

# Hall of Mirrors

a play by

B E Turner

## Introduction

### Concept:

Hall of Mirrors consists of two one act plays and a set of eight flash plays. The set is the same for all plays. They are designed to be played by the same cast of five actors with suitable doubling.

**Set:** It is a combination picture gallery/cafe. A small table with two chairs one side of the stage, which I refer to as the 'real' side. On the other side two six-foot mirror/picture frames 'hung' at floor level with curtains over them. There will also be a corresponding, diametrically opposite, table and chair on the 'mirror' side of the stage. There is an imaginary mirror down the center of the stage (at right angles to the audience) and in certain scenes the actions on one side of this mirror are reflection of actions on the other. The set should be kept simple in line with my minimalist preferences. Stage properties could also be mimed, especially on the 'mirror' side.

### Cast:

**FRANCISCO:** A waiter and Master of Illusion. This character is common to all plays. May be played by a female and if so call her FRANCISCA and change masculine words where necessary.

The other parts consist of a ,middle aged couple (male and female) in their forties/fifties and a younger couple in their twenties. These play a variety of parts which are described in each play.

# Play 1

**CAST:**

**SIDNEY:** A gentleman aged about fifty-five. Dressed conservatively in a suit. Cultured.

**MADLINE:** A woman of matching age. She is an attractive woman who dresses with flair.

**SID:** Alter ego of Sidney when younger. Appears from behind 'mirror'. Dressed as a Roman Catholic priest ie cassock and dog collar. He would wear vestments for obligatory mass but these can be mimed.

**MADDY:** Alter ego of Madeline when younger. Appears from behind 'mirror'. Well dressed.

**FRANCISCO:** A waiter and Master of Illusion.

**NOTE:** 1) There should be some physical similarity between SIDNEY/SID and MADLINE/MADDY even though they dress quite differently and are of different ages. A good opportunity for parent/sibling casting.  
2) RC priests have to do three masses a day. The ones they do without audience I have termed 'obligatory'.  
3) The plot for this play is based on an idea given me by Ann Elliot Smith.  
4) First presented July 11th 1998 at Stagecraft Theatre. Subsequently a few minor changes to the script.

*(Sidney enters and sits at the coffee table. He has a catalogue of pictures in the exhibition, which he reads. Francisco enters.)*

**FRANCISCO:** Coffee signor?

**SIDNEY:** You're new here aren't you?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signor.

**SIDNEY:** And your name is Francisco?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signor.

**SIDNEY:** And you're not Italian?

**FRANCISCO:** No signor. *(Pause)* Would you like coffee? Or tea?

**SIDNEY:** What's this exhibition all about then? It says here there are only two works, Illusion One and Illusion Two, is that them there?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signor.

**SIDNEY:** Why are they covered with curtains?

**FRANCISCO:** There's an explanation in the catalogue. It says that when the viewer opens the curtain he or she will see their own personal illusion which is unique to them and no-one else.

**SIDNEY:** Avant-garde eh? I prefer it when they hang real paintings.

**FRANCISCO:** I don't think the management really care signor, the establishment is making more profit as a coffee house than as a gallery. Exhibitions are a sideline now.

**SIDNEY:** Hmm.

**FRANCISCO:** Would you like coffee signor?

**SIDNEY:** When Madeline arrives.

**FRANCISCO:** Madeline signor?

**SIDNEY:** She's shopping. Madeline and I come to most exhibitions. We have been doing so for almost thirty years. We always come the day after the opening, at this time of day, when the gallery is quiet. The waiters may change from time to time but they are always called Francisco and they are never Italian. A management custom I imagine. Madeline has small Greek coffee black. I have a large cafe au lait . We share a small plate of Turkish delight.

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signor.

**SIDNEY:** Wait for her to arrive. The next time we come you'll know.

**FRANCISCO:** There won't be a next time.

**SIDNEY:** Really?

**FRANCISCO:** I'm only here for the duration of this exhibition.

*(Francisco exits. Sidney goes to one of the exhibits. Tentatively moves to open the curtain but changes his mind. Goes back to his seat. Madeline arrives and sits. There is no sign of her shopping. These two react together in a manner that might lead the audience to believe they are a couple.)*

**SIDNEY:** *(In good humour)* Five minutes late, as usual.

**MADELINE:** What would it be if I wasn't five minutes late?

**SIDNEY:** A miracle.

**MADELINE:** That's your department Sidney. *(Pause)* It's not always easy to get away from work.

**SIDNEY:** I ordered coffee.

**MADELINE:** The usual?

**SIDNEY:** Yes. *(Pause)* To think that we first met at an exhibition here, almost thirty years ago.

**MADELINE:** Stop, you'll make me feel old. Thirty years. That must be some sort of anniversary.

**SIDNEY:** Golden?

**MADELINE:** No, golden is fifty.

**SIDNEY:** *(Takes her hand)* But they've been golden years.

**MADELINE:** Yes.

**SIDNEY:** *(Takes a faded catalogue from inside jacket pocket.)* I even have the original catalogue. *(Gives it to her.)*

**MADELINE:** And it's dated. Opening thirteenth of September. We would have met the day after, the fourteenth. I quite forgot the date.

**SIDNEY:** It's wedding anniversaries you take particular note of.

**MADELINE:** Yes. Can we come here on the fourteenth then?

**SIDNEY:** We can come, but it's between exhibitions.

**MADELINE:** They could have arranged things better for their regular customers. I think we might come anyway. *(Picks up recent catalogue)* I don't see a lot of paintings in the gallery.

**SIDNEY:** It's avant-garde. Like the time Jimmy Peach exhibited. You remember?

**MADELINE:** Yes, I remember, the gallery was the exhibition.

**SIDNEY:** But the doorknobs were painted red.

**MADELINE:** Well Sidney I sometimes think that avant-garde can be quite interesting. Makes you look at things in a different way.

**SIDNEY:** I like my stuffy old ways.

**MADELINE:** Yes, I know you do. *(Reading catalogue)* 'When you open the curtain you'll see your own personal illusion.' This could be a bit of fun.

**SIDNEY:** Well you have a look then. Then you can tell me about your personal illusions.

*(Madeline goes to the nearest 'picture' and opens the curtain. Maddy is behind the frame and mimics Madeline's movements mirror-image-wise. It is up to the director as to the exactness of the mimicking. Is it permissible for Maddy to break the illusion when she is not being watched.)*

**MADELINE:** It's a mirror.

**SIDNEY:** It had to be something like that didn't it? I should have guessed. Rembrandt will be turning in his grave.

**MADELINE:** *(Posing)* Makes me look younger.

**SIDNEY:** That's the illusion.

**MADELINE:** *(Does her lipstick. Some business here. Maddy will have different coloured lipstick.)* That's better. I came away in a hurry.

**SIDNEY:** Well at least it's not entirely pointless. It enabled you to fix your lipstick.

*Madeline comes back to the table leaving curtains open.*

**MADELINE:** I think there was a slight distortion in the mirror. It didn't give a very exact reflection. Sort of hazy.

**SIDNEY:** Well, if it's meant to be a work of art it can't be an exact replication.

*(Francisco enters with the coffee and turkish delight on a tray. He deftly serves them.)*

**MADLINE:** Don't I know you?

**FRANCISCO:** I am Francisco signorina.

**MADLINE:** Of course. But in another life you were someone else?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signorina, we all have other lives, and in them we are always someone else.

**MADLINE:** You were Marvello the Magician, at a children's party I attended. And you paint a little don't you?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signorina I do.

**MADLINE:** Is this your exhibition then?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes signorina.

**MADLINE:** And you're here as curator?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes, I wish to overhear what people have to say.

**MADLINE:** I can understand that. No-one will ever tell the artist to his face what they really think.

**FRANCISCO:** Exactly.

**SIDNEY:** Well I'm prepared to tell you what I think. I think it's a load of pretentious rubbish. There you are.

**MADLINE:** You haven't even looked at them Sidney.

**SIDNEY:** I know what to expect don't I? I saw it in the mirror when I shaved this morning.

**FRANCISCO:** Exactly signor.

**MADLINE:** Sidney, you are being uncharitable.

**FRANCISCO:** No, just pragmatic. *(Looks at exhibits.)* Oh, signorina did not draw the curtain when she finished viewing.

*(Francisco goes to the mirror and grasps the curtains. There is a lighting change to focus on that side of the stage. The lights go down on Madeline and Sidney who freeze.)*

You see ladies and gentlemen, I am the Master of Illusion. What you might think to be the solid reality of existence can be moulded and shaped before your very clear eyes. The visions you have of the world are but a dream. Come down onto the stage my dear, you are about to entertain these fine people here.

*(Francisco leads Maddy onto the stage and draws the curtains. Maddy sits in a position diametrically opposite to Madeline. Francisco sits in a dim corner. In positioning note that Francisco is always the one that breaks symmetry. Lights fade across to Madeline and Sidney.)*

**MADLINE:** Are you going to look at the exhibition?

**SIDNEY:** I don't see the point.

**MADLINE:** But we always look at the pictures, even when they're only doorknobs.

**SIDNEY:** How is a mirror going to enable me to see things in a different way?

**MADLINE:** I told you there was a slight distortion.

**SIDNEY:** Like those mirrors in a fairground arcade? Is that what you mean?

**MADLINE:** I'm sure Marvello would have made them, different somehow.

**SIDNEY:** All right then, here's to the fifth dimension. *(Goes to the other exhibit and draws back the curtain. This time Sid is the image. Maddy and Francisco, still on-stage, are not acknowledged by Madeline or Sidney.)* There you are, just another mirror.

**MADELINE:** Surely you must look a little different.

**SIDNEY:** No, just a standard reflection.

**MADELINE:** Doesn't it make you look younger?

**SIDNEY:** Older if anything. *(Draws the curtain and goes back to his seat.)* Now we've got this tomfoolery over with we can sit back and talk about something more interesting.

**MADELINE:** Whatever you say, my dear.

**SIDNEY:** *(Sips)* This coffee is uncommonly good today.

**MADELINE:** And the weather is fine.

*(Cross fade to francisco, and freeze.)*

**FRANCISCO:** These pictures are as vague and insubstantial as the shadow made by a cloud passing before the face of the sun. When you look into the mirror what do you see? Is it the painted face of reality, or do you see deeper into the depths and crannies of the soul? And when you look at this stage, do you see images of yourselves, or do you see an idle passing fancy? Come down into our play my dear young man.

*(He opens the curtains before the second mirror and leads down Sid who sits next to Maddy, diametrically opposite Sidney. He then draws back the curtains and sits down.)*

**SIDNEY:** You remember the day we first met?

**MADELINE:** Like it was yesterday.

*(As they talk Sid and Maddy will mime the first meeting, at an exhibition, on the mirror side of the stage. One should be aware of the ping pong effect here. One way of avoiding this would be to bring the lights down quite low on the real side of the stage - they are just talking.)*

**SIDNEY:** It was a fine exhibition.

**MADELINE:** *(Disparagingly)* English watercolour.

**SIDNEY:** I happen to like English watercolour.

**MADELINE:** I didn't say there was anything wrong with it.

**SIDNEY:** Not in so many words. I remember particularly a large picture of the beach at Dover. I admired it very much, and you had to say: 'Why do they have to hang English paintings in New Zealand.'

**MADELINE:** I'd still say that. Why do they?

**SIDNEY:** Art is a universal commodity my dear.

**MADELINE:** But you couldn't paint a picture like that in New Zealand, the light is quite different from English light. Light in New Zealand has sharp edges.

**SIDNEY:** So you wouldn't hang a Rembrandt?

**MADELINE:** You know what I mean? I'm not saying I didn't enjoy the exhibition.

**SIDNEY:** You just went there looking for a new client.

**MADELINE:** And look what I found.

**SIDNEY:** An old fossil. *(Pause)* You gave me your card.

**MADLINE:** I always had a soft spot for a priest.

*(In the mime Maddy gives Sid her card and goes back. Sid comes down and reads the card.)*

**SID:** 'Madeline Campion, Hostess'. What does she mean 'hostess'? Why did she give me her card? It's not as though we'll ever see each other again... she seemed so calm, self contained...

*(Lighting change. Mime: Sid at prayer in church saying obligatory mass. Maddy enters church, crosses herself. At the end of mass they share communion. Mime host and chalice - don't do the whole ritual - just indicate.)*

If you come into the vestry I think we might manage a cup of tea.

**MADDY:** That would be nice.

*(They go into the vestry. Sid will be taking off his robes which can be mimed.)*

**SID:** After a three hour fast and a draft of wine I think I need a cup of tea and a biscuit.

**MADDY:** I agree.

**SID:** You did fast?

**MADDY:** Of course. I rang the presbytery to find out what time you were saying mass.

**SID:** Oh... I didn't even realise you were a member of the congregation.

**MADDY:** I come every Sunday.

**SID:** I'm only a curate you know, I haven't been here long enough to get to know everyone yet. I'm intrigued as to why you should wish to come and see me.

**MADDY:** I just thought...

**SID:** Yes?

**MADDY:** That it would be good for us to get to know each other. You might be parish priest here one day.

**SID:** If I do well enough as curate.

**MADDY:** I'm sure you shall.

**SID:** God be willing.

**MADDY:** If you are ambitious you shall.

**SID:** Well I'm not particularly ambitious, I'm just a humble old sod without a great deal of talent madam. Parish priest is the peak of my ambition.

**MADDY:** Don't call me 'madam', you should call me Maddy.

**SID:** What?

**MADDY:** Maddy. My name. It's short for Madeline.

**SID:** I prefer Madeline. You use it on your card.

**MADDY:** Yes.

**SID:** And what exactly does a 'hostess' do?

**MADDY:** I look after people. Give them comfort and soft words. I serve wine and play sweet music on the harp. I bathe their tired limbs in scented waters. Have you heard of my type of woman?

**SID:** In the confessional... I've heard... many things.

**MADDY:** *(Somewhat aside)* I am, what you might say, a kept woman. If you were uncharitable you might call me a harlot, a hooker, a whore. But I don't stand on street corners and I don't work in a house. I have class. I am cultured

and well read. I can converse on almost any subject. I am a home away from home for the wealthy man who desires a haven from domestic strife, or domestic boredom. I won't tolerate any rough or deviant behaviour, and I am prepared to be affectionate. I came to the gallery on the lookout for a new client. I have a short list of regular clients. A cultural occasion attracts the sort of person I prefer, however I came on the wrong day and the only one present was you.

**SID:** Why are you telling me this?

**MADDY:** I'm prepared to offer my services.

**SID:** What do you mean?

**MADDY:** A little comfort, for the priest.

**SID:** You mean...?

**MADDY:** Yes.

**SID:** You know about the vows a priest makes?

**MADDY:** Of course.

**SID:** Then why do you make such a suggestion?

**MADDY:** I wish to be of service.

**SID:** And your idea of service is to be a, temptress?

**MADDY:** Just to offer comfort.

**SID:** You've made this offer before?

**MADDY:** Yes.

**SID:** And been accepted?

**MADDY:** Yes. The first time I told a priest of my occupation in the confessional. A few days later I received a visit.

**SID:** (*Crosses himself*) May the Lord have mercy... One of my brothers may fall from grace. I do not wish to. I want to do this job, and I want to do it properly.

**MADDY:** You're a bit of a stuffy old coconut aren't you?

**SID:** I suppose I am Miss Champion. It's not uncommon for Ministers of Religion to be conservative. I find it often goes with the cloth.

**MADDY:** I hope I haven't offended you.

**SID:** No, no, I take it as a compliment.

**MADDY:** And we can remain friends?

**SID:** If you are in the congregation of course we must remain friends. How could a member of the flock be considered hateful? (*She touches his hand and goes. He absent mindedly crosses himself.*) Go with grace little one. May the lamb that is lost be found.

(*Crossover of lights to the real side.*)

**SIDNEY:** I remember the day you came to visit me in the church.

**MADLINE:** Mass and Communion.

**SIDNEY:** And a confessional.

**MADLINE:** Not an official one, no.

**SIDNEY:** No, not official.

**MADLINE:** I remember at that time, I really had the hots for a priest. Any priest.

**SIDNEY:** Yes, I know. There was something about your offer that wasn't wholly, ecclesiastical.

**MADLINE:** I thought we fell in love at that first meeting.

**SIDNEY:** You may well have done. Or you may just have had the hots.

**MADELINE:** How can you say such a thing like that?

**SIDNEY:** In my usual boring practical way.

**MADELINE:** And you mean to say you didn't fall in love with me then?

**SIDNEY:** Let us say I felt, somewhat of a disquiet.

**MADELINE:** So you did fall in love?

**SIDNEY:** I did not understand how I felt.

**MADELINE:** There. You did fall in love. I knew it. I mean, you sought me out, to talk to.

**SIDNEY:** Only because I felt comfortable in your presence.

**MADELINE:** There. Comfortable. That's, part of falling in love.

**SIDNEY:** If you say so my dear.

**MADELINE:** If you'd accepted my offer that would have been the end of it. There would have been a short carnal transaction and when it was over I would have hidden in the back pew and tried to avoid your face.

**SIDNEY:** And the face of God.

**MADELINE:** That too.

*(Francisco crosses to the table.)*

**FRANCISCO:** Signorina, signor, is everything to your satisfaction?

**SIDNEY:** You don't have to talk to us with a Italian accent young man, just because your name is Francisco.

**MADELINE:** Don't take any notice of him Francisco. The coffee is fine thank you.

**FRANCISCO:** Would signorina like another cup.

**MADELINE:** No, I've hardly had a sip.

**SIDNEY:** One thing I will say for you Francisco, the coffee is excellent.

**FRANCISCO:** But not the exhibition signor?

**MADELINE:** I must say I found... did you make these mirrors yourself.

**FRANCISCO:** Is it not necessary for the artist to make the objects of the art?

**MADELINE:** Yes, of course. I thought I detected a slight distortion, and a colouration of the surface.

**FRANCISCO:** Of course signorina, an illusion is a distortion of reality is it not. I could demonstrate if you wished.

**MADELINE:** Yes, I'd like that.

**SIDNEY:** You're wasting your time.

**MADELINE:** Sidney, you are a conservative old git.

**SIDNEY:** I know a delusion when I see it.

**MADELINE:** Illusion Sidney.

**SIDNEY:** The same thing.

*(Francisco and Madeline walk across to the mirror part of the stage. Francisco and Madeline stand before the mirror Maddy originally came out of. Francisco opens the curtains. There is nothing in the frame, just the black backdrop.)*

**MADELINE:** Oh, the mirror's blank. How did you do that?

**FRANCISCO:** It's my secret. I made some minor adjustments to the exhibition lights and 'Voila'!

**MADLINE:** A way you designed the mirror?

**FRANCISCO:** Yes. Of course.

**MADLINE:** Then where is the illusion if it's a blank screen?

**FRANCISCO:** It's what you paint on the screen yourself.

**MADLINE:** What you imagine?

**FRANCISCO:** What you believe.

**MADLINE:** And you do it with lights.

**FRANCISCO:** I do it with magic. Do you think this universe is real? We paint it with pictures of trees and oceans and cities. We create the illusion with the intensity of our private thoughts. Nothing is real, it is all a reflection from the imagination.

**MADLINE:** Is there something that is real then?

**FRANCISCO:** Of course.

**MADLINE:** What is it then?

**FRANCISCO:** The world of dreams.

**MADLINE:** *(Drawing the curtains)* I'm not sure if I wish to believe that.

**FRANCISCO:** Don't you? Why don't you look into the mirror? You never know what will be revealed.

*(Francisco, with gestures, draws Madeline and Maddy together at the imaginary mirror down the middle of the stage and returns to his obscure corner. (into the audience in the first production.) In this scene they move about the stage as an object and image in a mirror would. This will require a high degree of synchronization. (It is difficult and the moves should be reduced to what is achievable.) Maddy is the object and Madeline is the image here. Maddy/madeline presses her palm against the mirror surface, (ie press their palms together.)*

**MADDY:** I shouldn't touch the mirror.

**MADLINE:** It will make a mark.

**MADDY:** Fingerprints.

**MADLINE:** The mind makes connections, it follows a path, a network of possibilities.

**MADDY:** *(Turns away)* But what do I know about...

**MADLINE:** ...about what?

**MADDY:** About the young priest that I think I've fallen in love with.

**MADLINE:** 'Fallen in love'? What is the meaning of the phrase 'fallen in love'?

**MADDY:** Whatever you say love is, I don't know.

**MADLINE:** Love is defined in many ways. Yet all the definitions tell you nothing.

**MADDY:** It's something new. Something I don't understand. Something I'm afraid of. I never let my men touch me, I never let anyone ever get close.

**MADLINE:** Never get close?

**MADDY:** I don't want to be hurt. When I was young let myself get close to a boy. He was the school hero.

**MADLINE:** You felt an attachment?

**MADDY:** I was the top, and I chose the top. But then he moved along to the next girl and I was left, deserted, alone. Now I make the attachments, and I make the partings. And no-one is committed to anything.

**MADLINE:** But the priest, he gets close?

**MADDY:** We meet after vespers and chat outside the church. I joined the Committee for the Succor of the Poor, which he chairs. We converse in very polite terms, but that's on the surface. When I'm in the same room as him there's a, feeling... Yesterday he put his hand on mine. I wanted it to remain there...

**MADLINE:** Does he love you too?

**MADDY:** I think so, I hope so. I'm afraid of what will happen if he does. Life has been very comfortable. I sit back in the easy chair at home, without a care...

**MADLINE:** Satisfied.

**MADDY:** I was. Now I feel dissatisfied, empty... as though there is no point to anything.

**MADLINE:** You seek fulfillment?

**MADDY:** I'm a harlot. I make my living by pleasing men. I let them think I care for them when I really don't.

**MADLINE:** They understand that. They prefer it because they don't want the responsibility that goes with love. Why do you live this style of life?

**MADDY:** When I saw what my parents made of their lives I decided that wasn't for me. No marriage. No children. It was a thing to be avoided. None of this sappy love stuff. No schoolboy heroes to dump me. I'm self contained.

**MADLINE:** You live your own life?

**MADDY:** I live my own life.

**MADLINE:** You're self contained.

**MADDY:** I'm a charming woman. Men find me intriguing, attractive, chic, intelligent, desirable, a woman of quality.

**MADLINE:** But what made you decide to become a whore?

**MADDY:** When I was a child and I went to a birthday party. The grandfather offered me a sugar cake, taken from his own private store, if I sat on his knee. He was a wealthy man. He didn't mean me any harm, but he had fantasies... The sugar cake was the sweetest I had ever tasted. The next year I went to the party and sat on the old man's knee and asked for another cake. He gave it to me. Afterwards I went to confessional. 'Bless me father, for I have sinned. It is one month since my last confession. I have eaten a sugar cake.' The priest would say nothing. In later years I would say: 'I have been with a man, I have been with several men. They give me sugar cake.' The priest would say nothing.

**MADLINE:** 'For these, and all the sins of my past life, especially eating sugar cakes and being with men, I am heartily sorry.'

**MADDY:** But I wasn't sorry was I? I kept asking for the sugar because I liked it. I knew what to do in order to get men to give it to me. I was not heartily sorry, not at all.

**MADLINE:** Why are you talking to this mirror, telling it your secrets?

**MADDY:** Because I can see myself in it.

**MADLINE:** Is that what you fear?

**MADDY:** Yes.

**MADLINE:** What?

**MADDY:** The reflection in the glass.

**MADLINE:** More than that?

**MADDY:** When I look into his eyes...

**MADLINE:** What about them?

**MADDY:** I'm afraid of what I see.

**MADLINE:** What are you afraid of?

**MADDY:** Myself.

**MADLINE:** The reflection in a mirror?

**MADDY:** The reflection in his eyes. I never saw before such calm pools of still water. Asking nothing, seeking nothing. When I look into them he does not comment.

**MADLINE:** He is an exceptional person?

**MADDY:** Really quite ordinary. Cultured perhaps. Self opinionated. Stubborn. You have to say unexceptional.

**MADLINE:** What attracts you to him?

**MADDY:** Initially because he was a priest.

**MADLINE:** Explain that.

**MADDY:** I'm attracted to clergy. Sexually attracted. It's my fetish. Other men... just... nothing.

**MADLINE:** Why clergy?

**MADDY:** Because it's a sin... to do it. It's exciting.

**MADLINE:** I understand that.

**MADDY:** But now, mirror, things have changed, it's no longer lust, unseemly desire. What I feel is a strong note of music, a flowing river of affection, love, a place where I should lay my head. Where will it all end?

**MADLINE:** Where indeed?

*(Francisco comes to the women. They go back to their original places.  
Lights on Madeline and Sidney on the real side.)*

**SIDNEY:** So, was it a revelation?

**MADLINE:** What?

**SIDNEY:** The mirror.

**MADLINE:** The mirror was blank.

**SIDNEY:** Blank?

**MADLINE:** When I looked in I couldn't see a reflection.

**SIDNEY:** So. It was a revelation.

**MADLINE:** He said he did it with lights.

**SIDNEY:** I can imagine. I read somewhere that if the light strikes a glass surface at a certain angle it is reflected rather than refracted.

**MADLINE:** You're a fund of information today Sidney.

**SIDNEY:** It depends on the angle of incidence.

**MADLINE:** *(Vaguely)* Incidence?

**SIDNEY:** Yes. *(Pause)* I was thinking of that meeting we had.

**MADLINE:** What meeting?

**SIDNEY:** Not long after we'd met. It was after the second exhibition we visited together.

**MADLINE:** When we declared our love for each other.

**SIDNEY:** Yes. You invited me up to your flat.

**MADLINE:** You didn't really want to come.

**SIDNEY:** I'd already said my three obligatory masses that morning. I had no other duties that day. I felt strong enough to face anything.

**MADLINE:** Even yourself. Even your inner feelings.

**SIDNEY:** Even those.

**MADLINE:** And you were worried I might attempt to seduce you.

**SIDNEY:** The thought never crossed my mind.

**MADLINE:** Perhaps not.

*(Fade across to the scene from the past, played by Maddy and Sid on the mirror side.)*

**SID:** You have a very fine apartment.

**MADDY:** I keep it nice. Would you like wine?

**SID:** You understand I'm not here... (for sex and hi-jinks.)

**MADDY:** I understand. Wine?

**SID:** Not just now thank you. I associate wine too much with the eucharist.

**MADDY:** A cup of tea then.

**SID:** *(Pause)* There are things which must be said.

**MADDY:** What things?

**SID:** About yourself, and myself.

**MADDY:** Are you sure you won't have a glass of wine?

**SID:** *(Pause)* I love you Madeline. As much as I'll ever love any woman. There I said it at last.

**MADDY:** Yes. *(She goes to him - touches him)* Yes, yes you do.

**SID:** You might think it's a strange thing for a priest to say.

**MADDY:** Yes. Yes it is.

**SID:** You don't seem surprised.

**MADDY:** Why should I be surprised?

**SID:** For a priest to say... It's not easy...

**MADDY:** Falling in love is not an easy thing. Not for me.

**SID:** Falling in love?

**MADDY:** There, I said it.

**SID:** Yes, you said it. You love me too?

**MADDY:** Of course. *(Pause)* Well there we are, we're in love, and we haven't even gone to bed...

**SID:** Don't be frivolous.

**MADDY:** I'm sorry. *(Pause)* Would you marry me then?

**SID:** What are you talking about?

**MADDY:** Marriage.

**SID:** Good God woman, I haven't asked you to marry me.

**MADDY:** I'm sorry. It just slipped out.

**SID:** It's not a thing that even crossed my mind.

**MADDY:** So, you just want to live with me?

**SID:** I said don't be frivolous. A priest can't marry. A priest can't live with a woman.

**MADDY:** So they say.

**SID:** I don't understand you. You say you love me but you don't make the slightest attempt to take the matter seriously.

**MADDY:** I do Sidney. I do love you. I just don't know what to say. I just don't know what to do.

**SID:** Open the wine. Or if you've got something stronger.

**MADDY:** Scotch?

**SID:** That will do fine. *(She goes to the sideboard - all this is mimed.)* Just as it comes out of the bottle. *(She pours drinks for both - gives him his - he knocks it back - holds out glass - she pours more - they both sip.)* That's better.

**MADDY:** *(Sitting beside him)* What do we do then Mr Priest.

**SID:** We have to get to know each other, better.

**MADDY:** Yes. And then what?

**SID:** We have to decide.

**MADDY:** What?

**SID:** *(Ponders a moment)* We have to decide whether to change our lives or not. A priest can be released from his vows. Application is made to the bishop who may or may not grant benison. My bishop is liberal in these matters. Some are not so.

**MADDY:** You would do this for me?

**SID:** I don't know.

**MADDY:** I couldn't ask you to do anything. Not someone like me.

**SID:** You mean your way of life?

**MADDY:** My whoring. My lasciviousness.

**SID:** Christ would never judge you for that. Christ dealt with women of your calling. They came to him and received absolution, and thereafter followed Him, all the way to Calvary. Christ touched the hands of sinners with perfect love and forgiveness. He even dealt with members of the Inland Revenue Service.

**MADDY:** I'm giving it up anyway.

**SID:** Your, occupation?

**MADDY:** I spoke to one of my... He had problems organising his business seminars. He thought I might have the ability to be a hostess for them. It's worth a try.

**SID:** Hostess?

**MADDY:** It's what I'm good at.

**SID:** If we do marry then I would hope you'd be good in bed.

**MADDY:** What do you know about that?

**SID:** I had several women before I... I was a tearaway in my youth. The only way to resolve it was to enter the priesthood.

**MADDY:** Then you're not committed.

**SID:** Of course I'm committed. It doesn't matter why I entered the Church. The fact is I did, and it changed me. I'm fully committed to the cloth, and to my ecclesiastical vows.

**MADDY:** Marry me and you'll become Pope.

**SID:** You are terrible.

**MADDY:** I'm beautiful. *(Holding him)* Will you kiss me?

**SID:** I'll kiss you on the forehead my dear. That is all.

*(Kisses her on forehead.)*

**MADDY:** There's something I know Sidney.

**SID:** What's that, my child?

**MADDY:** That whatever happens, it will be all right.

*(Fade across to the real side. Sid & Maddy back in place.)*

**SIDNEY:** It's strange the things you do when you are young and stupid.

**MADELINE:** What did you say Sidney?

**SIDNEY:** I think I'd like to see that blank mirror. *(Raises his finger and calls out)* Waiter.

**MADELINE:** Why Sidney?

**SIDNEY:** Because I think it's a fraud.

**MADELINE:** "There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio..."

**FRANCISCO:** *(Comes up)* Yes signor?

**SIDNEY:** I'd like to see that blank mirror.

**FRANCISCO:** Certainly. Come this way.

*(They go to the other mirror. Francisco opens the curtains. There is nothing there.)*

**SIDNEY:** She was right, it is blank. How did you do that? A matter of lights she said. I didn't see you switch off any exhibition lights.

**FRANCISCO:** In the case of this mirror it is caused by the angle of the sunlight at the time of day.

**SIDNEY:** Sunlight? There aren't even any windows to this room.

**FRANCISCO:** That small window high up on the wall there. *(There will be no window on the set.)*

**SIDNEY:** That small... Oh yes, I didn't notice that before. Strange.

**FRANCISCO:** Amazing what tricks the mind plays.

**SIDNEY:** Yes. All right. All right. I understand the scientific principle, it's all done with the light.

**FRANCISCO:** I do it with leger de main. Do you think this universe is real? It is a blank moving picture screen which we illustrate with our mind. It is made out of the fabric of dreams.

**SIDNEY:** You have fantastic notions young man. What is reality then?

**FRANCISCO:** The image in a mirror.

**SIDNEY:** *(Drawing curtains)* I'm not sure if I can believe that.

**FRANCISCO:** But if you look into the mirror you might find the truth.

*(Sidney goes to the imaginary mirror down the middle of the stage and Sid goes to him as a mirror reflection. Francisco returns to his obscure corner. They are kneeling at prayer each with a rosary (mimed) in the right hand. Cross themselves (head, heart, left, right). In the mirror image left and right are reversed.)*

**BOTH:** Hail Mary, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

**BOTH:** Amen.

*(They cross themselves.)*

**SID:** O Lord I beseech you to lead me into the path of knowledge.

**SIDNEY:** O Father I beseech you to lead him into the path of knowledge.

**BOTH:** Amen.

*(They cross themselves.)*

**BOTH:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.  
Amen

*(They cross themselves. End of prayer.)*

**SID:** Father, I am troubled.

**SIDNEY:** In what way my son?

**SID:** My soul is beset with doubt.

**SIDNEY:** What is that doubt?

**SID:** A question in my mind.

**SIDNEY:** What is the question?

**SID:** The question is simple. The question is simple but the answer is not.

**SIDNEY:** So, what is the question?

**SID:** The question is; whether to marry Madeline or remain a priest.

**SIDNEY:** This woman, Madeline, is she is a sinner?

**SID:** A harlot.

**SIDNEY:** She gives her favours to men for money?

**SID:** Yes. Makes traffic of her body. A tawdry commercial transaction of the temple of her soul.

**SIDNEY:** Day by day she puts her soul in jeopardy.

**SID:** I know. I know.

**SIDNEY:** How could you fall in love with such a person?

**SID:** That is a mystery. But you see father, Christ ministered to sinners because they could be made clean. God is a merciful God. He will provide absolution.

**SIDNEY:** And you also?

**SID:** 'Let he who is without sin...'

**SIDNEY:** And your feelings for her? Are they pure, or are they tinged with lust?

**SID:** I am just a frail man of this earth. I have the feelings for a woman just the same as any other man.

**SIDNEY:** But your relationship at present is without sin?

**SID:** It is without stain. My love for Madeline is pure.

**SIDNEY:** Well said. Why did you become a priest?

**SID:** In my youth my parents were strict. They enforced the ten commandments with severity and I rebelled. I caused all kinds of trouble. Then Father Paddy Brennan took me into his study one day. *(Irish brogue)* 'What's this I hear about you breaking all the young girls hearts? It's causing me no end of trouble. Somethin' will have to be done about it, to be sure. And then there's this problem with Mary O'Connor getting pregnant.' I told him it could have been

any one of a number. He said to me: 'You've got to become a priest my boy, get a bit of Christianity into you, it'll settle you down.'

**SIDNEY:** It was not exactly proper of Father Brennan to force you into the priesthood without proper deliberation was it?

**SID:** He was a law unto himself. He'd run an illegal gambling parlour with sly grog for church fund raising. He didn't expect me to remain in the seminary. He hoped I might be out of circulation while the girls grew up.

**SIDNEY:** But you did stay. Why was that?

**SID:** I resented it for a start, just wanted to get out of there. Then one day I was in the chapel pretending to pray when I felt a great feeling of peace. I don't understand that, but it was a finer feeling than all the pleasure I'd had from the things of the world.

**SIDNEY:** A fundamental religious experience?

**SID:** No. Peace. Just peace. I didn't see the face of God or anything like that. But I found my place.

**SIDNEY:** You experience that now? When you are in church?

**SID:** Yes.

**SIDNEY:** And what do you experience when you are with Madeline?

**SID:** It's a river, it's a warm rush of affection.

**SIDNEY:** Peace?

**SID:** Peace? I hadn't thought. There is peace in her eyes, and there is peace in my heart when I am with her.

**SIDNEY:** But not the peace you found in the chapel?

**SID:** No. Different.

**SIDNEY:** In what way?

**SID:** A secular peace.

**SIDNEY:** I see. Is it your station to marry and have children?

**SID:** I do not know.

**SIDNEY:** Did God send Madeline to you as a gift of love, or as a trial?

**SID:** These are the questions which must be answered.

**SIDNEY:** And you have the answers?

**SID:** No.

**SIDNEY:** Is right in the eyes of God that you should come together?

**SID:** I do not know.

**SIDNEY:** Where will you find the truth?

**SID:** Within myself. If God lives within me then whatever decision I make shall then be the Will of God.

**SIDNEY:** Where will you find the truth then?

**SID:** The small voice within.

**SIDNEY:** And so let it be.

**SID:** And so let it be.

**SIDNEY:** Amen.

**SID:** Amen.

**BOTH:** Amen.

*(Francisco comes to the men. They go back to their places. Lights on Madeline and Sidney on the real side.)*

**MADLINE:** Well Sidney, what did you see in the mirror?

**SIDNEY:** A blank page.

**MADLINE:** Did you write on it then?

**SIDNEY:** No. I just thought about the past.

**MADLINE:** Oh yes. What about the past?

**SIDNEY:** About the time when I had to make the decision as to whether to marry you or remain in the priesthood.

**MADLINE:** (*Touches his arm*) Well you made the right decision.

**SIDNEY:** Yes, I'm sure I did.

**MADLINE:** I've been thinking about that time too.

**SIDNEY:** Have you.

**MADLINE:** Yes. Something about the exhibition that brought it back to mind.

**SIDNEY:** The mirrors?

**MADLINE:** They make you look at yourself.

**SIDNEY:** Well, that's obvious.

**MADLINE:** So what do you see when you look in the mirror.

**SIDNEY:** Myself of course.

**MADLINE:** Does that surprise you?

**SIDNEY:** It would surprise me if I didn't.

**MADLINE:** But when you look at yourself, do you know what it is?

**SIDNEY:** Before I came here today I thought I would.

**MADLINE:** But now you're not so sure?

**SIDNEY:** Something odd about those mirrors. The time when it was blank that superstition concerning vampires came to mind.

**MADLINE:** Vampires? What superstition was that?

**SIDNEY:** You don't see their reflection in a mirror. It's because they have no soul.

**MADLINE:** But you did see a reflection?

**SIDNEY:** Yes. Even when the mirror was blank.

**MADLINE:** Then you have a soul after all. (*Pause*) I must go. I have to be back at work by three.

**SIDNEY:** Yes. We will come on the fourteenth. We'll be the exhibition.

**MADLINE:** Of course. We'll paint the doorknobs yellow.

**SIDNEY:** Green. I like green.

**MADLINE:** Whatever you say my dear. (*She kisses him on the cheek and goes. The lights change to the other side.*)

**FRANCISCO:** Come on my children. Time to go back into your frames. (*He escorts Maddy and Sid back into the mirrors. They can be limp and carried like rag dolls (if you like). Francisco draws the curtains.*) Until it's time for another show. (*He goes across to Sidney*) Everything satisfactory signor?

**SIDNEY:** Francisco, I wish you wouldn't call me 'signor'. The least you could do is refer to me by my proper title.

**FRANCISCO:** Certainly sir.

**SIDNEY:** And it's not 'sir' either.

**FRANCISCO:** If you tell me what it is... (*Not knowing what title*)

**SIDNEY:** 'Monsignor'.

**FRANCISCO:** Oh. So, you stayed in the church. I thought that was how the story might end.

**SIDNEY:** What made you think so?

**FRANCISCO:** I think I detected more affection between you than one would expect in a married couple. But you see I am a master of illusion. I can see through the reflections on the surface of this apparent reality to the truth that lies beneath.

**SIDNEY:** And you do it with mirrors?

**FRANCISCO:** Like all magicians. *(Pause)* But tell me, why did you not marry Madeline? Was God more important? Did you make a sacrifice?

**SIDNEY:** I remember at the time I went through a great deal of emotional turmoil as to whether I should leave the priesthood or not. But in the end I discovered that it was my duty to offer my life to Christ. I could not abandon that for a secular life.

**FRANCISCO:** Your duty?

**SIDNEY:** I'm a humble man. I've risen in the Church because God wishes me to serve. I do my duty.

**FRANCISCO:** But did you consider how Madeline felt?

**SIDNEY:** Of course. I knew she couldn't live in an intimate relationship with a man for any length of time. A marriage would have destroyed both of us. How would she put up with my fussy little ways? You see, we still have our lives, and we still have our love.

**FRANCISCO:** I understand. *(Pause)* May I ask Monsignor, did you enjoy the exhibition?

**SIDNEY:** Well you know Francisco, in a way, I think I found it most enlightening.

**CURTAIN**