

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

A Mystery in Two Acts

by

Bob Cooner

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

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Cast of Characters

- “DeeDee” Desmond: Female. 30s-50s. African American. Jazz singer. Perceptive. Cool-headed.
- “Jinx” Sanders: Male. 30s-40s. Any race/ethnicity. DeeDee’s accompanist/confidante. Gay but mostly closeted. Wants more from life.
- Gino Moretti: Male. 40s-60s. Italian American. Owner/manager of The Night Hawk. Tough and temperamental, but unexpectedly sentimental.
- Pepe Guzman: Male. 20s-30s. Latino American. Bartender at The Night Hawk. Gay but mostly closeted. Quiet. A poet.
- Carla Moretti: Female. 40s-60s. Italian American. Gino’s ex-wife. Bookkeeper for The Night Hawk. Controlling. Suspicious.
- Rita Rogers: Female. 30s-40s. Any race/ethnicity. Cocktail waitress at The Night Hawk. Lonely. Fragile.
- Linda Moretti: Female. 20s-30s. Any race/ethnicity. Gino’s second wife. Devious. Ambitious.
- Angelina Moretti: Female. 20s. Italian American. Daughter of Gino and Carla. Spoiled. Acts out.
- Nicky Silver: Male. 20s-30s. Jewish American. Nightclub comedian. A schemer. Brash.
- Leon Bridges: Male. 40s-50s. African American. Detective with the SFPD. DeeDee’s boyfriend. Weary. Sometimes humorless.

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ACT I

Fall, 1955, 11:15 P.M. Rain outside, with occasional cracks of lightning and rolls of thunder. Interior of The Night Hawk, a below-street-level jazz club in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco. One small window high on one wall through which we can see the dim glow of a neon sign and signs of rain, including flashes of lightning. A small platform stage currently occupied by a piano, a piano bench, a taller stool, and a stand mic. A bar with stools. A telephone behind the bar. A few freestanding tables and chairs, and possibly some banquette seating with small tables. Dim lighting and smoke lingering in the air. A short set of steps leads up to the offstage main entrance to the club. A curtained entrance on one wall leads to a short hallway off of which, unseen, are the club's back office, restrooms, and a storage room. The overall look is of a slightly seedy but still thriving jazz club. It's been a slow night, though, and the last of the club's few customers have left. DEEDEE DESMOND, a singer at The Night Hawk, and JINX SANDERS, her accompanist, still occupy the small stage. They have been working on a new song—"After You Get What You Want, You Don't Want It" by Irving Berlin—to go into their act. PEPE GUZMAN, the club's bartender, is tidying up at the bar. RITA ROGERS, a middle-aged cocktail waitress, buses the tables, removing leftover glassware, wiping the tabletops, emptying ashtrays, etc. CARLA MORETTI, the club's middle-aged bookkeeper and ex-wife of the club's owner, occupies one of the tables where she smokes as she settles the night's accounts in her ledger.

DEEDEE. *(Singing, gesturing with her scarf.)*

AFTER YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT YOU DON'T WANT IT.
IF I GAVE YOU THE MOON,

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YOU'D GROW TIRED OF IT SOON.
YOU'RE LIKE A BABY,
YOU WANT WHAT YOU WANT WHEN YOU WANT IT,
BUT AFTER YOU ARE PRESENTED
WITH WHAT YOU WANT, YOU'RE DISCONTENTED.
YOU'RE ALWAYS WISHING AND WANTING FOR
SOMETHING.
WHEN YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT,
YOU DON'T WANT WHAT YOU GET.
AND THOUGH I SIT UPON YOUR KNEE,
YOU'LL GROW TIRED OF ME,
'CAUSE AFTER YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT,
YOU DON'T WANT WHAT YOU WANTED AT ALL.

(Jinx plays a piano solo interlude. GINO MORETTI, middle-aged owner and manager of the club, enters from the back office and proceeds to the bar.)

GINO. *(Annoyed, to Pepe.)* Hey—what the hell did you do with my beer?

PEPE. What did *I* do —?

GINO. It was right here.

DEEDEE. *(From the stage.)* You took it with you—to the back.

GINO. *(Skeptical.)* How do you know?

DEEDEE. I saw you do it.

GINO. You did?

DEEDEE. You'd be surprised what I see from up here.

GINO. Huh. *(He starts to head to the back to get his drink.)*

CARLA. *(Under her breath, referring to Gino.)* Pazzo [Crazy].

GINO. *(Changing his mind, turning back towards the bar, to Pepe.)* Ah, what the hell? Gimme another one.

PEPE. You're the boss. *(Pepe pours another beer for Gino. There is a loud thunderclap and a lightning flash visible through the window.)*

GINO. *(Peevish, to DeeDee.)* DeeDee, we're closed. Show's over. Be a good girl and go home.

DEEDEE. *(Still focused on Jinx and the song.)* Just working out some new tunes, Gino. Be done in a few.

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GINO. *(Still peevish.)* Jinx—get outta here already, *capeesh* [understand]?
Piovere a secchiate!

JINX. *(Still playing.)* Huh?

CARLA. He says it's raining buckets.

JINX. *(Sarcastically.)* No kidding? *(Cueing DeeDee.)* And you're back in—

DEEDEE. *(Singing again.)*

YOU'RE ALWAYS WISHING AND WANTING FOR
SOMETHING.

WHEN YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT,
YOU DON'T WANT WHAT YOU GET.

AND THOUGH I SIT UPON YOUR KNEE,
YOU'LL GROW TIRED OF ME,

'CAUSE AFTER YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT,
YOU DON'T WANT WHAT YOU WANTED AT ALL.

(While Deedee sings, Gino sits at the bar and reads the daily racing form while nursing his beer. Pepe takes a small notebook out of his pocket and writes. Carla continues to work at her ledger. Rita continues to pick up, exchanging Carla's full ashtray for a clean one. An insistent knock offstage on the club's entrance door overlaps the end of DeeDee's song. Deedee continues to chat with Jinx, who plays bits of the song from time to time. DeeDee might sing a phrase now and then as well.)

GINO. *(Calling out.)* *Porca miseria* [What the hell], we're closed! *(The knocking persists. We can hear a muffled voice calling outside.)* Somebody go see who's making that racket. *(Rita, dropping off her tray of dirty glasses, etc. at the bar, goes toward the door, exits off, and then quickly re-enters.)*

RITA. *(With an attitude, to Gino.)* It's your wife.

CARLA. *(Sarcastically.)* Oh, goody.

GINO. Then let her in, Rita! For Christ's sake, what the hell's wrong with you?

RITA. Nothin's wrong with me. You're the one who locked the goddamned door!

GINO. So?

RITA. Keys?

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GINO. (*Getting up to take keys from his pocket.*) What's she doing out in this mess? (*Gino tosses the keys to Rita. Having caught the keys, Rita exits to open the door, and LINDA MORETTI, Gino's young second wife, enters. Under her wet raincoat and hat, she is dressed fashionably. Gino meets her near the entrance.*)

LINDA. (*Entering, shaking her umbrella.*) What's with the locked door? It's a monsoon out there!

GINO. Linda, sweetheart, you said you were staying in tonight.

LINDA. (*Removing her wet raincoat, noticing the club is empty.*) Where are all the customers?

CARLA. (*Sarcastic and biting.*) Playin' hide and seek—and you're "it."

LINDA. (*Sarcastic, bitter, to Carla.*) Ha. Ha.

RITA. It's always slow on Mondays. (*Rita, removing her cocktail waitress apron, exits to the back to put her apron away and get her belongings. Incidentally, she hasn't returned the keys to Gino.*)

GINO. (*Referring to the weather.*) It's nasty business out there.

LINDA. (*Referring to the club.*) And lousy business in here. Seriously, this place is a morgue. It's not even midnight. It's like ... what—? (*Looking at her watch.*)—not even 11:30.

CARLA. Well, lookie there. Linda's learned to tell time.

LINDA. (*Bristling, to Carla.*) I'll tell you something *else*, too, Carla—

CARLA. (*Interrupting.*) Like what—your number? I already got it.

LINDA. (*To Gino.*) You're just gonna let her talk to me like that?

GINO. *Bambina* [Baby], you know how Carla is—

LINDA. But I'm your *wife*, Gino! She's just your goddamned *ex*!

GINO. I know, babe, I know—

LINDA. So what are you gonna do about it, huh? (*A pause.*) Gino?

CARLA. He ain't gonna do nothin'— (*Tapping her fingers on the ledger.*)—if he knows what's good for him, ain't that right, Moretti?

GINO. (*Ignoring Carla, to Linda.*) We decided to call it an early night. Now, come on, sweetheart—how 'bout a nightcap? (*Now to Pepe.*) Pepe—whiskey sour for my wife.

LINDA. (*Frustrated and angry.*) I don't want a goddamned whiskey sour! Jesus, Gino! (*Another thunderclap and more lightning. Linda sits at a*

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table pouting. Pepe puts his notebook away and transfers the dirty glasses to a bin. Rita re-enters with her purse, coat, and hat.)

RITA. Hey, Jinx, how do I know that song? *(Rita sets her belongings down at a table and sits. She takes out a copy of Confidential magazine to read.)*

PEPE. It was in that movie last year, right?

JINX. *(Impressed with Pepe.)* Yeah. “There’s No Business Like Show Business.”

PEPE. *(Overlapping Jinx.)* “... No Business Like Show Business”—right.

JINX. Marilyn Monroe does it in the picture, but she can’t hold a candle to DeeDee.

DEEDEE. Are you kidding?

JINX. Not when it comes to singing.

DEEDEE. I was about to tell you you need some new glasses.

JINX. Don’t sell yourself short, Deeds. You’ve got plenty of what it takes.

DEEDEE. If you say so.

RITA. You know, Marilyn Monroe and me, we use the same nail polish—“Fire and Ice” by Revlon. *(Showing her nails to the others.)* See? I read all about it in *Modern Screen*. *(Rita continues to read her magazine. Jinx pulls DeeDee towards him for a more intimate conversation.)*

JINX. *(Sotto voce.)* Hey—now, remember what we said—tonight’s the night.

DEEDEE. *(Suddenly hesitant.)* I don’t know ...

JINX. Come on, you got me this gig almost a year ago—and Gino’s been promising us both a raise for at least half of that.

DEEDEE. Why not wait ’til he’s in a better mood?

JINX. And just exactly when’s that supposed to happen, huh?

DEEDEE. *(Reluctantly agreeing.)* I know, I know ...

JINX. So, you’ll ask?

DEEDEE. Yeah, I’ll ask—but I’m not holding out much hope.

JINX. You want *me* to talk to him?

DEEDEE. No, I’ll do it. I just need to find the right time.

JINX. *(Nodding towards Gino alone at the bar.)* How about now?

DEEDEE. When did you get to be so pushy?

JINX. Somebody’s got to be.

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DEEDEE. One of these days it's gonna get you in trouble. (*Jinx starts to play another tune: "Some of These Days" by Shelton Brooks. Taking her scarf with her, DeeDee crosses to the bar.*)

LINDA. (*Calling over to Pepe at bar.*) On second thought, I think I will have that whiskey sour.

CARLA. Figures. (*Linda glares at Carla. Pepe puts his notebook aside and makes Linda's drink.*)

DEEDEE. (*Now at the bar, to Gino.*) So, boss—what did you think?

GINO. (*Who hasn't been paying attention.*) About what?

DEEDEE. The new tune. You like it?

GINO. (*Making nice.*) Are you kidding? Not many of you girls got what you got. You could sing the phone book and I'd like it.

DEEDEE. (*Laughing, playing along.*) I might just try that out tomorrow night. (*A pause.*) You know, I was just wondering because ... well, it's just that, um, Jinx and me, we've been talking, you know ... and we were hoping you might— (*Another loud thunderclap and more lightning. The electricity in the club goes out, causing a momentary blackout.*)

GINO. (*Reacting to the blackout.*) What the hell—? (*Others also ad lib regarding the sudden blackout. Just as instantly, the lights come back on.*)

CARLA. *Gesù Cristo*, that scared the piss outta me. (*Rising.*) I'm goin' to the ladies. (*Carla exits to the back.*)

GINO. Goddamned freak storm, huh?

DEEDEE. No kidding.

GINO. Now, what was it you were saying, Deeds?

DEEDEE. Oh, just that—

LINDA. (*Interrupting, calling to him from her table.*) Gino!

GINO. Yeah, babe?

LINDA. Come here a sec.

GINO. (*To DeeDee.*) Sorry. *Scusami* [Pardon me]. Duty calls.

DEEDEE. Oh, yeah, sure, go ahead. Anyway, I guess I'd better give Leon a call and see if he can come pick me up. (*Moving behind the bar to use the phone.*) This rain's not going anywhere, is it?

GINO. And good luck trying to get a cab right now.

DEEDEE. (*Mostly to herself.*) Or any other time, for some of us.

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GINO. If you want, use the phone in the office. (*Reaching for his keys in his pocket.*) Where the hell are my goddamned keys? (*Calling off.*) Carla?

DEEDEE. I think you gave them to Rita—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) No, that ain't right—

RITA. (*Interrupting.*) Jeez! I've got your goddamned keys, all right?

GINO. Why the hell— ? (*Then remembering.*) Oh, yeah. Well, give 'em to DeeDee, will ya? (*DeeDee takes Gino's keys from Rita.*)

DEEDEE. Thanks. (*DeeDee exits to the back. Jinx, still noodling at the piano, overhears Gino and Linda's conversation.*)

GINO. (*To Linda.*) Look, babe, I know Carla's a pain in the ass, but—

LINDA. Yeah? What else is new? But that's not what I want to talk to you about. (*Now sotto voce.*) Look around. (*Confused, Gino complies.*)

GINO. Okay ...

LINDA. What do you see?

GINO. What am I supposed to see?

LINDA. (*Annoyed.*) I don't know—*customers?*

GINO. Like Rita said, it's a Monday, and what with the rain—

LINDA. It's not just the rain, Gino. It's DeeDee.

GINO. What?

LINDA. She's not bringing in the business anymore.

GINO. But she's practically a fixture here, babe. When people think of The Night Hawk, they think DeeDee Desmond.

LINDA. Did it ever occur to you that's *why* they're not showing up? She's old news. Why not try someone else?

GINO. (*Glancing towards Rita.*) I did try someone else once—

LINDA. Who? You mean Rita? I didn't know she sang.

GINO. You wouldn't exactly call it that.

LINDA. Then why'd you let her— ?

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) Long story. I don't wanna get it into it, all right?

LINDA. So, how about trying something different? I was thinking, maybe a comic.

GINO. The Night Hawk is a jazz joint.

LINDA. So, it's against the law for a jazz joint to book a comic?

GINO. It's not why people come here, babe.

LINDA. That's the point, Gino. People *aren't* coming.

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GINO. But a comic?

LINDA. Why not? Somebody new, hip? Bring in the younger crowd?

GINO. I don't know—

LINDA. Like, I don't know, maybe your daughter's boyfriend? Nicky what's-his-name.

GINO. Nicky Silver? That *stronzo* [asshole]?

LINDA. Why not? He's young, he's with it, he's good looking—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) You think he's good-looking?

LINDA. I mean if you like that type—

GINO. Yeah, well, maybe—but what he *ain't* is funny.

LINDA. You just don't get his sense of humor. You're too ... I don't know, you know what I'm saying.

GINO. I'm too old? Is that it?

LINDA. Stop it, Gino. You know I don't think that. I'm just saying Nicky Silver appeals to ... well, to a different clientele. A crowd that goes out on *weeknights*, not just the *weekends*.

GINO. I don't know—

LINDA. (*Working the sexy angle.*) Come on. Try something new for a change. Hey, it worked for us, right?

GINO. (*Chuckling.*) You got that right.

LINDA. I'll make it worth your while.

GINO. Oh, yeah? Well, in that case ... I'll think about, all right? (*Jinx, having overheard Gino and Linda's conversation, is now troubled. He crosses to Pepe at the bar.*)

PEPE. (*To Jinx.*) The usual?

JINX. Yeah, I guess. Whatcha got there? (*He reaches for Pepe's notebook, brushing his hand against Pepe's. Pepe pulls his hand with the notebook away.*) Sorry, I didn't mean to—

PEPE. (*Interrupting, uncomfortable, evasive.*) No, it's not that. It's ... I mean it's ... nothing. (*Putting the notebook back in his pocket.*) Just ... scribbling is all. (*Pepe starts making Jinx's drink.*)

RITA. (*Calling to Jinx at the bar.*) Hey, Jinx, did you see this piece in *Confidential* about the real reason Joe DiMaggio divorced Marilyn Monroe?

GINO. (*Crossing to Rita.*) DiMaggio? Let me see that.

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JINX. Yeah. Supposedly he thought Marilyn was having an affair with her pianist.

GINO. (*Laughing derisively.*) Who the hell would start something up with a pianist, for Christ's sake?

JINX. (*Irked.*) Yeah, who the hell would ever do that?

GINO. (*Looking at Rita's Confidential magazine.*) And get a load of *this* headline: "The Men in Liberace's Life." Hah! I guess *some* fellas *do* got a thing for "pianists," if you catch my drift. (*Gino laughs at his own innuendo.*)

RITA. (*Annoyed, grabbing the magazine back.*) Ha ha. Very funny. And I happen to think Liberace is very talented. (*Pointedly to Gino.*) Whadda you know about talent anyways?

GINO. (*Pointedly.*) I know it when I see it, all right?

RITA. Since when?

GINO. (*Putting Rita in her place.*) You *know* when. (*Now to the others.*) And I ain't sayin' this Liberace ain't talented. I'm just sayin' when it comes to ice cream, he prefers tutti-frutti to plain vanilla. (*Laughing, to Pepe.*) Am I right, *amigo*?

PEPE. (*Annoyed by Gino's insinuation.*) *No sé* [I don't know], boss.

GINO. What about you, Jinx?

JINX. (*Defensive.*) What about me *what*?

GINO. You think that Liberace fella might be a little light in the loafers?

JINX. It's his life. He can do what he wants.

GINO. Sure, he can—as long as he doesn't do it to *me*, you know what I mean? (*No one laughs but Gino. Carla enters.*)

LINDA. (*To Pepe, who has delivered her drink.*) Thanks.

CARLA. So, how many does that make tonight, Linda? Two? Three? Seven?

LINDA. (*Standing, furious.*) Gino, if you don't say something to that battle-axe, I swear I'm gonna—

CARLA. (*Interrupting.*) You're gonna what, huh? What are you gonna do?

GINO. (*Intervening.*) Linda, baby, come on—

LINDA. (*To Gino.*) Go to hell! (*Linda grabs her purse and stalks towards the back hallway, just as DeeDee enters, carrying her coat, hat, and purse.*)

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She's got Gino's keys in her hand as well. Linda grabs Gino's keys from DeeDee as she pushes past her.) I'll take those. *(Linda exits.)*

DEEDEE. What the— ? *(Another thunderclap and more lightning.)*

GINO. *(Starting to the back after Linda.)* I guess I better go talk to her.

CARLA. As if she ever listens to you.

GINO. Carla, when are you gonna learn to shut your big fat mouth?

CARLA. When I'm six feet under.

GINO. *Magari* [Let's hope].

CARLA. *Stronzo* [Asshole]. *(Then standing, grabbing her cigarettes and lighter.)* I need some fresh air.

RITA. *(Warning Carla.)* It's pretty nasty out there.

CARLA. So, I'll stand under the awning! Jeez! *(Carla exits out the front entrance. DeeDee sets her purse, hat, and coat on a table near the stage. Her scarf hangs out of the coat's pocket.)*

DEEDEE. *(Ironically.)* So, what did I miss?

JINX. The two Mrs. Morettis at it again.

DEEDEE. What else is new, right?

RITA. That Linda's got a temper on her.

DEEDEE. She's no match for Carla.

PEPE. But don't you think Gino ought to stand up for Linda? She *is* his wife.

DEEDEE. Yeah, but Carla got there first—and what Carla says goes around here if you haven't noticed.

JINX. *(Implying more than he's saying.)* That's what *you* think.

DEEDEE. That's what I *know*.

JINX. And just why is that?

DEEDEE. If you ask me, honey, it's all about the money.

JINX. What *about* the money?

DEEDEE. It's Carla who keeps the books—not Gino.

JINX. You think there's something shady going on?

DEEDEE. Well, you know, Gino keeps a gun behind the bar.

JINX. *(Surprised.)* Jesus! *(To Pepe.)* For real?

PEPE. Uh-huh.

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JINX. Let me see. *(Pepe reaches under the bar and pulls out a handgun. Rita, carrying her purse, goes to the bar to look at the gun, too. Jinx takes the gun in hand.)* Wow.

DEEDEE. Be careful with that.

JINX. *(To Pepe.)* You know how to use this thing?

PEPE. Yeah. Korea.

JINX. Really? You served?

PEPE. As a medic—but I can handle a gun if I have to.

JINX. Good to know—I guess. *(To DeeDee.)* So, what's the skinny? There *is* something shady, or— ?

DEEDEE. *(Taking the gun from Jinx and setting it back on the bar.)* Well, there've always been rumors, but—

JINX. *(Interrupting.)* What kind of rumors?

DEEDEE. *(Incredulous.)* What do you think?

JINX. *(Catching on.)* Oh. *(Now getting an idea.)* Well, there's one way to find out. *(Pointing to Carla's ledger.)* Carla's precious little ledger. *(Jinx moves towards the table where Carla has left her ledger.)*

RITA. Careful. She catches you touching that thing, you'll be tickling those ivories one-handed—

DEEDEE. —and I really do need a fully functional accompanist, Jinx.

JINX. *(Sotto voce to DeeDee.)* Yeah, but for how long?

DEEDEE. What are you talking about?

JINX. *(Pulling DeeDee aside.)* Did you talk to Gino?

DEEDEE. I was just about to when Linda called him over to bitch about Carla.

JINX. That's what I'm trying to tell you. It wasn't Carla she had her claws out for. It was you.

DEEDEE. *(Surprised.)* Me? How do you— ?

JINX. *(Interrupting.)* I eavesdropped, okay? Linda wants Gino to can you and hire another act. And if you go, I go.

DEEDEE. *(Dismissive.)* Nobody's going anywhere, Jinx.

JINX. And get this: She wants a comic. Nicky Silver.

DEEDEE. *That wiseass?*

JINX. Yeah, that wiseass who just happens to be dating Gino's daughter.

DEEDEE. Not gonna happen. Listen—Gino and me, we go way back.

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JINX. But that was before Linda showed up—and I'm telling you, she's got his ear now.

DEEDEE. Yeah, well, I've had it a lot longer.

JINX. Maybe *too* long.

DEEDEE. Jinx, we are staying right here. Trust me. The Night Hawk's our home. And if it's more money you want, then we'll get it.

JINX. It's not just the money, Deeds.

DEEDEE. What are talking about?

JINX. It's Gino, too. His comments. His attitude. Maybe you haven't noticed, but he can be a real prick to me. To you, too, for that matter.

DEEDEE. I know, I know—but I guess I'm just used to it.

JINX. Well, I don't like it. I get enough of it out there. Time's up, Deeds. Either Gino makes good on that raise or else.

DEEDEE. Or else what?

JINX. Or else ... or else I don't know. Find a new gig, I guess.

DEEDEE. I'm fine right here, Jinx.

JINX. But don't you want more? Look, what I'm saying is—

DEEDEE. What *I'm* saying is this conversation's over, sweet cheeks. Now, I'm off to the little girls' room. And when I get back, I want to talk about something else, okay? (*DeeDee exits to the back, picking up her purse along the way and taking it with her.*)

JINX. (*Crossing to the bar, picking up the gun.*) Let me ask you something, Pepe.

PEPE. Shoot. (*Quickly reconsidering.*) Or maybe don't. How about I take that thing, huh?

JINX. (*Handing the gun back to Pepe.*) Yeah, sure.

PEPE. (*As he puts the gun away.*) You were saying— ?

JINX. I was just curious—don't you want more out of life than slinging drinks in this joint?

PEPE. Where's this coming from?

JINX. Just ... I don't know. Just weighing my options, I guess. So, whadda you say? Is this it for you—or is there more?

PEPE. (*After a pause, guarded.*) Yeah, I guess I want more.

JINX. It's only natural, right?

RITA. Right.

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JINX. (*Happy to be affirmed by Rita.*) See? Rita knows.

RITA. *If you can get it. Some can and some can't.*

JINX. But everybody still *wants* it.

PEPE. Whatever "it" is.

RITA. Respect.

JINX. Exactly—and success—and money.

PEPE. So that's "it" for you, huh? Money?

JINX. It solves a lot of problems.

RITA. What about love?

JINX. It sounds corny as hell, but, okay, why not?

PEPE. "The stain of love is upon the world."

JINX. Huh?

PEPE. It's from a poem. William Carlos Williams.

JINX. What's it mean?

PEPE. (*A tad flirtatiously.*) What do *you* think it means?

JINX. (*Flummoxed.*) I ... I don't know. (*Quickly changing the subject.*) So, what's "it" for you, huh?

PEPE. You mean what do *I* want?

JINX. Yeah.

PEPE. I guess ... well, it's complicated.

JINX. I know what you mean. (*Suddenly, there is a commotion at the entrance door where ANGELINA MORETTI, the early-twenties daughter of Gino and Carla, is entering with her boyfriend, NICKY SILVER, a nightclub comic. Both are drenched from the rain and a little drunk. Both are wearing coats and hats, but neither has an umbrella. Carla follows behind.*)

ANGELINA. (*Flapping her coat and removing her shoes.*) Oh my god, my new shoes!

CARLA. (*Going to the bar.*) Angelina, *mio Dio* [my God], come here. Let's get you a towel, eh?

ANGELINA. (*Removing her wet coat and handing it to Nicky.*) Nicky, baby, take this. (*Angelina follows Carla to the bar where Pepe hands her a bar towel and Angelina attempts to dry herself.*)

NICKY. (*Referring to Angelina's wet coat.*) What am I supposed to do with it?

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

PEPE. *(Coming around the bar to Nicky.)* I'll take it. *(Pepe takes Angelina's coat from Nicky and starts to move to hang it up. Rita busies herself behind the bar, making a drink for herself.)*

NICKY. *(Removing his coat and tossing it at Pepe.)* Take mine, too, while you're at it, pal. *(A little annoyed, Pepe takes Nicky's coat as well and hangs it up before returning to his spot behind the bar.)*

ANGELINA. Where's Daddy?

CARLA. *(Yelling towards the back.)* Moretti! Your daughter's here!

ANGELINA. Jeez, Ma, you'll wake the dead!

CARLA. He's in the back—with Linda.

ANGELINA. You mean that witch didn't melt in all this rain?

CARLA. No such luck.

ANGELINA. *(Removing her wet shoes.)* When Daddy comes out, tell him I'm in the ladies', okay?

CARLA. *(Yelling.)* Gino!

ANGELINA. Ma, enough! *(Leaving her wet shoes behind, she starts to exit to the back. She turns and addresses Pepe.)* Hey, um, what's your name ... Paco, right? Gimme a sloe gin fizz, would ya? *(Pepe curtly nods acknowledging Angelina, then turns to give Jinx a look. DeeDee, with her purse, enters from the back encountering Angelina who's exiting.)*

DEEDEE. Angie, I thought I heard you come in. What a mess out there tonight, huh?

ANGELINA. *(Brusquely.)* You got that right. *(Moving briskly past DeeDee.)* Excuse me. *(Angelina exits. As DeeDee returns to the bar, Nicky intercepts her.)*

NICKY. DeeDee Desmond—long time, no see, beautiful. *(Attempting to pull DeeDee into him.)* How about a little sugar?

DEEDEE. *(Resisting Dino's advances.)* I don't think so—

NICKY. *(Sniffing her neck.)* Mmm. You smell nice—

DEEDEE. *(Pushing him away.)* And you smell like a distillery.

NICKY. All right, I can take a hint.

DEEDEE. Then here's another one—save the wolf act for your girlfriend, okay?

NICKY. *(Winking.)* Which one? *(He laughs at his own drunken joke.)*

CARLA. *(Sharp.)* The one you came in with, cazzo [dick]!

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

NICKY. Easy, killer. It's a joke.

CARLA. Well, I don't like it.

NICKY. *(Holding his hands up in surrender.)* All right. Jeez. Have me arrested, why don't you? *(Rita, carrying a drink, returns to the table she occupied earlier.)*

RITA. You know, DeeDee's boyfriend is a cop.

DEEDEE. And he should be here any minute.

NICKY. Yeah? Maybe I know him.

DEEDEE. How's that?

NICKY. Let's just say I've had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of quite a few of our local constabulary. Seems they don't always appreciate my act.

DEEDEE. You mean I'm not the only who doesn't find you funny?

CARLA. Take a number. *(Another thunderclap, followed by a flash of lightning.)*

NICK. *(After a pause.)* I wonder what's keeping Ange? *(Linda enters from the back, followed by Gino. Linda is calmer, smugly satisfied. Gino is somewhat cowed. Nicky extends his hand to Gino.)* Mr. Moretti. How's tricks?

GINO. *(Shaking Nicky's hand, non-committedly.)* Così così [So-so]. You?

NICKY. Can't complain. *(Trying to make a joke.)* Kvetch [complain], sure, but that's in my genes, you know what I mean? *(Turning now and extending his hand to Linda, with innuendo.)* And how about you, Mrs. Moretti? Any complaints?

LINDA. *(Taking Nicky's hand.)* Not yet. *(Nicky pulls Linda into him and kisses her on the cheek. Carla notices the exchange between Nicky and Linda. Meanwhile, Angelina enters from the back.)*

GINO. *(Seeing Angelina.)* There she is! *(Gino goes to Angelina and embraces her.)*

ANGELINA. Hi, Daddy.

GINO. Angelina, *mia bambina* [my baby girl]! *(Gino goes to kiss her, but she pulls away.)*

ANGELINA. Daddy— !

GINO. *(Confused.)* What?

ANGELINA. I just put myself back together.

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

LINDA. (*Acknowledging Angelina coldly.*) Angie.

ANGELINA. (*Responding in kind.*) Linda.

GINO. So, what brings you out on a night like this, huh?

CARLA. *Una bella tempesta, eh* [Quite a storm, huh]?

ANGELINA. We were having dinner around the corner at Tony's—

NICKY. (*Interjecting.*) It wasn't raining so bad at first.

ANGELINA. (*Continuing.*) —but by the time we were done, it had turned into a deluge—

NICKY. (*Interrupting.*) —and, of course, there aren't any cabs, so we had to make a run for it—

ANGELINA. (*Interrupting.*) —in water up to my ankles, for god's sake!

NICKY. And if it keeps up like this, it's gonna be up to your—

ANGELINA. (*Stopping Nicky before he says something too crass.*) Nicky!

NICKY. (*Playing the innocent.*) What?

ANGELINA. (*Not buying Nicky's act.*) Jeez. (*Crossing to Pepe at the bar.*) Hey, Paco, you got that drink for me?

PEPE. (*Handing her the drink.*) Right here.

JINX. It's Pepe.

ANGELINA. Huh?

JINX. The gentleman's name is Pepe. Not Paco.

ANGELINA. (*Confused, going to Nicky.*) Isn't that what I said?

GINO. Pepe—like *pepperoni*! Ha! Am I right, *amigo*?

PEPE. (*Covering his annoyance.*) Whatever you say, boss.

NICKY. (*Changing the subject, sotto voce to Angelina, with a subtle nod towards Gino.*) Weren't you going to— ?

ANGELINA. (*After a quick nod back to Nicky, to Gino.*) Um ... Daddy—that thing I was asking you about before—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) So, that's why you're here, huh?

ANGELINA. What? No, it's like I said. There were no cabs—

GINO. You know, sweetheart, we already give you a generous allowance—

CARLA. (*Interrupting.*) You need more money? For what?

ANGELINA. All kinds of things, like, um, I don't know, everyday things—

CARLA. (*Interrupting, referring to Nicky.*) Like bankrolling this louse?

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

ANGELINA. Leave Nicky out of this, okay, Ma?

GINO. Is that right, sweetheart? Did he put you up to this?

ANGELINA. Nicky doesn't need money, Daddy. He's got plenty.

CARLA. Oh, yeah? Since when? When's the last time you booked a gig, Mr. Hot Shot Comic?

NICKY. I got plans, all right?

CARLA. "Plans," huh? "Plans" that involve actual *work*?

ANGELINA. Leave him alone, Ma! Nicky's doing just fine. *(To Gino.)*

Just a little extra's all I need. And I'll pay you back. I promise.

GINO. I don't want you should pay me back, sweetheart. I just don't want you picking up the slack for some *stanna mabaych* [mispronunciation of "son of a bitch"] who can't pay his own way.

ANGELINA. It's not *for* him, Daddy. I told you. It's for me. And it's just this once. I swear. *(There is a pause. Gino looks at Carla who glares at him.)*

GINO. It's a lot of money, sweetheart—

CARLA. How much?

ANGELINA. Stay out of it, Ma—

CARLA. *How much?*

ANGELINA. *(Quietly.)* Five.

CARLA. *(Shocked.)* You want we should give you *five hundred dollars*?

ANGELINA. I know it's a lot of money—

CARLA. *(Interrupting, sarcastic.)* Oh, you *know*! What *I* know is you gotta helluva nerve comin' in here—

ANGELINA. *(Interrupting, pissed.)* I'm asking, Daddy, not you, okay?

CARLA. *(Also pissed.)* If you're asking *him*, you're asking *me*, okay?

GINO. Stay out of it, Carla!

CARLA. It's my money, too, Moretti!

LINDA. *(Jumping into the fray.)* And *mine*, too, for that matter! What the hell does she need five hundred bucks for, I'd like to know?

ANGELINA. *(To Linda.)* None of your goddamned business, that's what for!

LINDA. Your father's half of this goddamned business *is* my goddamned business!

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ANGELINA. (*Interrupting, to Gino.*) I told you marrying this *puttana* [whore] was a mistake, Daddy—

CARLA. (*Interrupting.*) But would he listen? Oh, no. He just *had* to go and get yoked to this—

LINDA. (*Interrupting, to Carla.*) What he had to do was get away from *you*, you shriveled up hag!

GINO. *Basta* [Enough]!

LINDA. (*To Angelina.*) And don't think I don't know what you just called me! Believe me, I've picked up plenty of wop around here— !

GINO. (*Interrupting, shouting.*) *Basta* [Enough]! All o' youse! (*For a moment, everyone is quiet, then ...*)

CARLA. (*Referring to Nicky.*) Ten-to-one it's on account of this mooch.

GINO. (*Loudly.*) *Stai zitto* [Shut up], Carla!

CARLA. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could spit.

NICKY. For your information, I got a gig coming up next month at “the hungry i.”

JINX. “the hungry i,” huh? Impressive.

ANGELINA. (*Defensive.*) See, Ma? What do you got to say about that?

CARLA. I say “congratulations”—*if* it's legit.

NICKY. Legit? Hah! You're one to talk.

CARLA. What the hell's that supposed to mean?

NICKY. It means that ledger of yours might tell another story.

CARLA. That ledger is none of your goddamned business, *capeesh* [understand]?

ANGELINA. Look, Daddy, I wouldn't ask if I didn't need it.

GINO. (*Softening a bit.*) I know, sweetheart—

ANGELINA. (*Surprised, elated.*) Then you'll do it? (*Going to Gino to embrace him.*) Oh, Daddy, I knew—

LINDA. (*Interrupting, a warning.*) Gino— !

GINO. No, that's not what I meant. What I'm sayin' is ... is I gotta sleep on it.

ANGELINA. But, Daddy, I—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) And I don't want to hear any more about it. We'll talk tomorrow.

ANGELINA. But—

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) No buts. Tomorrow. (*Gino returns to his bar stool. Carla wraps up her accounting for the evening, removing her glasses, putting her pencil away, and closing the ledger.*)

ANGELINA. Jeez, I'm sorry I ever brought it up. God forbid I ever ask you for anything.

CARLA. (*Frustrated.*) Holy Mother, would you listen to her?

ANGELINA. (*Pulling Nicky aside.*) Take me home, Nicky.

NICKY. I would, babe, but chances of getting a cab are zilch. Better we stay here, have a drink, and wait it out.

ANGELINA. (*Pouty, imploring.*) Nicky— ?

NICKY. Just a little while longer, all right, babe? (*Angelina shrugs and goes to sit at a table. Carla, ledger and purse in hand, starts to go the back. Nicky crosses to the bar, to Pepe.*) Hey, buddy. Gimme another one of them whatchamacallits for my girl, huh?— (*Pepe nods and starts to work.*) —and I'll take a rum and Coke.

CARLA. (*Stopping.*) You mean you'll pay for a rum and Coke, right, Mr. Hot Shot? (*Carla exits to the back.*)

ANGELINA. Ma, I swear— !

NICKY. (*Hotly pulling out some cash from his wallet and slapping it on the bar.*) And keep the change! (*Pepe makes the drinks. Nicky goes to sit with Angelina. Rita exits to the entrance door to check on the rainstorm. Jinx pulls DeeDee aside for a private conversation.*)

JINX. Gino's alone over there. Why don't you— ?

DEEDEE. (*Interrupting.*) Are you kidding? Now is *not* the time.

JINX. If you won't, I will.

DEEDEE. Jinx, give it a rest, all right? (*Changing the subject.*) I'm gonna try Leon again. I thought for sure he'd be here by now. (*DeeDee goes behind the bar to try the phone. Another crack of thunder and flash of lightning. Rita re-enters, followed by LEON BRIDGES, DeeDee's police detective boyfriend, wearing a wet hat and raincoat and carrying a wet umbrella.*)

RITA. (*Referring to Leon.*) Lookie what the storm blew in. (*Rita continues back to the table where she's left her belongings.*)

DEEDEE. Leon— !

NICKY. (*Ala "movie gangster."*) Cheese it—it's the cops.

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

DEEDEE. (*Going to Leon.*) I was just trying to call you again, but wouldn't you know it, now the phone's out.

LEON. And not just here, baby. Phones are out all over the city. Some kind of night, huh? (*DeeDee and Leon share a quick kiss.*) Hey, everybody. (*Some of the others acknowledge Leon. Then, to DeeDee.*) You ready, hon?

DEEDEE. Just about. (*DeeDee starts to gather her belongings: hat, coat, purse, etc. Jinx follows her.*)

JINX. (*Sotto voce, referring to Gino.*) But I thought you were gonna— ?

DEEDEE. (*Also sotto voce.*) It can wait 'til tomorrow. (*Now to Leon.*) Where've you been anyway? Took you long enough.

LEON. (*Gently sarcastic.*) And now who's waiting on who? (*Carla, with her purse but without the ledger, enters from the back.*) But seriously, you're lucky it's just your *phone* that's out. There's plenty of folks who've lost power altogether. Stoplights are out of commission all up and down Market—and down here in the Tenderloin, there's all kinds of cars been flooded out in all the high water.

RITA. So, we're stuck here then, huh? (*Rita takes her bottle of "Fire and Ice" nail polish from her purse and starts to touch up her manicure.*)

ANGELINA. (*Frustrated, to Nicky.*) Well, if that's the case, I'll take that drink.

NICKY. (*Heading to the bar to get Angelina's and his drinks.*) Maybe drinks *and* a show? What do you say, DeeDee? How's about a little entertainment?

DEEDEE. Show's over, Nicky.

NICKY. Come on—what else have you got to do? Head out with this flatfoot and get drowned? (*Laughing at his own joke.*) Am I right?

DEEDEE. We'll think of something.

NICKY. Come on, DeeDee. How 'bout us doing a double act, huh? (*Holding the drinks, singing and dancing obnoxiously to "Everybody Loves My Baby" by Jack Palmer and Spencer Williams.*)

EV'RYBODY LOVES MY BABY,
BUT MY BABY DON'T LOVE NOBODY BUT ME,
NOBODY BUT ME—

CARLA. Shut your piehole, you lousy freeloader!

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

ANGELINA. (*Angry, to Carla.*) How about zipping *your* mouth, huh, Ma?

NICKY. (*Irate, to Carla.*) Oh, so now you want I should pay a cover charge, too, huh? Is that it?

GINO. (*Crossing to Nicky.*) Look, we don't want your money, all right? (*More civilly.*) Accept our apologies.

CARLA. Don't go apologizing for me, Moretti—

GINO. (*Loudly, angrily to Carla.*) *Mi scusi* [Excuse me], okay?

Gesù Cristo [Jesus Christ]! (*Now to Nicky.*) No hard feelings?

NICKY. (*After a pause, non-committedly, moving to sit with Angelina.*) Whatever you say.

GINO. *Prego* [You're welcome]. (*Turning to Leon, making nice.*) Sorry about that. Just a little, uh, family squabble, you know what I mean?

LEON. In my line, we call that a “domestic disturbance,” but yeah, I get it. (*Another thunderclap and more lightning.*)

GINO. (*Trying to lighten the mood.*) And I don't know—maybe Nicky's right, huh? (*Now to DeeDee.*) Come on, DeeDee—how about singing us a little something before you take off? You don't mind waiting a few more minutes, do you, Leon?

LEON. (*Looking to DeeDee.*) I, uh, well—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) When's the last time you got to hear DeeDee sing?

LEON. I guess it *has* been a while—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) Then that settles it. (*Another thunderclap and more lightning.*)

DEEDEE. Gino, it's late—and if the streets are as bad as all that—

GINO. (*Interrupting.*) What do you mean “late”? It's not even midnight— (*By this point, Rita has finished with her nail touch-up, has put the polish away, and has been blowing on her nails to dry them.*)

RITA. (*Interrupting, sincerely.*) I could maybe do a number if you want.

GINO. (*Cruelly dismissive, to Rita.*) I don't want. Nobody wants.

RITA. (*Rising, covering her disappointment and anger.*) Then in that case ... (*Rita, carrying her purse, crosses to the bar to make herself another drink.*)

GINO. (*To DeeDee.*) One last song—as a favor to me, all right? (*DeeDee looks at Leon, then at Jinx, unsure what to do. Leon, now removing his hat*

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

and coat and setting the umbrella aside, nods and waves her on. Jinx shrugs his assent.)

DEEDEE. *(Giving in reluctantly.)* Okay, yeah, sure.

GINO. Thanks, doll. I owe you, all right? *(Jinx exchanges a look with DeeDee, then takes his place at the piano. At Rita's table, DeeDee sets down her purse, hat, and coat. She takes the scarf out of her coat pocket with her and steps up onto the stage to confer with Jinx.)* How about a beer, Leon? Pepe, get our friend here a beer, okay? Or whatever he wants—on the house.

NICKY. Oh, so, it's "on the house" for our "friend" here, huh?

ANGELINA. *(Warning.)* Nicky—

LEON. *(To Pepe.)* Coffee's fine.

PEPE. Sorry. No more coffee, but I could make some fresh.

NICKY. Aw, come on, "friend." Live a little. You're off-duty, right?

LEON. Then, sure, a beer. Why not?

NICKY. A beer? No, no, no, my "friend." When somebody else is paying, you order the top-shelf, premium shit. Get it?

LEON. *(Firmly putting Nicky in his place.)* Yeah, I get it. *(To Pepe.)* A beer is fine for me. Thanks. *(Another thunderclap and lightning flash. Jinx begins playing a bluesy intro to "Bye Bye Blackbird" by Mort Dixon and Ray Henderson. DeeDee takes her position at the mic, scarf in hand, and sings.)*

DEEDEE. *(Singing.)*

PACK UP ALL MY CARE AND WOE,

HERE I GO SINGING LOW.

BYE BYE, BLACKBIRD.

WHERE SOMEBODY WAITS FOR ME,

SUGAR'S SWEET SO IS HE.

BYE BYE, BLACKBIRD.

NO ONE HERE CAN LOVE AND UNDERSTAND ME.

OH, WHAT HARD LUCK STORIES THEY ALL HAND ME.

MAKE MY BED AND LIGHT THE LIGHT,

I'LL ARRIVE LATE TONIGHT.

BLACKBIRD, BYE BYE.

(Piano solo interlude.)

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

NO ONE HERE CAN LOVE AND UNDERSTAND ME.
OH, WHAT HARD LUCK STORIES THEY ALL HAND ME.
MAKE MY BED AND LIGHT THE LIGHT,
I'LL ARRIVE LATE TONIGHT.
BLACKBIRD, BYE BYE.

(While DeeDee and Jinx perform, the following actions occur, somewhat overlapping: Pepe serves Leon a beer at the bar. Gino crosses to the bar and orders Pepe to refill his own beer, which Pepe does. Gino clinks glasses with Leon, then crosses to sit with Linda at her table. Pepe takes his notebook from his pocket and writes in it. Carla lights another cigarette at her table. Rita, with her drink and her purse, crosses and sits at the table near the stage where DeeDee has left her belongings. She nurses her drink and her hurt feelings. Nicky sits and talks with Angelina, their body language indicating tension and disagreement. Linda, sitting with Gino, wants to talk to him. Gino, frustrated, gets up and moves closer to the stage to listen to DeeDee. Linda, annoyed, takes her purse and exits to the back. Nicky, seeing Linda exit, excuses himself from Angelina and exits to the back. Carla, having noticed Linda and Nicky's cagily-timed exits, moves to Angelina and whispers her suspicions to her. Angelina, stirred by Carla, rises. Suddenly, there is a loud crack of thunder, a lightning strike, and the lights go out completely, abruptly ending DeeDee and Jinx's performance. We hear some ad-libbed confusion, along with the following dovetailing/overlapping lines of dialogue. The lines, actions, and sound/lighting FX in this section go very quickly.)

CARLA. *Cristo santissimo* [Holy Christ], not again— !

DEEDEE. You gotta be kidding— !

ANGELINA. What the hell— !

PEPE. *(Fumbling behind the bar.)* I think there's a flashlight back here. Gimme a sec— *(Just as suddenly, there is another loud thunderclap/lightning flash that momentarily illuminates the stage, and we see Linda and Nicky entering from the back. They both look a little disheveled, and Nicky is tucking in his shirttails. Now without any illumination, there are more confused ad-libs and more overlapping dialogue.)*

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

LEON. *(Fumbling to find his umbrella and exiting out the front.)* I'm pretty sure I got a flashlight in my car. Be right back—

CARLA. *(Digging in her purse.)* Where the hell's my cigarette lighter— ?

NICKY. What kinda *fakakta* [fucked up] crap is this— ! *(Another very loud thunderclap—though no lightning flash this time—covering an almost simultaneous gunshot which no one identifies as such. Another loud crack of thunder follows immediately.)*

LINDA. Christ Almighty! Jeez— !

DEEDEE. What the hell was that— ?

ANGELINA. Scared me to death— !

NICKY. Here, I've got a lighter—

CARLA. I got one, too, if I could just find it—

PEPE. *(Having located and turned on the flashlight.)* Ah! There we go! *(Starting to come around the bar to exit to the back.)* I'll go check the fuse box—

DEEDEE. Can you give me some light over here, Pepe? I don't wanna fall—

CARLA. *(Having found her lighter.)* Aha! Found it— ! *(Pepe aims the light at the step down from the stage to the floor. His light reveals the body of Gino lying on the floor near the stage. DeeDee gasps. Angelina screams. The following lines/actions somewhat overlap.)*

LINDA. *(Loudly.)* Oh, my god! Gino— !

JINX. *(Standing.)* What's happened? What's going on— ? *(Pepe, with the flashlight, rushes quickly towards Gino ahead of the others.)*

CARLA. *(Seeing Gino on the floor now.)* What's he done now— ?

ANGELINA. *(Also rushing to Gino.)* Daddy! Are you all right— ?

PEPE. *(Handing the flashlight to DeeDee.)* Here—hold this— *(Another rumble of thunder and a flash of lightning. As the others speak and come closer to Gino, Pepe is checking Gino's breathing and pulse.)*

LINDA. *(Also going to Gino.)* Let me see him! Gino— !

CARLA. *(Still looking for her lighter.)* What the hell? Get up, Moretti! *Stupido goffo— [Clumsy oaf]!*

ANGELINA. Daddy! Daddy! Get up— !

CARLA. What is that— ?

ANGELINA. Is that blood— ?

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

LINDA. What do you mean “blood”? What’s happened to him— ?

PEPE. I can’t tell yet. We need the lights back on— *(More thunder and lightning. Leon enters with an illuminated flashlight, using it to help him find his way inside.)*

LEON. *(Entering, referring to the flashlight.)* I got it! Cheese and crackers, it’s crazy out there—

RITA. I can go check the fuse box—

ANGELINA. Nicky, go with her—

NICKY. I don’t know anything about that stuff—

ANGELINA. *(Angry, to Nicky.)* What the hell good are you— !

LEON. I’ll go—

DEEDEE. No, Leon, you better come here. Quick— !

RITA. *(With her purse, heading to the back.)* It’s all right. I know what I’m doing, for Christ’s sake. I just need the keys—

CARLA. *(Digging in her purse for the keys.)* Oh, the keys, right. Here, take mine— *(Carla gives her keys to Rita, who continues towards the back.)*

LEON. *(Referring to the flashlight.)* And take this, too—

RITA. Thanks—

PEPE. *(Calling after Rita.)* There should be extra fuses inside the box— *(Rita, with her purse, the keys, and the flashlight, exits to the back.)*

LEON. *(Now with DeeDee and Pepe.)* What’s going on? What’s happened— ?

DEEDEE. *(To Pepe.)* Is he conscious— ?

PEPE. Doesn’t seem to be—

LEON. That’s a lot of blood—

LINDA. Well, do something— !

CARLA. Anyone got smelling salts or something— ?

ANGELINA. *(Trying to move toward Gino.)* Daddy— !

NICKY. *(Holding her back.)* Ange—

ANGELINA. Let go of me— !

LEON. Where’s he bleeding out? We gotta see if we can stop that—

PEPE. I, uh—I’m not getting any pulse—

LINDA. What do you mean? What does that mean— ?

ANGELINA. *(Pulling away from Nicky.)* Daddy! Daddy— !!

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

CARLA. *Per l'amor di Dio* [For God's sake], do something, why don't you— ?

ANGELINA. Don't stop, for Christ's sake! What the hell are you doing?

PEPE. It's ... it's no use.

LINDA. What? No, no—

PEPE. He's ... he's gone. I'm sorry.

ANGELINA. *(Wailing.)* No, no, no! *(Nicky tries to comfort her, but she pushes him away and runs to Carla's arms. Overwhelmed, Linda sits alone. Pepe moves away a bit, and Leon kneels to examine the body for himself. Suddenly, the lights come back on. Rita enters. The others are quiet and still.)*

RITA. *(Entering.)* Hey, I got the lights back on— *(Now taking in the stillness.)* What—what's happened? *(No one answers.)* What? Did he fall or— ? *(DeeDee shakes her head and moves away from the rest. Jinx follows her. Leon rises, removes a tablecloth from a nearby table, and covers Gino's face and body.)*

CARLA. *(As Leon starts to cover Gino's face, excitedly to Leon.)* What are you doing? What the hell do you think you're doing?!

ANGELINA. Oh, my god! No, no, no!! *(Angelina and Carla continue to hold on to each other. Linda still sits alone, Pepe nearby. Nicky doesn't move. Leon moves to join DeeDee and Jinx for a hushed private conversation.)*

LEON. *(Sotto voce, to DeeDee and Jinx.)* There's a bullet-sized hole in his back. I don't see an exit wound.

JINX. What are you saying?

DEEDEE. He's saying Gino's been shot.

JINX. Then we gotta call the cops or an ambulance or something.

DEEDEE. The phone's out, remember?

LEON. Hey—I *am* a cop. I've done this before.

DEEDEE. But, Leon, whoever did it, whoever shot Gino is here—in this room.

LEON. Right. *(Now taking charge, to the group.)* Okay, folks. Listen up. What we've got here is a murder investigation—so nobody leaves, understand? Nobody. *(Another flash of lightning accompanied by a loud thunderclap. Blackout. End of Act 1.)*

MURDER 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

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