

Yes. What is this, Robin?

ROBIN

Did she tell you her name?

DRAKE

No. Catherine told me who she was.

ROBIN

(nodding, calm)

Huh. Well whaddya know about that.

(Suddenly he shrieks, crumples to his knees)

JAY

What's wrong with him?

LADY

(carefully stepping toward Robin)

You're upsetting him. Please leave me alone with him.

ROBIN

(jumps up, backs away from her)

You stay away from me.

DRAKE

Robin, what's the matter with you?

ROBIN

Perry, don't you get it?

LADY

I was afraid of this. He's frenzied. Robin--

ROBIN

Cathy's dead!

LADY

Professor, help me restrain him. He might be violent.

DRAKE

No, Robin, Cathy's right here. Can't you see her?

ROBIN

Her? Oh I see her fine.

(Robin jumps to attack the Lady , but Drake pulls out a gun, blocks his way)

DRAKE

Robin, stay still!

(Robin freezes)

DRAKE

This is Cathy. You don't want to hurt her, do you?

ROBIN

Perry, this isn't Cathy. This is Harriet Raven.

LADY

(stepping toward him cautiously)
Enough now, Robin. Trust me. I'll help you.

(Suddenly Robin throws the pearls up in the air. All look up, and Drake fumbles to catch them. Robin knocks the gun out of Drake's hand; he shoves past the Lady, pulling her purse away and throwing it down. Before anyone can stop him he dashes for the door and runs out. Silence. Drake stares after him)

LADY

(shaken, hand to mouth)
Poor Robin.

(Drake looks at her carefully)

LADY

(near tears, staring after Robin)
When this hysteria attacks him, he'll say or do anything. I've seen it happen before. If only I'd come earlier . . .

DRAKE

Robin is not hysterical.

JAY

He's not?

DRAKE

He's a genius. The brilliant *demon*!

JAY

He's getting away.

DRAKE

Not for long. I've got these!

(He puts the pearls in his pocket)

DRAKE

What an astonishing improvisation! But I'll meet the challenge. Jay, give me the gun. No . . . you keep it. Go with Cathy. I'll go round about and meet you. We'll surround him.

JAY

Where?

CATHY

What are you going to do?

DRAKE

It's obvious, isn't it? We all know Robin's the murderer; now all that's left is to convince Robin! Cathy, go with Jay.

JAY

Where are we going!?

DRAKE

(out the door, but sticks his head back in)
To the Moontree. Where else ?

(He's gone. Jay and the Lady stare after)

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO
Scene Two

(The Moontree.
 Robin enters, stumbling with exhaustion,
 drops to his knees. Yells up at the sky)

ROBIN
 Cathy's dead!

(lowers head, panting. Suddenly he shrugs)

ROBIN
 (casual)
 Well it was her own fault. Chasing me like that.
 (pause)
 Did me a big favor though. Poor lady. Cathy's dead, so that old friend Robin is
 dead too. All that's left of him is . . . in this pipe.
 (holds pipe out vertically before him)
 My body's in this pipe.
 (pause; nods)
 Yeah. I like that. The mouth of the pipe is my mouth. The spine of the pipe is my
 spine. The neck of the pipe is my neck. The empty space inside is the empty space
 inside me.
 (silent for a moment; then holds pipe as if to smoke)
 I bring Cathy's soul into the pipe. And mine too, the soul of the man I was. I
 breathe them in together, Cathy Jaeger and Robin Swift, and keep them together one
 last time before they leave this world.
 (puts the pipe to his mouth, draws a deepbreath; holds it, eyes
 closed, then lets it out slowly. Silence)
 So I have released the peaceful souls of us dead.
 (pause. Opens eyes, gazes at pipe. Tosses the pipe on the
 ground)
 Or something like that. Whatever.
 (pause)
 Perry doesn't have to die too, does he? I hope not.
 (pause)
 You can come out now.

(Jay and the Lady emerge behind him, somewhat reluctantly. Jay holds gun. Robin doesn't turn around to face them yet)

ROBIN

See, it's pointless to accuse me. You can't pin a murder on the man I was. He isn't here anymore. He's dead.

(turns, looks around)

Where's Perry?

JAY

He'll be here. Hold up your hands.

ROBIN

Mean Perry wasn't watching? Dammit.

(pause)

Oh well. No good pointing that at me, sonny. You should point it at her. She's a mean one.

LADY

It tears me apart to see you like this, Robin. Maybe it was partly my fault.

ROBIN

Come off it, Harriet.

JAY

(stiffens, aiming gun)

Stay there!

ROBIN

Relax, Jay. Why are you so nervous?

JAY

Miss Jaeger's been telling me what you're like when you get frenzied.

ROBIN

Oh. Been whispering in his ear, eh?

LADY

You're dangerous this way, Robin.

ROBIN

Oh yeah. Do I frighten you, Harriet? What are you doing here, anyway? You had the goods before, at the church. Was it just too risky to shoot two at once?

LADY

Is this a game, Robin, or are you really beyond help?

ROBIN

So who has the goods now? Perry? Sure, that's it. So you're waiting for him.

LADY

How can you keep treating me this way after loving me all those years?

ROBIN

Easy.

LADY

Or is that why? Do you hate me now?

ROBIN

The Robin you know still loves Cathy and hates you, Harriet. Do you know, I'm starting to wonder whether you're here solely because of the smuggled goods, or if you want me back as your concubine.

LADY

(hurt)

You were Harriet's lover then.

ROBIN

Why are you keeping this up? Because of Jay? He's harmless.

JAY

(holding up gun)

I'm not entirely harmless.

ROBIN

Then take the safety off your gun.

JAY

(wincing)

Where?

ROBIN

(pointing to it)

There.

JAY

(taking safety off)

Thanks.

ROBIN

You know, Jay, Perry hasn't yet asked me why I came back to Boston. Doesn't he wonder about it?

JAY

I don't know. Ever since you got back he seems awfully confused.

ROBIN

True. Harriet has him under her spell, oh she does indeed.

JAY

Why did you come back?

ROBIN

Good boy. I came back to save him.

JAY

Save him from what?

ROBIN

To bring him enlightenment. Scour off his doors of perception. You know?

JAY

You're not kidding?

ROBIN

Nope.

JAY

You really believe all that stuff?

ROBIN

Yeah, well . . . I did. I think I did. See, Jay, I was a brain, like Perry. Only believed in logic. So that made me a sucker for romance. It'll happen to Perry if he keeps it up. If his romance turns out to be stupid like mine was, he'll end up chasing after spaceships and crystals and parallel worlds, just like I did.

JAY

You don't believe it anymore?

ROBIN

Nah. Not anymore. That Robin is dead.

(nudges the pipe on the ground with his foot)

That's twice I've died now. Only thing bothers me about it is Perry was right. I hate it when he's right. Say goodbye to him for me.

JAY

Where are you going?

ROBIN

I dunno. Go visit my parents maybe. Back where I *really* started.

JAY

You're just leaving?

ROBIN

(hesitates, picks up pipe)

Yeah. I dunno. Maybe not. I sure would like to get him out of Boston. This well-groomed little town will dry him up like a puddle. Not to mention leaving him here with thugs and thugettes like Harriet.

LADY

Robin--

ROBIN

Y'know, Jay, I think you're right.

JAY

About what?

ROBIN

Why should I leave that poor sucker of a Perry to rot away here?

JAY

Did I say that?

ROBIN

What if that's what she really meant?

JAY

Who?

ROBIN

Lorita. "You can't leave it all behind" she said. "He can't either, your friend." I thought she was telling me that I should come help him. But maybe she meant that he and I both have to learn the same lesson. I think that's it.

JAY

What's it?

ROBIN

It wasn't Perry who needed help, it was me. Well him too, he's messed up. But both of us have spent our lives trying to escape from the world. You can't just leave the world behind, Jay. Or your old friends either. Perry and me, we need each other. We've got lessons to learn. (laughs with wonder) We're still recovering from college after all these years. And we'll never graduate in this tight squinty Boston he lives in. That's it, Jay. That's what she meant. And I'm doing okay, in spite of myself. I got him out of his empty little office, that's a good start. Now for this empty little town. All these dead bodies and such are a problem. But who knows? The moon's still up, and I'm not gone yet.

JAY

What about the pearls?

ROBIN

What about them? Let Harriet have them. She's the only one who cares about them. You don't even know what they are.

JAY

Sure. Pearls.

ROBIN

Nope. Each one of those pearls is a fake, containing a beautiful Brazilian diamond, each one fully cut with twelve beautiful sides.

JAY

Diamonds?

ROBIN

As many diamonds as on the back of a rattlesnake. If you're quiet, you can hear them rattle. Harriet personally shot a Brazilian oil magnate to steal them. She hid them, smuggled them 5000 miles, doublecrossed her own gang and defiled my pipe for those diamonds. That's why she's so difficult to discourage.

JAY

Can you prove that?

ROBIN

(looks at him, shakes his head wearily)
Just tell Perry to give them back to her. We'll make a deal. Perry will give Harriet the diamonds if she tells us the truth of why she came here. Come on Harriet.

LADY

Please stop calling me Harriet.

ROBIN

Tell the truth for once. Why did you follow me here?

LADY

My name is Catherine Jaeger, and I want to help you.

ROBIN

Why?

LADY

(fighting not to cry)
Robin, please, don't make me do this. Not here.

ROBIN

(gleeful)

Tell us. You see, Jay? She can't explain it. Tell me why you came after me.

LADY

Because . . . because I love you.

ROBIN

(stops giggling, frowns)

That's not funny.

LADY

(angrily, wiping away tears)

It's true, Robin. Why else would I come here to help you? I was stupid and wrongheaded all those years, but I've stopped resisting and I want to make it up.

ROBIN

(tense, coiled up)

Stop it. I'm warning you.

LADY

I didn't want to tell you in front of them, but now I have. If you come with me, I'll help you.

(Robin looks at her. His face softens. He steps toward her, staring at her as if seeing her for the first time. Reaches out gently, touches her hair. Speaks softly)

ROBIN

Jay?

JAY

What?

ROBIN

Do you still think I'm a murderer?

JAY

I don't know, Mister Swift, it's all pretty vague . . .

ROBIN

Tell you what. I'll make it easier for you. Watch.

her

(He grabs the Lady by the throat and hurls
down, strangling her. She screams, struggles.
Jay, astonished, backs away, lifts pistol, aims
it, closes eyes as if to pull the trigger.
Suddenly a shriek from offstage: DRAKE)

DRAKE

Help me! Jay! Robin! Help--

(His cry is choked off)

JAY

(opening eyes)

Professor?

(The Intruder in black leaps onstage behind
Jay, knocks him down and takes his gun,
pulls Robin and the Lady apart, and stands
back, training the pistol on them all)

ROBIN

Who is this?

JAY

(getting up painfully)

I don't know, but he sure enjoys knocking me around.

(Jay starts to run in the direction of Drake's
call, but the masked man stops him with
aimed gun)

JAY

Have you killed the Professor? You killed Bunting, didn't you, and now you've
killed the Professor.

ROBIN

Does it ever talk?

LADY

I'm sorry, sir, we don't have the goods.

(Mask gestures toward Jay, advances with gun; Jay dynamically rips the pearls out of his pocket, backs away mightily)

JAY

You'll have to shoot me before you get these!

LADY

(astonished)

I thought Professor Drake had those.

JAY

Professor Drake thought he had them, too.

ROBIN

Aww, poor Harriet.

JAY

You can't have them!

ROBIN

He's right, pal. Those diamonds aren't yours. If you want to claim them, you'll have to identify yourself.

(He walks toward the masked man, who aims gun at him)

JAY

He means it, Mister Swift. He'll kill you.

ROBIN

That gun can't hurt me. I've already died twice.

(He jumps forward, snatches off the mask, reveals Drake)

ROBIN & DRAKE

(simultaneously)

HA! GOT YOU NOW!

(They pause, look at each other, puzzled)

DRAKE

(regaining control)

You can't twist away any longer, Robin.

JAY

Am I the only one who's never behind that mask?

DRAKE

Jay: lifting those pearls--or should I say, diamonds--from my pocket was excellent work.

JAY

Thanks.

DRAKE

Catherine: the matter is almost settled. Robin has proven himself away at last, in front of you all.

ROBIN

Is this another proof? You never give up, do you Perry. Why do you insist that I murdered Bunting?

DRAKE

Because your whole mistaken way of life has dragged you toward crime, and now you've proven it. I've tricked you with your own disguise. If you weren't behind this mask the other times, how would you know that I was not the real murderer? How would you know I wouldn't shoot you?

ROBIN

Why should I fear a man in disguise who's threatening me with the exact same revolver that my friend Perry threatened me with not half an hour ago?

DRAKE

(looks at gun, puzzles for an instant)
I just got it from Jay.

ROBIN

And I should fear a masked bandit who doesn't even have his own pistol?

DRAKE

(thinks, then points gun at Robin)
Stop squirming around, Robin! You knew I was not this killer because *you* were behind the mask each other time. When you broke into my house and Cathy thought it was Bunting; when you shot Bunting--

ROBIN

Wait a minute. This masked fellow broke into your house?

DRAKE

Yes.

ROBIN

And you thought it was me even then?

JAY

We thought it was Bunting. Well, Miss Jaeger did.

ROBIN

Who?

JAY

Miss Jaeger here.

ROBIN

Harriet was there, and thought it was Bunting? Did he get the pipe?

DRAKE
No you didn't. I foxed you.

JAY
He gave you the empty box instead.

ROBIN
In front of Harriet.

DRAKE
In front of Cathy.

ROBIN
Your game is screwed, Perry.

DRAKE
This is no game. People have been murdered.

ROBIN
So they can't play anymore. You're so anxious to prove I'm guilty that you're overlooking the obvious. It *was* Bunting in the disguise. Harriet saw you give the box to Bunting; she therefore believed that Bunting had the diamonds. So she imitated his disguise--you've shown us yourself how easy that is--hunted him down, shot him, and stole the stuff. You accused me of killing Bunting by accident, when the truth is that Harriet killed Bunting on purpose.

DRAKE
Harriet Raven is dead.

ROBIN
This is Harriet Raven! Search her, why don't you. Find any identification anywhere that says she's Cathy Jaeger.

(Drake hesitates, then turns resolutely to the Lady)

DRAKE
Cathy, I hope you will believe that I have no doubts, no doubts whatsoever that you are Catherine Jaeger. But to put this frenzy to rest, it would facilitate matters if--purely for the sake of formality--you could demonstrate some concrete proof of your identity.

LADY
Like what?

JAY
Driver's license, maybe?

LADY
This is incredible. You think what he says is true?

DRAKE
No. No I don't. I'm merely asking you to prove it to him. In court this will be necessary anyway.

LADY

(hurt and defensive)

Are you satisfied yet, Robin? I don't know what I've done to deserve this from you, but are you happy now? In the first place, Professor, I have had to go without solid identification to protect myself from mobsters like his friends.

ROBIN

Oh, yeah, we're a wild bunch.

LADY

And I am certainly not going into any kind of court to put my word against that of a . . . lunatic.

DRAKE

You can't identify yourself?

LADY

(near tears again)

How can you ask me that? I've worked so hard, I've come so far and risked so much . . .

DRAKE

(melting)

Catherine . . .

LADY

(mustering herself)

You were from the start an unwanted accessory in this case, Professor, and I might add that so far you have bungled two attempts to prove your case against Robin. Your powers are not infallible, it seems.

ROBIN

Brava! Brava, Harriet! Amazing!

LADY

Can't you make him stop calling me that?

ROBIN

Perry, both of us combined can't match this lady. Especially with diamonds at stake. Give it up. There's no answer here. Come with me, Perry. Follow me out of this tight-assed goddamn town--

DRAKE

Stop it! Stop it! Wait a moment. I'll figure this out still. She has no identification. That is a setback. But so what? Robin has no proof either. We're only back where we started. There's still an answer here, a sound logical answer, and I will find it.

ROBIN

And I'll be a flying pig by morning. Perry, I've shown you that she could have killed Bunting. You still believe I killed him. We could both be wrong. Jay could have done it.

JAY

Who, me?

ROBIN

We've only got his word that Bunting was killed at all.

JAY

I saw it.

ROBIN

Even you could have done it, Perry.

DRAKE

Why would I have done it?

ROBIN

How should I know?

(is struck by a new thought)

Maybe you're in love with Harriet.

(Robin looks at Drake with the question.
Drake glances at the Lady, embarrassed; then
points gun directly at Robin's head)

DRAKE

Don't anger me further.

ROBIN

Alright! Alright, Perry, just joking. No more kidding around. Stop and analyze the situation in your own terms. There are four of us. Each of us could have killed Bunting. At least two of us could have killed Cathy.

DRAKE

Harriet.

ROBIN

Whoever. I doubt Jay would have done it, although the power in those Brazilian diamonds is surprising sometimes. Look how he grips them! I doubt that you did it, because you could have forced your will on us all by now. So basically it's between Harriet and myself. One of us is the murderer. No alibis, no witnesses, no proofs. But you've got the gun, Perry, and that's what it comes down to, all your logic and reasoning. That pistol gives you the power of justice. So decide, Perry. Which of us did it?

DRAKE

(smiles a little)

Now that's my old friend Robin Swift. Not a wild-eyed convert to a peacepipe religion, but the clear-headed, rational, never-say-die joker.

ROBIN

No joke, Perry.

DRAKE

Jay?

JAY
Yessir.

DRAKE
He has a point, doesn't he?

JAY
Yes he does.

DRAKE
I have the gun, and the decision is mine. Therefore, Jay, will you please search Robin.

JAY
For what?

DRAKE
A weapon of any kind.

JAY
Right.

(Jay goes to Robin, searches him awkwardly)

DRAKE
There is always an answer, Robin. The trick is knowing how to look for it, and recognizing it when you find it.

(Jay pulls a small pistol from Robin's jacket pocket)

DRAKE
Ah, now, what's that?

ROBIN
Well what do you know. That's what I get for wearing an old jacket. It doesn't matter. It's empty.

DRAKE
Put it on the ground, Jay.

JAY
Right.

(He does)

DRAKE
Now if you'll search Miss Jaeger.

JAY
(looks at her)
I can't do that.

Why not?
DRAKE

She's a lady.
JAY

Do it, Jay.
DRAKE

He's not laying his hands on me.
LADY

DRAKE
(points gun at her)
Forgive me, dear lady. Nothing is more important than the truth, not even my faith in you. Now, Jay.

(Jay hesitates, then passes his hands quickly along her sides, barely touching her)

Do it properly.
DRAKE

I am.
JAY

(He searches again in slightly more detail)

Nothing there.
JAY

I beg your pardon.
LADY

Jay: her purse.
ROBIN

(Jay pulls purse away from her, looks it it, takes out a small pistol or derringer)

Look at this.
JAY

Well I couldn't very well go unarmed, could I?
LADY

DRAKE
(a little deflated)
Of course not. Put it with the other, Jay.

(Jay does. Drake lowers gunhand, glares at Robin)

DRAKE

Robin: you have finally boggled every weapon in my arsenal of truth.

(he rips off his tie with one hand, as if preparing to fight)

I used my carefully developed methods against you, my career, my pristine office, and they didn't work.

(flings aside tie, begins to take off coat, speaking desperately)

I flung my proven power of logic at you, and it bounced away like a rubber toy!

(hurls coat down, takes off glasses)

Even my consummate purity of vision has failed me in outdealing you.

(tosses glasses away)

A lifetime of development, and you have used me up in one night.

(glaring and smiling with the intensity of what he's about to do)

All that's left is right here and right now. Everything matters now. But listen close. Watch closely. For now that we have shown that I do indeed have the only gun . . .

(holds it up, lovingly)

. . . we will finally discover the truth. Jay: would you please hand me the diamonds.

JAY

Why?

(Drake points gun at him)

JAY

Oh.

(Jay hands him the pearls. Drake stands holding them, keeping others at bay with pistol. Silence. He looks at the pearls. He smiles, slowly, steps back)

ROBIN

(smiles back)

Perry, you bastard. You are amazing. You'll have to shoot all three of us, but what matter? You did it after all.

JAY

He did it?

ROBIN

You used the disguise to shoot Bunting, then led us all along with your fanatic logic; and now you've only been waiting to make sure we weren't armed, so you can make off with the diamonds free and clear. You did it all, didn't you Perry.

(Pause. Drake smiles, nods with delight)

DRAKE

Nope.

(Drake tosses the pearls to center with the two guns)

DRAKE

There: is a fortune in Brazilian diamonds. And there:

(bends down, slides his gun to center with the others)

DRAKE

. . . are the three guns. The escape is clear. Whoever is lying will pick up the diamonds and the gun and run. Proof positive.

(He beams, stands up posing as if having won an election. Jay, Robin, and the Lady tense up)

JAY

But Professor Drake, won't the murderer kill us too?

DRAKE

I DON'T CARE! The proof is more important! The answer is right here, and is irrefutable!

(Pause. Jay watches the Lady. She watches Robin. Robin watches Drake. Drake beams. Suddenly Robin howls like a wolf)

ROBIN

Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! This is it! This is beautiful! Perry, this is perfect! We'll make it now for sure!

(He does a little dance of joy, stops when he sees the Lady ready to leap)

ROBIN

Look at her. Consumed with desire. She'd love to jump for those diamonds, but she's still looking for an easier way. Listen to me first, though, Harriet, or else you'll make an awful fool of yourself over those trinkets. Because, Perry, I have one last secret about those totems of greed. You see, what lovely Harriet didn't know is that, just like everything else -- oh it almost pains me to say this -- there are two sets of those little white spheres.

JAY

You're kidding.

ROBIN

It's true. Two sets. One of them contains the diamonds of that dead Brazilian billionaire. The other is a string of pearls which I personally smuggled across the border from Mexico. Real pearls, mind you, worth good money. And Perry, the truth is that these pearls are just what they look like: pearls.

LADY

Where are the diamonds?

ROBIN

I switched them with the pearls before I left Brazil.

JAY

Then you have the diamonds?

ROBIN

Nope.

JAY

Who does?

ROBIN

(ready to burst with glee)

Lorita and her family in Peru. I dropped them off as a gift. They promised they'd take good care of them.

(He explodes with laughter, moving rather casually around the circle)

ROBIN

I could be lying, of course, but I think if you listen to the pearls, they just won't rattle the way diamond cases would. So none of us will try to escape with them. Nice try, Perry.

DRAKE

Thanks.

ROBIN

Don't be crestfallen, Perry. Let her do that. You should be happy.

DRAKE

Why?

ROBIN

Because your magnificent final failure here will finally get me what I want. And you will get what you want, Perry.

DRAKE

What's that?

ROBIN

The answer.

(Suddenly Robin shoves the Lady aside, dives for the pearls, grabs up a gun, whirls and points it in the Lady's face as she dives after him. She freezes)

ROBIN

I did it. I shot the woman on the street, and I shot Bunting as well. And all that story about the pipe and the new way of life and coming here to save you was, as you said, bullshit.

(He pulls out his pipe, gives it a loving look, then tosses it carefully away, sliding it to Drake's feet)

ROBIN

I did it all so I could have the diamonds for myself. And you're right, Perry: if these were the diamonds, I would take them up and escape.

(to Lady)

Wouldn't I?

(picks them up)

If these are the diamonds, I will take them. And, by golly . . . the diamonds . . .

(he holds them next to his ear and shakes them)

. . . are in Peru, where I stashed them so that I could come here, throw Bunting off the track and betray my partner Harriet. Too bad. They are lovely pearls, though.

(tosses them to Jay)

Here you go. Put yourself through school with them.

Look at Perry. Beaming like a just-fed hawk. If I shoot you all right now, Perry will die happy, knowing his logic was correct. But don't worry. I've no reason to harm you. My former love Cathy Jaeger is no threat. And you're harmless too, Perry, because where I will go now, you could never catch me.

DRAKE

Don't be so sure.

ROBIN

You'd follow me?

DRAKE

Like a Moray eel: you'll have to cut my head from my neck before I let go my teeth.

ROBIN

(gives Jay a thumbs-up sign; elated, glorious)

Well I am the villain! And though diamonds satisfy me today, who knows what catastrophe I will commit tomorrow! Crime after crime, and you will not catch me. First to the Andes to retrieve my goods, then to a nice little fence in Los Angeles where I was born, and where you will never find me.

(looks soberly at the Lady)

Farewell, Cathy Jaeger. Stay out of Peru, if you know what's good for you.

(turns, smiles)

Good luck, Jay. I hope you flunk. Good bye, Perry. Where I go, I *dare* you to follow me!

(He chuckles, laughs, turns and runs off laughing. The Lady is heaving with anger. Drake laughs, claps his hands, looking after Robin)

DRAKE

Now you see! He is no lunatic. Robin Swift is a mastermind! Jay, get me one of those guns. There's only one oddity about this--

(The Lady has stepped forward, picked up her purse and her gun. She points it at Drake as he turns around)

LADY

Hands over your heads, gentlemen.

DRAKE

What?

LADY

(fierce, foaming; a different voice than we've heard)
I've got stuff to do, Professor, and I don't want you following to get in the way anymore. You've screwed it up good for now, but your friend Robin can start counting his days, 'cause after he leads me back to MY DIAMONDS, I'll take care of him once and for all. If he thinks he'll be any harder to get rid of than BUNTING or that BITCH from California--

DRAKE

Your diamonds? Catherine, I don't understand--

(Lady steps to him, grabs his arm, flings him over her shoulder)

LADY

STOP CALLING ME CATHERINE! Dorkbrain. Now both of you, lie down, right there on the ground. Do it!

(Jay joins Drake on the ground)

LADY

(totally out of control, heaving and fuming)
Don't even *think* about following us, Professor. And don't even go anywhere *near* Peru. I'm gonna spin that bastard out by his guts and leave him to dry for crowfood. He'll regret crossing me. Oh, he'll be sorry. Nobody, NOBODY crosses HARRIET RAVEN and lives to LAUGH about it!

(She growls, hikes her skirt up to her hips and runs off furiously after Robin. Jay jumps up, grabbing a gun, takes a few steps after her. Drake raises his head, stares after her)

JAY

I don't get it. (pause) They can't *both* have done it. Can they? If she's Harriet Raven . . . I don't get it.

DRAKE

It's obvious.

JAY

What's obvious?

DRAKE

To the very end, I am challenged.

JAY

How? Who?

DRAKE
(rising)

He has won this round, outdone me full and fair, Robin has. But he's not free of me yet. Not by the distance of my mind, he's not!

(He starts to run off, but Jay dashes in front of him, holding up gun. Drake stops)

JAY

Mister Drake, wait a minute! Where do you think you're going?

DRAKE

What? I'm following Robin.

JAY

(suddenly deadly serious, pushing Drake to center with gun)
I'm sorry, Professor. It's no good. I can't let you follow him.

DRAKE

(astonished)

Jay . . . what are you saying?

JAY

(slowly losing his temper)

You're going to stay right here until you explain to me what in the living HELL has been HAPPENING!

DRAKE

Jay, let me go.

JAY

No!

DRAKE

He'll be out of sight in a moment--

JAY

Too bad! I'm not going to let you skip out and leave me with the police and the murders and these stupid pearls--

DRAKE

They're not pearls.

JAY

They're not?

DRAKE

Of course not.

JAY

But Robin said--

DRAKE

Jay, is it possible that you haven't understood these perfectly simple events?

JAY

Entirely possible. Hands up.

(Drake raises hands as Jay points gun at him)

JAY

(stoops to pick up pearls)

Now what do you mean these aren't pearls?

DRAKE

Hold them next to your ear and shake them.

(Jay does, then lowers hand, dismayed)

JAY

They rattle.

DRAKE

As I surmised.

ROBIN

Then why did Robin say they were only pearls?

DRAKE

To keep Harriet Raven from grabbing them.

JAY

Why?

DRAKE

Jay, think! If she had escaped with the diamonds, A: we might be dead, and B: his final trick would have been spoiled.

JAY

What trick?

DRAKE

Robin Swift gave a false confession. The confession served three purposes: one, it sent Harriet Raven off on a wild goose chase to Peru and Los Angeles, leaving us safe; two, it almost tricked me into following him like a bounty hunter; and three, it gave me my first clue where to find him.

JAY

Peru?

DRAKE

No no no: to the city where he was born.

JAY

Los Angeles?

DRAKE

That was the clue! He said Los Angeles to throw Harriet off his track. But *he* knew that *I* knew that Robin Swift was born in CLEVELAND! It would have worked! It all would have worked! But Harriet Raven fouled his plan by losing her murderous temper and revealing herself.

JAY

So Robin wasn't lying?

DRAKE

Not till the very end.

JAY

He was telling the truth all along?

DRAKE

Yes.

JAY

He was right?

DRAKE

Yes.

JAY

You were wrong?

DRAKE

As can be.

JAY

You were wrong all along?

DRAKE

You needn't rub it in.

JAY

And Robin was right! And that means his story about the pipe and the birds and the old woman was all true?

DRAKE

Apparently.

JAY

(with exhilaration)

Gosh. Hoooo-ey! It's hard to believe. But then why did he leave the pipe here?

DRAKE

Because he knows I'll bring it with me, when I follow him.

JAY

Follow him? You mean follow *her*.

DRAKE

I will surprise him. She's spoiled his plot, but I'll have the last laugh. He has tricked me, baffled me, mortified me; he's upset the measure of my entire world; and now . .

....

(he picks up the pipe)

. . . he's given me the ultimate challenge: to hurl myself into his world and grapple with him there. I accept! Robin Swift has beaten me at my own game, and I will not rest until I have beaten him at his!

JAY

You're not making much sense, Professor.

DRAKE

What do I care if I don't make sense? That's all part of Boston, and Robin has shown me that there's nothing for me here, the bastard. I belong out there in his strange world, my mind focussed on Robin, against Robin--

JAY

(raises gun at Drake)

Professor Drake, all this fuss has upset you. I going to have to keep you here for your own good.

DRAKE

Not with an empty gun you're not.

JAY

Empty?

DRAKE

That's the empty pistol you found in Robin's jacket.

JAY

Are you sure?

DRAKE

Here, I'll show you.

(steps over, takes gun from Jay, inspects it; steps back, aims gun at Jay)

DRAKE

Stand aside, Jay.

JAY

Aww, now, Professor Drake--

DRAKE

You've given Robin a head start, but no matter.

(He looks after Robin, gathering courage for his final leap)

DRAKE

I will be with him wherever he thinks to dissolve himself. He will leave me clues,

and I will stay with him through Cleveland, through the peaks of the Rocky Mountains, through California.

JAY

I give up.

DRAKE

Even there I will follow my superb antagonist, Robin Swift, matching my mind to his spirit. And finally, I will know him fully, I will fuse with him. I'll have sense of his least motion, his least desire or need. Nothing he does will escape me then, for I will know him then, I will *be* him; and then, by everything inside and outside: I'LL *HAVE HIM!*

(He starts to run off)

JAY

(pleading)

Professor Drake, you can't just run off like that!

(Drake stops, turns to look at him)

DRAKE

You're right.

(holding gun, he walks back menacingly toward Jay.

Jay freezes with panic, holds up hands, closes eyes)

DRAKE

I'll need a jacket.

(Drake grabs up his coat, turns, runs off into the night.

Jay stands frozen with eyes closed. After a moment, footsteps; and Mallard runs on panting. Jay opens eyes, looks around)

MALLARD

Wait a minute! Come back here right now! There's two dead bodies to be dealt with here! Where does he think he's off to now?

JAY

I don't know, Officer Mallard; but he forgot his watch.

(Jay pulls it out, stands holding the watch and the diamonds as Mallard stares at him and the lights go down)

**end act two
end pipe dream**