

erik

A Play about a Puppet

By John Patrick Bray

Suggested by *The Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux



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## Characters:

Barker  
Madam Giry  
Erik (Various Puppets)  
Christine  
Meg  
Josef  
Raoul  
Detective

General note: BARKER and MADAM GIRY may be on stage for the duration of the play.

### Synopsis

"Those that create you...are your God." In this loose retelling of *The Phantom of the Opera*, our obsessions with beauty, ugliness, madness, and desire all staged as part of this funhouse mirror where the audience may even catch a glimpse of their true selves.

### Author's Note

The title character, *erik*, should be played by puppets. My approach to *erik* is one which embraces complete theatricality (movement, lyrical dialogue, and the aforementioned puppetry).

(The HOUSE is DARK. There is a sign that reads HUMAN ODDITIES. A cage is on stage. We cannot see the lower half, only the upper portion. It is not a large cage. A CARNIVAL BARKER enters as the lights come up on stage. He looks over the audience and sneers).

BARKER

I know what you're here for. No, you've come to the right place. There are no mistakes on your program. You are here to see human oddities. It is our obsession with beauty. Our need for perfect shine of the skin; perfect shine of the hair; perfect laugh at the perfect moment that brings us to these, nature's deformities. If we did not have an obsession with beauty, well, then...I'd be out of a job. The first is without a doubt one that will simply wet your pallet for what awaits you inside. Ladies and gentlemen! THE PERFECT BABY!

(PERFECT BABY PUPPET grabs the cage and lifts itself up quickly. It looks like a coconut, with sharp front teeth and a shiny blue button eye. It begins to sing. NOTE: its singing should be in a high, crystal clear soprano).

PERFECT BABY  
(Singing)

FOLLOW  
THE PATH YOU'RE GIVEN  
FOLLOW  
THE LIFE YOU'RE GIVEN  
FOLLOW  
FOLLOW  
LOVE

(It shoots back down).

BARKER

If you want the full song, of course, we have it inside as

BARKER (Contd.)

well. (Beat). What's the matter? Never seen a child in a cage before? Sure you have. You've had parents, haven't you? You've been in cages. You might even be in one now. Someone ought to check the door. (Beat). And now, ladies and gentlemen, the most grotesque of all creatures, the most hideous disposition, and if you have a heart condition please be warned to step back! I now give you the most monstrous of all creations: my wife.

(MADAM GIRY enters carrying a bag of apples. She scowls at the crowd).

MADAM GIRY

You'll be sorry you came. You'll wish you hadn't. (Sighs. Matter-of-factly). Go back. Go back. Bleh. Ooogala. Scary stuff. (Beat). Boo. Well, you had your chance. (Beat). I really wouldn't have brought children here. Didn't you read the sign? Well, we have your money now. It's up to you. (Beat). Follow me and give the small ones the apples. Helps keep them alive. Here.

(She approaches PERFECT BABY'S cage).

Want an apple?

(PERFECT BABY reaches up and hands her a dead frog).

What is-? OH! Dreadful creature.

(She kicks the cage).

No apples for you!

(PERFECT BABY leaps up and shakes the cage).

Fine, fine. No good scaring away the customers.

(She goes to hand PB the apple. THE BARKER takes it, and bites into it. The ERIK PUPPET 1 looks really sad).

MADAM GIRY (Contd.)

Aw, poor monster. Someday, we'll get you outta here. Even if I gotta flush you down the sewer.

BARKER

Shut it, you. It ain't going nowhere.

(He throws the rest of the apple into PB'S cage. The PB gets excited, and retreats to the floor of its cage, presumably to eat what's left of the apple. We hear PB humming the tune he was just singing. The BARKER smiles at the crowd).

Ugly little thing, ain't it?

MADAM GIRY

But what a voice! It makes me wonder if there is a God. Must be a devil. Look at him. (Beat). Beautiful voice, distorted body. Perhaps he was conceived by both. (Beat).

BARKER

Come on, folks. More ugliness to gratify your appetite awaits.

(BLACKOUT. ERIK'S humming continues. THE BARKER'S VOICE can be heard in the dark).

BAKER'S VOICE

First creature: the wretched soul of a sixteen-year old girl.

(LIGHTS RETURN. PB's humming echoes for a minute, then disappears. CHRISTINE, a young woman with a deep, yet beautiful voice stands center stage in a trance).

ERIKS' /PB'S VOICE

FOLLOW  
FOLLOW

ERIK (Contd.)

MY VOICE

(For an instance we can see the ERIK PUPPET - older, darker than PB - standing in the frame of a mirror, but he steps away into the dark).

CHRISTINE

(VOICE OVER).

I know it is you. You draped me in your red scarf as a child as we huddled by a nimble fire. The smell of flesh; rotting animal flesh. The likes I never knew could exist. Hell had erupted into tiny cold crystals that lined our tiny room. The rattling in your chest sounded like woodpeckers. I knew you would leave me. I would have no beacon to guide me through the years. That is when you told me.

(Beat. She parts her lips).

CHRISTINE

(OUT LOUD).

One day, you'd return.

(Enter RAOUL).

RAOUL

You are right. I have returned!

CHRISTINE

Oh, Raoul!

(She embraces him).

Where have you been all these years?

RAOUL

Both these years!

CHRISTINE

I was but a girl!

RAOUL

And you taught me what it is to be a man.

CHRISTINE

And what is it? to be a man?

RAOUL

Well...to leave!

CHRISTINE

Leave?

RAOUL

Explore! To find himself, so he can bring...himself back to the one he loves. Oh, my little puppet.

CHRISTINE

I am wider now. My breasts are fuller.

RAOUL

They are. And what of -?

(He places his hand over her the front of her crotch).

-down here?

(She gasps. Horrified, but she cannot fight the touch).

I imagine soft down. The most elegant sheen that does not scratch or tickle the flesh, but caresses it-

CHRISTINE

Stop! (He does). Too much talking. Could you *sing* it to me?

RAOUL

Sing?

CHRISTINE

Like the voice. The voice I just heard.

RAOUL

You're hearing voices?

CHRISTINE

Yes. Tell me it was yours! And I will be...yours!

RAOUL

Uh...

(He clears his throat. He tries to sing. The sound is like that of a goose being stretched, or a Manatee having an orgasm).

CHRISTINE

Oh, no, that isn't! It's not...it isn't you.

RAOUL

Darling, what are you talking about?

CHRISTINE

My father said he'd send someone. He said I would know. He said...I...I need a moment.

RAOUL

Christine, be gentle with me. I am but a tender man who has traveled many miles to see you. True, some may chalk it up to coincidence that I was in my box seat here at the opera, listening to the beauty of...whatever the hell we were listening to...

CHRISTINE

You heard me sing?

RAOUL

...when suddenly I recognized my one, my only...my first, I mean! Technically not my first, but one who has stood out in my memory! And I thought "is it my Christine?" How did you come to be singing lead?

CHRISTINE

I have been training myself.

RAOUL

And Senora Piangi? Is she not Prima Donna? Why wasn't she singing lead?

CHRISTINE

She had a frog in her throat.

RAOUL

Perhaps some tea.

CHRISTINE

No. She woke up from a nap. And someone had put a frog in



CHRISTINE (Contd.)

her...in her mouth. She swallowed it.

RAOUL

Good lord!

CHRISTINE

She's alive, she couldn't go on. And like I said. I've been training. And the voice...the voice tells me...

RAOUL

The voice?

CHRISTINE

Did you like the performance?

RAOUL

No. (Beat). You were beautiful. You are the brightest jewel, but among other jewels. You were lost. The arrangement, the conducting, the fat actors meandering about stage. You...like any jewel, require the right setting. Some jewels are meant to be in an earring. A pendant. A ring.

CHRISTINE

A ring? (Beat).

RAOUL

Yes. Well, a jewel needs a context...in any, uh, hypothetical example. (Beat).

CHRISTINE

Do you remember my father?

RAOUL

The man with a tuning fork at my backside.

CHRISTINE

(Beat.) When he lay on his deathbed, he told me that he would return. I told him that the dead do not return. He said that even if that were the case he'd send...an angel. To sing to me. All of the songs he used to sing.

RAOUL

Rustic folk songs. Songs from the hills about ghosts and highwaymen learned from a life of tuning pianos and organs.

CHRISTINE

Surely, you would not speak ill of my father? After so many years?

RAOUL

No, I apologize. It is just that he left...an impression.

(Reaches to his backside).

But not as deep as the impression that you made on my heart. Please...let me be close to you.

(He holds her. Drops a hand on her breast. It is more clumsy than sexual).

CHRISTINE

Go. Please. I will join you in a moment.

RAOUL

Certainly.

(He removes his hand. He bows, and exits. He stops to say something, but decides against it. EXIT RAOUL. The humming begins again. CHRISTINE looks towards a mirror. She sings).

CHRISTINE

Follow...follow...follow...

(BLACKOUT. LIGHTS up on BARKER).

BARKER'S VOICE

The next horror: MORAL DECAY!

(LIGHTS UP on JOSEF and his wife, MEG as BARKER exits. She is beautiful and pale. He is older, and also pale).

JOSEF

Do you see this, my wretched wife?

MEG

Wretched, am I?

JOSEF

As long as you're saddled up with that fat opera star, you are wretched.

MEG

He appreciates my youth. He buys me things.

JOSEF

I see. But what is the price you pay? (Beat). Is it fair that I am forced time and again to wake up with scars all over my manhood? The jumpin' consumption? Tell-tale signs of your infidelities to a piggy, pig, pig, piggy-

MEG

Piggy, he may be! But, he is more than a mere stagehand! He creates the art around here.

JOSEF

Does he now? And me? A mere stagehand? My wife, for shame. Find me something more artistic than the hammer, and more beautiful than a good, hemp rope.

MEG

Piangi can teach me to sing.

JOSEF

I'm sure.

MEG

And he will never leave me.

JOSEF

Is that so?

MEG

Yes. Because he isn't mine. And since he isn't mine to possess, I am not his to leave. You one day, my old husband, will die. Perhaps of the very plague that Piangi has given us both.

JOSEF

Thanks again, I say.

MEG

And I am your wretched wife. If only because being so young a wife makes me wretched. (Beat). Aw, when I see your prune-ish forehead get all squeezed up because of that big, bushy eyebrow of yours, my heart can't help but melt. Kiss me.

(He leans in).

And watch the tongue, I've got something on it.

JOSEF

What?

MEG

I don't know. It just blistered.

(He pulls back from her. A moment. Horror and sadness).

What is it you wanted me for?

(He points to the ground).

JOSEF

Another dead frog. That makes three. One in Ms. Christine's dresser, one in the Senora's mouth, and now this. And let's not also forget the **six rats in the storage room last week, all strung up like marionettes. What does this mean?**

MEG

We are above a sewer. Beauty built upon filth. Is it truly a wonder that this pestilence should plague us so?

JOSEF

Plaguing is one thing, but to see the rats in strings like that. Do you think it was group suicide? Or...

MEG

Or?

JOSEF

It's him!

MEG

Who?

JOSEF  
(Teasing)

The phantom -

(She quickly covers his mouth).

Don't say it!

MEG

Why not?

JOSEF

It scares me so.

MEG

How so? It ain't real.

JOSEF

It is real. As real as the cuts on our loins.

MEG

(She begins coughing).

Meg? Are you all right?

JOSEF

Someday, I will be a real opera star.

MEG

(Twilighting)

Meg, your fever is acting up again.

JOSEF

(She dances and plays like  
she's an Opera Star.)

Bloody wonderful. Can I expect such wonderful brain  
fevers, too?

(She takes his handkerchief  
(which was holding the frog,  
to wipe her brow.)

(She unfolds the handkerchief  
which was surrounding the  
frog.)

MEG

A frog in Ms. Christine's dresser, you say. You've been stealing her under-things again.

(JOSEF grabs at it).

The Phantom punishes the wicked, Josef.

JOSEF

Is he God, now?

MEG

Whatever you cannot see but still believe in...having blind faith in anything makes it God.

(RAOUL enters).

RAOUL

I demand an explanation!

(BOTH cover up the concealed under-garment).

JOSEF

I was gonna give 'em back!

RAOUL

Back? I mean Christine. She...she disappeared! She was in her room. She asked me to wait outside a moment. I did. I returned, she had vanished. I know there is something afoot, and I demand an answer! Satisfy me!

(JOSEF and MEG look at each other).

MEG

He's real!

JOSEF

Stringing up dead rats in the closet is only the beginning!

RAOUL

Rats?

JOSEF

Rats and frogs, Mr. Nouveau Riche. Rats and frogs.

(Smiling, leans in on Raoul).

JOSEF (Contd.)

How did you make your money?

RAOUL

I beg your pardon, sir?

JOSEF

Nothing sir, nothing. It's just...please kiss my wife!

(LIGHTS CHANGE. THE BARKER steps forward into a spot-light. Wet sounds in the air. Dripping. BARKER pulls open a curtain, revealing a sewer).

BARKER

And what other terrible things await you down here? Dear audience, let us feast our eyes on something truly freakish. The beautiful young girl, in a place that is meant only as a way of dealing with the rest of the human waste. Turn your attention to the **GIRL IN THE SEWER**.

(LIGHTS UP on CHRISTINE. She is laying on the stage, half-awake, half-dazed. She sits up with a start).

CHRISTINE

Where am I? I must have fallen..

(A sound...the scurry of a rat, perhaps).

Hello? (Beat). I have traveled through the mirror. The sound of your voice, and my reflection. Such temptations to step through.

(There is the sound of a high, sweet humming. Like that of a little girl).

I know it is you. Who else would sing to me in such a comforting voice? Who else would leave little dead roses outside my door? I have always hated full-bloomed roses; seeing their petals swell up, as if filled with blood.

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

Give them to me withered, give them to me with crisp petals that have brushed a lovers lips, and still carry the memory.

(She approaches a curtain, and pulls it back. Reveal: LIGHTS UP on the ERIK PUPPET who is playing at an organ. CHRISTINE sees him and reacts).

I know...that music. It is a song that someone sang to me long ago in my dreams.

(The ERIK PUPPET turns slightly towards CHRSTINE. He is wearing a mask).

Maybe not...*quite* like this...but I must know. It is you, isn't it?

(The ERIK PUPPET plays at the organ once more. CHRISTINE approaches him).

Father...I have loved you as a girl could love a father. To sit in your lap. Feel the warmth of your belly. The heave of your chest. The smell of a stale pipe. The promise of tomorrow in your chuckle. Looking into your eyes, knowing that you will become a memory. Wrapped in a gentle blanket of mist coming from your pipe.

(She taps ERIK'S shoulder. He turns).

Let me see you.

(She removes his mask. It is the ERIK puppet. Even uglier than before. It chatters its teeth at her. She doesn't scream or faint).

All that remains is a husk. (Beat). Is it you, father?



(The ERIK puppet chatters its teeth).

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

If it is you, you are still...if it isn't you, then you are an agent of his. He told me I would know. (Beat). You won't leave me, will you?

(THE ERIK PUPPET rises from the organ. She faints. The ERIK PUPPET looms over her. He gathers a blanket and puts it over her. BARKER pulls a curtain over the scene).

BARKER

Rats and frogs, ladies and gentlemen. Rats and frogs.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. He exits. **A silhouette of a body drops: an overweight man is hanging by the neck. His shadow against the rear wall.** LIGHTS CHANGE. MEG and JOSEF).

JOSEF

Meg? Why are you crying? Why are the police here?

MEG

It is our Piangi. He has been murdered.

JOSEF

Murdered?

MEG

Do you see? Do you see how all of your talk of evil invites it?

JOSEF

Right. He's spreading syphilis and I'm the one inviting evil.

(She turns JOSEF to the shadow on the rear wall. He sees it. He looks out above the audience, at "the body").

OFF-STAGE VOICE (BARKER)

Cut him down, boys.

("The body" drops. The silhouette is gone).

JOSEF

Cut him down? That's...that's my rope! The devil used my rope!

MEG

He was strangled. Hanging from the ceiling. Twisting. Twisting so slowly. Like a pendant. A beautiful...gift.

(DETECTIVE approaches them. He wears a cape. He is very melodramatic).

DETECTIVE

Excuse me.

JOSEF

Don't look at me like that, sir.

DETECTIVE

Sir?

JOSEF

You think I did it - my rope. My wife. The man who cuckolded me, sir. Gave me...the disease. I can see it in your eye, you've come to arrest me.

DETECTIVE

My eye. It does not blink. It did not mean to offend you. I have no doubt of your innocence.

JOSEF

Oh. That's good. Really good. Can't blink, eh?

DETECTIVE

You saw this man that was hanged? Twisting, as you say?

MEG

Yes. Yes, he was hung.

JOSEF

Hanged. Just like them rats.

DETECTIVE

Rats? (Beat). You found...hanging rats?

MEG

Yes. Who are you?

DETECTIVE

I am a man who crawls through the very underbelly of this city. I am...

(DETECTIVE takes a long drag of a cigarette).

JOSEF

Come off it, he's a detective Meg. Look at him. The way he holds his cigarette, the smoke of mystery around his eye. The way he can't blink. The way he knows that I'm innocent of murdering your suitor with my rope. Detective, through-and-through.

MEG

You are with the man cutting...cutting him...down..?

DETECTIVE

No, I am not the local police. I am...operating out of my own motives.

JOSEF

Oh. They know I'm innocent too, right? You all share a brain I mean?

MEG

Very glamorous work, I'm sure.

JOSEF

All right, don't get any ideas with your 'glamorous' talk. Your lover's dead, which means you'll have to come home with me. It's hell. But, I love you.

MEG

I wish I was dead. I love you, too.

DETECTIVE

Was it...an opera star he killed?

JOSEF

He who? Do you mean...the Phantom?

MEG

Don't say his name!

DETECTIVE

The phantom!

MEG

Don't say his name again!

(DETECTIVE mouths "Phantom?"  
JOSEF mouths "Phantom.")

DETECTIVE

So...he's becoming infamous?

JOSEF

I'll say he is. The opera house will pay a pretty penny to whoever can stop him.

DETECTIVE

Are you certain?

JOSEF

Of course! Another scandal like this, and they'll be out of business.

DETECTIVE

And where can one find the managers of such an establishment?

JOSEF

They are useless. Broken men. This will cripple their minds. Freeze their blood.

DETECTIVE

Surely, a detective can be of help...where the police fail. But the managers are useless, you say. Whom shall I help?

MEG

Help me live again!

(She grabs onto the  
DETECTIVE).

JOSEF

See?! Your glamorous talk!

DETECTIVE

I've taken too much of your time.

(He exits).

JOSEF

How did he get back here, anyway? Who's running this place?  
(Beat). Broken men.

MEG

I am going to tell Senora Piangi.

JOSEF

You are?

MEG

She has to know that her husband and I...

JOSEF

He's dead! And we'd be as good as hanged if you say anything. Motive, opportunity. Rope. MY rope. Good lord! Using a man's rope. That's the end of it. This is what civilization has brought us. My rope, my industry, soiled. Fitting, in a way, I suppose. I guess there's a certain irony to it. Maybe not irony. Poetic justice. His disease kills me. My rope kills him. Huh. It's all about position. It's his position inside you that kills me, and my position, a man dealing with rope, that kills him. (Beat). It sounded ironical when I thought about it, but out loud...(Beat). Huh. Maybe I am guilty.

MEG

I am dead to the world already. My heart has been strangled.

JOSEF

Well I ain't! And you're not confessing to anything. End of story.

MEG

There she is. Talking to the other police. (Beat.) I feel so faint. If you love me, bring me a glass of water.

JOSEF

Are you kidding? (Beat). All right, all right. But, - don't go anywhere.

(JOSEF exits. MEG looks over her shoulder to make sure he can no longer see her, and then turns out to the audience. She steps forward, as if approaching someone. As she talks she follows that someone with her eyes).

MEG

(To audience).

Senora Piangi. I...wanted to tell you. You...you have covered your hands. Yes. I understand. And the mark on your neck. I have a mole. Right here. Just like you. Right here.

(MEG indicates a mole on her neck).

Do you like it? Beautiful, isn't it? Some call it a beauty mark. A piece of flesh. Darkened, but not dead. Like a little piece of beautiful dried fruit. It's these little blemishes that make us beautiful, isn't it? The dried nature of moles and marks that make our more colorful pinkish areas pop in front of the eyes. I know that mine does. Mine also...well, it covers something. Something we both have in common.

(She removes the mole. There is a reddish blister beneath).

You see? We have this in common. It's as if we both have the same fading beauty. The same need to wear these tiny masks. I just wanted to tell you. You grieve. I grieve, too.

(She looks at the mole).

We have that in common.

(MADAM GIRY crosses and plunks an apple in her hand).

MADAM GIRY

Keep moving. For crying out loud. You're scarred, I'm scarred. Some wear fake moles to cover them. Most wear suits and ties and go to work in the morning. Let's go.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to CHRISTINE,  
who is on stage alone).

CHRISTINE

There have been men, father. Men who have tried to make me believe that...that they were you. That they could replace you. Men such as Piangi, who enters my room and watches. He watches. No, studies me. As if every moment I'm alive were an illustration from a stolen picture book. Men such as Josef Bouquet.

(ERIK PUPPET enters,  
listening to CHRISTINE).

A man of the hammer. He believes women are meant to be overpowered. Plucked in their youth when he is already so close to the end. Will it really make him younger to hold my personals? And of course Raoul. Who years ago...[took me]. Why has he returned now? When there's...this man, father. This man. What is his name?

(THE ERIK PUPPET swings up  
next to CHRISTINE. The ERIK  
PUPPET chatters twice).

Erik? Did...did you say Erik? I know he sent you. (She looks to the heavens.) Thank you, father. (Back to ERIK.) Why do I feel so weak? Is it the sewer?

(She touches ERIK PUPPET's  
face, and takes its hands).

There is blood on your hands...what has happened? Tell me...what has happened?

(LIGHTS change to JOSEF. He  
is carrying a glass of water.  
He looks around).

JOSEF

Great. By 'don't go anywhere,' I suppose I meant 'disappear.' Or go running off to that prima donna to make us prime suspects. Merde. Merde. Merde. Merdy merde merde. Meg? Senora Piangi? Any wretched soul around? (Beat). Suppose I should be careful what I ask in this place. Any soul around. What's this?

(He moves aside a piece of burlap. LIGHTS UP on CHRISTINE).

CHRISTINE

Did you hurt yourself, my poor sweet Erik?

JOSEF

Someone's been playing with the anchors here. Sand every...

(JOSEF sees something. He picks it up. It is a dead frog).

Dead frog? Is this one for me? Is someone leaving me gifts, now?

(He has a shocked expression. He turns around. There is a knife deep in his back).

CHRISTINE

Did you...did you kill...?

JOSEF

Well that...that's right sneaky, it is.

CHRISTINE

You...you're protecting me?

JOSEF

Crap, crap, crap.

CHRISTINE

I understand. (Beat.) But the police. They'll be looking for...(Beat.) I will protect you now.

JOSEF

Come out and face me like a...

CHRISTINE

I will be your guardian.

JOSEF

...death.



CHRISTINE

I will be your angel.

(JOSEF falls over dead.  
CHRISTINE drops her dress,  
exposing her breasts.  
BLACKOUT).

(LIGHTS CHANGE TO BARKER and  
MADAME GIRY).

BARKER

It's sad to see a man with a knife in his back because of a woman.

MADAM GIRY

It's sad to see a woman with a knife in her hands because of a man.

BARKER

Do you really think Josef Bouquet deserved that?

MADAM GIRY

It doesn't matter what I think. That's the whole point, isn't it?

BARKER

Hold onto your apples. Ladies and gentleman: a man who thinks of God.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. LIGHTS UP on  
RAOUL).

RAOUL

There is a plague upon us. My Christine is missing. Men are turning up dead. The creatures from the sewers are crawling about the earth, and dying. Wasn't there a passage in the bible? About frogs raining down from the heavens? Since when could it rain from inside. Perhaps if the world is raining frogs, from earth to sky, rather than sky to earth, it is a sign that something else is at work here. And yet, the reputation of this opera house is clean. So, clean. It is because it is so majestic. Marble. Ivory. Looking at it makes me want to..chisel something.

(He examines his own soft hands).

RAOUL (Contd.)

And yet...the easiest target for the devil in hell is a priest. Because if the priest falls, the devil wins. In this majestic house, land of strumpets on stage, true, but in the balconies - Counts, Dukes; patrons. All saints in their white ties and black capes. Powdered perfection. A devil must be exorcised, sent back into the bowels of the earth with the rats, the frogs...we must find the evil here. Before it destroys the reputation of us all.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. The ERIK puppet is sitting in a chair, with its head tilted back. Its robe is open, revealing a large, muscular cock. CHRISTINE is reaching around for her clothes, with a sheet over her. She is shivering. She turns to ERIK, who is presumably asleep. She continues looking for her clothes. ERIK lifts his head and watches as she crawls around, gathering her things together. He sets his head back. CHRISTINE pauses and looks over at him. She turns back to her things. ERIK chatters his teeth. CHRISTINE gasps and stands up).

CHRISTINE

I must go. They will miss me.

(ERIK chatters his teeth).

What you have done for me. Thank you. I must go.

(CHRISTINE moves to exit).

How...how do I leave?

(ERIK points upwards).

How do I get there?

(Sounds of an opera overture begin).

ERIK  
(Gurgling voice).

Follow.

(LIGHTS CHANGE to BARKER and MADAME GIRY).

BARKER  
Oh, perhaps that was too much.

MADAM GIRY  
I didn't need to see its penis.

BARKER  
Fear not for Christine, friends. This ghoul was not her first.

MADAM GIRY  
She's had other ghouls.

BARKER  
Follow us here, behind this curtain, an image from the past. A young woman, practically still a girl...

(He looks behind the curtain).

Wait for it...wait for it...all right. Now we can show you  
-

MADAM GIRY  
In the name of decency, you may see that the girl looks a little older than we've let on.

BARKER  
Of course! Well, for goodness sakes, we're not child pornographers!

MADAM GIRY  
No. They're in the pulpits. They're all in the streets, arresting the homeless. Running for public office. Wearing black capes and white ties while others, God's creatures, sneak into public facilities hoping for enough water to

MADAM GIRY (Contd.)

wash the dirt out of their hair, only to be beaten and left bleeding in the alleys.

BARKER

For that reason, we tell you the girl behind this curtain is quite young, though you will be able to tell she is not.

MADAM GIRY

Let us use our imaginations, and take you, to five minutes after the act of Man and Woman.

(MADAME GIRY pulls open a curtain. CHRISTINE is in bed with RAOUL. She is lying down. RAOUL is dressed, lacing up his boots. CHRISTINE should look a little broken).

CHRISTINE

That was...painful...

RAOUL

Uh-huh.

CHRISTINE

Was it painful for you?

RAOUL

Oh, um...no.

CHRISTINE

Do you like my feet?

RAOUL

Sure. They're...pretty.

CHRISTINE

Pretty?

RAOUL

Yes, pretty.

CHRISTINE

Pretty feet. (Beat). Will you kiss them?

(Awkward pause).

RAOUL

Yes, yes.

(He gives a quick peck on her left foot. He turns away. She clears her throat and offers her right foot. He gives a quick peck. He turns away and continues to dress).

CHRISTINE

I love you.

RAOUL

Good, that's uh...that's very good.

CHRISTINE

Will you return to me soon?

RAOUL

Quite possibly.

CHRISTINE

My father is sick, you know.

RAOUL

He travels France tuning instruments. There's weather. Dust. Sick people. Bad music.

CHRISTINE

If he dies, I will have no one. At night, I pray to Jesus. I ask him to send me someone with a sweet voice, and warm, soft hands.

RAOUL

Soft hands, huh?

CHRISTINE

To hold me. Keep me close. Never leave me the way my father will one day. And do you know what Jesus says to me?

RAOUL

You hear Jesus?

CHRISTINE

He says...fear not, young woman. I will send the angel of music, on a fine horse, with well-laced boots, and soft

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

hands." And when I ask, "oh, who could this be? This angel?" Jesus opens his mouth, and a nest of frogs leap toward me. And I awaken here. (Beat). Do you know who he was sending me? Raoul?

(She smiles at RAOUL).

RAOUL

Um...that's, uh...Christine. I'm a Count. You're...you're a...

(She reaches under the sheets and touches herself. She looks at her hands).

CHRISTINE

Is there always so much blood?

RAOUL

No...

CHRISTINE

It's supposed to be so beautiful.

RAOUL

No...the first time is usually...

CHRISTINE

Usually? So...so I'm not your first.

RAOUL

Well, no.

CHRISTINE

Oh.

RAOUL

(Recovering)

But you're the first that I meant to do it with! Others were...uh...mistakes. Mistakes from a life, oh, Christine...what a terrible life. (Beat). Oh, my little puppet. Don't cry. Puppets don't cry.

(Drying her tears).

You cannot understand what it is like. To have so much money. To have a title. To be in the public gaze. It means

RAOUL (Contd.)

being denied...the important things. and never understanding where the real value of existence lays.

CHRISTINE

Are you going to say, it lays right here?

(She parts her legs. He lays on top of her. A knock at the door).

OFF-STAGE VOICE

Christine? Are you all right?

(They continue to make love as the knocking continues. **The shadow of a GIANT TUNING FORK.** LIGHTS CHANGE).

(CHRISTINE exits. RAOUL is on stage by himself. In the present).

RAOUL

Is there always so much blood?

(LIGHTS CHANGE. BARKER enters).

BARKER

As we have witnessed this little scene, someone else has been remembering it. And they aren't too happy. Our next stop: the self-pitying male.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. BARKER exits).

RAOUL

Stupid. So...so stupid. If Christine returned to me now... perhaps I could make amends for the way I left. Perhaps I could show her that there is more to me than just...than just leaving. Perhaps...perhaps *I* should be leaving her dead things to play with.

(CHRISTINE enters).

CHRISTINE

Raoul!

RAOUL

Christine!

CHRISTINE

Oh, I thought I'd never see you again!

(He throws himself on the ground and starts kissing her left foot).

CHRISTINE

What on earth?!

RAOUL

Don't you remember? QUICKLY! THE OTHER ONE!

(She offers it to him. He kisses it).

CHRISTINE

(Laughing).

I'm going to fall!

RAOUL

Christine, marry me!

(In one motion he props himself up on one-knee and pulls her onto his leg).

CHRISTINE

What? No!

RAOUL

Please, it is me, your...your *Angel of Music*.

CHRISTINE

No...you can't be!

RAOUL

Yes...do you not remember your...*our* first time? Our first love?



CHRISTINE

But, Raoul. You have had, I'm sure, many lovers since that day. That day. I was but a girl. You made me feel so young. Too young.

RAOUL

My little puppet.

CHRISTINE

I think I hated that you called me that.

RAOUL

You didn't. It cheered you.

CHRISTINE

Did it? Did I need to be cheered?

RAOUL

Yes, because I was leaving.

CHRISTINE

Yes. And you will leave again.

RAOUL

Say the word, and I will order my finest horses. We shall be married in any Cathedral you wish. Notre Dame? The Vatican? Or somewhere else. Somewhere where religion will never find us. I will shower you with gold and kisses, each one worth more than ten million francs. Just say the word, and the riches of my heart shall be yours.

CHRISTINE

Raoul. I would say yes. However...

RAOUL

However?

CHRISTINE

You cannot sing.

RAOUL

I can learn! I *will* learn!

(She touches his cheek and starts to walk away).

I can play the organ!

(She stops).

RAOUL (Contd.)

I can play it...really well. I've learned...uh...love songs. In fact...in fact, I will rent out this very Opera house. For the night after next! The engagement party of the Viscount de Changy and the lovely Christine Daae. I will play for you my music. I will have the entire orchestra there, dressed for a Masquerade Party. And there will be singing. There will be dancing. Music in everyone's ears and beaming off of everyone's plastic face. It will penetrate our very hearts, and souls. Our emotions will run like slow, warm water, through our bodies and into the earth. Your father will be seated in the highest seat -

CHRISTINE

Box five. When he tuned the organ here. Years ago. I remember watching him from Box five.

RAOUL

Box five, then. And from Box Five his spirit will be a part of the most musical, most joyous celebration of love Paris has ever seen!

CHRISTINE

Oh, Raoul! You ARE my angel of music!

(THEY KISS. ERIK PUPPET appears in the mirror, witnessing this. He shudders. RAOUL regains his composure).

But we must do this immediately.

RAOUL

Immediately?

CHRISTINE

Yes. Love fades. Like wall print. It must be done soon before...

RAOUL

Before? (Beat). Tomorrow night. I will have it announced. TOMORROW NIGHT!

CHRISTINE

Yes!

RAOUL

What better way to wash away the murder of two men -

CHRISTINE

*Two men?*

RAOUL

-than by having the marriage of a Count and his long, lost Christine.

CHRISTINE

*You mean one man. Senor Piangi.*

RAOUL

Yes. And then the stage man. He turned up.

CHRISTINE

Josef?

RAOUL

I suppose that was his name. He did tell me.

CHRISTINE

...no...

(CHRISTINE looks toward the mirror).

RAOUL

Never mind, darling. That's the past now. All you have to look forward to is your future.

(He joins her at the mirror. They look at themselves).

Don't worry, my love. It shall be arranged.

(RAOUL notices something off-stage).

There's the manager now! (Beat). Until then.

(RAOUL exits. She continues looking in the mirror).

CHRISTINE

He is so beautiful. So beautiful. (Beat). Oh, God, what

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

have I done?

(LIGHTS CHANGE. CHRISTINE exits. BARKER steps out in front of a curtain, holding a candle).

BARKER

What indeed had she done? (Beat). And now... I wish I could draw open this curtain and say "witness the masquerade ball!" But...you all know what a masquerade ball looks like.

(MADAM GIRY enters wearing a Mardi Gras mask- lots of feathers; but not pretty).

MADAM GIRY

Best I could do really.

BARKER

And besides, you're not all here to see a ball!

MADAM GIRY

Heavens, no! What are we? A bunch of rich, rich, richies?

BARKER

Really, what you want to see is the blood.

MADAM GIRY

We all want to see that.

BARKER

Especially the blood of the rich, rich, richies!

MADAM GIRY

I love the sight of blood on a starched shirt. Spattered across a pasty face. Fire burning trapped bodies, some moving from pain, some moving because of the fire's dance. Some not moving at all. And the interior of the house, the flying buttresses, shadows shaking hands with the devil. A broken heart cries out for vengeance, but what are the insects below burning in the yellow light? Ants under a magnifying glass.

BARKER

And so, we shall let you know that inside here, the Paris Opera House, there is an incredible ball. Hundreds of people dancing. The Count himself is wearing a white mask lined in diamonds, and his wife-to-be, the lovely Ms. Christine, is also wearing white. Both. Are wearing white.

MADAM GIRY

A mockery of white.

(CHRISTINE and RAOUL enter wearing white masks. They cross in front of BARKER and MADAM GIRY).

CHRISTINE

I thought you could play the organ.

RAOUL

Be quiet, please.

CHRISTINE

Don't you know a single song?

RAOUL

Is that all you care about? Music? We're about to be wed.

CHRISTINE

Oh, God.

RAOUL

Now there is someone I want you to meet.

(They EXIT. BARKER and MADAM GIRY share a smile).

MADAM GIRY

All in white.

BARKER

The better to catch the blood of the innocent rich, when Erik, battered and abused in the cockles of his heart, performs for you, the most amazing feat ever accomplished in the history of the Paris Opera House!

(BOTH EXIT quickly. A SPOTLIGHT appears on the Erik Puppet, who is wearing a large red hat and cape, a la Red Death. A drum roll. BARKER'S VOICE can be heard through a megaphone).

BARKER'S VOICE

Ladies and gentleman: Erik, the amazing, will now reveal his greatest trick: The Saw Dance of the **Chandelier!**

(ERIK is holding a saw. He is near a rope. He looks at the audience and nods with his mouth open, enthusiastically, as if to say "I can do this! Watch me!" The drum roll continues. He begins sawing like crazy on a rope, occasionally looking up at the crowd, sweating. The rope breaks! He looks up! **The sound of a whistle, he follows it down. Sound of a chandelier crashing.** Loud music. People screaming! CHRISTINE races on stage with blood on her dress. She races off. RAOUL enters slowly. He has a cut on his head. MORE VOICES SCREAMING. LIGHTS UP behind ERIK. The puppet is laughing. SOUNDS of more SCREAMS and APPLAUSE for ERIK. BLACKOUT. BARKER AND WIFE RE-ENTER).

BARKER

Ladies and gentleman. A sickbed.

(RAOUL is laying on a bed with a cloth over his head. MEG is on the bed next to him).

RAOUL

Wha...where am I?

MEG

Paris Opera House. Now a hospital. And a tomb. Blood and fire.

RAOUL

Meg? Are you all right?

MEG

(Incredulous)

No. I am dying.

RAOUL

Where is Christine?

MEG

Not from the fire, no. It's...something else. Do you see these beds? They were all fashioned rather quickly. Mostly old curtains. The ones the rats have eaten through. Plenty of room for all of the survivors. Look at them. Empty beds. **So many empty beds.**

RAOUL

(Attempting to cut it short).

Yes, so many.

MEG

I guess we're all dying, aren't we. Some a bit more slowly than others. I used to think that you were only given so many meal-times in a life. I made sure to eat no more than three a day. And if I were to eat a fourth, I'd either force myself to vomit. Or I would not eat for two whole days, just to make sure. I've missed a lot of meals. And pulled a lot of rope. And kissed a lot of blisters.

(He grabs her and begins shaking her).

RAOUL

Can you make sense, please?

MEG

I am beyond sense. Soon, I will be beyond flesh.

(He lets go of MEG. MEG collapses. RAOUL stands, a little awkwardly, as if dizzy. The DETECTIVE enters).

RAOUL

Who are you?

DETECTIVE

My name is not important. A better question would be...*why* am I? Why have I become a man obsessed? Witness the way I hold this cigarette between my ring finger and pinky. Do you know of men that could hold a cigarette in such a fashion and make it look comfortable?

RAOUL

I must say. That is an impressive way to hold a cigarette.

(DETECTIVE draws on a cigarette).

DETECTIVE

I know what it is you seek. (Beat). The fog of your confusion is coming from...down below. Why do you seek this woman?

RAOUL

Christine?!

DETECTIVE

Yes, Christine.

RAOUL

How could you know?

DETECTIVE

I know many things. Tell me. Is she remarkable?

RAOUL

Yes, remarkable.

DETECTIVE

Beautiful?

RAOUL

I have become bored with outer beauty. But beauty was the



RAOUL (Contd.)

only thing that mattered to me once. Fair skin. Dark hair. Red hair, if her mouth was wide enough. But Christine. I love this girl. She is not symmetrical. Her hair is enough to lose a legion, to let them die between her legs. Her eyes are off, just a bit...the left one looks a bit more at the sun than the right. Is this not love?

(DETECTIVE blows smoke at  
RAOUL).

DETECTIVE

I am looking at a murderer.

RAOUL

Are you?

DETECTIVE

You have murdered hundreds of women with your eyes, thoughts, and deeds. The red-headed woman with the wide mouth. How long did she suffer before taking her life?

RAOUL

What are you talking about?

DETECTIVE

Beauty exists only as far as your loins can shoot. And then, the beauty fades. Like breath on a mirror. Like the life from a cockroach. Look at the way I hold my cigarette. Is it not beautiful?

RAOUL

Well, yes.

DETECTIVE

Do you not want to kill this image?

RAOUL

No.

DETECTIVE

Do you find my mouth wide enough for this cigarette?  
(Beat). Were I a woman, you would say, oh, for a cigarette, sure. But a man is not a cigarette. A man is...a cigar.  
Yes?

RAOUL

I don't see your point.

DETECTIVE

Unless you are a pipe!

(GRABS RAOUL'S crotch. RAOUL tries to force him off. DETECTIVE puts a knife to his throat. MEG giggles).

Do not move. Do not. Do not. You are a killer of women. In their hearts, minds, souls...and their little flabby legs. Why should I help you find this Christine? Seems she's better off with a phantom, than with a murderous dream. Why should I ever help someone like YOU?!

RAOUL

BECAUSE I WILL PAY YOU!!!

(Beat. DETECTIVE releases him, VICTORIOUS!).

DETECTIVE

You know her to be in the sewers?

RAOUL

The sounds behind the mirror. They are wet sounds. Where else?

DETECTIVE

And you do not follow these sounds? My friend, the red-headed woman. She need not so wide a mouth after all.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. BARKER enters smoking a cigar. MADAM GIRY stands next to him, looks at the cigar, and puts a toothpick in her mouth. BARKER allows the cigar to lower in his mouth. LIGHTS CHANGE).

Perhaps your woman is better off with Erik.

RAOUL

Erik? It has a name? You know what it is?

DETECTIVE

If I know what you seek, does it not stand to reason that I am somehow responsible for it?

RAOUL

You? You are responsible?

DETECTIVE

We are all responsible for something, lady killer. Do you like my accent?

RAOUL

If you know where Christine is, then show me.

DETECTIVE

No. I cannot. It would be like a magician allowing the audience to see him placing his dove in his sleeve. Do you know how many doves a year die due to suffocation?

(RAOUL places several gold coins in DETECTIVE'S hand).

(Beat). You do realize, you ask for death. Do not be fooled. There is no beauty in death.

(Pause).

I will lead you into the sewers. But you must keep your hands at the level of your eyes.

(RAOUL obeys).

RAOUL

Is it because the maniac strikes fast with a rope around the neck

(DETECTIVE moves RAOUL'S hand over his nose).

DETECTIVE

The smell, it is treacherous.

(They exit. LIGHTS CHANGE. BARKER enters. He looks a little annoyed and apologetic).

BARKER

And now, forgive us, as we live in a political climate, we have no choice: ladies and gentleman...a soap box.

**(LIGHTS CHANGE. Reveal:  
DETECTIVE. A SIGN overhead  
reads "An Argument Against  
Deductive Reasoning").**

DETECTIVE

In order to be regarded as a master detective, one most perpetuate the mystery that plagues them first. Most mysteries can be solved in a matter of moments. You can guilt on a man's face like a little girl naming colors from a fairy tale drawing. Or you can act what you would do in a guilty man's position. You need to spend hour after hour over book, chemistry set, or any other modern ingenuity. If I were a haunted creature, where would I hide? If I had a beautiful voice, where would I be? If I were kept in a cage, fed rotten apples day upon day, year upon year, what would I do to my captors? Present them as a gift to a detective you have learned to trust with frequent visits. I found Erik in thirty three hours.

**(The ERIK puppet dangles  
behind him. He notices,  
smiles, and continues  
talking).**

One does fall in love with mystery, and their place in it, the way one falls in love with hearing how they appeared in another's dream, and what part they played. My place is obvious and important. I will be the hero of this sad little tale. I will bring the monster to the law. And I will do so...only when the stakes are highest. When the mortality rate of patrons is significantly increased and noticeable. Not just a few stage-hands, but when singers, starlets of the stage, when they begin to feel the nimble fingers of death working quickly upon them, then and only then my importance will grow. Do not look harsh upon me. Men do this all of the time. Your political leaders do this all of the time. We act when the stakes are at their highest. And lucky for us, they never see...

**(He pushes the puppet and it  
sways back and forth).**

DETECTIVE (Contd.)

...the man holding the strings.

(ERIK puppet exits. RAOUL enters, out of breath. LIGHTS CHANGE. The men descend into the sewer).

RAOUL

You say its name is Erik.

DETECTIVE

(Beat). Erik. Erik with a 'k.'

RAOUL

Erik with a 'k.'

DETECTIVE

Yes, Erik with a 'k.'

RAOUL

These steps are so slippery.

DETECTIVE

Yes, yes they are.

RAOUL

We should have asked for help. More men.

DETECTIVE

No, no. The sound would simply frighten him away. We must keep silent.

RAOUL

But more men could -

DETECTIVE

My friend, do not concern yourself or your pocketbook with more men. Come, we must -

(The sound of a **trap door**.  
**RAOUL shouts**. BLACKOUT.  
LIGHTS UP. The DETECTIVE is alone on stage).

## DETECTIVE (Contd.)

Another one of your tricks, Erik? A trap door? Do you think it fair to kill the man that your precious girl really loves? I want you to contemplate that while I adjust my hat. Do you see the way it sits, slightly crooked, over my brow? It shows an intensity of character that your mind will never understand. (Beat). Show yourself, little scorpion. Show yourself. See if you can sting me. Show yourself, little scorpion. Show yourself..

(LIGHTS shift. DETECTIVE exits in the blackout. RAOUL awakens, and sees the corpse of JOSEF next to him, strung up a bit around the body, and against a wall. RAOUL starts pushing at JOSEF. He begins chuckling a mad chuckle).

RAOUL  
This...this is Erik's work. Oh, God...this...this...

JOSEF  
I didn't deserve this.

RAOUL  
Good God!

JOSEF  
Oh, yes, Good God! Good to you, maybe, but put yourself in my position.

RAOUL  
It can't be.

JOSEF  
No fine horses for me to order. No notice in the paper. 'Man Murdered,' that's what they'll say, but no mention of my name. Nothing in bold print. No front pages for ol' Josef, no, no, no, but instead...this. My wife is already forgetting me.

RAOUL  
I know. I saw...what...what are you doing here?

JOSEF  
I think I'm supposed to be a present.

RAOUL

A present?

JOSEF

Well, if you think about it, a young tabby may drop the severed head of a frog in front of you. Leave a small, crushed mouse in your bed. Dead little things as tokens of their affections. Rewards for their heroics for the loved one to oooh and aaah over. It's much easier more rewarding if its' a rat that has been scratching at your walls at night, keeping you awake. A mouse that has been eating your cheese. Things that may have done you wrong, without really meaning to. A cat kills it, and presents it to you so you can eat it, or bury it for later. Lovely little things, cats.

RAOUL

Presents...they leave presents.

JOSEF

It's Christmas time at the opera house. Christmas.

(The body of JOSEF BOUQUET goes lifeless again).

(LIGHTS CHANGE to CHRISTINE. She is talking to the ERIK puppet, who cannot be seen. She has gone mad).

CHRISTINE

Somewhere in the screams...I reach for a hand. The hand that can play the organ. The hand that has returned after so many years...both those years. Where is Raoul going? I can't move. And he's running off again. His hands in the air like cowardly balloons. Stop! Wait, please! Something falls. Hits me. It pins me to the ground. Blurry vision. Raoul disappears in the crowd. I reach out. I touch it. God. I touch something. I think...matted hair. Bone. This is a person. This was a person. (Looks at her hands.) Is there always so much blood? Is there always so much blood? And I finally understand. Yes. There is. Always. A sewer of blood. And no man should have to see. (Holds up bloody hand.) I am alone.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. DETECTIVE finds the corpse of JOSEF.

He touches the corpse, and the arms make a little dance, as if someone were choreographing a marionette. JOSEF stops moving. The detective raises his arm, and continues into the sewer).

(LIGHTS CHANGE. MEG is laying in bed, feverish, sweating, at the end).

MEG

Piangi...Look me in the eye, Piangi. Tell me that you love me. Tell me that you love your wife. Tell me you love that I love my husband. Tell me we are all protected. And that this was the only way. The burning is gone. The itching has subsided. See my legs? They cannot move. Who holds my strings? Who?

(She dies. BARKER enters.)

BARKER

Who indeed, ladies and gentlemen?

(He looks at MEG.)

Who indeed?

(BARKER exits as LIGHTS CHANGE to the DETECTIVE who is walking through the sewers. LIGHTS through the grates from above).

DETECTIVE

Erik! It is finished. Where are you, man?

(The ERIK puppet drops down behind him, then darts back up).

This is no time for the usual trickery. I...I have to apprehend you. On charges of murder of Josef Bouquet. At least seventeen members of the orchestra. Musicians! You, of all people, have killed musicians! And the fine patrons, masked buffoons. Sent them to their devil. You have done me well. Had you attacked the poorer patrons in the balcony,



DETECTIVE (Contd.)

well, we might let it pass. Society forgets. Erik. But you...you have made me a hero.

(He removes a hand gun from inside his coat).

Don't make me shoot you, Erik. Neither one of us wants you to be a corpse. Yet. Look at me. I am armed. My hand is at the level of my eyes.

(Sounds of doors creaking).

Little scorpion.

(A closer sound is heard...a creak of some sort.)

I made you what you are, Erik. I took you out of that fowl carnival. You were the greatest sworn enemy a detective could ever create. And now...

(Another sound).

And I say it is finished. Let's not forget -

(CHRISTINE steps up behind him and slashes his throat).

...those who create you...are your God....

(DETECTIVE falls and dies.  
CHRISTINE looks at her work).

CHRISTINE

Meow. Mroooooow.

(She sinks to her knees next to the body. The ERIK puppet swoops down next to her. She looks up at it, and licks the back of her hand, like a paw. BLACKOUT).

(LIGHTS UP on BARKER and MADAM GIRY).

BARKER

The last few items you will need to see on your own.

MADAM GIRY

Right. So, here's how this works:

(MADAM GIRY has two cut-out shapes: one is of a Scorpion, one is of a grasshopper. She addresses the audience).

Look under your seats, you'll find two shapes like these. If you are too frightened to continued, or simply not curious, you can hold up the scorpion. The scorpion will fill the room with water from the sewers. Filled with shit. Vermon. Whatever you've been drinking and returning. Drowning us all, everything in this cage.

BARKER

Or, if you are brave, you can hold up the grasshopper, which will blow us up into the heavens to fart in the face of God.

MADAM GIRY

It's really up to you.

BARKER

Really, it is up to you.

MADAM GIRY

There is a third option. They could see the end.

BARKER

Sure they could. But they know how it ends. It's how stories such as these always end. They end with you being all alone.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. CHRISTINE is in the arms of the ERIK puppet, holding a bloody knife. She is breast-feeding him).

CHRISTINE

I did have a child once. When I was a very young girl. It was taken from me. I could feel my breasts grow heavy.

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

Painful. (Beat). I've had these...phantom pains since. And you.

(She holds him close as he continues working on her breast).

It no longer hurts when I'm with you. (Beat). They will come for me, you know. Especially after what happened at the opera house. They won't allow me to stay. But, I will stay here. With you. Until our very breaths expire. You taught me everything I truly need to know about singing. About being a woman. I will stay here with you. You are my savior. (Beat). He's coming..

(LIGHTS CHANGE. RAOUL hunts through the sewer. He sees the dead DETECTIVE).

RAOUL

And how did you get ahead of me? (Beat). Have you nothing to say to me, corpse? (Beat). Good. I'm so glad. I'm so happy happy glad glad.

(RAOUL steps away from him. The ERIK puppet sneaks up behind him).

ERIK

(Sings).

FOLLOW  
FOLLOW  
LOVE

(RAOUL turns to the ERIK puppet. He freezes for a moment. Unsure what to do, he raises his hand to the level of his eyes, and turns away).

RAOUL

Where is she?

(ERIK shakes his head 'no').

RAOUL (Contd.)

You are love's only worthy opponent. The disfigured martyr. The father figure. The husk of a man. I tell you this: the promise of beauty is stronger than the promise of growing old, ugly. Seeking what we can never really have is life's only true joy. You know this better than anyone, don't you? (Beat).

ERIK  
(Sings)

FOLLOW  
FOLLOW  
LOVE

RAOUL

Your voice won't always be so pretty. My face will only grow older. But I'm not a husk yet. I'm not dead yet. Beauty and love. Will you release her?

(ERIK puppet exits. RAOUL follows. CHRISTINE enters, holding the bloody knife).

CHRISTINE

Cut the strings. Cut the cord. Cut the hand of God. My love. They are coming. With torches and angry voices. I will free you. I will free myself. I will free us.

(ERIK puppet enters, frantically. CHRISTINE stabs it. A groan. PUPPET OPERATOR removes ERIK. PUPPET OPERATOR is RAOUL. He drops ERIK).

No! It cannot be? How?

RAOUL

Good, God, Christine.

(CHRISTINE crawls to the ERIK PUPPET. It is lifeless. She chuckles a little, and makes like she is going to stab RAOUL).

RAOUL (Contd.)

For Heaven's sake, no Christine! Look at me! Please! Look at me! This madness is over! No more stabbing. (Beat.) Christine, I am a respectable man. You are still a star of the opera. I will marry you regardless of this incident, and we shall work through this together.

CHRISTINE

Marry me? Regardless? Father said "who's going to marry you? A little used slut. Not even a woman, already used. Who's going to marry you? A count with a tuning fork in his ass? "Count Tuning-Fork ass has left the bed full of blood." I never forgave him. Not even when his cold chest was filled with woodpeckers. But I wanted to. I tried to. No one will marry a used woman, Raoul. No one wants a used little girl. (Beat). How many have you...how many? How many have you married?

(Beat. CHRISTINE examines ERIK).

He left us such a lovely present. Wedding present.

(VOICES can be heard from above, in a general murmur).

RAOUL

(To VOICES).

Can you hear me up there?

VOICES

Yes. What? Is it a ghost? It is lunch.

RAOUL

I am in the sewers below the opera house. A man has been murdered. The opera house is in ruins. The one responsible is down here.

VOICES

Murder? How boring. I'll fetch the police! I'll grab my father's gun! I'll order soup, my wife likes it.

RAOUL

Enter at this sewer covering here. Bring men. Many men.

VOICES

Help is on the way! Many men! And a priest, don't forget a

VOICES (Contd.)

priest. As an officer of the law, I demand you stop touching my hat. So many bodies. So much blood.

RAOUL

Do you hear those voices from above? Little puppet, do you hear?

(RAOUL is standing, looking up at the grate).

CHRISTINE

Follow love. Follow paths. Follow...

RAOUL

(To CHRISTINE).

Yes, that's it. Follow me, dear. Follow me!

CHRISTINE

Follow love. Follow love.

(She stabs RAOUL repeatedly. He looks at the blood. He tries to say something, but cannot. He dies. She begins to move her body like a puppet. She sings more than speaks the next line [Note: preferably with a glockenspiel accompaniment]).

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

(Sings)

FOLLOW  
THE PATH YOU'RE GIVEN  
FOLLOW  
THE LIFE YOU'RE GIVEN  
FOLLOW  
FOLLOW LOVE

FOLLOW  
THE VOICES THAT GUIDE YOU  
FOLLOW  
THEY LIVE INSIDE YOU

FOLLOW  
FOLLOW  
LOVE

CHRISTINE (Contd.)

FOLLOW  
THE GIFTS YOU'RE GIVEN  
FOLLOW  
A SOUL THAT'S DRIVEN  
FOLLOW  
FOLLOW

(Pauses. Speaks:).

Follow love.

(As she sings, the stage goes DARK. A light shines through a sewer door. CHRISTINE and RAOUL are trapped in a shadow that resemble bars. CHRISTINE stares straight ahead. RAOUL, dead, sits up and props her on his lap. She continues to move puppet like. RAOUL moves his mouth a little, as if the voice of a dead man is heard through a woman. She continues singing. Little puppet. He seems to smile at her from beyond the grave).

VOICES

Do you hear her? Someone's down there! Follow her voice!  
Follow her voice!

(LIGHTS SHIFT. THE BARS look more like the bars of a cage. THE BARKER and THE MADAM GIRY enter. THE BARKER closes the curtain over CHRISTINE AND RAOUL. The VOICES subside. They turn. They are next to the cage from the beginning of the play).

BARKER

And we did follow her voice. Brought her up, along with the dead. And Erik?

MADAM GIRY

Maybe the rats got to him first? Maybe he was dragged down into the sewers on a wave of human excrement?

(Rattling comes from the cage).

MADAM GIRY

Quiet down, you! The story's almost over.

BARKER

Oh, and this little fella...why...

MADAM GIRY

It ain't a "he." It's a "she." She's Christine, Jr.

(PERFECT BABY, from the beginning, pops up again).

BARKER

The stress of seeing this creature everyday. (Beat). Well, it's only right that she comes back to the beginning, where Daddy Erik was born. (Beat). Our obsession with beauty and ugliness, the two of them really being interchangeable if you think about it, does lead to nature taking its cyclical course. If you need to look into the heart of human ugliness, look no further than here. We've got all the attractions, and their sad consequences.

(He drops an apple into the cage. PERFECT BABY chases after it. The BARKER shakes his head with the shame of it).

All right, everybody out! Come on! Next group's already at the door. They'll need to see it all, too. (Beat). Well, what did you expect to discover here? What brought you here in the first place? What did you think you'd find inside? Beauty? Truth? Yourself? Here. Have an apple and fuck off. (To the off-stage cast). Everybody out here. Bow so *they* (to the audience) can fuck off.

(CURTAIN CALL. A parade of puppets. DETECTIVE ENTERS, knife still in his back, reaching for it. JOSEF does



the same. THEY BOW, falling over. RAOUL enters, holding his manhood through his pants. He looks around, gives a nod, and bows. MEG enters scratching herself in various locations. She smiles. Someone throws her a rose off-stage. She bows like an opera-star. ERIK puppet operator enters with ERIK. They bow. BARKER and MADAM GIRY may or may not bow. If someone has not bowed, make sure they come in and do so, quickly, as the audience is leaving. BLACKOUT).