

M O T H E R O F M A U D E

by Julie Jensen

ANNIE, an older woman, a former actress. She is packing a trunk and fighting with it.

ANNIE
God damn it all to hell!

LUCILLE
(Off.) I've ask you nice not take the Lord's name in vain.

ANNIE gives the trunk a kick.

ANNIE
How many God damn times have I packed a God damn trunk in my God damn life?

She kicks it again and something falls and breaks.

LUCILLE enters. She's middle-aged, plain speaking, a devout Mormon.

LUCILLE
You know better than to stuff a trunk so full. Hinges the weakest point. Look at that whole trunk, you couldn't break it, no matter what you done to it. But pack it too full, and you pop the hinges. Because hinges the weakest point!

ANNIE
Help me, Lucy, don't lecture me.

They struggle.

LUCILLE
How many times I told you?

ANNIE

How many?

LUCILLE

Not near enough, I guess.

ANNIE

You said it enough, Lucy. I just didn't listen.

LUCILLE

Because if you listened, it would be calm around here. Whereas if you don't listen, you get to run around and jump about like you was in the eye of a hurricane.

ANNIE pulls out of the scene and addresses the audience.

ANNIE

(To the audience.) I have to interrupt events for a moment here. I must tell you something important before we proceed. None of this is true. None of it happened. No, that's not quite right. Some of it happened. But not all of it...happened. Just so you know that...

ANNIE returns to the scene.

Hold this still while I put this rope around it.

They struggle.

LUCILLE

You don't need to take all this here back there.

ANNIE

I intend to work.

LUCILLE

You do? You don't...

ANNIE

They still have Brigham's Big House.

LUCILLE

Yeah, but they don't need you, after all these years.

ANNIE

"Best playhouse west of the Rhine," that's what he used to call it.

LUCILLE

Who?

ANNIE

Brigham forever Young.

LUCILLE

And do not you be making fun of him.

ANNIE

Making fun, Lucille? Moi?

LUCILLE

Well, whatever it is you do.

Besides, your mother's very sick. You won't have no time for acting in a playhouse.

ANNIE

That's right, Lucy. She's very sick. She'll be sleeping.

They try once again to shut the trunk and fail. LUCILLE opens it and grabs some frilly garments.

LUCILLE

You ain't got the sense God give a goose.

ANNIE

We had to supply our own kit, back in my day. Our own costumes, make-up, wigs. I had twelve costumes in my

trunk. I could play anything from Hecuba to Mary Magdalen, Little Match Girl to Catherine the Great.

LUCILLE

I'm telling you, you won't need all this.

ANNIE

(In a southern accent and a physical flourish.) "But, Lucille, I will not be back here ever again. And I feel compelled, therefore, to take with me all of whatever I might need for the rest of my life."

LUCILLE

Ten costumes?

ANNIE

Twelve.

LUCILLE

Complete with shoes?

ANNIE

Complete with shoes, gloves, hats and fans. I'm going to work there, Lucille. I worked there as a girl. I am known there. Maybe not remembered but known. I was a favorite of Brigham Young!

LUCILLE

You wasn't neither.

ANNIE

I grew up in his house.

LUCILLE

You never...

ANNIE

I'm telling you I did.

LUCILLE

And did you also date Abraham Lincoln?

ANNIE

Brigham Young had children my age. I played with them: Suza, Maria, and Morris.

LUCILLE

They ain't no end to your play acting.

ANNIE

The old man loved me. I knew it. He loved me in the only way he could, the only way he knew, as a paramour.

LUCILLE

Oh, hush!

ANNIE

Possessed of 27 wives, or there about, and blessed with over 50 children, or there about, he was a man who'd spent his life merely plucking the lilies of the field. I was his last lily.

LUCILLE

When you ain't famous, you make it up that you are.

ANNIE

Sometimes Suza's mother, Lucy, would invite me to eat with them. On such occasions Suza and I would vie for the attention of her father. I always won.

Actress playing LUCILLE moves over to some assorted set pieces and sits at a table. She is now SUZA, a 12-year-old. ANNIE joins her as a younger version of herself. B.Y. enters and sits at the table. He's older, heavy, wheezing.

SUZA

Guess where we went today, Papa?

B.Y. is fixated on ANNIE throughout the scene.

B.Y.

I can't imagine, girl, where did you go today?

SUZA

To the top of Ensign Peak.

B.Y.

(Still fixated on ANNIE.) To the top of Ensign Peak. So far as that?

SUZA

I led them up, Papa, because I didn't want anyone to get bitten by a rattle snake. Therefore, I went first, and all the rest followed me.

B.Y.

That's a good girl.

(To ANNIE.) Come here, Annie, your hair's caught up in the buttons on your dress.

ANNIE

I know.

B.Y.

Come over here, let me fix it.

B.Y. gets down on his knees.

ANNIE

No, I like it the way it is.

B.Y.

It's unbecoming for a young girl, pretty as you.

ANNIE

If you don't like it, you don't have to look.

B.Y.

Was that sassing, my child?

SUZA

Yes, Papa, that was sassing.

ANNIE

You are not in charge of me.

SUZE

Annie, you better watch out, you'll be taken to the orchard. Won't she, Papa?

ANNIE pulls out of the scene to address the audience.

ANNIE

(To the audience.) Now I told you from the outset that this might not be true. It IS true that Brigham Young loved me. That's true. But you don't have to believe it, if you don't want to.

ANNIE moves back into the scene and we pick up where they left off.

B.Y.

Yes, indeed, all children must behave.

SUZA

See there, Annie, all children must behave.

ANNIE

I am being have.

B.Y.

I'll be the judge of that.

ANNIE

You won't be the judge of me.

B.Y.

Why not?

ANNIE

I am the only judge of me.

B.Y.

What about God? Won't God be the judge of you?

ANNIE

If I let him.

B.Y.

And so you tell God what to do?

ANNIE

If need be.

B.Y.

Know you not your own power, child?

ANNIE

A young girl brings an old man to his knees.

B.Y.

(Taken aback.) Indeed, you do, child. Indeed, you do.

ANNIE and LUCILLE move back to the trunk and into the previous scene. LUCILLE picks a magazine off the floor.

LUCILLE

Do you want to keep this magazine, Miss?

ANNIE

What is it?

LUCILLE

"Green Book."

ANNIE

No, God damn it, I do not want it!

LUCILLE

Lord's name in vain, Miss...

ANNIE

*Show it to them. Go ahead, show it! (To the audience.)
Look at this. This is "The Green Book Magazine,"
August, 1914, an eight-part series. "The Life Story of
Maude Adams and Her Mother." My first name is "Her." My
last name is "Mother."*

She tosses the magazine down.

LUCILLE

The green-eyed monster back for another visit?

ANNIE

*None of this matters to Maudie. These things matter to
me, not to her.*

LUCILLE

I know.

ANNIE

Yet I taught her everything she knows.

LUCILLE

I know you did.

ANNIE

*I made her what she is today. I made her from the soil
and sweat, from spit and grit. I made her from grease
paint and charcoal. She had to work for nothing. Good
things just leapt like a cat into her lap--*

LUCILLE

Self-pity, Miss, get you nowheres.

ANNIE

*I told her exactly what to do and what to expect if she
did. I made her, God damn it! I MADE HER!*

LUCILLE

Lord's name...

ANNIE

And no, I do not know why I did not make myself instead. The great tragedy of my life.

LUCILLE

That ain't no tragedy neither. Some people got no food.

ANNIE

People say to me, "Just look at what you created. You created Maude Adams, thee Maude Adams!"

LUCILLE

And they're right.

ANNIE

But who am I, Lucy? Who am I?

LUCILLE

I'll tell you who you are. You're tedious.

ANNIE

The child never had to work for her supper. Never had to struggle, never had to fight for a God damn thing.

LUCILLE

Lord's name...

ANNIE

Whereas, I grew up in a vacant lot. City of the Great Salt Lake. Wind-blown desert full of sage brush and vermin. None of the advantages she had. No one to teach me, warn me, make sure I got paid.

I could stand all this with great dignity and strength, if I just had some of my own.

ANNIE moves to the other set. CHARLES, a theatre producer, holds a chair for her.

CHARLES

Yours has happened already, Sweetheart. You have to live with the memories now.

ANNIE

Don't say that, Charles. That's my greatest fear.

She sits. Charles moves to his chair and sits.

CHARLES

At least you have memories. Not everyone does.

ANNIE

It's so nice to have a future, so grim to have only a past.

CHARLES notes her chair.

CHARLES

Wait a moment. Sit over in that other chair, please. The sun is going down. We must face north.

ANNIE sighs and moves.

And keep the foot of that chair off the flowers.

ANNIE

The flowers?

CHARLES

In the rug. The flowers in the rug. Keep the foot of the chair off the flowers in the rug.

ANNIE rolls her eyes and moves her chair.

How about a nice glass of brandy?

ANNIE

No, thank you.

CHARLES
Port?

ANNIE
No.

CHARLES
What would you like?

ANNIE
Some work, Charles. A role.

CHARLES
Indeed, let us talk about that.

ANNIE
Let's.

CHARLES
First about Jimmy.

ANNIE
Jimmy?

CHARLES
Jimmy Barrie.

ANNIE
Who's that?

CHARLES
James M.

ANNIE
Oh right, the dwarf.

CHARLES
He's not a dwarf. He's just short.

ANNIE
Whatever you say.

CHARLES

He has remained a child in his body. He just never grew up. He's such a unique creature.

ANNIE

All right. All right.

CHARLES

The point is he absolutely loves Maudie. And she loves him.

ANNIE

Because neither one of them grew up?

CHARLES

In a way.

ANNIE

And so, what's the play?

CHARLES

It will be incredible. I have that feeling. And you know I have an instinct about these things.

ANNIE

What's the play, Charles?

CHARLES

It's called "Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up."

ANNIE

And Maudie plays what?

CHARLES

Well, she plays Peter.

ANNIE

Oh God, Charles, "Peter"?

CHARLES

Yes, she plays a boy, but...

ANNIE

...the boy who never grew up.

CHARLES

And she'll be a sensation!

ANNIE

You know it's your God damn fault she's turned out the way she has.

CHARLES

Maudie's got something. Audiences want it. And I'm selling it. That's all I know.

ANNIE

In the future, I'd thank you to steer her away from such roles.

CHARLES

The way she's turning out has nothing to do with a role in a play. Look at me. I was never in a play!

ANNIE

All right, all right. But please, no more such roles!

And so then, what's MY role in this "incredible play"?

CHARLES

How would you like a nice glass of Burgundy, FROM Burgundy? I picked it up there myself.

ANNIE

No, Charles.

CHARLES

Just a splash?

ANNIE

You're trying to soften me up.

CHARLES

I'm trying to be polite.

ANNIE

The maid or the mother, which one am I playing?

CHARLES

There are some things to be considered first.

ANNIE

Mother or her maid? Maid or mother? Which one?

Pause.

CHARLES

Neither one.

ANNIE

What else is there?

CHARLES

Nothing for you, I'm afraid.

ANNIE

Excuse me?

CHARLES

You're not in it.

ANNIE

I have to be in it. It's in her contract.

CHARLES

Jimmy doesn't want you.

ANNIE

What does Jimmy have to do with it?

CHARLES
He wrote it.

ANNIE
You're the producer. You can do anything you want.

CHARLES
The play is about a family of children who are visited by a magic boy, Peter Pan, and his even more magical side-kick Tinker Bell--

ANNIE
Tinker Bell! My God, Charles, you've gone too far.

CHARLES
Tinker Bell is not played by a man. Tinker Bell is played by a woman. That makes all the difference.

ANNIE
Forgive me if I'm having trouble tracking all the sexual permutations here.

CHARLES
It's like the Elizabethan theatre. A boy plays a girl who plays a boy who falls in love...with what?

ANNIE
With an ass?

CHARLES
Very clever.

ANNIE
There's such a word as "obscene" applied to plays these days.

CHARLES
This is not obscene, it's a fantasy.

ANNIE
And what fantasy is that?

CHARLES

That boys don't have to grow up.

ANNIE

In my experience, they haven't.

CHARLES

Jimmy meant the role to be played by a girl. He's written it for Maudie.

ANNIE

And he's another one. If I couldn't get along with you people, I swear, my daughter would have no career!

CHARLES

Temper, temper, temper.

ANNIE

You're serious about no role for me.

CHARLES

In the world of a play, boys don't need mothers.

ANNIE

What about Hamlet? What about Oedipus?

CHARLES

You can be so tedious sometimes.

ANNIE

There's got to be a mother in this play, someone's mother.

CHARLES

There IS the mother of Wendy.

ANNIE

The mother of Wendy, yes. Maybe the third lead? Third lead is fine, Charles. Billing after the title, 12-point type.

CHARLES

But Jimmy thinks...

ANNIE

Jimmy thinks what?

CHARLES

Well, Jimmy thinks...

ANNIE

What is this "Jimmy thinks, Jimmy thinks"? You've fallen in love with him, haven't you? God, Charles, you're short, but he's a dwarf.

CHARLES

He is Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up. That's him.

ANNIE

...Who sees himself being played by a post-adolescent girl?

CHARLES

Why not?

ANNIE

And who also sees me as whatever stands in his way, his mother.

CHARLES

The mothers of all the boys he ever loved.

ANNIE

I see.

CHARLES

I'm sorry, Doob-chuck.

ANNIE

Is there no lesser role? I'm more than serviceable in a lesser role, any role at all.

CHARLES

He doesn't want you.

ANNIE

Why not?

CHARLES

He thinks you're artificial.

ANNIE

ARTIFICIAL! My daughter is playing a boy. That's NOT artificial!

CHARLES

Jimmy always saw Maudie in the role. He wrote it for her.

ANNIE

And she'll be "just terrific," I know.

CHARLES

She will be terrific.

ANNIE

I am written out, she is written in. She is written for, I am written against.

Pause as reality sets in for ANNIE.

You ever notice, Charles? One never knows it's the end of something, till it's already over. You never get a chance to say to yourself, "This is it. This is the last. I must appreciate it for what it is." That's all I'm asking for.

CHARLES

I know.

Pause. He eyes her sympathetically.

And right about now you feel like gnawing off your own wrist.

ANNIE

Yes, I do.

CHARLES

I understand.

ANNIE

You do not understand!

CHARLES

No people on earth are more jealous than we men of a certain persuasion. We lose every day. We look, but we may not touch. That continues for a lifetime, making for a legacy of misplaced hopes.

ANNIE

But you, yourself, you want for nothing!

CHARLES

We settle for what we can get. Although ultimately that bores us, because we've been trained to want what we cannot have.

ANNIE

To want what we cannot have...

Pause. It sinks in. ANNIE rises.

Well, I suppose there's no more to be said.

She moves to the door.

CHARLES

Oh, Sweetheart...

ANNIE

Yes.

CHARLES

Turn on the lights as you leave, would you? I'm so dreadfully frightened of the dark.

ANNIE moves out of the scene and over to the trunk and sits in a chair.

LUCILLE

Hurts, don't it, Miss?

ANNIE

It hurts, Lucy.

LUCILLE

I know how much all this matters to you.

ANNIE

And what right have I, now, at this point in my life, to be dancing with the green-eyed monster?

LUCILLE

You're alive. Maybe that's the answer.

ANNIE

Meaning what?

LUCILLE

Anyone alive is inclined now and then to feel a pinch of jealousy.

ANNIE

More like a punch than a pinch.

Pause. ANNIE says nothing.

LUCILLE

So say it.

ANNIE

What is there to say?

LUCILLE

You have child envy. Envy for the life of your child.

ANNIE

Why didn't I get this chance? She doesn't enjoy it. She'd walk away tomorrow if you gave her a reason.

LUCILLE

All true.

ANNIE

I was born to her life, and she was born to mine.

LUCILLE

Perhaps so.

Pause. ANNIE fingers one of the costumes in the trunk.

ANNIE

I'm just an old relic. Me and this old theatre. Both of us destined for demolition, just waiting for the wrecking-ball.

LUCILLE

Isn't there something else you could be doing 'sides being a player on a stage?

ANNIE

It's my work, Lucy, it's me. I don't know who I am without it.

LUCILLE

That don't make no sense. Like me saying, "I don't know who I am if I ain't dusting"?

ANNIE

It sounds impossible, I know.

LUCILLE

You could work on fixing that.

ANNIE

I doubt it.

LUCILLE

You could marry someone.

ANNIE

Like whom?

LUCILLE

(Inventing as she goes along.) A kind old gentleman with a big house in the city, with a big grassy yard, with an iron gate and a fence all around, with servants and cooks and butlers and maids, with a carriage and two horses, with a motor car and two drivers.

ANNIE

And what would I be doing?

LUCILLE

You, well you, would be standing in the window in a long blue dress looking at the view and holding your cat.

ANNIE

(Pause as she considers it.) That sounds perfectly... horrible, Lucy.

LUCILLE

It could be a bit dull. But you might grow to like things dull.

ANNIE

People have asked me, over the years, why I stayed with the theatre, why I continued. The reason I did it was love. I loved...the attention. Pitiful admission, I know.

We players, we pretend it is the people who need us. They need what we have to offer. Because of course, we

are the unique and the profoundly talented. We believe that if audiences did not have us, they would wither and die. But that's not true, Lucy. It is we, the poor pitiful players, WE who would wither and die without THEM.

LUCILLE

Well, at least you've got that right, about who needs who.

ANNIE

We're mere decoration to their lives, all the while believing we're the essence of their lives. Delusional, it's all a delusion.

LUCILLE

I think it is, Miss.

ANNIE

I should have listened to my father and stayed away from the theatre. It's brutal, barbaric....

LUCILLE

Now that part AIN'T true! You take slavery. That was brutal. And killing people in wars, that there is barbaric.

ANNIE

...But I was fourteen when the Brigham Young built the Big House. Salt Lake Thee-ater. My father cut the timbers for the roof beams.

ANNIE moves over to the other set and plays herself as an adolescent. The other two actors play her MOTHER and FATHER.

MOTHER

And what did Brother Brigham pay you for that job?

FATHER

We did not discuss money.

MOTHER

No, I'm sure you didn't. Brother Brigham doesn't have to pay. That's his reward for talking to God.

ANNIE

(To the audience.) My mother did not care for Brigham Young.

FATHER

Enough, Julia. Please.

MOTHER

...Free tickets to the theatre, that's what he paid you!

FATHER

Annie uses them, anyone can use them.

MOTHER

I have an idea, why don't we use the free theatre tickets for Sunday dinner. Let's invite everyone we know to the feast.

FATHER

You're so tedious when you get off on these tangents.

MOTHER

I am making a point.

FATHER

With a pitch fork.

ANNIE

(To the audience.) I saw every play my parents would allow. I knew the actors by name and reputation. I memorized their lines, their delivery. I studied their behavior, how they moved and gestured, how they "strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage." And I wanted nothing more than to be with them, of them. By age seventeen, I was.

But when my father objected, I should have listened!

FATHER

She's growing up with the weak willies and the fairy queens! They're collected like bees over there.

MOTHER

Growing up with people gathered by Brigham Young, God-in-a-Basket himself.

FATHER

They're a degenerate lot, I don't trust them.

MOTHER

They're trustworthy enough. They wouldn't steal your purse.

FATHER

One of them would! Who's that fellow that dresses up and sings opera? What's his name?

ANNIE

Morris?

MOTHER

Morris Young. One of the beloved sons of beloved President of the beloved Church.

FATHER

No, what's his other name when he does his show?

ANNIE

Madame Patrini.

FATHER

And what's that for?

ANNIE

He sings, Father.

FATHER

He dresses up and sings?

ANNIE

He dresses up and sings.

FATHER

He dresses up in a dress and sings?

ANNIE

In a dress. And sings. Yes.

FATHER

And sings opera. As if he were a woman!

ANNIE

He's very good. Some people don't know he's a man. They don't know who he is, whose son he is. They think he's an Italian opera singer from Genoa, Italy, as he claims.

FATHER

Why does he do that?

ANNIE

He's always done it. When we made shows together, Suza, Maria, Morris, and me,--he did it then. I played all the major roles. Suza played the lessers. Maria built the sets. And Morris dressed up and sang. He liked portraying queens with tall crowns and long trains. And so, we always let him be a queen. A queen that could sing. A weeping queen that could sing. That was his favorite.

FATHER

I don't want you anywhere near him.

ANNIE

I grew up with him, Father.

FATHER

He's off-limits. I don't like him, I don't like the idea of him. You hang around people like that, you'll lose your moral compass, turn out to be a deviant like him, and land yourself in hell for all eternity.

MOTHER

Well, in this case the son is less dangerous than his father.

FATHER

Julia, please...

MOTHER

Just because you think he surpasseth human understanding.

FATHER

I'll thank you not to speak disparagingly of the President of the Church.

MOTHER

Well, some people do not believe he's the son of God.

FATHER

He doesn't say he is the son of God.

MOTHER

He doesn't have to. He ACTS like the son of God.

ANNIE

Mother, he's a harmless old man.

MOTHER

He's a lecherous old man.

ANNIE

I can take care of myself.

MOTHER

See that you do!

ANNIE

(To the audience.) My parents knew that Brigham Young sent a carriage for me each night I performed. Picked me up and brought me back. There was something about that courtesy that made them uncomfortable.

MOTHER

He leers at you from his private box.

ANNIE

Everyone is watching him, Mother. He cannot leer.

MOTHER

Looks down your neck from on high.

ANNIE

Well, he would have precious little to see.

MOTHER

He has those field glasses for that purpose.

ANNIE

Those are opera glasses. They come from Roma, Italy.

MOTHER

Call them anything you choose. He a lecherous old man to whom no one has ever said no.

ANNIE

There's his carriage now.

ANNIE grabs a cape and scurries out.

MOTHER

(Calling to her.) If he is in that carriage, you're to walk right on through and out the other door. Do you understand me?

ANNIE

*(Calling to her mother.) I understand you, Mother.
(Whispering.) But I need not obey you.*

(To the audience.) Now remember I told you. Not all of this is true. I'm making up a lot of this as I go along. Some of it is true, just not all. You may decide which is which.

So...when I open the door to the carriage, he is stuffed in the corner. His fat hands propped on his cane. Wheezing.

She climbs in. He watches her.

B.Y.

Close the door tight, my dear. It's cold tonight.

She closes the door carefully. She's done it before.

That's right. Now come sit close to me.

ANNIE

My mother told me I was to walk out the other door if you were in the carriage.

B.Y.

No need for that.

ANNIE

That's what I told her.

B.Y.

Come on up and sit beside me.

She does, as if it's the regular thing. He cuddles with her.

B.Y.

See that, I'm a threat to no one.

ANNIE

My mother knows that.

B.Y.

How does she know that?

ANNIE

I told her.

B.Y.

How did you know?

ANNIE

You told me.

B.Y.

I did?

ANNIE

You did.

B.Y.

Well, good, I'm glad I told you.

He cuddles her closer. Pause.

What play do you play tonight, child?

ANNIE

"Fashion" by Anna Cora Mowatt.

B.Y.

And do you play a lovely girl with long dark hair?

ANNIE

A child, actually.

B.Y.

Is your part worthy of your gifts?

ANNIE

It's not big enough.

B.Y.

Then I shall see about extending it for you.

ANNIE

Tell them how well I run. I should like to be in a chase scene.

B.Y.

You'd make a very good child in a chase. Consider it done.

ANNIE moves out of the scene.

(To the audience.) He was very kind to me, it's true. He did a great deal for me. He gave me roles. He saw to it I got lessons from all the actors who went through town and from the local actors he used in almost every play. They all taught me whatever they knew. And I taught Maudie.

LUCILLE

I don't believe a single thing you say about him.

ANNIE

Of course you don't, Lucy, that's how you maintain your faith.

In any case, the relationship with Brother Brigham ended abruptly when a stage door Johnnie caught my eye. Barry Kiskadden. I loved him for his name. (Chanting.) "Barry, Barry, Barry Kiskadden. Kiss the girls and make them cry." He was a Scot. Who came over here to work in the mines, or at least, that's what he said on his papers. In fact, I think he had been booted out of his wee kirk of the heather village in Scotland. For a reason that became all too clear. For Barry Kiskadden, in spite of his very fine name, did not kiss the girls and make them cry. Because Barry Kiskadden never kissed

the girls at all. And he never worked a single day in any mine either. He was an accountant.

And yet you do remember, do you not, that none of this is true. Or it may not be true. Lucy, for example, she believes none of it.

ANNIE moves to a box and opens it.

By the way, Lucy, who's the President of the Church these days?

LUCILLE
You know, Miss.

ANNIE
No I don't. I forgot.

LUCILLE
Brother Woodruff.

ANNIE
Wood-ruff. Do the dogs come when you say his name?

LUCILLE
How many times do I have to listen to the same joke?

ANNIE
I'm working on my delivery.

LUCILLE
Work on it with someone else.

ANNIE
I have to entertain you.

LUCILLE
No, you don't.

ANNIE

So anyway, Kiskadden used to keep track of me from the distance of a hundred and fifty feet, first balcony, gentile section. I was flattered by the attention. A handsome man with clean fingernails. I did not have high standards. He also had a beautiful Scottish accent and knew all there was to know about what he called "the language of the fan." (She demonstrates with a fan.) That should have tipped me off. But alas, I was a foolish, foolish girl. My biggest mistake was marrying the man. Ah well, long gone...Washed away in the great flood of time.

She moves to a pile of papers, program sheets, flyers, leafing through them.

I was good in "The Octoroon" by Dion Boucicoult. What did I play? (She reads a page.) A lady of leisure. How many ladies of leisure have I played? Ladies of leisure are merely queens in smaller costumes.

It's such a self-reflexive business, all the time turning around and around, only to come face to face with ourselves again.

Maudie says she doesn't know who she is. She was always on stage, she was always playing a part, she doesn't know who she is underneath the grease paint.

Do you think this is my problem, Lucy?

LUCILLE

I don't think I care, and I don't think anyone else cares, and I don't think you should care.

ANNIE

I'm just asking a question. I know who I am. Poor Maudie doesn't. What do you think?

LUCILLE

Sometimes I just do not know what you're talking about.

ANNIE

Hand me that hand mirror, please.

Eyeing herself in the hand mirror, so she gets a picture of the back of herself in the large oval mirror.

I've got loose flesh now. I've got to lose that, if I expect to work again. Maudie does not gain weight. Have we not noted that, Lucy?

LUCILLE

If you say so.

ANNIE

...Whereas, I just LOOK at a confection, and I wear it for the rest of my life.

LUCILLE

I'm trying to get my work done, Miss.

ANNIE

I know. And you're such a hard worker, Lucy. That's something I appreciate about you. You're a hard worker. Of course, I couldn't have you around if you weren't.

LUCILLE

What I mean is we ain't making a lot of progress here.

ANNIE

They said it was all right. I have the keys. I can take as long as needed. That's what they said. (New York accent.) "Annie Adams"—they've always called me by both names—"Annie Adams, ya take all the time ya need. Ya ain't bothering nuttin'."

Used to be, they would thank me for something besides getting out of everyone's way.

She looks in the big oval mirror, close-up.

I think my hair is thinner? Do you notice that, Lucy?

LUCILLE

That's what, Miss?

ANNIE

Whether my hair is thinner. Do you notice that?

LUCILLE

Nope. You want these make-up brushes?

ANNIE

No, probably got diseases.

LUCILLE

*And there's a lot of vases once had flowers in 'em.
Dozens of 'em.*

LUCY

Oh. I don't think I want ALL of them. Just pick out three, Lucy. (High British accent.) "Pick three, darling. We'll take three for the memory."

ANNIE, still fixated on the papers.

Why is it, Lucy, that you never saw my work?

LUCILLE

Because you was stingy with my time off.

ANNIE

I was what?

LUCILLE

You told me if I seen your plays, I had to count it as my time off. And I didn't wanna waste my time off doing something like that!

ANNIE

It's just odd, don't you think? You don't really know me.

LUCILLE

Oh, I think I know you, Miss. I don't need no further examples.

Eyeing herself again in the mirror.

ANNIE

I carry my weight in my legs and my behind. That was good twenty years ago. You could hide a multitude of sins under a full skirt and a bustle. Not good now. It's all sleek, long. I'm not right for the times. Even if I lost weight, I'm too short.

(Irish accent) "So well-suited for the role of an elf, if only I could dance a jig and squat on a rock." Ahh, but I cannot, for I have flat feet and bad knees.

Only courageous people grow old, Lucy. The cowards die young.

LUCILLE

You might know that whatever you was doing, it's the hardest thing that ever was!

ANNIE

Intensity, Lucy. One must live life with intensity.

LUCILLE

I'll take my life with a lighter touch, thank you.

ANNIE

You know, I could teach, Lucy! I could teach young adults, aspiring practitioners of the craft of acting. I do not want to teach children—they all smell like wet pennies. But after all these years in the profession, I know a great deal. I have accumulated a lifetime of

information and practical knowledge. What think you, Lucy?

LUCILLE

Do you want all these gloves?

ANNIE

Put them all in that box. Separate each one with a layer of tissue.

A teacher, Lucy. A teacher of men. And women. Not children, though. Not ever children. Proprietor of a Dramatic Studio. "Coaching for dramatic recitals, readings, professional training for the voice and body." What name should I use, Lucy? Annie Adams lacks dignity and gravity. A.A.Adams, no. Mrs.A.A.Adams, better. Mrs.A.A.Adams-Kiskadden. How does that sound, Lucy? Mrs.A.A.Adams-Kiskadden.

LUCILLE

Sounds good, Miss.

ANNIE thinks about it cynically.

ANNIE

(Country accent.) "Need to know how to tell a joke? I'm the one. Dance off stage backwards, I got you covered. Trip and fall on a flat floor, that's in my bailiwick."

(As a carnival barker.) "Step right up, ladies and gentlemen, I have the secret to ten thousand ways to get a laugh. How to fall down a flight of stairs and walk away afterwards. I can teach you thirty-five tragic ways to die and twenty-five humorous ways to die. Yes, folks, I've got a thousand useless lessons I can impart."

(Change of tone.) Charles told me I ought to get up an act for the vaudeville stage. But I refused.

She moves to the other set. CHARLES is at a table with papers.

ANNIE

I have standards, even if you don't.

CHARLES

Arrogance will get you nowhere, Doob-Chuck. I happen to enjoy the vaudeville stage.

ANNIE

It's not theatre.

CHARLES

Who cares? It's entertaining...

ANNIE

It's a circus.

CHARLES

...And they're filling up theatres with it.

ANNIE

It's the lowest common denominator.

CHARLES

Could you move away so you do not cast a shadow? I don't like to sign my name in a shadow.

ANNIE rolls her eyes and moves.

Those performers, vaudvillians, they've done it-- whatever they're doing--a hundred thousand times before. They're very good at it.

ANNIE

It's primitive, Charles. Tricks and physical jokes.

CHARLES

It's like a machine. The picture of precision. You can't get that in a play.

ANNIE

And shouldn't.

CHARLES

Oh, Annie Adams, Annie Adams. You're fussier than an old queen who can't find her purse.

ANNIE

I grew up in the era when there were only three lessons to be learned about theatre:

Don't be late

Don't be drunk

Don't spit on the floor

I've done my best to civilize it.

CHARLES

I live by another motto: if they're buying it, I'm selling it.

ANNIE

The whore of the American theatre. How do I put up with you?

CHARLES

You find me irresistible, just like everyone else.

ANNIE

I suppose I do. Silly me.

CHARLES

Lucky you.

ANNIE

Long-suffering me.

CHARLES

We made a great deal of money.

ANNIE

Maudie makes a great deal of money.

CHARLES

A million dollars a week, Doob-chuck. No one ever has made as much.

ANNIE

It's all about money with you. What about love?

CHARLES

"I loved you, Cinera, in my fashion."

ANNIE

You never loved me the way I loved you.

CHARLES

Of course not. But that doesn't mean I didn't love you.

ANNIE

Do you still?

CHARLES

I think I do.

ANNIE

And what will you do about it?

CHARLES

Probably nothing. You?

ANNIE

I've lived without a man my whole life. What do I need with one now?

CHARLES

"Hit, a very palpable hit."

ANNIE

And I've always known that marriage did no more than enslave women.

CHARLES

Hence, what do you need with it?

ANNIE

What do I need with it?

Instead, I have spent my life with you and men like you. You remind me of my failure.

CHARLES

Poor pitiful you.

ANNIE moves back to the other set.

ANNIE

Charles Frohman and I used to decorate each other's lives. He lived with Charles Dillingham. And no one who knew him was in the dark about that, unless they wanted to be in the dark about that. But I was his "lady friend," his "female companion." My job was to keep the gossip from his door.

LUCILLE

I always thought he was a little bird-like.

LUCILLE is packing a couple of large handbags.

--AN END FOR NOW--