

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS SAMPLE

SONDRA has just brought a dead rat down from her apartment to show ZAK.

(SONDRA strokes the corpse.)

Poor baby.

SONDRA

Don't touch it!

ZAK

So soft and furry.

SONDRA

Don't! They carry that, you know, that *plague* stuff!

ZAK

They're beautiful, really.

SONDRA

No. Not even after his steam bath and sauna.

ZAK

He was hungry, I guess. You can't blame him.

SONDRA

(SONDRA peels back the rat's upper lip.)

So white!

ZAK

You want to *die*?

SONDRA

So even! God, I wish I could afford to get my teeth capped.

ZAK

I wish I could afford *anything*! I'm history here. Any minute.

SONDRA

Your Dad dried up?

ZAK

Drier than a potato chip.

SONDRA

You haven't got any, have you?

ZAK

You kidding? At least the 'phone company got Dad off my case.

SONDRA

How so?

ZAK

They cut off my 'phone yesterday.

SONDRA

So that's why. I thought maybe I dialed wrong. I'd never just come barging in, you know.

ZAK

That's okay. I wasn't doing much of anything.

SONDRA

How goes the song writing?

(ZAK shrugs.)

ZAK

I meet with the guy again tomorrow. You know, to see if it works this time.

SONDRA

Can I hear?

ZAK

Not much to hear.

SONDRA

If it's private, that's okay.

ZAK

No, no. It's your basic "I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby" number.

(He plays.)

"I brought you this
Though all the world seems bleak
And gloomy,
Can't seem to break this losing streak,
Rent overdue--
So let them sue me!--"

Then something like this:

“Shoes worn out, no where to go,
But take this gift....”

That’s as far as I’ve got. And no idea what the guy’s giving his girlfriend, or where the song’s going.

SONDRA

Thud.

ZAK

Whad’ya mean, “thud”?

SONDRA

The song’s just kinda lying there.

(She indicates the rat.)

Like him. Only the song’s not so lively.

ZAK

Gee, thanks.

SONDRA

Like if he rolled off the piano. Thud.

ZAK

Now I’m *really* motivated.

SONDRA

That’s just it. The guy doesn’t sound motivated. He’s moping around feeling sorry for himself.

ZAK

So what’s he supposed to do? He’s broke and got nothing to offer his girl.

SONDRA

He’s got himself. His love.

ZAK

Big deal.

SONDRA

If he doesn’t know that’s the biggest gift of all, then he’s too dumb to be singing anyway. Maybe he should be playing the harmonica or something.

ZAK

You’re right. Shit.

SONDRA

Maybe we should collaborate.

ZAK

Maybe I'm in the wrong business. But what am I gonna do if I don't do this?

SONDRA

I know. Like what am I gonna do if I don't clean banks at night?

ZAK

Nothing to do is the worst.

SONDRA

The pits.

ZAK

If you ask me, that's why people do things.

SONDRA

I'd do *anything* not to do nothing. I mean I'm doing enough of nothing already.

ZAK

Like the way people read newspapers. Who wants news? What're you supposed to do with *news*? They want something to do, that's all.

SONDRA

Or smoke cigarettes. You got one by any chance?

ZAK

Nope, fresh out. Yeah, who really *wants* to smoke cigarettes? It's something to do. When there's nothing to do. I bet that's why Shakespeare did what he did. You think he wrote all that stuff so he could go down in history? You think he really wanted to spend his life in a cold little room with stone walls, sitting on a hard wooden bench, squirming around on his hemorrhoids and wearing out quill pens? Shit no. He did it so he'd have something to do when he wasn't with what's-her-name. In her cottage.

SONDRA

Maid Marion.

ZAK

That was Robin Hood...who went around robbing from the rich to give to the poor so the poor could get rich and then he'd be able to rob *them*. That way he'd always have something to do.

SONDRA

You ever thought about that?

ZAK

Robbing the rich?

SONDRA

Getting a Maid Marion. There'd be more to do if you were living with someone. Cleaning and cooking and arguing and stuff.

ZAK

Maybe there'd be *too* much to do. No time to yourself. To do nothing.

SONDRA

I've been thinking. You've got more room than I've got, and I've got more money than you've got, and putting that together would give us something to do.

ZAK

I don't think so....

SONDRA

You could still write songs.

ZAK

Yeah, but....

SONDRA

And when you weren't doing that, there'd be other things to do.

ZAK

I've *got* other things to do.

SONDRA

Like what?

ZAK

Wrap pennies. I wrap 'em in chronological order, oldest at the bottom. Takes time.

SONDRA

Don't you ever go out? You know, like on a date?

ZAK

Going out means spending money. Which means not going out. You?

SONDRA

Who's going to ask *me* to dinner and a disco after work? At nine in the morning?

ZAK

I guess.

SONDRA

You could ask me. If you'd like to. I promise I'd say no.

ZAK

A least you get to get out, see people.

SONDRA

I hate getting out and seeing people. It's weird out there.

ZAK

I've forgotten.

SONDRA

Like there's one teller at Citibank. She leaves horny notes for me. She's convinced I'm a guy.

ZAK

Maybe *she's* a guy.