

Sleep With Me  
A Play with Music  
By Jim Shankman  
(revised 5/16/09)

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Cast:

Louis B. Mayer

The legendary head of MGM at the height of his powers.

Melody Mudd

16 years old. Caught between girlhood and womanhood.

Beulah Mudd

Her mother. Desperate, determined and hot as a pistol. Maybe 35.

Billy Bone

A charming lanky hillbilly, rough around the edges. Younger than Beulah. An eccentric dancer (a la Buddy Ebsen).

Time: 1938

Place: Hollywood.

Setting: a unit set representing the bungalow office of Louis B. Mayer on the MGM lot and a small single room in a Hollywood flophouse. Louis' spacious office is decorated in high Deco style with a sleek curved desk. The overall effect is mid thirties's corporate regal. There is a private bedroom connected to the office by a door upholstered in leather.

Music:

*Early Bird* Lyric by Sidney Mitchell Music by Lew Pollack  
from Captain January with Shirley Temple and Buddy Ebsen.

*The Right Somebody To Love* Lyric by Jack Yellen Music by Lew Pollack  
from Captain January with Shirley Temple and Buddy Ebsen.

*Oh My Goodness* Words and music by Mack Gordon and Harry Revel  
From Poor Little Rich Girl with Shirley Temple Alice Faye and Jack Haley

*An Old Straw Hat* Words and music by Mack Gordon and Harry Revel  
From Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm with Shirley Temple and Randolph Scott

## Act One

(Louis B. Mayer comes stumbling into his office on the MGM lot as a deep orange California sunrise pours through the venetian blinds. He sits heavily at his desk. The phone rings. He picks up.)

### LOUIS

Yeah. I'm here. I'm here. This better be good, Schenk (*pronounced skenk*). It is six o'clock in the morning. I don't care what time it is on Fifth Avenue. I don't wake up on Fifth Avenue. I wake up on South Bundy. No, I didn't read the report. No I didn't talk to the finance boys. I'm talking to you. Yeah I know. Overbudget. Let me ex-- Yeah I know. Let me ex--- Yeah I know. I read Vari--. Yeah I can count. Listen to me, Schenk. Who runs this studio, you or me? You or me? I do. I know every penny. I know every brick. I know every script, every actor, every light, every camera. I carry it around like a ten ton weight in my head. And what do you do? You dine with bankers. You golf with bankers. And you entertain chrous girls for bankers. And you call me up at six in the morning. Six. It's six. And you tell me profits this, and box office that, Depression this, and deficit that. I know there's a depression on. I drive by it every morning in my limo. You want my job, Schenk? A movie a week every week? Bang bang bang. And I'll sit in New York eating danish at Lindy's reading the New York Herald, Mr. Hotshot Nicholas Schenk, majority shareholder and major pain in my ass, he would still be shining my shoes if Marcus Loew didn't drop dead in his tracks in 1927. Look, Nicky. Nicky Nicky Nicky. '39 is gonna be huge. War or no war. I promise you, Nicky. Bloody butcher knives. Yeah, I'm working on it, Nicky. I want her. I want her very bad. Believe in me, Nicky, old MGM pal of mine.. Have I ever failed you? Answer the question. Nicky. Nicky. Goddammit. I ain't through with you!

(He slams down the phone, sits back, stretches out and falls fast asleep.  
The deep orange California sunrise intensifies.)

### LOUIS' INTERCOM

Mr. Mayer. Mr. Mayer

(He mutters and shifts in his sleep. He is dreaming.)

### LOUIS

No calls. No calls. Next. Next. Send in...the next... one. So cute....adorable.

### LOUIS' INTERCOM

Mr Selznick is on the line.

### LOUIS

(In his sleep.)

I said no calls. So cute. Selznick! Selznick! Adorable. Eat her up. Next next send in the next one. Cute.

(Melody Mudd steps through the door to Louis office dressed as Shirley Temple. She stands in a spotlight and sings to him.)

MELODY (as Shirley Temple.)  
(Early Bird From Captain January. Lyrics/Music S.Mitchell/L.Pollack)  
GOOD MORNING GOOD MORNING  
NATURE HUNTS WHEN MORNING COMES ALONG.

LOUIS  
Shirley?

MELODY  
DAYS DAWNING STOP YAWNING  
AND BEGIN TO JOIN ME IN MY SONG

LOUIS  
Shirley?

MELODY  
EARLY BIRD  
UP AT BREAK OF DAY,  
EARLY BIRD  
SING THE DARK AWAY,

LOUIS  
Shirley, is that you?

MELODY  
EARLY BIRDIES ALWAYS CATCH A WORM OR TWO,  
SO DON'T BE LATE YOU'VE GOT A DATE  
YOUR WORM'S AWAITING YOU.

LOUIS  
So cute. Adorable. Come here, you.

MELODY  
SLEEPY HEADS  
NEVER SEE THE SUN,  
STAY ABEDS ALWAYS MISS THE FUN,  
WHISTLE IN THE MORNING..

LOUIS (over)  
Selznick Selznick, leave us alone.

MELODY  
SEND THE WORM A WARNING

LOUIS (over)

Leave me alone I'm very busy.

MELODY

SLEEPY HEAD  
TUMBLE OUT OF BED,

LOUIS (over)

Come on, you. Snuggle up with me.

MELODY

BE A LITTLE EARLY BIRD.

(Song ends. Louis awakens.)

Shirley! Shirley! Where are you? Where is she?

(He realizes he was dreaming.)

Awwwwwww!!!!

(He tries to go back to sleep so he can dream again.)

Come back. Shirley, come back to me.

(He shifts about grunting and groaning. Finally he sits up.)

Goddamn son of a bitch.

(Louis gets down on his knees.)

Oy god. This is going to kill me yet.

(He prays.)

Please God. I am on my hands and knees. Listen to me. I need her. I have to have her. It's that voice, that smile, that beautiful blonde shikse head of hair she's got on her. Does that make me a monster? Am I some kind of fiend? One month. That's all I ask. Six weeks. Seven on the outside. Then I will let her go. I will give her back. Just give her to me. Please God. This is Louis Mayer. You owe me. After what I did for you in this town. You owe me bigtime. Give me Shirley Temple or I don't make The Wizard of Oz. Do I make myself clear?

(Crossfade to Melody, in a nightdress, sitting on a small unadorned bed in a Hollywood flophouse. She is sixteen or so, but her womanliness is hard to miss. She holds a piece of her mother's clothing up to a mirror and sings.)

MELODY

(Melody sings very simply and with deep feeling.)

EARLY BIRD  
UP AT BREAK OF DAY  
EARLY BIRD  
SING THE DARK AWAY

(Beulah enters.)

BEULAH

Sorry, baby. Momma's home.

MELODY

Momma, are we really going to crash the big time, Momma?

BEULAH

Yes we are, honey bun. We are going knock their socks off.

MELODY

Two meals a day, Momma?

BEULAH

Three.

MELODY

No.

BEULAH

On my honor, honey bun.

MELODY

Oh Momma. I want to be a star. I do.

BEULAH

You will be, honey bun. You will be. But first I want to hear your song one more time.

MELODY

Ok.

(Melody sings very simply and with deep feeling.)

EARLY BIRD

UP AT BREAK OF DAY,

Momma, I'm so tired.

EARLY BIRD

SING THE DARK AWAY,

BEULAH

That's not what she says when her Momma tells her to practice.

MELODY

EARLY BIRDIES ALWAYS CATCH A WORM OR TWO,  
SO DON'T BE LATE YOU'VE GOT A DATE,  
YOUR WORM'S AWAITING YOU.

BEULAH

No no no honey. You're singing with too much feeling. Too real. Too honest. There's a depression on, sweetheart. Folks don't want that kind of real. They want to be happy.

MELODY

I don't feel happy.

BEULAH

Well that's acting sweetie. Happy when you're sad. Sad when you're happy.

MELODY

How come you know so much? You know almost everything, Momma.

BEULAH

Come on, you. Pick it up. And stop flattering your old momma.

MELODY

Are you old?

BEULAH

Too old for showbiz. Now come on. Make me feel good inside.

MELODY

(She sings. She tries to be more cheerful.)

SLEEPY HEAD  
NEVER SEE THE SUN,  
STAY ABEDS,  
ALWAYS MISS THE FUN,  
WHISTLE IN THE MORNING  
SEND THE WORM A WARNING  
SLEEPY HEAD  
TUMBLE OUT OF BED  
BE A LITTLE EARLY --

Momma, I can't do anymore. I can't.

BEULAH

Alright honey, that's alright for now. Now go to sleep, little one.

MELODY

Sleep with me, Momma.

BEULAH

You're a big girl now, Melody.

MELODY

Please, Momma. Snuggle up like you used to. I'm hungry, Momma.

BEULAH

What are you hungry for, Melody?

MELODY

For you, Momma. And for Daddy.

BEULAH

Hush now. Hush.

(Beulah climbs into the bed with Melody.)

There. How's that. Is that better?

MELODY

Tell me all her movies, Momma. So I can fall asleep.

BEULAH

Well let's see.

(Beulah recites slowly, gently like a bedtime story.)

There's Littlest Rebel and Dimples and Bright Eyes and Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm and Poor Little Rich Girl and Little Miss Broadway and Curly Top and Stand Up and Cheer and Baby, Take A Bow and Wee Willie Winkie and Heidi and Stowaway.

(Billy Bone appears in the door. Melody is asleep. Beulah kisses Melody and extricates herself from the bed. She goes to Billy and they embrace.)

MELODY

(Melody half awakens.)

You left one out, Momma. You left out the best one.

BEULAH

And there's Captain January with Buddy Ebsen and they sing....

MELODY and BEULAH

...our favorite songs in that one...

BEULAH

...Early Bird, and Right Somebody to Love. And they dance together like a pair of crazy jaybirds.

(Melody is asleep. Beulah stands, looks at Billy and pulls her dress over her head. Crossfade to Louis' office. Louis is pacing in front of his desk. He smokes a fat cigar. The intercom buzzes. "Mr. Mayer." The phone rings. He picks it up.)



LOUIS

David. Did you talk to Zanuck? Is he gonna lend her out? Oh Jesus. Well why not? Ah Christ. How much? Jesus christ. And what did you say? Jesus H. Christ. And what did he say? Jesus H. Christ On A Cross! Look at me, I am getting all *fashmergele*. Do you understand what I'm saying to you? *Fashmergele*. I don't care, it's a word. So I made it up. I haven't been to Poland for forty years. Listen to me little Davey Selznick, you little *pishe payshe*, still wet behind the ears, offer him a swap!

(He slams down the phone. His intercom buzzes.)

Send her in. Send her in. I'm sitting here like a lump on a log. Send her in for crying out loud.

(The office door opens. Melody enters. She wears a frock dress with white stockings. Her hair is in pigtails. She looks a lot younger than she did in the first scene, maybe thirteen, but this is not your ordinary kind of thirteen.)

Ok Ok. Hi hi hi. How are you, dear? That's right. Right in here. Ain't gonna bite ya. Haven't got my teeth in. Ha ha ha. Leastwise not yet. There ya go. Very nice. Ok. So. You are....

MELODY

Melody Mudd.

LOUIS

No, really? I mean... Really? Melody? That's lovely. Where's your mom, Melody.

MELODY

She's right outside, Mr. Mayer, sir. She's filling out the form about who I am and where I come from and what have I done.

LOUIS

Right. Good. That's just fine. Why don't you have her step in here and talk with us, just the three of us. Ok, Melody? Absolutely adorable, a lovely name. A name for a movie star.

MELODY

Well, ok, Mr. Mayer. I'll go get her. Just be two shakes, ok?

LOUIS

Wait wait wait. That's what you want to be isn't it? A movie star?

MELODY

Sure I mean golly.

LOUIS

Well maybe you will be. What do you think about that?

MELODY

Wow Mr. Mayer I mean holy cow. I'll go get my Mom. Back in a jiffy.

LOUIS

Wait wait wait. Do you sing, Melody? Says here you're a singer.

MELODY

I am, I mean yes I do, I mean that's right, yes, yes. I'll just get my ---

LOUIS

Wait whoa hold on. Here, let's have a good look at you, Melody. You know I think I like you, young lady. Yes, that's just what you are, isn't it, you're a nice young lady. We are always on the lookout for nice young ladies here at Metro. Let's get your mom in here and let's talk about this, whaddaya say?

MELODY

What ever you say, Mr. Mayer. You're the boss.

LOUIS

Yes I am. I am the boss. Ha ha ha ha ha.

MELODY

Ha ha ha ha ha.

LOUIS

You are just charming the pants off me, Melody. What a lovely smile.

MELODY

Oh, thank you, Mr. Mayer. My momma says my smile is worth a million bucks.

LOUIS

Your momma says that?

MELODY

Yes sir. She says it every night before we snuggle up in the trundle bed.

LOUIS

Isn't that sweet. You know it's very important, Melody, to honor thy father and thy mother. Of all the ten commandments, that's the one that people need to think about the most. That's my strong opinion.

MELODY

Yes sir. I don't have a father anymore.

LOUIS

Oh no?

MELODY

But Momma's got a boyfriend. Does that count?

LOUIS

Well that depends on a lot of things, young lady. Mmmm hmmm.

MELODY

Why did you say that like that, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

Say what?

MELODY

Mmmm hmmm like that. Did I say something wrong? I hope I didn't. Momma says first impressions never come off.

LOUIS

Well isn't that just so true. You know that's pithy, that's what that is.

MELODY

Is it?

LOUIS

Yes it is.

MELODY

Mommy's very pithy.

LOUIS

Well I'll just bet she is. With a lovely sweet daughter like you, what else could she be but pithy in the first degree.

MELODY

Oh she's a lot of things, Mr. Mayer. She's beautiful and she's gentle. And she rides horses, Mr. Mayer. She's an expert horsewoman.

LOUIS

Is that so?

MELODY

Oh it is, you bet it is. She rides all the time. She can't get enough of it. She likes the really big ones, Mr. Mayer. The bigger the better she always says.

LOUIS

And why is that?

MELODY

Well 'cause she says they last a lot longer. She can ride them all day she says and they never give out. She can ride and ride and ride. And she likes the way they feel underneath her.

LOUIS

Yes yes I see.

MELODY

And she does tricks.

LOUIS

What kind of tricks do you mean, dear?

MELODY

Oh like tricks in the saddle. Special positions.

LOUIS

So she's very accomplished in the saddle, is she?

MELODY

It's on account of daddy rode her very hard ever since they met.

LOUIS

I'm sorry?

MELODY

Daddy. He rode her on his best horse. All day long. And Momma said she learned an awful lot from Daddy.

LOUIS

Well I can't wait to meet her. But first I would like you to read a little scene for me, dear. Here's the scene I want you to read. First I'd like you to just read it aloud for me and then we'll just play around with it.

MELODY

Ok. Mr. Mayer. Well here goes.

(She reads from the script.)

"Golly Moses it's good to see you. It's such a big surprise. Really. Mommy and Daddy will be here any minute. Boy won't they be surprised. I said, he's far faraway but he's always looking out for us and when things are looking down we just have to put ourselves in his hands. And he'll come through. And I was right, wasn't I? You bet I was."

LOUIS

That's lovely, dear. Now I want you to go out there and open the door and come in and see me and say those lines to me like you really really mean it, ok? Cause that's what acting is all about isn't? You say the lines like you really really mean it. So go outside. That's right. Then take a minute and knock and come in.

(Melody goes out. Mayer picks up the phone.)

David. So who does he want for her? Cary Grant, are you kidding me? And what did you say? Edger Bergen, you gotta be crazy. And what did he say? Spencer Tracy, is he out of his mind? And what did you say? Charlie McCarthy, are you fucking nuts? Look I gotta go. I'll call you back. I'm working on plan B.

(He hangs up.)

Melody honey, are you out there?

MELODY

Yes, Mr. Mayer.

LOUIS

Well knock and come in. Day's a wasting.

(Melody knocks and comes in. She is wearing a very short, frilly babydoll dress.)

MELODY

(She reads again. Lights shift. It is a seduction scene this time.)

"God it's good to see you. Well well well, what a big surprise. Really big. Mommy and Daddy will be here any minute. So we better hurry. I said, he's always looking out for me and I just have to put myself in his hands. Cause that's what hands are for, aren't they? Oh baby."

(Lights return to normal.)

LOUIS

Yeah yeah, that's uh, jesus that's good, that's really really good, Melody. That's uh.... Why don't you try that one more time for me. Ok? And yeah, whatever you were doing, a little bit more. Don't be shy, honey. Ok, scoot.

MELODY

Am I getting it, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

Uh yeah honey, you are definitely definitely getting it.

(Melody goes out.)

Jesus christ. Did that...? Did she...? Am I...? Ok get a grip on yourself, Ellbe. This is not what you think. It can't be. You're tired, you're overworked. But Get. A. Grip.

(Phone rings. He picks up.)

Yeah? Listen, Schenk, I am very busy right now. I'm auditioning. Don't you threaten me, you SOB. It's my money too and it's my goddamn name on the marquee!

(Louis slams down the phone. Melody knocks and enters. She is in satin underwear and stockings.)

LOUIS

Oh My God.

MELODY

(She “reads.” Lights shift.)

“God it’s good to see you. Well well well, what a big boy. A really big boy. Don’t look now but things are looking up. Ooooh! I’m just gonna put myself in your hands, ok? Come on, put me in your hands. Oh baby.”

LOUIS

Hey, what is this? Who are you?

MELODY

(Lights shift back.)

I’m Melody, Mr. Mayer.

LOUIS

Oh yeah right right right. Wait a second. Wow. Uh.... You know, you are very talented, my dear. You’ve got a big future in pictures.

MELODY

Do I really, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

Are you kidding me? You could be the next Shirley Temple, the next Judy Garland.

MELODY

Really, Mr. Mayer.

LOUIS

Oh yeah. Yeah. Ok, one more time. You think you got one more in you?

MELODY

Have you got one more in you?

LOUIS

I hope so.

(She goes out.)

Jesus christ on a crutch. I got all these bad thoughts in my head. God, are you watching me? Well don’t.

(Louis loosens his tie and undoes his belt.)

(To God.) She’s really very talented, isn’t she.

(A knock on the door.)

Come in.

(Door opens. Beulah comes in. Louis dives behind his desk.)

BEULAH

Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

Minute please.

BEULAH

Mr. Mayer are you all right?

LOUIS

Minute please.

(He comes up dressed.)

Sorry. Sorry. Dropped my glasses. Blind as a bat without these. And you are...?

BEULAH

Mrs. Beulah Mudd, Melody's mother. (Calling.) Melody.

LOUIS

Yes of course.

(Melody comes in dressed as the thirteen year old again.)

BEULAH

Here she is. Isn't she something, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

Yes she is. She is something else. Something else entirely.

MELODY

I told Mr. Mayer, Mommy, all about your horseback riding, Mommy.

BEULAH

Oh you shouldn't brag, honey bunch. She has a way of embellishing a story, Mr. Mayer. Most folks don't believe it's true cause she paints it so bright. I usually have to end up giving them a personal demonstration.

LOUIS

Uh huh.

BEULAH

What about you, Mr. Mayer. Do you believe me?

LOUIS

I'd like to, Beulah. I'd like to very much.

BEULAH

What?

LOUIS

Beg pardon?

BEULAH

What would you like to do, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

I would like to speak with you privately about your very talented daughter.  
(He goes to the red leather door behind his desk.)

BEULAH

Honey, you go play by the stream, I mean you wait outside.

MELODY

Yes, Momma.

(Louis escorts Beulah through the door into a private bedroom.)

LOUIS

Very kind of you to give me your time, Mrs. Mudd.

BEULAH

My pleasure, Mr. Mayer

LOUIS

You have a very talented young lady on your hands.

BEULAH

Oh don't I know it.

LOUIS

I would say she has a chance of making it in pictures, Mrs. Mudd.

BEULAH

Why don't you call me Beulah.

LOUIS

Beulah.

BEULAH

Just a chance, Louis?



LOUIS

Why don't you call me Mr. Mayer.

BEULAH

All right. Just a chance, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

Well it takes more than talent. It takes sacrifice, hard work, dedication. And that special something extra, that indefinable something. And she's going to need your help, Beulah, every step of the way.

BEULAH

I would do anything for that girl.

LOUIS

You may have to.

BEULAH

Is that so.

LOUIS

Beulah, honey, there's a million little girls in America and they all want to be a movie star. And they can all sing off key and mangle a line of dialogue like nobody's business and you just want to eat them up, you do, you can't help yourself. But what am I going to do, Beulah? I can't hire all of them

BEULAH

No I suppose not.

LOUIS

That's where the mother comes in.

BEULAH

She does?

LOUIS

Oh yes she does. She comes in in a big big way.

BEULAH

How big, Mr. Mayer?

LOUIS

The biggest.

(Beulah speaks to the audience. As she speaks she undresses down to her underthings. Louis sits on the bed and loosens his tie. As he listens to Beulah he removes his cufflinks. He takes off his shoes.)

BEULAH

My husband fell off the tractor one day when he was drinking, went under the thresher and they had to stitch him back together for the funeral. When the farm failed, the man from the Jackson County Bank came and told us to get off the land, it wasn't ours no more. So we packed up the pick-up truck, me and Melody, and he said, no ma'am, you can't take that truck without I say so. So I said what do I have to do to make you say so because me and Melody are going to Hollywood and we cannot walk there. So he took me back inside and I said, Melody honey, go play down by the stream, and it took me all day long and half the night but he finally agreed to let us keep the truck and the shotgun, and we set out two days later just as soon as I could sit down again. We had 57 dollars and 22 cents to our name to get us to Hollywood. And we drove clear across this great big country and everywhere we went we depended on the kindness of the good people of this land

LOUIS

I'll be damned.

BEULAH

We got up into the mountains of Colorado and I was overheating and I could not get out of first gear to save my life, just creeping along dragging my tailpipe and we come to a service station had five of the finest Colorado corn-fed brothers you ever laid eyes on, and they said, we can fix you up real good, ma'am, and I said I can't pay you nothing, I got nothing left to give, and they said lemme see that little girl of yours sitting right next to you in the front seat just as pretty as you please and I said DON'T YOU TOUCH THAT GIRL! She has the gift of laughter and tears and she is going to be a movie star. So they rolled me into their big old garage and they took me apart piece by piece, all five of them, working all day and working all night, didn't eat, didn't sleep, unscrewed me here and disassembled me there, picked me apart and laid me out all over that cold cold concrete floor, and when they had me all spread out systematic-like, they steamed the grease right out of my crankshaft and rebuilt my engine from the bottom up. So you had better believe me, Mr. Mayer, when I say to you that I will make any sacrifice for my little Melody to make her a star in the Hollywood firmament.

LOUIS

Beulah, that is the saddest goddamn story I ever heard in my life.

(Louis rips back the sheets as the lights go black.)

LOUIS

Hey hey hey. Relax. What's the matter? You're all tensed up. Hey come on. I thought we went into this with our eyes open or was that a whole lot of hooley you were handing me? Huh? Aw come on. Don't ruin it.

(Louis switches on a light As he does Beulah bursts through the bedroom door and Melody sits up in the bed.)

BEULAH

Hey what the hell is going on here!

MELODY

Momma?

BEULAH

You get up out of there this instant. This instant. .

LOUIS

Hey, what the hell...?

MELODY

Mother!

BEULAH

This instant. Get out of that bed.

LOUIS

How the hell did she...?

MELODY

Mother please!

BEULAH

Don't you mother please me. I'll mother please you within an inch of your life.

LOUIS

Jesus christ almighty. What is going on here?

MELODY

Mother, I am working here. I am auditioning.

BEULAH

That is my job. My job. I sleep with the producer, not you. Your job is to sing and dance and read lines. That is your job. Not this. Now you get your body dressed before I smack you back to the day you were born.

MELODY

I didn't do it, Momma. He did it.

LOUIS

(To Melody.) What are you talking about?

MELODY

I don't know how you got me here, mister, but you got me here.

LOUIS

Hey, I don't sleep with girls. I sleep with their mothers. What do you think I am?

BEULAH

Ought to be ashamed of yourself.

LOUIS and MELODY

Who?

BEULAH

(To Melody.) You. I work my fingers to the bone for you. I take the food out of my mouth and I put it in yours. I give you the clothes off my back. The least you could do is stay out of this bed and let me debase myself with this heartless insatiable man till I am thoroughly ashamed and begging for mercy. Great god in heaven. Is that asking so much? After everything I have done for you?

LOUIS

Ladies.

BEULAH

You shut up. I am talking to my daughter, my flesh and blood.

MELODY

I didn't do nothing Momma. I was out in the office reading Variety and the next thing I know this old man is huffing and puffing all over me and calling out my name.

LOUIS

I did no such thing. That is a flat out lie.

MELODY

Well you were thinking it pretty loud, Mister.

LOUIS

How the hell do you know that?

MELODY

Well look at me. You nearly squashed the life out of me.

BEULAH

Did you ruin my little girl? Did he ruin you, Melody?

MELODY

He squashed me flat as a pancake, but nothing else happened cause you come runnin in here all het up and god almighty.

BEULAH

He didn't take your treasure?

MELODY

I didn't even know I had a treasure. But if you would give me five minutes....

BEULAH

Melody Mudd, you hush your mouth. I'm the one he wants. Ain't I, Mr. Louis Mayer. I'm a growed woman, and I know which end is up, and I know exactly what to do with it when it is. So you get out of this here bedroom. March, little girl. You march right out of here and you stay out of here. And if I EVER. Catch you in this bed again, you will not live to see the day.

(Beulah chases Melody out of the bedroom.)

Now. Let's see what you got left on the old fastball, Mr. Mayer. This game ain't over by a long shot.

(Blackout. Lights up on a beat-up old 30's pick up-truck. Billy Bone is sitting in the driver's seat smoking a cigarette. He is a tall lanky goodlooking countryboy, rough around the edges from lack of spending money. Melody is sitting next to him. There is a shotgun on a gunrack behind them.)

BILLY

Melody, girl, I got something I got to say to you, and it's the kind of thing that when a father says it to his daughter, well, I don't know, she ought to listen to what he says because he only has her best interests at heart.

MELODY

Billy, before you say anything....

BILLY

No, Melody now listen to me.

MELODY

Hush, Billy. Now hush for a minute, honey.

(She puts a hand to his lips.)

BILLY

No, come on Melody, that ain't how a girl is supposed to touch her daddy.

MELODY

You ain't my Daddy. You are my momma's boyfriend.

BILLY

All right, that ain't the way a girl is supposed to touch her momma's boyfriend.

MELODY

What's wrong with it? I ain't hurting you am I?

BILLY

You are getting too familiar with me, young lady.

MELODY

I'm just trying to be my natural born self, that's all.

BILLY

That ain't natural and you damn well know it.

MELODY

You are *fornicating* with my mother. Is that natural?

BILLY

*Fornicatin'?! You don't even know what that means.*

MELODY

I know what it sounds like and it sounds like something awful.

BILLY

Melody, when two grown people got the hots for each other, it may not be legal and it may not be moral, but it is perfectly natural. That is one thing I know for damn sure.

MELODY

Billy, honey....

BILLY

Don't call me that. Don't call me honey. That ain't right, Melody. You know it ain't right.

MELODY

It ain't a matter of right and wrong. This is Hollywood, the land of getting what you want. I walked into that big old Hollywood producer's office today and the next thing I know he started looking at me kind of funny and talking to me kind of funny and pretty soon I started feeling kind of funny.

BILLY

You are still a child. You don't even know what you are talking about.

MELODY

Back home I was. Not here I'm not.

BILLY

Did he touch you, honey? Did he touch you wrong?

MELODY

You mean like this?

(She slides over next to him.)

BILLY

No come on. You stay away from me, Melody. You keep your hands to yourself. You stay away from me. Stay away. Come on.

MELODY

No, Billy.

BILLY

Get your hands off a that. Please, Melody, please. Ow girl stop yankin' it. I only got but one. Just squeeze it real.... Yeah oh yeah. I mean, No! No! No! Pray with me, Melody. Pray now. That's right. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me.

MELODY

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

BILLY

Oh sweet jesus. Melody Mudd get down on your knees and pray to god for understanding.

(Melody ducks down below the dashboard.)

Aw Melody, no honey no. No no no no no. It ain't right. It ain't natural. Oh jesus, no. God wanted you to do that he wouldn't have given you razorsharp teeth. There, that's...yeah that's... Oh no! Oh no! Oh for god's sake all right then. There is only so much a man can take!

(He reaches down and pulls her up off the floor of the car, but it isn't Melody, it's Beulah. He grabs her very passionately.)

BEULAH

Whoa, Billy. Down boy. Easy does it.

BILLY

Mel---? Beulah?

BEULAH

Billy?

BILLY

Beulah, what the hell?

BEULAH

Why you looking at me like that for?

BILLY

I don't know. I thought....

BEULAH

What'd you think?

BILLY

I don't know. I don't know what I was thinking.

BEULAH

You better not be thinking what I think you're thinking.

BILLY

And what exactly do you think I am thinking?

BEULAH

Well let's just say I hope you wasn't thinking it. Because if you was, then I don't what to think.

BILLY

Come here you, I know what you need.

(Melody enters.)

MELODY

Hey what happened? What is she doing in there?

BEULAH

Melody honey, that ain't none of your business, now is it. Me and Billy are having a private conversation, which is something grown ups do from time to time and it is no concern of yours, now is it?

MELODY

He takes off his pants to have a private conversation?

BEULAH

Little girl, this is way way over your head.



MELODY

Well I want to have a private conversation with Billy. I got a lot of things I want to *say* to him. I got a lot on my *mind*, Momma.

BEULAH

There is a time and a place honey.

BILLY

That's right, Melody.

MELODY

Don't you tell me about no time and no place. Open the door, Momma and let me in there, or I will tell him, Momma, I will tell him everything.

BILLY

Tell him what?

MELODY

You'll be sorry.

BEULAH

Billy, don't you see what she is doing? She is trying to come between us because she has not accepted you into this family the way I have.

BILLY

Tell me what?

BEULAH

Nothing.

MELODY

Everything.

BILLY

What?

BEULAH

(Beulah opens the car door.)

You behave yourself.

MELODY

Will somebody tell me what happened? One minute I am sitting on my bed reading Photoplay Magazine, next thing I know I am on my knees in this truck eating a hot dog out of his lap!

BEULAH

Billy Bone! What in God's name is she ---?

BILLY

Beulah, honey. I don't know. Sometimes my mind kinda wanders a bit.

BEULAH

I don't call that wandering. I call that making a beeline.

MELODY

Will somebody tell me what is happening?

BEULAH

Lamb chop, this is grown up business.

MELODY

No, it ain't. I know all about it, Momma.

BEULAH

All about what?

MELODY

You think I don't know what is going on with you two? It's sex. That's what it is. I know all about it.

BEULAH

You don't know the first thing about it.

MELODY

I do too.

BEULAH

All right then. What is it? Tell me what sex is?

MELODY

It's when the man gets on top and wiggles around and huffs and puffs and the woman is underneath making noises like a puppydog's fell in a posthole and can't get out.

BEULAH

Oh baby where do you pick this stuff up?

MELODY

I got ears, Momma. I don't sleep like the dead anymore.

BEULAH

Oh baby no no no.

MELODY

Oh yes. Now I know I'm right cause look how he's smiling all embarrassed at what I said.

BEULAH

Well that's just fine, honey. Now you know all about sex. I hope you're proud of yourself. But that don't change a single thing around here.

MELODY

It's my turn, Momma. My time has come.

BEULAH

Oh no it has not.

MELODY

Now you can come with me, Billy Bone, or you can go with her. Which is it? Are you coming or going.

BILLY

I'll be damned if I know.

BEULAH

You get back in that room and you lie down and go to sleep before I put you to sleep.

BILLY

Now Beulah.

BEULAH

Shut up, Billy. This is between me and her.

(Beulah grabs Melody roughly and takes her to their room.)

MELODY

Ow Momma. No, Momma, don't leave me alone in the dark. Come and snuggle with me. Please, Momma. I don't want to be alone. I'll tell Daddy you left me alone. I tell him when I say my prayers.

BEULAH

Melody, honey, hush now, you are going to make me cry.

MELODY

Well go ahead and cry, Momma. You got lots to cry about, don't you.

BEULAH

Honey I am crying on the inside. Where only god can see it. And your Daddy. Come inside, baby. Good night, Billy. I gotta put my little girl to sleep.

BILLY

Good night, Beulah. Good night, Melody.

MELODY

Night, Billy. Sweet dreams.

BILLY

Yeah, you bet.

(Melody and Beulah go inside. Melody gets ready for bed. Billy exits.)

MELODY

Momma, I want to go home.

BEULAH

Oh, honey.

MELODY

I do. Let's pack up the pick-up truck and go back home to Indiana. It's better there, Momma.

BEULAH

How could you possibly want to go back there now when we are getting so close to our dream of making you a great big movie star like Shirley Temple.

MELODY

Are we?

BEULAH

Sure we are. I think Mr. Mayer really liked us. I'll bet he's thinking about us right now.

MELODY

I wish he wasn't. I want to be a girl again, Momma, like I was at home. I could go back to school. I could go fishing in the Patoka. I could play chinese jump rope on the playground and have all the boys look up my dress on the monkey bars.

BEULAH

Those days are gone, sweetheart.

MELODY

I was gonna ask Bobby Buddabin to the Sadie Hawkins Dance and maybe kiss him behind the bleachers.

BEULAH

Oh no you aren't.

MELODY

Why not, Momma? Just a harmless little kiss. And tell him I really like him and does he really like me.

BEULAH

You stay away from that boy. I don't like the shine on his shoes.

MELODY

Why not?

BEULAH

Next thing you know he'll be taking you down to the river when there ain't no moon.

MELODY

And then what?

BEULAH

You know perfectly well what.

MELODY

I have half a mind to go down there and find out.

BEULAH

Please don't talk that crazy wild talk.

MELODY

Well I'm sorry, Momma, but I...

BEULAH

I have not had a day's peace since your father died. I hate this life I hate this town. I hate this farm.

(Pause.)

MELODY

Momma, we aren't on the farm anymore. We left. We came here to Hollywood.

BEULAH

That's right.

MELODY

I want to be a girl again, Momma.

BEULAH

You will always be a girl on the inside, baby. But on the outside... on the outside... Oh baby I don't want to talk about it.

MELODY

If I have to be a woman, then I might as well start being one now.

BEULAH

There's so much to learn. So much to explain.

MELODY

Explain it to me, Momma.

BEULAH

I don't have the heart right now.

MELODY

I want to be one like you, Momma.

BEULAH

Oh honey, please don't make me cry.

MELODY

Sing me one of her songs, Momma.

BEULAH

All right, baby. Which one?

MELODY

You know.

BEULAH

I guess I do.

(Beulah sings to Melody. As Beulah sings, Melody changes into her night clothes and becomes a girl again. The Right Somebody To Love  
Lyrics/Music J.Yellen/L.Pollack)

WHAT MAKES LIFE THE SWEETEST, BESTEST AND COMPLETEST  
NOT A BIG DOLL HOUSE, OR A MICKEY MOUSE  
BUT THE RIGHT SOMEBODY TO LOVE.

ICE CREAM CAKE AND CANDY MAY BE FINE AND DANDY  
BUT IF YOU ASK ME, THEY'RE NOT ONE TWO THREE  
WITH THE RIGHT SOMEBODY TO LOVE.

ONE YOU REALLY CARE FOR  
AND IS YOURS TO HAVE AND KEEP  
ONE YOU SAY A PRAYER FOR  
IN YOUR NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

THOUGH YOU'RE NOT QUITE SEVEN,

MELODY

(Drowsy.) Momma, I am way more than seven.

BEULAH

THOUGH YOU'RE JUST ELEVEN,

MELODY

Momma, I'm not. I'm sixteen.

BEULAH

How on earth did that happen?

MELODY

Very very slowly for a long long time. And then all of a sudden.

BEULAH

WHAT IS MOST LIKE HEAVEN  
IT'S THE JOY THAT'S FOUND WITH YOUR ARMS AROUND  
JUST THE RIGHT SOMEBODY TO LOVE.

(Beulah gives Melody a kiss goodnight.)

It's all for you, sweetheart. I do it all for you. That's what a good mother does.

(Blackout. Lights up on Louis' office. He is on the phone.)

LOUIS

Why is he green? Emerald? He's emerald? The whole city is emerald? No I didn't read it. I pay you to read it. I thought the wicked witch was green. So why is the guy green? No, explain it to me. No, I got all day. Pretend I'm an idiot. Pretend. No, I don't. She's bad so she's green. He's good so he's emerald? Aren't we splitting hairs? What's the moral of this story?

(Lights up in Louis' office bedroom where Melody is wearing Louis' trousers. She snaps the suspenders over her shoulders and come to the bedroom door.)

LOUIS

Melody. What the heck are you doing in there?