(THEO enters. He is a surly teenager, clearly not thrilled that his mother has asked him to visit PIPPIN. He carries a large white duck.)

LEADING PLAYER

Enter Theo. A lovable boy and his lovable duck...

THEO

(Shouts at PIPPIN)
Pippin! Pippin! Say hello to my duck...
(HE pushes the duck into PIPPIN's face)

PIPPIN

How do you do...

THEO

Guess his name.

PIPPIN

Augustus.

THEO

Wrong. His name's Otto. You're not very smart...

PIPPIN

I'm smart enough to know that a duck belongs in a pond and not in my bed!

(Theo looks at Pippin a moment)

THEO

Bite me.

(HE goes. PIPPIN tries to go back to sleep.)

CATHERINE

(Who has been observing all of this from downstage)

Obviously hopeless. I had picked him up off the road. I could throw him back out again. Out he goes.

(Goes to PIPPIN, and is again stunned by the beauty of his foot. The anger drains out of her)

I'll give him another chance.

(To PIPPIN)
Pippin, you have been lying in this bed for seven days now. What is the matter with you?
PIPPIN

It's nothing you could possibly understand.

CATHERINE

Well, try me. Give me a chance.

PIPPIN

All right. I have been searching and searching for something fulfilling and meaningful to do with my life, and I have tried everything I can think of, and I haven't even come close. So I am in utter, abject, complete despair.

(After a beat)

And that's it?

PIPPIN

Yes. That's it.

CATHERINE

(Coming downstage, to audience)

You may think that what I did next was a little... underhanded...

(Turns back to PIPPIN)

Pippin, let me tell you something about despair.

(She points to the conductor and a keyboard begins to play as if this were the beginning of a soap opera.

PIPPIN is surprised by the music and begins to search for its source.

CATHERINE sits on the end of the bed and begins speaking.)

I loved my husband very much. The years we spent together were the happiest years of my life. And then one day he was struck by fever...

(Slowly PIPPIN comes down to the end of the bed and watches her)

...and when his hand went cold in mine, I felt my life, too, was over. I was overcome by the deepest despair. I took to my bed for five days. On the sixth day I got up. There were things to be done. An estate to be run. A boy to raise.

(The keyboard plays a grand finish. CATHERINE looks to the audience and smiles.

PIPPIN is staring at her. To audience)

Well, look at that. I think he's really moved.

(PIPPIN reaches out and touches CATHERINE's hand.

SHE looks at the hand for a long moment. Then, softly, to PIPPIN)

Pippin, this is such a large estate. I'm all alone here and I can't do all this work by myself. Couldn't you please help me...

PIPPIN

All right.