

ELLA'S PAWNSHOP

A short play by

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Dramatis Personae

MICKY: 25 years old, smart but broken, dresses in jeans and jean jacket.

MR. PENROSE: 50 years old, slick and quick, wears tweed suit.

MARIE: 40 years old, beautiful but worn.

Place

Ella's Pawnshop

Time

Present

ACT I
Scene 1

Setting: Ella's Pawnshop. There is a glass counter and shelves containing a variety of items that would be found in a typical pawnshop. Items should include guitars, records, stereo equipment, and any other relevant items.

At Rise: MR. PENROSE is behind the counter polishing a piece of jewelry. A bell chimes—the kind that is heard when one walks into a store. MICKEY enters stage right.

MICKEY

(Scratching himself.)

Hey, Mr. Penrose.

MR. PENROSE

(Looking up and putting jewelry down.)

Good afternoon, Mickey. What can I do for my most cherished patron today?

MICKEY

Uh, well, the usual.

MR. PENROSE

Haha the usual! So you won't be getting anything *out* of hock, I take it?

MICKEY

No, not today. Soon though.

MR. PENROSE

Yes yes, always soon, never soon enough. At any rate, what's the occasion *today*?

MICKEY

Well, you see, I...

MR. PENROSE

No no, let me guess. You need rent money? No, the first of the month is still too far off. Hmm... You need to get your car fixed? No, you sold that a long time ago. Let's see... Oh! I have it now—you need money to remodel your kitchen!

MICKEY

Are you interested in what I have or not? I didn't come in here to be ridiculed.

MR. PENROSE

No no, of course you didn't. I mean, of course I'm interested, although I can't possibly imagine what else you could have that you haven't already pawned. Your guitar, your record collection, your shoes—I think I even have your bed around here someplace.

MICKEY

I already told you I'll be back for 'em as soon as---

MR. PENROSE

Your luck changes. Yes, I remember. Mickey, do you know how long I've been in ownership of Ella's Pawnshop?

MICKEY

I'm not interested in your biography, Mr. Penrose.

MR. PENROSE

Ha! Twenty-five years.

MICKEY

(Scratches himself.)

Congratulations.

MR. PENROSE

And do you know what the one constant has been that entire time?

MICKEY

I dunno. That old suit you're wearing, maybe?

MR. PENROSE

Haha! No, Mickey. The one constant is that people, people like *you*, never *ever* get their things back, no matter how much they convince themselves that they will.

MICKEY

(Scratching himself.)

People like *me*, huh? What's that supposed to mean?

MR. PENROSE

You'll scratch yourself to death before you get that itch.

MICKEY

(Stops scratching.)

Is that so? I'll take my scratching *and* my business elsewhere then.

(Turns around as if to leave.)

MR. PENROSE

Let's drop this charade, shall we? I'm the only man in town that will touch the junk you've got and you know it. So, what have you got for me today?

MICKEY

(Turns back towards counter.)

MICKEY (Cont.)

You're lucky I've got stuff to do today, man. I don't have time to be running all over town chatting up greasy pawnbrokers.

(Takes off necklace and puts it on the counter.)

Here.

MR. PENROSE

(Picks it up and examines it.)

And what is this?

MICKEY

It's a necklace. How long did you say you've been doing this again?

MR. PENROSE

Long enough to know better. It's 14 karat gold.

MICKEY

Tibetan gold. It's from Tibet.

MR. PENROSE

I wasn't aware that you've been pawning your possessions to finance exotic adventures. So who'd you lift it from?

MICKEY

Who'd I... Are you calling me a thief? I might be a lot of things, but I'm not a god damn thief.

MR. PENROSE

My mistake. Where did you get it from?

MICKEY

It was my old man's. He gave it to me before... It's a family heirloom, ok?

MR. PENROSE

Interesting. I'll give you one hundred dollars for it.

MICKEY

One hundred dollars! Are you out of your mind!? That's 14 karat gold!

MR. PENROSE

Yes, I am aware. 14 karat *Tibetan* gold, as you say.

MICKEY

I could scrap it for more than that! Look at the craftsmanship on it! That's hand-made quality stuff right there!

MR. PENROSE

You're right, it's very nice. One hundred dollars.

MICKEY

This is an outrage! You fucking no-good usurious shyster—

MR. PENROSE

Please, Mickey. This is a place of business. Speaking of business, what's the going rate for heroin these days?

MICKEY

What the fuck did you just say to me?

MR. PENROSE

I'm merely reminding you that what I am offering will allow you to get what you need. Isn't that what this is all about?

MICKEY

This is about *principle*. You clearly don't have any.

(Grabs necklace off counter.)

You can take your hundred dollars and—

MR. PENROSE

Oh yes, this is the part where you pretend to be incensed by my offer and storm off, only to return shortly thereafter to accept my terms. I know the routine too, Mickey.

(Bells chime and MARIE enters stage right. She begins looking around the store.)

Please do it over there. I have respectable clientele to attend to.

(MICKEY walks away from the counter and stews.)

MICKEY

Respectable nothin'...

MR. PENROSE

Welcome to Ella's Pawnshop, Miss! Are we looking to pawn, sell, or buy?

MARIE

I'm looking to buy.

MR. PENROSE

Excellent. And what are we in the market for, Miss...

MARIE

Marie. I'm looking for a guitar.

MR. PENROSE

Marie! What a lovely name! That was my mother's name, you know.

MICKEY

I thought Ella was your mother's name, you charlatan.

MR. PENROSE

Oh! Haha! Ella was my wife's name...

MICKEY

No, you told me it was your *mother's* name, and that's why you named this racket Ella's. Are your wife and your mother the same person then? Because that would explain a lot.

MARIE

Do you work here?

MICKEY

Do I look like a criminal to you, lady?

MARIE

Well...

MR. PENROSE

Haha! No, no, Mickey is not under my employ. He's a regular here though. One of my *favorite* customers, actually.

MICKEY

Say lady, did you know that the word "pawn" is derived from the Latin word *pignus*? Emphasis on pig. Why do you think that is?

MARIE

Maybe I should leave you two alone...

MR. PENROSE

Oh, no no! That's just Mickey's sense of humor. One of the hundred reasons I cherish him as a customer. One of the *hundred and twenty-five* reasons, actually.

(Motions to MICKEY to demonstrate that he has just upped his previous offer of one hundred dollars to one hundred and twenty-five dollars if MICKEY behaves himself.)

MICKEY

Pignus, lady. Think about it...

MR. PENROSE

Haha did I say hundred and twenty-five? I meant one hundred and *fifty*! Yes, *one hundred and fifty* reasons, Mickey!

MICKEY

I *accept* the terms of your compliment. I'll wait over here.

MR. PENROSE

Thank you, Mickey. Now, back to guitars! And what exactly were you looking for, Marie?

MARIE

Well, I'd like to get a guitar for my son. It'll be his first one.

MR. PENROSE

A budding musician! Music to mine ears! Haha!

(Walks from behind counter to where the guitars are.)

How about this one here? It's made of luxurious rosewood. It sounds like a dream and it's barely used...

MARIE

Do you think my son would like it?

MR. PENROSE

I imagine he'd love it! Any budding musician would! And it's a real steal, at just two hundred and fifty dollars.

MARIE

Two hundred fifty dollars... Do you have anything a little more affordable?

(MICKEY whistles and makes a sound like a plane crash landing. MR. PENROSE coughs.)

MR. PENROSE

Of course, of course! It's a first instrument after all-- we wouldn't want to break the bank! How about this beauty? It's made of redwood and has a wonderful tonality to it.

MICKEY

That's *timbre*, Mr. Pignose.

MR. PENROSE

Thank you, Mickey. Yes, that's what I meant. It has a wonderful *timbre* to it.

MARIE

It's lovely. How much is it?

MR. PENROSE

A mere two hundred dollars.

MARIE

Two hundred dollars... I can't afford that one either.

(MICKEY whistles and makes a sound like a plane crashing again. MR. PENROSE looks at MICKEY angrily.)

MR. PENROSE

Understandable. We can work with your budget though, I assure you. In fact, I may have the perfect item the back. Would you kindly wait a moment?

MARIE

Oh, sure. I'm sorry, I had no idea guitars were so expensive. Money's just been really tight...

MR. PENROSE

No need for apologies, Miss. I shall return shortly.

(MR. PENROSE exits stage left. MICKEY walks over to MARIE.)

MICKEY

You know, it's none of my business, but those guitars aren't worth what he's asking for 'em.

MARIE

Really? I don't even know where to start with them. I'm not a musician.

MICKEY

Yeah, well I am. I haven't played guitar in a while but...I am.

MARIE

That's all Kevin talks about is playing guitar. Kevin's my son. I just want to do something nice for him for his birthday. It's been so hard since my husband died and... I don't know, you seem like a nice boy. Maybe you could give my son some lessons?

MICKEY

How old is Kevin?

MARIE

He'll be fifteen next Saturday.

MICKEY

That's how old I was when it happened too. Um, when I started playing guitar, I mean. I'm in no position to be giving lessons though. I'm sorry.

(Enter MR. PENROSE stage left with guitar.)

MR. PENROSE

I apologize for the wait. I had to really dig for this one. I'll be honest with you, this instrument isn't nearly as good as the other two, although it's much more...

MICKEY (angry)

What do you think you're doing, man?

MR. PENROSE

I'm showing this fine young lady an item, Mickey.

MICKEY

Yeah, *my* item. I told you, I'm going to be back for that.

MARIE

Is that your guitar?

MR. PENROSE

It *was* his guitar. However, Mickey seems to be forgetting that he failed to produce payment in the time allotted to him as per our agreement. As of yesterday, this guitar became property of Ella's Pawnshop, and as such—

MICKEY

As such, you're a swindler! That belongs to me and you know it!

MARIE

I don't want to cause anybody any trouble.

MR. PENROSE

There is no trouble, Miss! No trouble at all! I am well within my legal and ethical rights to sell you this guitar and you are well within *yours* to buy it. Since it was so *sorely neglected* by its previous owner, I would be willing to let it go at one hundred and fifty dollars.

MICKEY

One hundred and fifty dollars! I paid four hundred dollars for that!

MR. PENROSE

Yes, and I gave you seventy-five for it. But that is neither here nor there, is it?

MARIE

Please, both of you, calm down. It's ok. I can't afford it anyways. Thank you for everything, but I really think I should be going now.

MR. PENROSE

Now now, Miss, let's not get hasty! Mickey, you are upsetting my customers. I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

MICKEY

You can ask all you like but I ain't leavin'.

MR. PENROSE

Now, Mickey, let's be reasonable here. Surely, you have an *itch* to scratch elsewhere, do you not?

MICKEY

(Stares at MR. PENROSE blankly before looking down.)

You're a pig, Mr. Penrose.

(Takes out necklace and puts it on the counter.)

Give me my money and I'll get out of here.

MR. PENROSE

I knew you'd see it my way. One hundred dollars...

MICKEY

You said one hundred and *fifty*.

MR. PENROSE

My mistake. One hundred and fifty it is then.

(Hands MICKEY money.)

Until next time.

MICKEY

I'd like to buy back my guitar, please.

(Holds money out.)

MR. PENROSE

Excuse me?

MICKEY

My guitar. You said it was one hundred and fifty dollars. I have one hundred and fifty dollars and I'd like to purchase it.

MR. PENROSE

I'm sorry, but I've already offered it to the young lady here.

MARIE

It's ok, I really can't afford it. Thank you for your help. Maybe there's something else I can get Kevin instead. I'll just take a look around.

(Walks off and starts looking around the store.)

MR. PENROSE

Well then, business is business. Please keep in mind that all sales are final.

MICKEY

Is that a promise?

MR. PENROSE

That's a professional guarantee.

MICKEY

Sold.

(He exchanges money for the guitar and walks over to MARIE.)

MICKEY

Here, lady.

MARIE (surprised)

What are you doing?

MICKEY

Birthday shopping. Take it.

MARIE

I can't take this! I couldn't...

MICKEY

Look, you gotta take it. I ain't got no use for it and if you don't take it then I'm just gonna have to sell it back for half of what I paid for it. All sales are final. Isn't that right, Mr. Pignose?

MR. PENROSE

That's Mr. *Penrose*, but yes, all sales are final.

MICKEY

See? I don't make the rules around here.

MARIE

I...I don't know what to say.
(Takes guitar.)

MICKEY

Say happy birthday to Kevin for me.
(Starts walking away.)

MARIE

But why?

MICKEY

(Turns around.)
I was fifteen once, too.
(Walks away but then turns around again.)
Oh! And one more thing, lady: Don't let Kevin grow up to be a pawnbroker.
(MICKEY exits stage right as bells chime.)

MR. PENROSE

Well, that was certainly uncalled for.

MARIE

Yes. Uncalled for...

(Exits stage right slowly, cradling guitar as bells chime.)

MR. PENROSE

And a good afternoon to you too! Hmph!

(Picks up necklace and begins cleaning it.)

Forteen carat... *Tibetan* gold...

CURTAIN