

LV runs. MARI falls on the settee. Mounds of soot fly up into the air. She slowly sits up on the settee, facing out. She grabs up the phone and throws it up back. The orange and yellow lights strangely illuminating her face from below, her shadow thrown huge up the back.

I'm now in the carcass of my house, a smoked ham. I can't start again. What's the next move? I'm too beat for a man, really I ask you. I've been jumping the coals for years, now I've finally fallen in. Nobody wants the burnt bits, have you noticed? They love a blazing bint but when the flames have gone who wants the char? Well, some might say I've got what I deserve. But that's the problem, I've never had what I deserved. I was more than this dump I had to live in. In fact, my energy itself could have burnt this place down years ago, four times over with fireworks forever. I was more than what I married. Your father, your father kissing me with his parlour lips. I had health and breasts and legs. I strode. When I got behind your pram I propelled it about a hundred miles an hour. The air was full of the sound of wolf whistles, deafening. He was shambling somewhere behind, a beanpole Chaplin. But you, you were always his. It was always you and him, you and him all the time, doing quiet things, heads bent together, listening to the records. Driving me mad, my energy could have burnt this house down four times over, and you two tilted into books, listening the radio shows, playing board games in front of the fire. Fuck it. And now I'm dancing on my own grave and it's a roasting tin. My house gutted, my last possession gone. My last chance charred. Look at me up to my ankles in char. *(She looks at all the thick soot over the floor.)* In fact, this is my soul leaking over the floor here, soot itself. I'm going to scoop handfuls up and spread it over you. Your head, you see, *(She indicates everything.)* was the match head to this.

She gets up with her hands full of soot, and traps LV in a corner. Holding her with one hand while she prepares to cover her with the soot from the other, she holds her there.

Wait a minute. No. What do you want anyway? Oh, I know, your records.

She lets her go.

The firemen put all the salvage in the alley. They should be there.

LV goes out and round to the alley. MARI stays put. LV sees the big pile of broken records almost filling the alley. Lamplight glinting off them. She gently picks a piece up. Opens her mouth to scream but nothing comes out. Opens her mouth again, nothing. MARI appears.

What's up, cat got your tongue?

She steps forward but she slips on the massive pile of broken records, slithering all over in them and falls.

LV quickly holds the sharp edge of a half record, to her throat. MARI suddenly stunned.

LV And now, you will listen! One time, one! *(She screams.)* There's one. *(She screams again.)* There's another. Can you hear me now my mother?! *(words rush out)* My dad, you mention him and it's wrong what you say, wrong what you say. You drove him as fast as you could to an early grave. With your men and your shouting and your pals and your nights, your nights, your nights, your nights, your nights of neglect. Things forgotten everywhere. No soap in the dish, no roll in the toilet, no clean blouse for school. Oh my dad, when he had his records on he sparkled, not dazzling like you, but with fine lights, fine lights! He couldn't speak up to you, 'cause he must have wanted you so. I couldn't speak up to you, 'cause I could never get a word in! *(She looks at the piece of record in her hand.)* These become my tongues. *(She drops it.)* And now they've gone, I don't know where this is coming from. But it's one after another and I can tell you now.

Pause.

That you hurt me.

Pause.

That you hurt me.

Pause.

With your sharp ways and the things you said and your
SELFISHNESS WOMAN!

Pause.

I've got to stop now. I'm trembling so strange.

(She drifts slowly away).

MARI *on her knees, trying to stand.*

MARI *(pleading)* LV, I beseech you. I beseech you, LV. *(She is slipping, trying to stand but slipping in all the records. Soot all over her hands and face, in the lamplight, slipping, sliding, trying to stand)* I beseech you! I beseech you!

She stops struggling, flops face down in the pile. She closes her eyes.

SADIE *is at the alley end, peeping and softly giggling.*

Blackout.

Lights come up on the empty club.

LV *comes in, stands at the back of the stage.*

Suddenly, faint purring sound of machinery. LV looks up.

BILLY *comes into view in the cherry-picker.*

BILLY You come back on your own. I was just coming. Everything all right?

She nods.