

ACT TWO

Scene 1

In the darkness, we hear a tape of a bright bouncy version of "Joy, Joy, Joy" being played on an organ. The volume is quite high. Lights come up on Marguerite standing in the middle of the community room at Depew's. A downstage center table represents the casket. She calls out to an unseen character.

MARGUERITE. MERLINE! MERLINE! THAT'S WAY TOO LOUD! TURN IT DOWN! *(The music stops abruptly.)* This is a wake, Merline, not a parade. You got anything up there a little more somber? Well, take a look! *(Mumbling to herself.)* Paying you enough. *(As she waits, her attention turns to the casket. She pulls a handkerchief from her purse and polishes a small spot on the side of the casket. She inspects the body for a moment, then pulls out a small instamatic camera from her purse and takes a flash photograph of the casket. She glances over the body again.)* Well, Bud, they've got you painted up like a two dollar whore. *(A quieter, slower hymn comes on. It plays throughout the scene.)* What? Oh yeah, that's a lot better. And Merline, let's see if we can get that air conditioning cranked up a little. Bud's melting like a candle down here. *(Junior and Suzanne enter. Suzanne is dressed entirely in black, including a veil.)*

JUNIOR. Well, here we are, Honey. Why don't you just sit down here for a minute. I just got to move the car. I'll be right back. Won't take but a minute. Can I get you anything, Sweetheart?

SUZANNE. *(Pulling back her veil.)* Can you get me back the last twelve years of my life, Junior? Can you get me back my youth, my hopes, my dreams of a good life with a loving and faithful husband? Can you do that, Junior?

JUNIOR. No, but I could get you a Coke or something.

SUZANNE. A Coke would be fine, adulterer.

JUNIOR. Aw, Suzanne ... *(A huge crash is heard offstage. Junior runs to the door.)* YOU KIDS GET OUT OF HERE! I TOLD Y'ALL TO WAIT IN THE CAR! I'll be right back, Baby. *(A yelping sound is heard offstage.)* AND GET THEM DOGS OUT OF HERE! *(He exits.)*

MARGUERITE. Suzanne.

SUZANNE. *(Fixing her make-up.)* Aunt Marguerite.

MARGUERITE. You feeling better today?

SUZANNE. Yes, thank you.

MARGUERITE. Well, I hope you'll feel up to singing tomorrow morning.

SUZANNE. *(Crossing up to her.)* Oh, of course I will. I just couldn't let Daddy Bud down. Aw, doesn't he look wonderful. So peaceful.

MARGUERITE. Looks kinda rouged up to me.

SUZANNE. How's she gonna go on, Aunt Marguerite? That's what I'd like to know. How's she gonna go on?

MARGUERITE. Well, it's gonna be sad.

SUZANNE. How's she gonna face life without our Daddy Bud?

MARGUERITE. It's sad when a woman loses her husband. I remember when I lost my William. No one to cook for. No one to keep house for. Nobody to talk to over the breakfast table. The children crying. Asking over and over again for their daddy. "Where's my Daddy?" Nothing but the lonesome sound of the boards creaking under your feet as you walk the floor from dark to dawn asking yourself that same question: Why — Oh Why — Oh Why — Oh? *(Suzanne is weeping openly.)* Why did he leave me? Where has he gone? Why don't he come back? Why can't it all be the way it was? No, I don't think there's anything sadder than a woman losing her man. *(Suzanne explodes into tears and throws herself across the casket, sobbing deeply. Disgusted, Marguerite pulls Suzanne off the casket.)* Suzanne, get a hold of yourself! *(Polishing a spot on the casket again.)* You know for what we're paying, it wouldn't have killed Merline to run a little Pledge across this thing. *(Ray-Bud, Raynelle, Lucille, and Delightful, who is chewing bubble gum, enter. They stand quietly in the doorway for a moment.)*