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ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

LIGHTS COME UP on the backyard of "29 Freemont Road", circa, 1972. GEORGE is DOWN STAGE LEFT, digging in the yard with a small shovel in the earth. There is a shoebox near him. It's late October in Springfield, Massachusetts and already cold enough for the ground to freeze.

We hear the sound of MARY and AL, arguing from the kitchen window.

MARY

I want your goddamned keys!

AL

You don't need my keys, use the spare set!

MARY

The spare's for the bartender, I need keys to the office!

AL

You don't need to be in the office!

MARY

Look, YOU, don't tell me what I need to have and where I need to be! How the hell can I order food and booze and everything else, if I can't get into the office?!

AL

I took care of the ordering, you don't have to worry about that!

MARY

I'll need to go the bank, you jackass!

AL

Stanley can do the bank!

MARY

Stanley can't find his ass with two hands and a map! What do you care about the keys, they're going to take them away when you get up to Sing-Sing, anyway!

AL

I'm not going to SING-SING, will you lower your voice!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL (CONT'D)

Does the whole neighborhood have to know our business?!

MARY

It's no secret, it was in the newspaper!

AL

It was three lines! Why the hell do they have to put something like that in a newspaper?! It's personal business, I should sue those bastards!

MARY

Plowing your car into a police cruiser in the middle of the night, isn't exactly personal business! I want those keys!

AL

Fine, take them! Try not to burn the place down while I'm gone!

MARY

Will you get out there and help the boy?! He's been waiting for you since 9:45!

AL

Can I at least get some coffee?!

MARY

Have your coffee later, get that corpse in the ground! You don't exactly have all day!

AL

Jesus-Christ!

The argument stops abruptly and Al emerges from the house, pulling on his coat. He carries a beaten Trillby hat in his hand. Al CROSSES DOWN LEFT, towards George, rubbing his temples from time to time.

AL (CONT'D)

What's your hurry, butchy boy?

GEORGE

It's cold, the ground is hard.

AL

I'd have helped you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

I have to dig when the sun's high.

AL

There's time. The sun'll be out for hours.

GEORGE

It's farther away now. You see it but it's not so strong.

AL

What are you talking about?

GEORGE

The sun.

AL

Oh. You learn that in school?

GEORGE

Yeah.

AL

The things you learn in books. I always thought the sun was the sun.

GEORGE

No, it's never the same. We keep moving towards it, until we start moving away. All of us, even the monkey.

Al puts his hat on.

AL

I loved that monkey.

GEORGE

I know. I loved him too but Mary wants him buried, she's mad about something.

AL

Your grandmother doesn't run this house! And besides, she hated the monkey. I'm surprised she's not burying him for the sheer pleasure of it.

Al takes a small bottle of aspirin from his coat pocket, pops a few.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AL
Women and monkeys don't mix, it's a fact.

GEORGE
What's the matter?

AL
Just a headache.

GEORGE
You're leaving.

AL
Who said I was?

GEORGE
I heard you fighting.

AL
We should bury that monkey.

GEORGE
We ARE burying the monkey, that's why I'm digging a hole. Are you in a lot of trouble?

AL
Some but it's nothing I can't handle. I have to go away for a little while.

GEORGE
Are you going to jail?

AL
No, I'm not going to JAIL!
(Beat)
I, ah, have to go someplace but it's not a jail. It's nicer.

GEORGE
Where are you going?

AL
It's kind of like a, a spa.

GEORGE
What's a spa?

AL
A place where you eat salad and sweat.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

AL (CONT'D)

I gotta' lose some weight Anyway.
Do you want me to help you?

GEORGE

I can do it, it doesn't have to be
very big, he was a small monkey.
How long will you be gone?

AL

I'll be back before you know it.
I'll have dropped ten pounds and
I'll be able to fit into my good
suit. Then the three of us can go
out to dinner and celebrate your
birthday.

GEORGE

You won't be here for my birthday.

AL

No. I'm sorry, butchy boy, I
won't. But I'll make it up to you,
we'll go to that nice German place
you like.

GEORGE

Mary doesn't like German food.

AL

Your grandmother enjoys being
difficult.

GEORGE

No, she doesn't!

AL

Don't tell me about my wife,
George. I may not have read a lot
of books but I know who I'm married
to and she likes to be difficult!

George says nothing.

AL

Well, it's no big deal if she is.
Everybody's got to have a hobby.

GEORGE

What's with you and the Germans?

AL

I don't know, I just like the food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GEORGE

Mary says you got the monkey from a German woman and she was a tramp.

AL

She wasn't a TRAMP! She was a nice woman, she was a friend of mine.

GEORGE

Mary says you got a lot of friends like that.

AL

Your grandmother's got a big mouth! It's not my fault if I'm popular. That looks deep enough to me.

GEORGE

Almost.

George starts to cry a little, getting angry that he is.

AL

Everything's going to be all right.

GEORGE

I know.

Al puts his hand on George's head, ruffles the boys hair. George pushes it away.

AL

It's just part of life.

GEORGE

I know!

AL

So stop crying, will you? It's just a monkey.

GEORGE

I'm not crying about the GODDAMNED MONKEY!

George tries to put the shoe box into the hole but it's not deep enough, tries to force it in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

AL

Will you watch your language?!
Your grandmother hears you cursing
like that and I'll never hear the
end of it! She's already on my
case. That hole's not big enough.

GEORGE

I can see that! Goddamned monkey!
Why did he have to die right now?
Why couldn't he just wait?

George hurls the box down onto the ground.

AL

Hey, watch what you're doing!

GEORGE

He was a nasty monkey anyway! All
he did was shit and bite people!

Al picks up the box and takes off the lid. George goes back
to digging the hole. He stops crying. Al looks at the dead
monkey in the box, strokes it with his finger.

AL

He did other things too. He made
us laugh, a lot. You remember
that?

GEORGE

Yeah. I do.

AL

I remember the summer when you were
five and my friends from the circus
came to see us.

GEORGE

Yeah. I remember the midgets.
They got the monkey drunk.

AL

The monkey got drunk and when I
took away his beer, he got mad and
ran up into the trees. And later,
when I was telling a joke, the
monkey stood up on a branch and
pissed into my glass.

George laughs a little, in spite of himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

GEORGE

I remember. It was really funny.

AL

You fell down on the ground, you were laughing so hard. I'll never forget the sight of you, rolling around on the ground with the midgets, laughing at the monkey's revenge.

GEORGE

I wish we hadn't cut down the trees, they were nice.

AL

Yeah, I miss those big old trees too, but they were diseased. Hey, maybe next summer we can put up a little pool? Would you like that?

GEORGE

I don't want a pool!

AL

What are you so mad about?

George starts digging passionately as he speaks.

GEORGE

They're stupid! Buster Petroni's father put up a pool last summer and I saw what happened to him. The Guminic brothers went over there and held Buster under the water until he started turning blue and then they ripped off his bathing suit so Buster couldn't get out of the pool because there were girls there, and then the Guminic brothers pulled on one side of the pool until it came apart and then all the water came flooding out and Buster got sucked through and everyone saw him flying across the yard with no clothes on! Then Buster's mother came out and yelled at everyone and then chased Buster into the house and gave him a spanking! After that, he had to switch schools.

George stops digging.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

AL

All right, so forget the pool.

GEORGE

Maybe we can plant some new trees instead.

AL

Sure. I think it's deep enough now, you're halfway to China.

GEORGE

Yeah.

AL

Let's put him in.

Al and George lay the monkey to rest and then cover up the hole together.

AL

We should say a prayer.

GEORGE

Prayers won't help a monkey.

AL

Everyone needs prayers, George. The worse we are, the more we need them. Come on, say one with me.

George puts his hands on the little grave. Al covers the boys hands with his own. They bow their heads.

GEORGE

I wish the monkey didn't drink.

AL

I know, I wish he didn't too. We are who we are. "Dear Lord, we ask you to receive into your care, this monkey. I know, you know, he wasn't always what you'd call a model Christian, but as I've never met one myself, I could be wrong about that. Like all of us, he had days that he was morally challenged, but there were other days, maybe not so many, when he rose to the occasion and was better than the others of his kind.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

AL (CONT'D)

Whatever else he was, he was an individual and not a copy. He will be missed."

Mary opens the back door and stands in the doorway.

MARY

AL-BERT! AL-BERRRT!

AL

We're saying a prayer for the goddamned monkey! What do you want?!

MARY

They're here! They're in the driveway!

AL

WHO'S in the driveway?!

MARY

Who do you THINK?!

Al rises.

AL

They're not supposed to be here until the afternoon!

MARY

Well they're here now. You better hurry up, they'll be at the front door in a minute.

AL

Tell 'em to wait!

MARY

They're not going to wait and you know it!

AL

FUCK THEM! I'm doing something with my grandson!

George rises.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

MARY

Albert, please, don't make a scene. Just get up here before the entire neighborhood is out on their front lawns. Come on, just get it over with.

AL

All right, all right, keep your dress on!

Mary goes back in the house.

AL

I gotta' go, butchy boy.

George runs to Al, embraces him.

GEORGE

Let me go with you.

AL

You can't, you know that. Besides, I need you to keep an eye on the octopus while I'm gone, your grandmother won't have anything to do with it.

Al tries to break away from George but the boy holds onto him. Al ruffles George's hair.

GEORGE

Don't leave!

AL

I'm serious. If that octopus crawls out of the tank again, your grandmother will have him on the menu and I paid a lot of money for him.

GEORGE

You said you got it in a card game.

AL

So I lied. Come on, come on, cut that crap out. You're a big boy now, you know how things work. You know things I don't even know. And listen to your grandmother, she's gonna' have her hands full while I'm gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

GEORGE

All right.

George lets go off Al.

AL

Good. You're almost a man, you have to start acting like one.

Al takes his hat off and puts it on George.

AL (CONT'D)

You wear this while I'm gone, all right? And don't lose it.

GEORGE

I won't, I promise.

AL

And make sure you pile some stones on the monkey's grave. We don't want some dog digging him up.

GEORGE

All right.

AL

Then wish me luck.

GEORGE

Good luck, Al.

AL

Same to you, George.

Al CROSSES UPSTAGE to the back door and EXITS. George starts looking around the yard for stones. He finds a few.

ANTHONY, a portly boy of twelve, ENTERS THROUGH THE HOUSE.

ANTHONY

Hey! Hey, George! I heard the cops are here to cart off your grandfather!

George RUNS DOWNSTAGE, yelling at Anthony, as the hat flies off his head. Anthony runs up towards the lip of the stage.

GEORGE

Shove it up your ass, Fatso!

ANTHONY

Don't you call me that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

GEORGE
Shove it up your fat, FAT, ASS!

ANTHONY
You're real funny but your
grandfather won't look so funny
when he's in jail!

GEORGE
He's not going to jail, he's going
to a spa!

ANTHONY
That's a laugh! Funny kind of
"spa" with bars in it!

GEORGE
SHUT YOUR GODDAMNED MOUTH!

George throws a stone at Anthony but misses him.

ANTHONY
HEY, I'M TELLIN' MY MA YOU'RE
THROWING STONES!

GEORGE
SHUT YOUR MOUTH ABOUT MY
GRANDFATHER!

ANTHONY
YOUR GRANDFATHER'S A DRUNK AND
EVERYBODY KNOWS IT!

GEORGE
HE'S NOT A DRUNK, HE JUST OWNS A
BAR!

ANTHONY
MY FATHER SAYS HE IS AND THAT BAR
IS NOTHING BUT A SHIT-HOLE!

George throws another stone. From somewhere, A DOG STARTS
BARKING.

ANTHONY
HA-HA, YOU MISSED ME! YOU THROW
LIKE A FRIGGIN' GIRL!

GEORGE
SHUT UP, YOU STUPID POLLACK!

The back door opens and Mary ENTERS the yard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

MARY

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! What is going on out here?! George, what are you doing, are you throwing rocks again?!

GEORGE

Anthony started it!

MARY

Put those rocks down this minute! Don't I have enough going on in the front yard without you causing a commotion in the back?!

GEORGE

But he said..

MARY

..I don't care what he said! Put down those rocks!

ANTHONY

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Your-grandpa's-a-big-drunk!

MARY

Anthony, you mind your own business or I'm calling your mother on the phone!

ANTHONY

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! And-he's-a-whore-monger!

MARY

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

GEORGE

See what I mean?

MARY

Goddamnit, give me one of those!

Mary grabs a stone from the ground and throws it at Anthony. She hits him.

ANTHONY

OWWW! I'M TELLIN' MY MA!

Anthony EXITS, running up the aisle and crying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

MARY

You go ahead and tell her! And if she comes near me, I'll hit HER with a rock too!

GEORGE

Good shot, Mary!

MARY

You shut up too, you're not helping!

GEORGE

It wasn't my fault!

MARY

I don't care whose fault it was! What kind of family is this? Your grandfather's going up the street in a police car and we're back here throwing rocks at people! This keeps up and we'll all be in leg irons!

GEORGE

I'm sorry. But he was saying things!

MARY

I know he was and you better get used to it! Things are going to get rough around here, so I need you to knuckle down and act like you're in the real world! You understand me?

GEORGE

I understand. I'll knuckle down.

Mary and George CROSS UP to the back door.

MARY

You better, 'cause we're fresh out of BAIL MONEY! Now come on, I've your lunch waiting and then we've got to get to the bar, I mean the restaurant!

GEORGE

All right. Oh, wait!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

George runs back and retrieves Al's hat. George and Mary EXIT into the house, as THE SOUND OF THE DOG BARKING CONTINUES.

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE ONE.

SCENE TWO

Two weeks later, around dinner time and growing dark outside. Light streams into the yard from the windows of the house. The backdoor opens and George comes running out, he crosses down to the monkey's grave and kicks at the stones on it. The backdoor opens again, Mary comes into the yard, wearing an overcoat.

MARY
George, come back inside.

GEORGE
I won't!

MARY
You're behaving badly.

GEORGE
No, I'm not.

MARY
She brought you a present.

GEORGE
I don't want it.

MARY
She's your mother.

GEORGE
Who said?

MARY
Your birth certificate.

GEORGE
Where has she been all this time?

MARY
She's trying to tell you. The least you could do is listen.

GEORGE
I don't have to do anything!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

It's cold out here, you're going to get sick.

GEORGE

I don't care.

The backdoor opens again, KATHERINE stands in the doorway with Tim behind her. Katherine wears a pretty dress and a little party hat.

KATHERINE

George?

MARY

Katherine, this isn't a good time.

KATHERINE

Excuse me?

MARY

You're rushing things. Let me talk to him.

KATHERINE

He's MY son!

MARY

Don't be stupid! Go inside.

Katherine crosses DOWN into the yard. Tim follows, staying in earshot.

KATHERINE

Don't call me stupid, I'm a grown woman, I don't have to take that anymore!

MARY

Wearing high heels and being a grown woman are two different things!

KATHERINE

You're not in charge here!

MARY

My roof, my rules.

KATHERINE

We're not playing by your rules anymore!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY

Says who?

KATHERINE

(Indicating Tim.)

My lawyer.

MARY

Really? And where was your LAWYER when you couldn't pay your rent? Where was your LAWYER when you had no food in the house? Where was your LAWYER when you came to us at the Memorial Day parade, weighing 95 pounds with a baby under your arm? Where was your lawyer THEN?

KATHERINE

Don't throw the past up in my face!

MARY

It's YOUR past Katherine. If you can't stand the smell of it, that isn't my fault.

Katherine advances on Mary in a threatening way.

KATHERINE

Old woman, I am so sick of your shit!

MARY

Don't you raise your hands to me.

George picks up a stone from the monkey's grave, taking aim at Katherine. Tim immediately starts circling around towards George.

GEORGE

You stay away from her!

TIM

Hey! HEY!

MARY

George, put that stone down!

TIM

You put it down right now!

GEORGE

NO!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KATHERINE
Tim, stay out of this!

TIM
The hell I will!

Katherine tries to shove Tim back, they struggle.

MARY
George, stop it!

GEORGE
Tell her to get out of here!

Tim breaks away from Katherine.

TIM
The kid's wild, he needs some
discipline-

KATHERINE
-He doesn't mean it, it's his
birthday-

GEORGE
-Make her go-

MARY
-George, civilized people don't
throw-

TIM
-You better put that down if you
know what's good for you-

GEORGE
-Who said I was civilized?-

KATHERINE
-Stop it, you're scaring him-

MARY
-Can we just go back in the HOUSE-

GEORGE
-MAKE HER GO-

TIM
-You're just encouraging this-

MARY
-I can't make her-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

KATHERINE

-Honey, I know you're upset-

GEORGE

-WHY NOT?-

TIM

-You put that rock down-

MARY

-Because she's your mother-

GEORGE

-She isn't my mother, she's an IMPOSTER! I've never seen her before in my life!-

MARY

-GEORGE!

Katherine turns away.

TIM

What kind of kid is this?

MARY

George! That woman over there, whether I like it or not, is my daughter! And whether you like it or not, she is YOUR MOTHER!! But if you throw a stone at her, as God is my witness, I WILL NEVER SPEAK TO YOU AGAIN!! Do you understand me?! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!

George screams and throws the stone at the house, breaking a window on the first floor.

GEORGE

Ahhhhh!

MARY

God Almighty, not the window!

TIM

That's it buddy, you apologize to your mother right now!

GEORGE

Get away from me!

TIM

Come back here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

George runs UPSTAGE, goes through the side gate, Tim hot on his heels.

MARY

If you touch that child, I'll have you arrested! DO YOU HEAR ME?! I'LL HAVE YOU ARRESTED!!

Katherine has begun to cry by now. Mary crosses UP to the house.

MARY

Christ-on-a-bicycle! Now I gotta' replace that.

KATHERINE

What have you been telling him?!

MARY

Katherine, I haven't told him anything.

KATHERINE

I don't believe you! You've obviously been filling him with lies about me, telling him GOD KNOWS WHAT!

MARY

Why would I do that?

KATHERINE

Because you want him for yourself, that's why! Because you always wanted a boy, you never wanted daughters! And now you've got what you always wanted, you've got your son. But you're not going to keep him, because he's not yours!

MARY

There really is something wrong with your brain.

KATHERINE

What did you tell him?!

MARY

We never talked about you.

KATHERINE

LIES!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARY

I never had to lie, Katherine. I never had to tell him anything, because he never asked. Because one day you were here and the next you were gone. That said everything.

KATHERINE

I left a note!

MARY

Yes, I still have it. There are twelve words on that note. And you've been gone for five years. How long did you expect that boy to live on twelve words?

KATHERINE

I couldn't stay in this house anymore, I couldn't stay in this neighborhood with everybody spying on everybody and buzzing behind their doors like bees! I had to get out and find a life.

MARY

So you found it, good for you. Why do you need George?

KATHERINE

Because he's mine, he's my son and I want him back!

MARY

Katherine, do you remember the cats?

KATHERINE

Cats? What are you talking about?

MARY

When we first came to live here, you had a thing for cats. You would pick up every stray you could find and you'd bring 'em back and push them in the back door. And I was always coming into the kitchen and finding these mangy, chewed up cats sitting on the table, hungry and hopeful.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MARY (CONT'D)

And I'd feel bad, because they were skin and bones but if you feed a stray then you own it and this house had all the mouths it could hold. So I'd have to put them out the door and I never had a good feeling about it.

KATHERINE

What's your point?

MARY

My point is that you're still doing it. Dumping strays in the kitchen and then going out to play. But George is not a cat, he's a boy.

Katherine tears off the party hat, beginning to shiver from the cold.

KATHERINE

I'm his mother!

MARY

Spreading your legs for some roustabout in Niagara Falls doesn't make you a MOTHER! They have other words for that!

KATHERINE

I am not a TRAMP, we were MARRIED!

MARY

You never showed me the license.

KATHERINE

DADDY saw it!

MARY

So he said. He also claimed to have met Churchill but I don't know that I believe him.

KATHERINE

I want my son!

MARY

Why now? Because it's convenient? Well maybe it's not convenient for anybody else, maybe it's not convenient for GEORGE!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

KATHERINE

I know what's best for him. And so does Tim.

MARY

What the hell does TIM know about it?

KATHERINE

He knows everything.

MARY

Excuse me?

KATHERINE

I've told him everything. Daddy's drinking, his girlfriends, all the cars he's wracked up. And I told him about you and your temper. Your violence. It's not a safe environment for a child.

George returns to the side gate, slowly crosses into the yard, listening.

MARY

Your father and I didn't do badly by you, Katherine, you had a normal life. We made mistakes but we could have done worse.

KATHERINE

Really? Growing up in the circus, that's your idea of normal? Being surrounded by freaks and midgets and elephants?

MARY

Believe it or not, most people enjoy the circus.

KATHERINE

Most people don't have to live in it. Most teenage girls don't get molested by 40 year old clowns in the middle of the night!

MARY

You were never "molested"!

KATHERINE

He rammed his tongue down my throat! What would you call it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

MARY

It only happened once! And your father took care of that.

KATHERINE

More stories, just like Churchill.

MARY

What are you talking about?

KATHERINE

I want a better life for George, better than what I had.

MARY

You should have thought about that five years ago.

KATHERINE

I'm thinking about it now!

Mary notices George.

MARY

What is it, George?

GEORGE

It's Tim. He's hurt.

KATHERINE

What do you mean, he's hurt?

GEORGE

He was chasing me and he fell down.

KATHERINE

"He fell down"?

MARY

George, what happened?

GEORGE

I didn't do ANYTHING! It's not my fault.

MARY

Nobody said you did. What happened to Tim?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

GEORGE

We were running through the Guminiaac's yard and it's all dug up because of their stupid dog and then Tim stepped into one of the holes and then he started yelling. I think he broke his ankle.

KATHERINE

Oh, God. Show me where he is.

MARY

I'll take you, I know where the Guminiacks live. George, go in the house.

KATHERINE

No, I want you to call an ambulance.

MARY

I think the boy's had enough for one day, don't you?

GEORGE

It's all right, Mary. I'll take her. It IS kind of my fault.

MARY

George, take my coat, it's freezing!

GEORGE

It's all right, I'll be fine!

George crosses UP RIGHT, Katherine follows.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You never said you grew up in the circus.

KATHERINE

I did.

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE TWO.

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS COME UP on George, standing on a stepladder, trying to replace the bathroom window on the first floor. George wears a coat, wool hat and mittens. It is one week later, just before Thanksgiving. He struggles with the window pane, unable to get it in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

GEORGE

Go in! Go in! What's wrong with
you?!

George pulls his mittens off to get a better grip on the
glass.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Stupid glass!

George cuts his finger on the edge of the glass.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ow! Shit!

George sits on top of the ladder and squeezes the finger with
his other hand, trying to stop the bleeding.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's okay, it's okay, it's not bad.

George takes his hand away, looks at the finger.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Oh boy, it's bad. It's really bad.

George covers the finger again, starts to panic, breathing
hard. Al appears, UP STAGE RIGHT, at the side gate and
crosses into the yard. Al seems thinner and moves with less
vitality than when we saw him last.

AL

What are you doing up there, Butchy
Boy?

GEORGE

Al, you're home! Oh-my-god!

George loses his balance on the ladder and almost tumbles
off it.

AL

Careful, careful! You almost fell!
You have to pay attention when
you're on a ladder, haven't I told
you that? What's the matter with
your hand?

GEORGE

I cut my finger.

AL

Is it bad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

GEORGE

I don't know, I think so.

AL

You better come down and let me look at it. What were you doing up there, anyway?

GEORGE

Trying to fix the window.

AL

What happened to the window?

GEORGE

Oh, it got broken.

Al looks at George's finger.

AL

This is a pretty bad cut, George. I think you're going to need a stitch or two.

GEORGE

Aw, shit. Does that mean going to the hospital?

AL

No, we don't need a hospital for a couple of stitches, I can do it.

GEORGE

Shouldn't we get a doctor?

AL

Don't need a doctor for something this small. Hell, I've seen women give birth without doctors, we don't need one to stitch up your finger. Trust me, I've done stuff like this plenty of times.

GEORGE

Will it hurt?

AL

Maybe a little bit, but you can handle it. Do you know where your grandmother keeps her sewing basket?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

GEORGE

Yeah.

AL

So go get it. Better get some peroxide too.

GEORGE

Shouldn't we do this inside?

AL

No, the light's better out here, I can't see anything in that damn house. Hurry up now, let's get you fixed up.

George runs into the house. Al sits on the stone bench, lights a cigarette. He rubs his head and looks around the yard.

AL

There's so many things I intended to do - Mardi Gras, gambling in Cuba, and I never got to see the Statue of Liberty. Dear God, what's the point of giving us a life if we never really get to live it? The more I realize what the days are, the faster they slip through my fingers and I can never get them back. Sometimes I think I never really lived, I only, dreamed. Did I do it all wrong or am I still dreaming now? Maybe it doesn't matter WHAT I did, just why I did it. That's the only thing that worries me, the reasons. Ah, fuck it. Maybe it doesn't matter at all. Maybe I'll wake up tomorrow and the night'll be day and all of this will be a, torn picture in somebody else's mind. Or maybe I've just been sober too long.

George comes back with a sewing basket and a bottle of peroxide.

AL (CONT'D)

Let me see what we got here.

Al looks in the sewing basket, finds some thread and a needle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

AL (CONT'D)
This'll work.

Al takes a pair of glasses from his coat pocket and puts them on. He threads the needle.

GEORGE
How come you're home so early?
Mary said you wouldn't be back for
another two weeks.

AL
I got time off for good behavior.

GEORGE
Was it bad, where you were?

AL
Not so bad but the food was
terrible.

GEORGE
Yeah, you lost weight.

AL
I'm looking forward to a good meal
at Thanksgiving. How'd you manage
to break that window?

GEORGE
It was an accident.

AL
I figured as much. Who were you
throwing rocks at, this time?

GEORGE
Katherine.

AL
My daughter, Katherine? Your
mother?

GEORGE
Yeah.

AL
Good Christ, I know you're angry
but you didn't have to throw a rock
at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

GEORGE

I didn't really throw it AT her. I was going to but then I threw it at the window instead.

AL

I'll bet that made her feel better.

GEORGE

I know, it was stupid.

AL

You can say that again.

Al finishes threading the needle.

AL (CONT'D)

Yeah, this'll do fine. Put some of that peroxide on your finger.

GEORGE

It's going to sting.

AL

Yeah it is but you don't want an infection.

George pours some peroxide on his finger, it stings.

GEORGE

Ow.

Al sterilizes the needle with the flame of his cigarette lighter.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What are you doing that for?

AL

Sterilize the needle.

GEORGE

This is really going to hurt, isn't it?

AL

Now don't be a baby, George. If this is the worst hand life deals you, than you're getting off easy. How did Katherine look?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

GEORGE

I don't know, she looked like her picture. Her hair was different.

AL

When did you see her?

GEORGE

On my birthday. She brought me a present.

AL

What'd she get you?

GEORGE

Some girlie thing. I gave it to Jackie down the street.

AL

Did Jackie like it?

GEORGE

'Course she did, she's a girl.

AL

All right, now sit next to me and try to relax.

George sits next to Al, fidgets.

AL (CONT'D)

George, you're bouncing around like a Mexican jumping bean.

GEORGE

I'm scared.

AL

I know you are but it's going to be all right. You have to sit still now. Make all the noise you want but don't move, you understand?

GEORGE

All right, I won't move.

Al makes a stitch in George's finger.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

AH-AH-AH!

AL

I know, I know, it stings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

GEORGE
IT-REALLY-HURTS!

AL
All right, I know it does. We just
have to do two more.

GEORGE
I-DON'T-WANNA-DO-TWO-MORE!

AL
Steady now, here we go.

Al makes another stitch in George's finger.

GEORGE
AHHHHHHH!

AL
Don't move!

GEORGE
I'M NOT MOVING!

AL
Steady, steady, just one more and
we're done!

Al makes a third and final stitch in George's finger.

GEORGE
THIS-REALLY-REALLY-GODDAMNED-
HURRRRRTTTTSSS!!

AL
There! We're done! I just have to
tie it off.

Al ties off the thread. He reaches into the sewing basket,
finds a pair of scissors and cuts off the excess thread.

AL
Now keep your hand up in the air
for a couple of minutes, give that
a chance to clot up.

George gets up and starts moving back and forth, shaking his
finger around in the air.

GEORGE
That hurt a LOT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

AL
I know it did. Hey, I said "hold
it up." I didn't say "shake it
around."

GEORGE
You said it was going to hurt a
LITTLE!

AL
Sorry, I lied.

GEORGE
You tell a lot of lies!

AL
You're right but if I'd told you
the truth, you'd never have let me
do it, right?

GEORGE
No!

AL
That's why I had to lie.

GEORGE
Mary says you should never lie, you
should always tell the truth.

AL
I know she does and that's the root
of every argument I've ever had
with the woman! Will you stop
running around, you're going to
start bleeding again and that
defeats the whole point of
stitching up your finger! You
don't want to do it a second time,
do you?

George stops moving.

GEORGE
No.

AL
Good. So come sit down with me and
have a little pain-killer. You
acted like a man, so I think you're
entitled to a little.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

GEORGE
What kind of pain-killer?

Al takes a can of beer out of his coat pocket.

AL
Pabst Blue Ribbon.

GEORGE
Is that beer?

AL
It ain't soda pop.

Al opens the can of beer, extends it to George.

AL
You can have the first sip.

GEORGE
Cool.

George sits next to Al, takes a sip of the beer. He makes a face.

GEORGE
Uggh, that tastes awful!

AL
You get used to it.

George hands the can back to Al, who takes a big mouthful.

AL
So what did Katherine have to say
for herself?

GEORGE
She got married again.

AL
Really? Who'd she get married to?

GEORGE
Some lawyer, guy named "Tim".

AL
A lawyer, huh? She came here just
to tell you that?

GEORGE
Naw. She said some other stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

AL

Like what?

GEORGE

Oh, like her and Tim buying this big house down in Hartford and how they had lots of room and I could come visit them, if I wanted. Said I could have my own room.

AL

Having your own room's a nice thing. How'd you feel seeing her?

GEORGE

I don't know. Can I have some more of that beer?

AL

Sure.

Al gives George the beer, he takes another sip.

GEORGE

It's not so bad the second time.

AL

Were you happy to see her?

GEORGE

I told you, I don't know.

AL

You don't know how you feel? Thought you were smarter than that.

GEORGE

It's not about being smart!

George shoves the beer back at Al, gets up again, agitated. George moves around again, shaking his finger.

GEORGE

It's about something else. I don't really know what the word is, but it isn't that. I don't know, part of me, wanted her to come back. I used to think about it, what it would be like, but now she's here and it's not what I thought it would be. She's not like you and Mary, she's different-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

AL

-George, don't get that finger going again-

GEORGE

-I don't know, I don't know if I like her. Sometimes she's really cool, you know, she's fun. And sometimes she scares me. She was really mean to Mary on my birthday, and, and that's why I was going to throw the stone-

AL

-George-

GEORGE

-PLEASE LISTEN TO ME! I was really angry and I was gonna' throw the stone and Mary, Mary was saying' something, but I couldn't hear her. And I was looking at Katherine and something happened. Something inside me, I don't know, something inside me, started turning. You ever feel that? Something turning inside you? That never turned before?

AL

Yes. I have.

GEORGE

I DON'T THINK I LIKE THAT FEELING!
I DON'T THINK I LIKE IT AT ALL!

AL

It's okay, George.

GEORGE

No, it's not! Why does she have to come back now? When I, when I just got used to the idea, that she was gone? Why? Now?

AL

I'm sorry to tell you this, George, but the world is not in the habit of giving people what they want. I wish I could tell you different but I can't. Even when we do get what we ask for, it's never at the right time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

GEORGE

That stinks.

AL

You're right, it does. Want to know something? I've never really been fond of this world, I think it's kind of a cold place. That's why I chose to live in the circus for so many years. Now you can say what you want about circus life, that it isn't real, that it's all one big illusion and maybe that's true. But the illusion was mine to chose and mine to create. It belonged to no one but me. Our time on this world is short, George. You're going to blink your eyes three times and you'll be an old man like me. So whatever you decide to do about Katherine, make sure you do it for the right reasons.

GEORGE

What are the right reasons?

AL

Do whatever YOU want, not what other people want you to do. Do what makes YOU happy. There's no future in anything else.

GEORGE

All right.

Al finishes his beer, then ruffles George's hair.

AL

How about we fix that window, before your grandmother gets home?

Mary calls OFF STAGE.

MARY

George? GEORGE!

AL

Shit. See what I mean? Never what you expect.

GEORGE

We're out here, Mary!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

AL
Hurry up, run inside and brush your
teeth! It's bad enough she'll
smell it on me.

George runs inside the house THROUGH THE BACK DOOR, UP STAGE
CENTER. Al puts the empty beer can in his coat pocket and
waits on the stone bench. Mary appears at the side gate, UP
STAGE RIGHT.

MARY
Al-bert! What are you doing home?

AL
I cut my holiday short.

Mary CROSSES DOWN to Al.

MARY
You didn't bust out of there, did
you?

AL
No, they let me out.

MARY
Why would they do that?

AL
They had their reasons.

MARY
Have you been drinking?

AL
Mary, I just got in the door.

MARY
I can smell it on you!

AL
You have got the nose of a baboon,
did anybody ever tell you that?

MARY
Did anybody ever tell you, you're a
drunk?

AL
Yes, YOU have. Repeatedly. For
years!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

MARY

It hasn't made much of an impression, has it?

AL

None. And since we're on the subject, I am not a DRUNK, I'm an alcoholic.

MARY

I don't see a difference.

AL

I've never missed a days work in my life, that's the difference.

MARY

Albert, why didn't you stay the thirty days? Couldn't you have tried for that long?

AL

I didn't see the point.

MARY

Goddamn you, the point is getting control of your life! The point is sobriety, you son-of-a-bitch!

AL

No, that isn't the point.

MARY

Than what the hell is?!

AL

The point is death, Mary.

MARY

"Death?" What are you talking about?

AL

Death! DEATH! You've heard of it, right?

MARY

I know what the word means! Why are YOU saying it? Do we know somebody who's dying?

AL

We do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

MARY
Who?

AL
Me.

MARY
What?

AL
I have cancer, Mary. Up here.

Al points to his head. Mary starts to speak, falters, sits on the bench beside Al, looks away.

MARY
How long?

BLACK OUT. END
SCENE THREE.

SCENE FOUR

Several days later, Thanksgiving afternoon. George and Katherine are in the backyard, DOWN STAGE CENTER. Katherine is teaching George to juggle balls.

GEORGE
That is so cool! Nobody I know has a mother who can juggle.

KATHERINE
You grow up in the circus, you learn a lot of things.

GEORGE
Like what else can you do?

KATHERINE
I can ride a horse, a camel and an elephant.

GEORGE
You rode an elephant?

KATHERINE
Used to do it all the time. I can walk a wire too.

GEORGE
What does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

KATHERINE

You know, like balance on a cable
but high up in the air.

GEORGE

Are you serious?

KATHERINE

Sure. I wanted to be a trapeze
artist but your grandmother
wouldn't allow it. She doesn't
like heights and she didn't like
the woman who was teaching me, so I
had to stop. I was good too, I
could have been great.

GEORGE

You weren't scared up there?

KATHERINE

Sometimes but mostly I loved it. I
loved being up high and having
everyone watching me. I loved the
danger of it. I probably shouldn't
tell you things like that.

GEORGE

No, tell me.

KATHERINE

There's just something about being
close to death, having it dance
around you, it just makes you feel
more alive than anything else.

GEORGE

It sounds really cool.

KATHERINE

It is and it isn't.

GEORGE

What do you mean?

KATHERINE

The woman that taught me, she died,
very badly.

GEORGE

How?

Katherine stops juggling, her memory taking over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

KATHERINE

She fell and something happened with the net, it wasn't secure. I remember that night very clearly, we had a straw house.

GEORGE

What's a "straw house"?

KATHERINE

A sold out show, when all the seats are full and all the rubes are watching. Everything feels different in a straw house, all that energy, all the expectation. Things get magnified and distorted - the lights, the sounds, the music - you can't always tell what's real. Sometimes it's a magical thing but not always. Bad things can happen in a straw house, there's a danger in it, you never know. One moment it's perfect and the next, it's out of control. She was so beautiful, everyone I knew was in love with her.

GEORGE

How did she fall?

Katherine breaks the memory, it's too much.

KATHERINE

I can't talk about this, I shouldn't have brought it up.

GEORGE

The woman that died, what was her name?

KATHERINE

I told you, I don't want to talk about it!

Katherine starts juggling again.

KATHERINE

Come on, pay attention here. Are you watching me?

GEORGE

I can't do that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

KATHERINE

'Course you can, it's in your blood, like it's in mine.

GEORGE

Did Al teach you how to juggle?

KATHERINE

No, a man named Emmet Kelly taught me.

GEORGE

Who's that?

KATHERINE

A friend of your grandfathers'. He was a good juggler. All right, now you try it.

Katherine stops juggling, gives the balls to George.

GEORGE

It looks too hard.

KATHERINE

It's easy, it's like tying your shoelaces. You just have to practice. Go on.

George tries to juggle the balls but drops them.

GEORGE

See.

KATHERINE

Pick 'em up and try again. Look, try doing two at a time first, just to get the rhythm.

George juggles two balls, he does all right.

GEORGE

This is kind of boring.

KATHERINE

It's not boring, this is how you start. There's a flow to it, can you feel it?

GEORGE

Kind of.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

KATHERINE

All right, now try it with the third one.

George tries it with three balls, has it for a moment but then drops them.

KATHERINE

Keep going, nobody gets it on the first try. Start again with two.

George juggles with two balls, does fine.

KATHERINE

Good. Now try it again with three.

George tries again and fails.

GEORGE

I don't get it.

KATHERINE

That's because you're thinking too hard, it doesn't work that way. You have to give yourself over, you have to FEEL it! Now try again.

George tries a third time but still no good.

GEORGE

I don't want to do it anymore. It's too hard.

George starts to walk away in frustration.

KATHERINE

Don't you walk away from me, mister! That's just like your FATHER, quitting the first time things get tough!

This stops George in his tracks. He turns.

GEORGE

What happened to him?

KATHERINE

Your father? He went over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

GEORGE

Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

KATHERINE

Close enough. He was a dreamer and a quitter. Is that what you want to be?

GEORGE

No.

KATHERINE

Good. Then come back here.

George crosses back to Katherine.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

(Softening her voice)

Life is what you make of it, George. If you say it's hard, then it's hard. But if you say that it's easy, then it is. Watch me again.

Katherine juggles slowly at first, then faster.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

See? This isn't hard, you just have to stop thinking about it and do it. It's the easiest thing in the world. It's as easy as riding a bike. It's as easy as saying "I love you". Do you remember me saying that to you? I used to say it all the time.

GEORGE

I don't think saying "I love you" and riding a bike are the same things.

Katherine stops juggling, irritated. She hands two of the balls to George.

KATHERINE

Keep practicing.

GEORGE

I don't want to.

KATHERINE

Do it!

George keeps practicing with the two balls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

You're right. They're not the same things, they are different.

GEORGE

Why did you say they were?

KATHERINE

That's not what I meant.

GEORGE

I don't think life is easy either.

KATHERINE

WE choose LIFE, George, it doesn't choose US. And if we choose our life, than we can choose what kind of life we have. Your grandparents chose to be in the circus, that's the life they wanted but one day, they chose to leave it. I chose to have a child, I chose to HAVE YOU.

GEORGE

And then you left too.

KATHERINE

That was different.

GEORGE

Why?

Katherine crosses DOWNSTAGE CENTER, plays the fourth wall. George does the same, still practicing with the two balls.

KATHERINE

My life got very complicated.

GEORGE

I thought you said it was easy.

KATHERINE

It is easy but sometimes it gets complicated too. That's the problem with life, it never stays the same, things change.

GEORGE

Than it isn't easy all the time?

KATHERINE

No, not all the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

GEORGE

So then sometimes it's hard.

KATHERINE

Sometimes.

GEORGE

So juggling isn't easy after all,
it's really hard. You just make it
look easy 'cause you know how to do
it.

Katherine starts to get angry but catches herself.

KATHERINE

You know what? Tim thinks you'd
make a good lawyer.

GEORGE

I don't want to be a lawyer.

KATHERINE

You really like to argue.

GEORGE

That's because I'm difficult. It
runs in the family.

Katherine kneels down and takes George by the shoulders.

KATHERINE

Please, please don't be difficult
with me, George! I know that
you're angry, I know you're upset
and you probably have every right!
But I'm your mother, George, and
I'm doing my best here! Just give
this a chance.

GEORGE

I know you are, I'm trying too. I
just don't want to talk about, the
world, giving you what you want.
'Cause it doesn't!

Katherine lets go of George, stands.

KATHERINE

Fair enough. There's something
else I want to talk to you about.

GEORGE

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (33)

KATHERINE

I want you to spend Christmas with us.

GEORGE

Who's "us"?

KATHERINE

Me and Tim.

GEORGE

I don't think Tim likes me.

KATHERINE

Sure he does. You just have to get to know him.

GEORGE

I think he blames me for stepping in that hole.

KATHERINE

Nobody blames you for that, it was an accident.

GEORGE

Lemme' think about it.

KATHERINE

And then you can meet Tim's family. They live in Connecticut too.

GEORGE

I don't know if I should leave Mary and Al alone on Christmas.

KATHERINE

They wouldn't mind. They're older people, George. When you get older, you enjoy a little peace and quiet.

GEORGE

Are you talking about Mary and Al? They're the loudest people I know!

KATHERINE

Yes, I know they ARE loud but maybe they don't always want to be that way.

GEORGE

I don't think they can help it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (34)

KATHERINE
Yeah, you're probably right.

George pulls on Katherine's coat sleeve, drags her back to the yard.

GEORGE
Come on, let's do some more juggling!

KATHERINE
I thought you didn't want to.

GEORGE
Not me, you! You got anything else in that bag?

KATHERINE
I've got some pins.

GEORGE
What are pins?

KATHERINE
I'll show you.

Katherine and George go back into the yard. Katherine opens the bag and pulls out some juggling pins. FOR THE SAKE OF PRACTICALITY, THE JUGGLING OF THE PINS CAN BE MIMED.

GEORGE
Hey, those look cool! Can you juggle with them?

KATHERINE
Stand back and watch, little man!

Katherine grabs four pins and starts juggling, really showing off this time.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Anyone can juggle balls, pins are something else!

GEORGE
I want to try those!

KATHERINE
Pins are tough, you got to work up to these!

The back door opens and Al comes into the yard. He wears a coat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (35)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Most people can handle three but only a real juggler can do four. On a good day, I can do five! And every now and then, I can handle six!

AL

You could never do SIX!

KATHERINE

Thought you were lying down?
Thought you had a headache?

AL

I'm feeling better. Nice to see you've kept up with your lessons.

KATHERINE

Oh, I am very much in practice. How about you? Want to go a couple of rounds?

AL

I think I can handle it.

Al takes off his coat, throws it on the ground.

AL

Show me what you got!

Katherine throws the pins at Al and they start passing them back and forth. They are both very good.

GEORGE

Shit, this is great! No one's going to believe this at school!

KATHERINE

You're not bad for a retiree!

AL

You're not bad for a smart ass!

The door opens again and Mary stands in the doorway, watching.

MARY

Al-bert, stop showing off!

AL

Mary, it's a holiday! Live a little!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (36)

AL (CONT'D)

George, I want you to take a picture of this with your mind! We may be this and we may be that here on Freemont Road, but one thing we ARE NOT, IS BORING!!

KATHERINE

Stop talking and juggle, old man!

AL

Come on! Give me all you got!

KATHERINE

All right, Daddy, show me what you're made of!

Katherine and Al start juggling faster, passing the pins back and forth. Now faster. It's starting to look a little dangerous.

MARY

Katherine, don't go so fast! Your father isn't well!

AL

Mind your own business, Mary!

GEORGE

Wow!

KATHERINE

Mother, he's fine! Daddy's a professional!

AL

You bet your sweet BIPPY I am!

Al suddenly gets a bolt of pain in his head. He loses his focus and gets hit with the pins. He falls to the ground.

MARY

Al-bert!

GEORGE

Al!

KATHERINE

Daddy!

George, Mary and Katherine all run to Al.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (37)

MARY

Christ-in-a-raincoat, I told you to
be careful!

KATHERINE

He was doing fine!

MARY

He doesn't look fine NOW, does he?

KATHERINE

Daddy, are you okay?

Al struggles to his knees, tries to wave them away.

AL

I'm all right, it's all right.

MARY

I told you, he's not well. Why
does no one in this house listen to
a word I say?!

KATHERINE

What's wrong with him?

The two women help Al to his feet.

AL

I just got hit with a fucking pin!

MARY

Albert, watch your language,
please!

AL

You watch your language and I'll
watch mine! Let go of me, I can
walk by myself.

Al waves them off and starts walking to the house. After a
few steps, he stumbles and almost falls again. Katherine
catches him.

KATHERINE

Daddy, stop! Let us help you.

Katherine and Mary help Al, he doesn't resist this time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (38)

MARY

God-Almighty! Do we have to have a scene everyday of the week out here?! George, pick up those pins and come inside!

KATHERINE

Mother, it's the backyard! Who do you think is watching?

MARY

Everybody! They're all watching! How could they NOT, with the SPECTACLE this family keeps making of itself?! WHAT DON'T WE JUST PUT UP A TENT AND CHARGE ADMISSION!!

Mary, Al and Katherine go in the house. George starts gathering the pins and balls and putting them into the gym bag. George stops, looks at the balls, starts to juggle two, then tries with the third and drops them. He picks them up and tries again. George almost gets it but continues to fail.

GEORGE

Work! Why won't you work?

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE FOUR.

SCENE FIVE

About a month later, Christmas Eve, night. Snow has been falling most of the night and continues to fall. Light spills cheerlessly from the windows of the house, onto the yard. WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF Al and Mary, having a terrible fight inside, accompanied by the sounds of things breaking.

AL

Goddamnit, Mary-

MARY

-You stay away-

AL

-Give it, give it to me-

MARY

-You keep your hands off me, you bastard-

AL

-Fucking bitch-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (39)

MARY

-You PROMISED me-

AL

-I want it, you understand me-

There is a loud crash inside, perhaps the sound of a kitchen table being turned over. The back door flies open and Mary runs into the yard, dressed in a robe and slippers. She clutches something in her hand that the audience will eventually see is a pistol. Al comes through the door after her, dressed in pajamas but minus a robe or slippers. Al is out of his mind with pain and he claws at his head throughout the scene. Al staggers towards Mary, then falls to his knees in the snow.

MARY

You are out of your goddamned mind!

AL

I know that!

MARY

It's a sin what you want me to do!
Do you understand me? It's a sin
of the worst kind and I won't be a
part of it!

AL

You don't have to be a part of it!
I can do it myself.

MARY

You're going to go to hell, Albert!
I always figured you would but if
you do this, then it's for CERTAIN!

AL

Don't talk to me about hell, I'm
already there! Can't eat, can't
sleep, can't shit! I can't take
the pain anymore!

MARY

You think I don't see it, you think
I'm blind!

AL

No, Mary, I think you're cold! I
think you're the coldest bitch I
know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (40)

MARY

You promised me you wouldn't do this.

AL

I know. I lied. I lie all the time. Nobody knows that better than you.

MARY

We'll go back to the doctor.

AL

I don't want to see anymore doctors, I want it to be over with!

Al struggles to his feet, staggers towards Mary but she avoids him. Al falls to his knees, then starts crawling towards Mary.

MARY

At least see a priest!

AL

What good is a PRIEST gonna' do me?

MARY

You could confess your sins, take the Eucharist!

AL

Confess my sins and THEN kill myself?! What's the point of that?!

MARY

I don't know, Albert, I don't know! Better that than nothing.

AL

I've made mistakes, Mary. Made a lot of them in my life.

MARY

And this is the worst yet!

AL

Just give me the gun. I can pull the trigger myself.

MARY

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (41)

AL
You're enjoying this aren't you?
You think I've got this coming to
me!

MARY
No, I don't.

AL
You lying witch!

Al gets close to Mary, catches her, they struggle for the
pistol.

MARY
Albert, please, don't do this!

AL
Give it!

MARY
It's Christmas Eve! People don't
kill themselves on Christmas! What
will the neighbors say?!

AL
That's all you care about, isn't
it? What people think?!

MARY
No, I don't! I care about you!

Mary breaks free of Al and he falls a third time. Mary still
has the pistol.

MARY
Forty-four years, Albert. If you
do this, if you go now, what am I
left with?

AL
I'm already gone, Mary.

MARY
Stay.

AL
I can't. Whatever's left, of this
life, you'll have to do it alone.

MARY
What about George? What's he going
to think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (42)

AL
He'll understand.

MARY
He's only ten years old! How's he going to understand his grandfather putting a gun in his mouth?!

AL
When he's older. People understand, they understand these things.

MARY
I don't.

AL
That's because you're a dumb spook from the north of Ireland and you believe everything the priests ever told you!

MARY
And you are a drunk and womanizer and a good-time Charlie! But I never took you for a coward. You want this so bad, go on! Take it!

Mary throws the pistol out into the snow.

MARY
I've gone along with you, Albert, on a lot of things. Many times, against my better judgment. But not this time, not with this. I can't.

AL
Than wish me luck, Mary.

MARY
No. I won't.

AL
Have it your way. Just go inside.

MARY
Merry Christmas, Albert.

AL
Get out of here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (43)

Mary walks into the house. Al crawls on his hands and knees, looking for the pistol in the snow.

AL

"Merry Christmas", my ASS! Did you have to throw it so far?! Where are you? WHERE ARE YOU?!

Al crawls to the stone bench, leans against it, lying in the snow.

AL

Goddamnit, do I have to EVERYTHING around here myself?! Surrounded by nothing but weaklings, ingrates, and CATHOLICS! Where the hell are people when you need them?! WHERE THE FUCK IS IT?!

George appears UPSTAGE RIGHT, dressed in pajamas, shoes and overcoat. George keeps his hands in his pockets.

GEORGE

How're you doing, Al?

AL

Who is that? Who are you?

GEORGE

It's me. It's George.

AL

What the hell are you doing out here, in the middle of the night? Don't you know, it's Christmas Eve? What's Santa Claus gonna' think, you out of bed, this hour?

GEORGE

I don't believe in Santa anymore.

AL

Really? Since when?

GEORGE

I don't know. Doesn't matter.

AL

Was it something I said? Made you stop believing?

GEORGE

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (44)

AL

Good. One thing I won't get blamed for. What are you doing out in the snow?

GEORGE

I heard you and Mary arguing. I couldn't take it, so I came out here.

AL

Sorry about that. Go inside now. We won't be arguing anymore.

GEORGE

Come back with me, come back with me and Mary.

AL

Can't. Gotta stay out here until I find something.

GEORGE

What are you looking for?

AL

Something I lost.

GEORGE

Can't you look for it tomorrow?

AL

No, I gotta find it tonight.

GEORGE

I wish you'd wait, a little longer.

AL

Why?

GEORGE

I don't know, I just do.

AL

You know what's going on here, don't you?

GEORGE

No, I just know you don't feel good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (45)

AL

It's more than that and you know it.

GEORGE

You want a drink?

AL

What?

GEORGE

Maybe you'd feel better if you had, you know, a drink?

AL

There isn't any, grandmother poured it all down the sink! Doesn't matter where I hide it, the woman's like a bloodhound.

GEORGE

I know where there's some.

AL

What are you talking about?

GEORGE

Well, don't get mad, but last summer, after you had the accident, I took your bottle of single malt and put it behind the washer.

AL

What?! Why the hell did you do that?

GEORGE

I dunno. Was worried 'bout you.

AL

That shit's expensive!

GEORGE

I know.

AL

Went CRAZY looking for that bottle!

GEORGE

Sorry. But it's still there if you want it. Might make you feel better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (46)

AL
No. No, don't think I do.

GEORGE
You must feel pretty bad.

AL
Ah, had worse. I want you to go
inside now.

GEORGE
Not without you.

AL
I'll come in in a while, I promise.
Kind of like it out here, feel of
the snow on my face. Go on.

GEORGE
I'm staying.

AL
George!

GEORGE
I like it too!

AL
George, you're pissing me off now!
Go inside!

GEORGE
I'm going to stay out here with
you!

AL
You obey me, you little bastard!

GEORGE
No! I won't! You don't have any
shoes on.

AL
You know what I'm looking for,
don't you?

GEORGE
No.

AL
And you know, you know why I want
it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (47)

GEORGE

No, no, I don't know, what you're talking about!

AL

You're smarter than that, George.

GEORGE

I'm not smart, I'm stupid and I don't know what you're looking for!

AL

What have you got in your pockets?

GEORGE

Just my hands, they're cold.

AL

What else, besides your hands?

GEORGE

Nothing!

AL

I don't believe you.

GEORGE

There's nothing in my pockets!

AL

Come here, then. Show me and I'll believe you.

GEORGE

No.

AL

Don't finish out with me like this. I've always been your friend, George. Since the first day you came to us. Be my friend now.

GEORGE

"Straw house".

AL

What?

GEORGE

Now I understand...What Katherine...Everything was beautiful..and it was a straw house!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (48)

Al reaches out his hand to George.

AL
Help me, George.

GEORGE
Straw house...

AL
Please.

George looks at Al but doesn't move.

BLACK OUT, END
ACT ONE.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

SCENE ONE takes place simultaneously in "Saint Theresa's Funeral Home" and George's backyard in Springfield, Mass. Al lies on the low stone bench, DOWN CENTER, dressed in his hounds tooth suit, hands folded across his chest. A vase with roses rests on a table, by his head. Upstage are a number of folding chairs, that are all empty except for Anthony, who sits several rows back, STAGE LEFT. As the LIGHTS COME UP, George crosses DOWN CENTER STAGE towards Al, through the chairs. George is dressed in a jacket, slacks and dress shirt. George looks a little numb and almost seems to walk on air. He stops before Al and kneels, making the sign of the cross.

GEORGE
Mary says the dead never miss their own funerals, that they can't help themselves. Does that it means you're here now? Listening? I wish you could do something to let me know if you are, it wouldn't have to be anything big, just something.

George waits for a sign but there's nothing.

GEORGE
I guess that was a stupid idea.

George reaches out tentatively, touches Al's hand.

GEORGE
Your hands are really cold. Is that what it's like to be in heaven? To be cold?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (49)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I always hear about hell being so hot, about the fire and the flames, so I guess it makes sense that heaven is the other way around. I wish the monkey was with you too, to keep you company but I don't know if they'd take him, he had a pretty bad record.

Anthony gets up and crosses to George, a little awkward.

ANTHONY

Hey, George.

GEORGE

Hey Anthony.

ANTHONY

How you doing?

GEORGE

'Kay, I guess. What are you doing here?

ANTHONY

Well, I heard about, what happened and I just wanted to come by, say I was sorry.

GEORGE

Oh. That's nice of you.

ANTHONY

What I said about your grandfather, I was just bein' a jerk. He was a cool guy, he did cool things, he wasn't mean. Shit, when my old man gets loaded, he just smacks me around the kitchen, you know? Your grandfather wasn't like that.

GEORGE

No, he was a good guy.

ANTHONY

And he had really cool animals, I don't know anyone else who had a monkey. Kids used to talk about it all the time.

GEORGE

Really? How come nobody ever came over to see him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (50)

ANTHONY

I don't know. Kids are weird. Was it fun? Did he do tricks?

GEORGE

Oh, yeah. All kinds. One time Al was painting the basement and the monkey got ahold of his brush and ran around and got green paint all over the house until Al chased him out into the trees with a rake!

ANTHONY

Holy shit, that's great!

George starts to laugh a little at the memories.

GEORGE

And then one spring we planted rose bushes and the monkey ate every single one of the petals and he came in and threw them up all over the floor when we were watching "Hawaii Five-O"! Or one morning, when Mary was scrubbing the kitchen floor and the monkey stood up on the counter and pissed all over her hands! And he was smart, he was really good with latches and locks, you couldn't keep him out of anything. But he wasn't always bad, sometimes he was really good. Sometimes Al would take us for ice cream, and the monkey would get his own cone.

ANTHONY

No way!

GEORGE

Yeah, and he really liked sprinkles, and sometimes they'd get stuck to his nose!

George and Anthony are really laughing now. Tim ENTERS the funeral home, walking with a cane. George and Anthony stop laughing.

ANTHONY

Well, I gotta' go now. See you later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (51)

GEORGE
See you, Anthony.

Tim crosses DOWN to George.

TIM
Nice suit. Never seen one like that.

GEORGE
It's houndstooth, he had it made special.

George touches Al's suit, tries to smooth out a wrinkle in one of the sleeves.

TIM
He was a different kind of guy, your grandfather.

GEORGE
What do you mean?

TIM
The way he lived, the circus, all that.

GEORGE
He was a good guy.

TIM
Not saying he wasn't, but he told a lot of stories.

GEORGE
What's wrong with that?

TIM
Nothing wrong with stories. Long as you don't take 'em too seriously, have to know the difference between fact and fiction.

George can't smooth out the wrinkle, he stands, tries harder.

GEORGE
People liked his stories.

TIM
People say all kinds of stuff when they're drinking. Alcohol's a tricky thing, George.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (52)

GEORGE
What do you want?

TIM
A boy should be careful, who he
looks up to.

GEORGE
Leave me alone.

TIM
Think you live in your own little
world, it's like you're walking
through a dream or something.

GEORGE
What's wrong with you?

TIM
Maybe it's not your fault.

GEORGE
Why won't you smooth out?!

TIM
Are you listening to me?

Tim puts his hand on George's shoulder, he shrugs it off.
George goes back to the wrinkle.

GEORGE
I hear. Let go!

TIM
You really think those stories are
true?-

GEORGE
-Yes-

TIM
-How old are you now?-

GEORGE
-That's a stupid question-

TIM
-Old enough to know what's real-

GEORGE
-I know 'bout the Easter Bunny,
KAY?! I know 'bout Santa Clause!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (53)

Tim points to Al.

TIM
And what about this? Is this real?
Is it?

GEORGE
(Beat)
It's real.

TIM
Then why were you laughing? You
think it's funny?

GEORGE
Nobody's laughing!

TIM
I heard you!

GEORGE
Was just, remembering things.
Stories.

TIM
Stories!

GEORGE
Smooth out!

TIM
Just talk to me, son.

GEORGE
Don't call me that, I'm not your
son! I'm nobody's son!

TIM
That's not true! You have a
mother, you're HER son. But that's
not enough, I know that. You need
a father. Every boy needs a
father.

GEORGE
Leave me alone!

TIM
Why don't you cry?

GEORGE
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (54)

TIM

Why don't you cry?!

GEORGE

Why don't YOU?!

TIM

Because I didn't love him, because he just looked like another drunk to me! What's your excuse?

GEORGE

He wasn't a drunk and I'm not a boy, so I don't cry anymore! What do you care for anyway?

TIM

When you pick up a stone and throw it at your mother, I care!

GEORGE

I didn't throw it AT her!

TIM

When you call her an "imposter", I care!

GEORGE

Smooth out!

TIM

When you do things, that make your mother sad, I CARE!

GEORGE

Go away!

TIM

When I see a boy, trying to be a man and going about it all wrong, I care about that too.

George starts to climb on top of Al, furiously working on the wrinkle. OFF STAGE, we hear the sounds of Mary and Katherine quarreling.

GEORGE

This isn't right!

TIM

George, what are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (55)

KATHERINE

He was my father, it should go to me!

GEORGE

There's something wrong with his suit, it's not supposed to look like this!

MARY

He was my HUSBAND, I'll decide what to do with it!

Tim grabs at George, stumbles, drops his cane.

TIM

George, get down!

GEORGE

-he can't go to heaven in a wrinkled suit, let go-

TIM

-You're making a scene-

KATHERINE

-I don't see why you want to keep it-

GEORGE

-Where are all his friends? He had a lot of friends-

TIM

-don't want your mother to see you like this-

MARY

-And why do you want it?-

GEORGE

-nobody cares, they only say they do-

TIM

-get DOWN, goddamnit, get down-

GEORGE

-telling me what's real, I know what's REAL-

KATHERINE

-to REMEMBER HIM by-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (56)

TIM

-George, please-

GEORGE

-Real is everybody goes away, they
laugh and they smile and they go
away-

MARY

-You remember what you want to-

TIM

-come DOWN-

GEORGE

-MY FATHER went over Niagara Falls,
Al went to heaven and my mother ran
away to be with you-

TIM

-STOP IT!

They struggle and George knocks the vase of roses down on Al,
getting his body wet.

GEORGE

Shit!

Mary and Katherine ENTER through the back door of the house.
George puts the vase of roses back on the table.

KATHERINE

I want that ring, mother!

MARY

Well you're not gonna' get it!

Mary turns and sees George kneeling on Al's body.

MARY

George! What are you doing?!

GEORGE

Nothing.

MARY

Get down from there right now!
Christ-in-a-sidecar, can't I leave
you alone for five minutes?!

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (57)

George gets down.

KATHERINE

Tim, you were supposed to keep an eye on things!

TIM

What the hell does it look like I'm doing?!

Katherine crosses towards George.

KATHERINE

Are you all right, honey?

MARY

Does he LOOK all right?

George turns away.

GEORGE

I'm fine.

Tim retrieves his cane.

TIM

You heard him.

Mary adjusts the flowers in the vase. When Mary turns her back, George goes back to smoothing the wrinkle on Al's sleeve.

KATHERINE

I think George should come and stay with us.

GEORGE

What?

KATHERINE

Just for a while, a little change of pace. Do him good.

MARY

Says who?

KATHERINE

I don't want George to be a burden, not now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (58)

MARY

Nobody said he was a burden.
George, stop fiddling with that
corpse!

Mary slaps George's hand.

GEORGE

He's not a corpse!

MARY

Well he's not a man anymore, is he?
Not like that.

KATHERINE

Think about what's right for
George.

MARY

Exactly what I AM thinking about!
Don't get cagey with me, Katherine,
I'm in no mood!

KATHERINE

It's not good for him to be around
this, this death.

MARY

Oh, and you're gonna protect him
from it? From death? You'd have
to be more than a mother to do
that, you'd have to be some kind of
a saint!

KATHERINE

Do you have to fight me on
everything?

MARY

Come on, George, we're leaving! We
have to go to the Pie Car, there's
work to be done!

GEORGE

I wanna' stay!

MARY

We'll come back later!

Mary takes George by the hand, he struggles.

GEORGE

I don't wanna' leave him alone!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (59)

MARY

Settle down and act like a citizen!

TIM

Why don't you think about what's
right for the boy, Mary?

MARY

Why don't you mind your own
business?

GEORGE

Yeah, mind your own business!

Mary grabs George by the ear and twists.

MARY

And that's enough out of you!

GEORGE

Oww!

KATHERINE

Mother, stop it!

MARY

Now go out to the parking lot and
wait for me! Go on!

George runs UPSTAGE and EXITS through the backdoor of the
house.

GEORGE

I don't want to go to the goddamned
PIE CAR! I hate it there, I HATE
IT!

George is gone.

KATHERINE

You know, I don't have to keep
asking you.

MARY

Yeah, you do.

KATHERINE

He IS my son, I could just take
him.

MARY

Big talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (60)

TIM

No, it's not! Up until now we've been nice but it doesn't have to stay that way. If we take you to court, it'll cost you money, it'll be messy and we'll win.

MARY

Do it then, take me to court! And maybe you can explain what was so important, so GODDAMNED IMPORTANT, that you left that boy on his own for five years! Five birthdays, five Christmases and everything inbetween.

KATHERINE

It was my life too!

MARY

'Course it was! You were young, you didn't like it on Freemont Road, you couldn't run around the way you wanted to! You had itchy hands and itchy feet and itchy everything! Christ, the day you left our house, you WERE NOTHING BUT ONE, BIG ITCH!

(Beat)

And now you've been scratched, everyway you wanted. Every way but one.

KATHERINE

That's not how it was.

MARY

Wanna' protect George? Protect him from yourself.

Mary crosses UPSTAGE, to the back door of the house. Katherine follows her.

KATHERINE

That's NOT HOW IT WAS!

MARY

And say a prayer for Albert, he needs all the help he can get.

Mary EXITS, slamming the door behind her. Katherine stops, turns back, momentarily overcome. Tim crosses to Katherine, tries to touch her but she waves him off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (61)

TIM
Katherine?

Katherine suddenly fixes on the vase of flowers, heads for it.

TIM (CONT'D)
Honey, no, don't!

Katherine grabs the vase of roses and raises it over her head, intending to smash it. Tim gets ahold of the vase, they struggle, he gets it way from her.

TIM (CONT'D)
You don't need to do that.

Katherine stands, breathing hard, trying to control herself. She looks at Al.

KATHERINE
What's wrong with his face?

Tim puts his hands on Katherine's shoulders.

TIM
Don't worry, it's going to be all right.

KATHERINE
What's wrong with his face?

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE ONE.

SCENE TWO

George's backyard, three months later. It's early April and a snow squall is falling. George and Mary are building a snowman, which stands DOWN CENTER of the stone bench. While pretty, the squall's accumulation has been slight and it has literally taken all the backyard's snow to make a rather pitiful snowman. George runs around excitedly, gathering the last of the snow. Mary also gathers snow but seems preoccupied. Both wear overcoats and gloves. George also has on Al's old trillby hat.

GEORGE
I've never seen it snow in April,
Mary.

MARY
It's a spring snow. Come tomorrow,
you won't even know it was here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (62)

GEORGE
The flakes are so big.

MARY
It won't last.

GEORGE
So we should hurry.

Mary starts crossing to the house. George follows.

MARY
I've gotta' go in, George. You
finish up here.

GEORGE
No, stay a little longer! We're
almost done.

MARY
I'm waitin' on a phone call.

GEORGE
I'll listen for the phone, I'll
hear it. I can hear really good!

MARY
Can't miss this one, it's
important.

GEORGE
I'll listen, I promise!

Mary hesitates.

MARY
All right but you gotta' pay
attention.

GEORGE
I will.

Mary goes back to the snowman. George gathers snow.
Katherine appears UPSTAGE RIGHT, hides behind the fence,
listening.

MARY
Come on, we need more snow.

GEORGE
Do you think Al's in heaven?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (63)

MARY

(Beat)

George, I don't know about these things. Ask a priest.

GEORGE

I don't know any priests.

MARY

Well, ask somebody else.

GEORGE

I'm askin' you!

MARY

And I'm telling you, I DON'T KNOW!

(Beat)

I wish I did but I don't. A question like that, that's a college man question and I never got past the sixth grade.

GEORGE

That's still a year ahead of me.

MARY

And it's not enough, is it? You've gotta' be educated, you've gotta' be smart to know about things like that.

GEORGE

I think you're smart.

MARY

Come on George, we have to do better than this, get some more snow.

GEORGE

We got it all. There isn't any left.

MARY

No, you didn't, here's some over by the grill. Hustle now, it's already stopping.

George goes DOWN STAGE RIGHT, by the grill and makes snow balls Mary goes back to packing the snowman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (64)

MARY

I wish I was your age again, everything in front of me. Or even thirty. Christ, I'd settle for forty. Made a lot of left turns in my life. I wonder why? You think about those things when you're older. Why you turned left, when you could have gone right. Why you get married or have a child, when you're still a child yourself. The sisters don't talk about any of that in the sixth grade. What they ought to give you is driving lessons, tell you how to make the right turn. What to do about the, traffic.

GEORGE

Hey, Mary! Look!

George starts juggling three snow balls, doing it well. Katherine looks up from behind the fence, amused.

GEORGE

Pretty good, huh? I've been practicing!

MARY

We're building a snowman here, George, not foolin' around!

GEORGE

I want to get better and then do four and maybe five. And then I can start working on the pins.

MARY

Be nice if you put that energy in your schoolwork.

GEORGE

Don't you think I can?

MARY

All right, bring that snow over here. Let's finish this guy up.

GEORGE

In a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (65)

MARY

George, I'm not doing this for my health!

GEORGE

I'm gonna' get better and better!

MARY

Goddamnit, why doesn't ANYBODY in this family EVER listen to me?! For FORTY-EIGHT YEARS, I been chattering away, like a LONELY BIRD IN A CAGE and NOBODY LISTENS! Not your grandfather, not your mother and not even you! Forty-eight years! People paid more attention to that Goddamned MONKEY than they did me!

GEORGE

Did I do something wrong?

MARY

GEORGE! George, listen to me. We are not in the circus anymore. We haven't been for a long time and you never were.

GEORGE

I know that.

MARY

Don't think you do. You've got too much of your grandfather in you.

GEORGE

What's wrong with that?

MARY

He was out of step with the world, George. Where others saw mackerel, he saw mermaids. When he heard hoofbeats, he was looking for zebras. But that's no way for a man to spend his life, there's no future in it! Do you understand?

GEORGE

No.

MARY

You got to do better in school! Do you hear me?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (66)

GEORGE
I'm doin' all right.

WE HEAR THE SOUND of the telephone ringing inside the house.

MARY
The hell you are! I been hauled
down TWICE this month to the
principal's office on account o'
you! Do you know what it's like to
have to see the principal at my
age? It's embarrassing!

GEORGE
Sorry.

MARY
Sorry doesn't cut it! Be different
if you were HOPELESS like those
Guminiac boys or downright STUPID
like that Theresa, whats-her-name!
Teachers all say you're smart but
you don't seem to give a damn, just
stare out the window all day long,
DAY-DREAMING!

GEORGE
I'm not "day-dreaming"!

MARY
Call it what you like, you're sure
not paying attention! Not to what
counts!

GEORGE
Mary?

MARY
What?!

GEORGE
There's something I gotta' talk to
you about.

MARY
Does it have to do with school?

GEORGE
Well, no-

MARY
-Then I don't wanna' hear it-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (67)

GEORGE
-but it's-

MARY
-Stick to the subject-

Mary turns her head at the sound of the phone. Katherine ducks down behind the fence.

GEORGE
-something I gotta' tell you-

MARY
-GODDAMNIT! Is that the phone-

GEORGE
-What-

MARY
-THE PHONE! Do you hear it ringing-

GEORGE
-oh, yeah, it is, but-

MARY
-Said you would LISTEN! You PROMISED-

Mary runs UPSTAGE.

GEORGE
-sorry-

MARY
-Just what I'm talkin' about, you gotta' pay attention! CHRIST-IN-A-BROTHEL!

Mary EXITS into the house, the door slamming behind her. Katherine stands up behind the fence.

KATHERINE
Hey handsome.

GEORGE
Kathy?

KATHERINE
Isn't the snow great?

GEORGE
It's all right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (68)

KATHERINE
What are you doing?

Katherine CROSSES DOWN STAGE into the yard. The SOUND of the telephone goes off.

GEORGE
Nothing much, just a snow man.

KATHERINE
There's more snow in the front, you know.

GEORGE
I like it better back here.
Doesn't matter anyway, it's not going to last.

KATHERINE
We should finish him up then.
Don't want to leave him like that, do you?

GEORGE
Guess not.

KATHERINE
We should get him some arms. Come on, look for some sticks.

George and Katherine comb the yard for sticks.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Are you all right?

GEORGE
Yeah.

KATHERINE
You seem kind of blue.

George says nothing.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Anything you want to talk about?

GEORGE
No.

KATHERINE
You can, you know. You can talk about anything you want with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (69)

GEORGE

It's nothing.

They make arms on the snowman with sticks.

KATHERINE

You want to go for a ride later?

GEORGE

I don't know. Got a lot of homework to do.

KATHERINE

You can do that later.

GEORGE

Got to study for a test in algebra. Hate algebra.

KATHERINE

I hate algebra too. I don't know why they make you study it, it's not like anybody ever uses it in the real world.

GEORGE

Engineers do.

KATHERINE

You want to be an engineer?

GEORGE

Hell, no.

KATHERINE

Then don't worry about it. He still needs a face.

GEORGE

I got stuff.

George takes some buttons and a radish out of his jacket pocket.

GEORGE

Use this.

Katherine makes eyes and a mouth with the buttons.

KATHERINE

What's the radish for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (70)

GEORGE

His nose.

KATHERINE

You should use a carrot.

GEORGE

We don't have any.

KATHERINE

Did you look?

GEORGE

'Course I looked! I know what a carrot looks like!

KATHERINE

Okay, okay. Just asking.

Katherine puts the radish on the snow man's face.

KATHERINE

What do you think?

GEORGE

Not bad.

KATHERINE

Think I kind of like it. Wish we had a pipe.

GEORGE

Yeah. What about a cigarette?

KATHERINE

George! You want to give the snow man a cigarette?

George laughs a little.

GEORGE

Why not? Lotta' people smoke.

KATHERINE

Not a lot of snow men.

GEORGE

This one could.

KATHERINE

I suppose. But I don't have any cigarettes, been trying to quit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (71)

GEORGE

I got some.

KATHERINE

What are YOU doing with cigarettes?

GEORGE

Nothing. Just got some.

KATHERINE

You aren't smoking, are you?

GEORGE

No. Once in a while.

KATHERINE

You're too young for that, George.

GEORGE

I know, I don't do it much. You gotta' promise not to tell, Mary'd be really mad if she knew.

KATHERINE

I won't tell.

GEORGE

Promise?

KATHERINE

I promise.

George takes a Sucrets's tin out of his pocket, opens it and pulls out a cigarette.

GEORGE

Here, give him this.

Katherine puts the cigarette in the snow man's mouth.

KATHERINE

It's a good thing we're in the backyard.

GEORGE

I think he looks funny.

KATHERINE

I think he looks familiar. There's something missing though.

GEORGE

I know what!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (72)

George takes off the Trillby hat, gives it to Katherine.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Put this on him.

Katherine puts the Trillby on the snow man. They step back and look at him.

KATHERINE
How does he look?

George's expression slowly begins to change from pleasure to pain. He begins to cry.

KATHERINE
What do you think? George, what's the matter?

GEORGE
He's melting. He's melting really fast!

KATHERINE
It's okay.

GEORGE
Make him stop melting! Make it stop!

Katherine kneels down, taking George in her arms.

KATHERINE
Shhh.

GEORGE
I don't want him to go!

KATHERINE
It's just a part of life, honey.

GEORGE
Don't let him go!

KATHERINE
He's already gone, George.

GEORGE
Make him stay!

KATHERINE
I got you, George, I got you! Hold on, honey. It's going to be okay!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (73)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

We'll get out of here, we'll take a drive and we'll turn the radio up really, really loud and we'll go really, really fast and we'll make it all go away! We'll make it all go away! You just wait and see! Just hold on, George, just hold on! I promise you that nobody, nobody will ever love you like I do!

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE TWO.

SCENE THREE

A month later, on Mother's Day afternoon. "Mercy, Mercy Me" by Marvin Gaye plays, as a LIGHT SPECIAL REVEALS Mary, Katherine and Tim playing badminton in the back yard. Mary plays SL, Katherine and Tim SR. All three move in rhythm to the music, their rackets striking the imaginary birdie to the legendary "pop" in Gaye's song. A SECOND SPECIAL REVEALS George CENTER, seated on the stone bench, lost in thought. Somewhere on the lawn is an open bottle of wine and two glasses. Also a transistor radio, the source of the music. DOWN LEFT is a small table and some lawn chairs by the grill. From UPSTAGE, Al crosses DOWN to George. The MUSIC FADES as they begin to speak, though the badminton game continues. Al puts his hand on George's head, ruffles his hair.

GEORGE

Al?

George tries to turn around but Al holds him in place.

AL

Don't turn around Butchie Boy.

GEORGE

Why not?

AL

If you look at me then I'll have to leave.

GEORGE

What are you talking about? Why can't I look at you?

AL

Trust me, just the way it works.

GEORGE

Okay. What's it like in heaven?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (74)

AL

I, ah, couldn't exactly say.

GEORGE

Oh. Are you in trouble again?
You're not in that other place?

AL

No, no, not there. It's different,
it's better, kind of like that spa.

GEORGE

Is it fun?

AL

Sometimes. Look, there's something
we have to talk about and I don't
have a lot of time.

GEORGE

Tell me what it's like! Just a
little! Is it cold?

AL

Well, no, it's definitely not cold.
It's kind of like, Florida, it's
really humid and they got a lot of
crocodiles.

GEORGE

Don't you mean alligators?

AL

Hell, I can't tell the difference.

GEORGE

Well, a crocodiles got a long
crooked nose and -

AL

- do you want to hear about this or
not?

GEORGE

Sorry. Yes.

AL

So it's hot and humid and people go
around in bathing suits and there's
always some big party going on, so
there's a lot of drinking and
laughing. And they do a lot of
gambling, horse racing and stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (75)

GEORGE

That doesn't sound so bad.

AL

Yeah but the women are ugly as hell, 'bout the last thing you want to see coming at you in swimwear! The booze is terrible, tastes like gasoline and I've never had worse luck at a track.

GEORGE

What do they use for money?

AL

Ah, some kind of I.O.U. system. Ask me, the whole place is rigged.

GEORGE

Still sounds better than here.

AL

It's not. The more I'm there, the more I miss this old place. Miss you. Christ, never thought I'd say this but I even miss your grandmother!

GEORGE

Really?

AL

Yeah, believe it or not. See, a party's fun but if it goes on forever, well, it's not really a party anymore, turns into something else. If you don't have something, someone, real to come home to, then what's the point?

GEORGE

I don't understand.

KATHERINE

George?

AL

You gotta' be careful what you wish for, Butchy Boy. Don't make the same mistakes I made.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (76)

GEORGE

Did I do the wrong thing, Al? That night in the snow?

AL

Not talking 'bout me now, talkin' about you, what you do with your life. That's what's important.

MARY

George, are you gonna' play with us or just sit there day dreaming all afternoon?

GEORGE

Was I wrong, Al?

Al starts to back away from George, as the lights grow brighter, turning into full daylight.

AL

There is no right or wrong, George. There's only "why". What we do doesn't really matter, it's the why that counts.

GEORGE

What does that mean?

AL

You'll figure it out. Time's up, gotta' go.

GEORGE

Don't leave!

AL

Remember what I told you.

GEORGE

But I don't get it!

AL

It's all about the "why".

GEORGE

Al?

George turns around but Al is gone. George turns back to the others and the game. Tim throws down his racket. The sound of the radio comes back, to the tune of "Horse With No Name" by America.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (77)

KATHERINE

Come on, Tim! You can do better than that!

TIM

I'm a barrister, not Jimmy Connors!

KATHERINE

It's all in the wrist!

TIM

No, it's in my ankle, I gotta' sit down.

Tim crosses DOWN to his briefcase, gets a chair.

KATHERINE

Come on George, get in the game!

GEORGE

I don't wanna' be Jimmy Connors either.

KATHERINE

You don't even know who Jimmy Connors is!

GEORGE

Yeah, I do. And he plays tennis, not badminton.

KATHERINE

Smart ass! Oh, Tim, you're not going to do work today, are you?

TIM

Somebodies' got to pay for that mausoleum in Hartford.

MARY

You can watch that grill while you're over there.

TIM

Sorry, Mary, that's not my area.

KATHERINE

Got that right. Tim couldn't boil water with two hands and Cookbook.

MARY

Keep an eye on those burgers, George, don't want them to burn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (78)

GEORGE
Do I have to?

MARY
What did I just say?

Katherine crosses to the wine bottle and refills her glass,
moving to the music.

MARY
Go easy on that, Katherine.

KATHERINE
It's just wine.

MARY
Booze is booze, and drinking before
noon is bad business.

TIM
Bring me some of that rat poison,
will you George?

GEORGE
What am I? The butler?

TIM
Just get it.

KATHERINE
I'm a grown woman.

MARY
And your father was a grown man.
Didn't do him a lot of good, did
it?

George gets Tim's wine glass.

GEORGE
What kind of wine is this?

TIM
Some French crap, I don't know.

KATHERINE
You think everyone's an alcoholic.

MARY
Just remember what you come from.

KATHERINE
How can I forget?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (79)

Katherine starts moving around more, dancing more freely.

MARY

We're gonna' eat soon.

KATHERINE

Go ahead, I'm not hungry.

GEORGE

Can I try some?

TIM

Not on your life.

Tim grabs the glass and spills wine on his shirt.

TIM (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

MARY

Told you it was bad business.

KATHERINE

You're such a fatalist.

MARY

You and your big words.

GEORGE

What's a fatalist?

KATHERINE

Somebody who believes in peanut butter and jelly.

GEORGE

What?

KATHERINE

Like Charlie Brown. Everyday he opens his lunch box and finds a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. So that's all he thinks he's going to get, like he doesn't have a choice. Charlie Brown gives up the idea of ever getting anything else, 'cause he thinks it's already been decided. That's a fatalist.

MARY

You get all that from reading Peanuts?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (80)

KATHERINE

I got all that from living with
you.

TIM

Ah, GREAT! It's gonna' stain!

KATHERINE

God, Tim! You are like a calamity
magnet!

MARY

Go clean yourself up in the
kitchen.

Tim crosses UPSTAGE to the house, EXITS.

KATHERINE

Come on, Mother, let's go a round!
Just you and me!

MARY

Just full of piss and vinegar
today, aren't you? Fine, do your
worst!

KATHERINE

Watch the birdie!

Katherine serves and Mary returns. They play a competitive
volley and Mary scores.

MARY

Ha! Put that in your pipe and
smoke it!

KATHERINE

Nice one, Mother. Your serve.

Mary serves and Katherine. This second volley is even more
fierce.

GEORGE

I still don't get it. About, being
a fatalist.

KATHERINE

What don't you get?

GEORGE

Well, Charlie Brown doesn't make
his own sandwiches, so he doesn't
really HAVE a choice, does he?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (81)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

In a way, he'd be kind of stupid to think he was gonna' get anything BUT peanut butter and jelly.

KATHERINE

Yeah, that's true, but one day he'll be grown up and get to make his own sandwiches. And then he can have anything he wants. Just like you.

GEORGE

I guess. Except he can't grow up, 'cause Charlie Brown's not a real boy.

KATHERINE

You think too much, handsome.

Mary falters and Katherine scores. Mary starts to breath harder.

MARY

Not when he flunked his algebra test this week!

KATHERINE

So he won't be Einstein, who cares?

MARY

Keep an eye on those burgers, George!

KATHERINE

I think we should stop.

MARY

What are you talkin' about? I can go all day! Serve that thing!

"Horse With No Name" ends and WE HEAR the voice of a disk jockey.

DISK JOCKEY

And it's a beautiful day in Springfield, the thermometer just hit seventy degrees, skies are clear, with zero chance of rain! Perfect weather for all you Moms and your families to celebrate Mother's Day!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (82)

Katherine serves again, as Mary tries to rally but quickly tires. George sneaks a drink of Tim's wine during this volley.

DISK JOCKEY (CONT'D)

Speaking of that, we have a song dedication that's a little unusual, but we're gonna' send it out anyway! Normally on Mother's Day, I get phone calls from sons, daughters and husbands, who all want to dedicate a song to Mom. This time, it's the other way around and Mom is dedicating a song to her son. This is for you, George, from your mother Katherine.

Mary stumbles, her breathing clearly labored and Katherine scores. "Mother and Child Reunion" by Paul Simon begins to play on the radio.

KATHERINE

Score! Hey George, did you hear that?

GEORGE

Holy shit! Are they talking about us?! On the radio?

KATHERINE

They sure are. Come on, dance with me!

George and Katherine dance to the music, laughing. Katherine sings the lyrics to George as they dance. Now light-headed, Mary crosses shakily to a chair and sits.

MARY

Christ, Katherine! Does everybody need to know our business?

George and Katherine don't seem to hear her.

MARY

What the hell is wrong with this family?! Do we HAVE to keep making a spectacle of ourselves?! And on the RADIO?!

Mary starts to rise, falters, puts her hand to her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (83)

MARY

If those burgers get ruined, then
there's nothing to eat! GEORGE!!

Angry and hurt, Mary struggles to her feet. She crosses to
the radio and turns it off.

GEORGE

Hey!

KATHERINE

What the hell are you doing?

MARY

Had enough of this!

Mary walks unsteadily to the grill.

GEORGE

That was my song, turn it back on!

MARY

Had enough of songs and dancing and
boozin' it up! It's not a brothel!

KATHERINE

That's rich, coming from someone
who owns a bar!

MARY

It's not a bar, it's a restaurant!

GEORGE

Turn it back on!

Mary examines the burgers in disgust. George crosses to the
radio.

MARY

Look at them, they're ruined! What
are we supposed to eat?!

KATHERINE

They're not ruined.

MARY

Burnt to a crisp!

KATHERINE

Doesn't matter, we can go out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (84)

MARY

I have to close tonight, I can't go out! George, what are you doing?

George turns the radio back on.

GEORGE

Was played for me, I want to hear it!

MARY

You turn that goddamned radio off!

KATHERINE

Mother, stop it!

GEORGE

I won't! You can't make me!

Mary crosses to George, who's now holding the radio.

MARY

We'll see about that!

Mary takes the radio away from George and smashes it on the ground. Music off. George looks at her, stunned. Tim appears at the back door. Mary is clearly not well at this point.

KATHERINE

Mother, what's wrong?

MARY

I am sick to death, up to the roof of my mouth with taking care of people! I'm sick of having everyone's back.. and nobody having mine! I'm sick of working my ass off, while everyone goes out to play! I'm sick of GOODTIME CHARLIES and DAY-DREAMERS!

GEORGE

I'm sick of things too. I'm sick of school and fighting and you being angry all the time! And I'm sick of Fremont Road!

KATHERINE

George!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (85)

MARY

Then CLEAR OUT! Take your wine and
your, your peanut butter logic
and.. get out of the hell out of
here!

KATHERINE

Mother, I think you should sit
down.

GEORGE

You know Al was right about you,
Mary! I told him he was wrong, but
he was right! You enjoy being
difficult!

MARY

You heard me..clear..clear..

Mary faints and falls. Katherine moves to her.

KATHERINE

Mother!

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE THREE.

SCENE FOUR

Evening, some two months later, on the Fourth of July. The yard is empty but there are the sounds of firecrackers and children shouting from the neighborhood. George appears UP STAGE RIGHT, by the side entrance and enters the yard. He carries a backpack, which looks full. He tries the back door but it's locked. George inspects the windows of the house, which are dark.

GEORGE

Guess no one's home.

He crosses DOWN STAGE to the stone bench, takes off the backpack. We see that he is perspiring and dirty. George takes off the jacket and wipes his face with it, then lays it on the stone bench. He investigates the yard.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Boy, the grass is getting pretty
long. Can't even see where the
monkey is.

Anthony ENTERS through the house, crossing to the lip of the stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (86)

ANTHONY

Hey. Hey, George.

George is startled but then comes DOWN STAGE to him. They speak in stage whispers.

GEORGE

What? Who's there?

ANTHONY

It's me, Anthony!

George takes a cigarette lighter from his pocket, lights it to see better.

GEORGE

Anthony?

ANTHONY

Yeah. What are you doing?

GEORGE

Just fooling around. What about you?

ANTHONY

Nothing. Haven't seen you in a while. You go away to camp or something?

GEORGE

Neah, moved to Connecticut.

ANTHONY

Why'd you do that?

GEORGE

Oh, my grandmother's not doing so hot. She got diabetes, so I went to live with my mother and her husband.

ANTHONY

That's too bad. You like Connecticut?

GEORGE

It's all right. Hey, what's with the haircut?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (87)

ANTHONY

I know, I look stupid. My parents sent me to a military school in January.

GEORGE

No shit! Do you like it or does it suck?

ANTHONY

It sucks big time! You gotta keep your hair short and wear a uniform and they make you get up really early and do push-ups! And everywhere you go, you gotta run and salute people, they really break your balls if you don't salute!

GEORGE

That DOES suck!

ANTHONY

Tell me about it. Hey.

GEORGE

What?

ANTHONY

I was thinking, maybe you want to hang out some time?

GEORGE

Yeah. Sure. Why not?

ANTHONY

Cool! Yeah, and I can show you some Judo moves they taught me, so you can kick some ass if anybody messes with you!

A light comes on in the kitchen window.

GEORGE

Sounds like fun. Thanks.

ANTHONY

Yeah, well, kids can be real jerks sometimes. Shit, I got to go in now, curfew. I'll see you later.

GEORGE

See you, Anthony. Good night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (88)

ANTHONY

You too.

Anthony EXITS. A flashlight beam appears shining inside the porch. The porch door opens and Mary stand in the doorway, holding a flashlight in one hand and Al's old revolver in the other. She wears a bathrobe. Mary shines the flashlight around the yard.

MARY

Is somebody there?

Mary CROSSES DOWN STAGE, looking for an intruder.

MARY

I said, is anybody there?! You better get the hell out of here, if you know what's good for you!

George circles away from the flashlight beam.

MARY

I know you're there, I can hear you! You better clear out, I've got a gun here and I'm not afraid to use it!

George decides to make a run for it, heads for his backpack on the stone bench. Mary continues to pan around with her flashlight, just missing George.

MARY

God-damned thieves, sneaking up on an old woman in the dark!

George gets his backpack and heads for the side entrance but remembers his jacket. He runs back to the stone bench and Mary finally catches him in the light. George freezes, as Mary levels the pistol at him.

MARY

There you are, you little bastard, I see you! Don't you move a muscle!

GEORGE

I won't.

MARY

What are you stealing?!

GEORGE

Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (89)

Mary moves closer to George, still aiming the pistol.

MARY
George?

GEORGE
Hi, Mary.

MARY
George?! Christ-in-a-LUMBERYARD,
what are you doing out here?!

GEORGE
I don't know.

Mary lowers the pistol.

MARY
Skulking around in the dark like an
assassin! What do you mean you
don't know? Why aren't you in
Connecticut?

GEORGE
I don't like it.

MARY
Does your mother know you're here?

GEORGE
No.

MARY
You aren't running away, are you?

GEORGE
Well, kind of.
(Beat.)
The grass is kind of long back
here.

MARY
Yeah, it is. Been meanin' to get
to it but I've been busy with the
"Pie Car".

GEORGE
How's business?

MARY
Not so good. Gonna' have to sell
it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (90)

GEORGE

You are?

Mary crosses to the stone bench and sits, putting the pistol down.

MARY

It's a sinking ship, George. Employees stealing, bills never ending, last night some drunk blew his cookies all over the bar, right when the Red Sox were finally winning. And I don't have the personality for it, that was your grandfather's thing. He loved to talk to people and tell his stories. Without him, it's not the same.

GEORGE

I guess not. You doing OK?

MARY

All right, still trying to get used to these damned needles. So what's your plan?

GEORGE

Plan?

MARY

You're running away, gotta' have a plan. Can't blunder out into the night, no idea where you're going.

GEORGE

Oh, yeah. I'm gonna' to join the circus.

MARY

Didn't know they were in town.

GEORGE

Not Barnum's, just a little one. They're down in Hartford, I got Kathy and Tim take me on Friday. Then I snuck away and found the ring master. Told him about you and Al, and how I wanted to join up with them. And he said I could. It's a cool little circus, Mary.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (91)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

They only have one ring but their clowns are really funny and they've got good animals acts and aerial. And everyone is really nice!

MARY

What kind of job are you going to do there?

GEORGE

Oh, well, the ring master said that since I come from circus people, I could do whatever I wanted. Maybe I'll be a clown or maybe I can work with the animals. I'm not sure.

MARY

Sounds like you got it all figured out.

GEORGE

I guess.

MARY

So how come you're in Springfield?

GEORGE

What do you mean?

MARY

If you're hooking up with this outfit, in Hartford, just seems a little out of your way. Come up here.

GEORGE

I don't know. Guess I wanted to see the house again before I leave. Could be gone a long time.

MARY

'Course. Those little operations, they gotta' chase the weather, don't get up here much. Might be years.

GEORGE

And things change so fast. You ever notice that?

MARY

Yeah, I have.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (92)

GEORGE

So I figured I'd say goodbye, you know, while I had the chance.

MARY

Good thinking.

Silence.

GEORGE

Should probably get going, gotta' catch a bus.

MARY

No, they don't wait.

GEORGE

Goodbye, Mary.

MARY

'Bye.

George turns to go, walks a few steps UPSTAGE and stops.

MARY (CONT'D)

Did you forget something?

GEORGE

Not true.

MARY

What's not?

(George crosses back to Mary.)

GEORGE

Not going to the circus, I been there already! Didn't see any ringmaster, just some creepy guy with tattoos that talked funny! Said nobody cared 'bout my family, nobody cared if I could juggle, said any moron with two hands could do that! Told me I could clean up after the animals, clean up the SHIT and if I did it right, he might let me stay! So I tried, but the animals smelled bad and they scared me and something bit me on the shoulder! And the people were shoving and screaming and nothing was the way it was supposed to be!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (93)

Distraught, George grabs the pistol off the bench.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It was all wrong, Mary, it was-

MARY

-George, put that thing down-

GEORGE

-All wrong! And I was gonna go back to Connecticut, I was, but it's the same thing there-

MARY

-it's all right, George, it's going to be-

GEORGE

-no, it's not, it's not what I thought it would be! It's not fun!

George shakes the pistol around as speaks, much in the way he shook his stitched finger in Act One.

GEORGE

Kathy can't cook, just puts everything in a pressure cooker and it tastes like play dough! And they made me go to summer school, 'cause I failed algebra! And Tim's a real jerk, he makes me do my homework in front of him and he comes up with quizzes for me and I can't do anything right! And they're talking about moving and I don't know if I want to! And Kathy, Kathy's gonna' have a BABY, she told me two weeks ago.

George throws the pistol down on the ground. Mary picks it up and places it in the pocket of her robe.

GEORGE

That's all she talks about now, and nobody cares about me.

MARY

Sorry to hear that.

GEORGE

I want things to go back, to the way it was!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (94)

MARY

Doesn't work that way.

GEORGE

Make it go back!

MARY

Can't. We'd need a time machine for that.

GEORGE

We could make one! We could do it together!

MARY

George, I don't know about things like that, wouldn't know where to begin. Even if I did, I don't think I'd have the heart to try.

GEORGE

I'm sorry about Mother's Day. I don't think you're difficult, I was just mad.

MARY

Forget about it. What else were you gonna' do? What else, could any of us do?

GEORGE

I'm still sorry.

MARY

So am I. Why don't you come over here, take a load off?

George and Mary sit down on the stone bench together.

MARY

I hear summer school's a bitch.

GEORGE

Yeah. I shoulda' worked harder, like you told me. Hey, maybe, maybe I could do it up here? And I could help you with the grass and stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (95)

MARY

I suppose you could. Gotta' be honest, George, I'm not as young as I used to be and things have been kinda' tight around here. And the sisters, well, they don't work for free. Ah, actually they do but the Pope doesn't.

From inside the house, we HEAR THE SOUND OF THE PHONE RINGING.

GEORGE

Don't you want me here anymore?

MARY

'Course I do, that's not what I'm sayin'.

GEORGE

I don't understand.

MARY

Well, you better figure it out quick! You hear that phone ringing? You know that's Kathy.

GEORGE

We don't know, could be anybody. Could be Houdini.

MARY

Houdini's dead.

GEORGE

He could be callin' long distance.

MARY

She's looking for you.

GEORGE

I know. What are we gonna' do?

MARY

WE aren't gonna' do anything, YOU are.

GEORGE

Me?

MARY

You gotta' make up your mind, George!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (96)

MARY (CONT'D)

You gotta' figure out who you want to be! Can't go ping-ponging back and forth, house to house, her to me, just 'cause you don't like the food on the table or what people have to say! It's not fair, people have feelings, not just you.

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

MARY

And quit bein' sorry! Sorry doesn't get us through the day. And you can't be on the run either, the way your father was. Say what you want about Albert, when he made up his mind about somethin', he stuck to it.

The SOUND of the phone goes off.

MARY (CONT'D)

Know that life hasn't been ideal here, George. Maybe I've been kidding myself all these years, 'bout gettin' free of the circus. Funny sort of way, it's followed us. Maybe all we ever had here, was a straw house of our own. But it was the best we could do.

GEORGE

Mary, about the gun, there's something I got to tell you...

MARY

Shh. You don't have to tell me anything. I know.

GEORGE

You do?

MARY

Yeah. And you know what I think?

GEORGE

No.

MARY

Think you need to knuckle down, study hard and learn all you can.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (97)

MARY (CONT'D)

Maybe some day when you're older,
if you get really smart, you can
figure out a way to make that time
machine. And you can go back, if
you care to, and fix all the things
that we did wrong.

GEORGE

I don't think I'll ever be that
smart.

MARY

You never know.

GEORGE

I don't even know, what to do now.

MARY

You'll figure that out.

Suddenly, there is the sound of fireworks and colors flash
across George and Mary's faces.

MARY (CONT'D)

George, look! It's started!

GEORGE

Hey, I almost forgot what day it
was!

The fireworks continue to pop, as more colors flash across
their faces.

MARY

How could you forget about the
Fourth of July?

GEORGE

Dunno. Guess I was thinking about
other things.

Mary points into the sky.

MARY

There, look at that one!

GEORGE

Wow!

As fireworks flash, George moves a little closer to Mary.
After a moment, she puts her arm around George. The SOUND of
the telephone, ringing inside the house returns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (98)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Kathy's calling again. Do we have to answer it?

MARY

Give it time. You can always call her back.

The SOUND of the phone continues, as they go back to watching the fireworks and THE LIGHTS FADE.

BLACK OUT, END
SCENE FOUR.

SCENE FIVE

The following afternoon. A cemetery where Al is buried. Mary is on her hands and knees, clipping grass around Al's gravestone. Katherine stands DOWNSTAGE LEFT, facing out.

KATHERINE

Daddy would have like this view of the highway. He was always on the go, always in motion. Would have suited him.

MARY

Wasn't really thinkin' 'bout that, but I suppose it's true.

KATHERINE

Why did you pick this place?

MARY

'Cause nobody in Springfield would bury him. Nobody Catholic, anyway.

KATHERINE

Guess so. Why'd you get two plots?

MARY

Two bodies, two plots. That's how it works.

Katherine turns to Mary.

KATHERINE

You're not ready for the grave yet.

MARY

Want to be sure there's somewhere to stick me, when it's time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (99)

KATHERINE

You didn't have to buy your own
headstone too.

MARY

Got a deal, death's expensive.

KATHERINE

I suppose.

MARY

All you got to do is fill in the
date.

Mary stops what she's doing, looks at the stone.

MARY (CONT'D)

Christ-in-a-bathing-suit!

KATHERINE

What is it?

MARY

They got my NAME wrong!

KATHERINE

What?

MARY

Look!

Katherine looks at the stone.

KATHERINE

Guess you'll be "Marie" for all
eternity.

MARY

Stupid bastards!

KATHERINE

So much for bargains.

MARY

Can't believe I didn't see this
before!

KATHERINE

Mother, I've got something to tell
you.

MARY

You're pregnant, I already heard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (100)

KATHERINE

Damnit, I told George to shut his mouth.

MARY

Sure, like any of us have a talent for that!

KATHERINE

I wanted to surprise you.

MARY

I'd have known anyway. The way Tim is strutting around over there, you'd think he'd knocked up Mexico!

KATHERINE

It's more than that. Tim got a job offer, in New York.

MARY

Really? He gonna' take it?

KATHERINE

He'd be crazy not to, they want to make him a partner.

MARY

And what about George? What are they offering him?

KATHERINE

What are you talking about?

MARY

George ran away once, that should tell you something.

KATHERINE

Children do things like that.

MARY

Unhappy children, yes.

KATHERINE

He's happy as any boy I know.

MARY

You made a big show of yourself, how much you wanted him, how much you cared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (101)

KATHERINE

He's my son!

MARY

You needed him more than he needed you! And that really got under your skin. You wanted a perfect family and you needed George for that. Well you got him, by hook or by crook. But wanting and having are not the same, are they? Promises aren't so easy to live up to!

KATHERINE

Where is he? You said he'd be here!

MARY

He's getting flowers and don't change the subject!

KATHERINE

And what is that?!

MARY

Why you never hear ANYTHING, anybody says?!

KATHERINE

I listen all the time!

Mary stands up, the clippers still in her hand.

MARY

No, you don't! Not when it counts!

KATHERINE

That day of the snow, I heard him then! That's when it counted and you were the one who didn't hear!

Mary moves in on Katherine, the clippers now look like a weapon.

MARY

THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU AND ME, YOU STUPID ASS!

KATHERINE

Mother?-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (102)

MARY

-IT'S ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE!
SOMETHING IMPORTANT!-

KATHERINE

-put those clippers down-

MARY

-I AM NOT GONNA' LIVE FOREVER, YOU
UNDERSTAND?!-

KATHERINE

-you're SCARING me-

MARY

-I CANNOT KEEP WATCHIN' OVER ALL OF
YOU THE REST OF MY GODDAMNED LIFE!-

KATHERINE

-TIM, TIM-

MARY

-GROW UP, AND DO IT IN A HURRY!
GROW UP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

Mary catches herself, puts down the clippers.

MARY (CONT'D)

Don't replace him with this child.
Don't do that to him.

George runs up the aisle, through the house. He carries a
pot of flowers.

GEORGE

Mary! Mary!

George climbs onto the stage, runs between them.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What's goin' on?

MARY

We're just talkin'.

GEORGE

Oh. Sounded like somethin' else.

KATHERINE

Well, we are the loudest people you
know, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (103)

GEORGE

I guess.

KATHERINE

Aren't you going to say hello?

GEORGE

Hey, Kathy.

MARY

George.

GEORGE

What?

MARY

Don't you think it's time you started calling people by their right names?

GEORGE

That is her right name.

MARY

Not to you.

GEORGE

Oh. Hey, Mom.

KATHERINE

Hey, George.

GEORGE

Mary, do I have to start calling you "grandma" too?

MARY

No, we can spare each other that.

GEORGE

Okay.

KATHERINE

He could call you "Marie".

MARY

Shut up!

KATHERINE

So what are we going to do, George?

GEORGE

Huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (104)

KATHERINE
You're going to have to make a
decision.

GEORGE
I do?

MARY
Yeah, you do.

GEORGE
What if I can't?

KATHERINE
Life is about choosing, like it or
not.

GEORGE
Maybe I don't wanna. Choose.

MARY
There's no future in that, George.

GEORGE
Can't..

KATHERINE
Remember that day of the snow? I
chose you.

GEORGE
Can't make up my mind.

MARY
Gotta' call the sisters if you're
coming back to school.

GEORGE
Just don't, can't-

KATHERINE
-Don't be a quitter, George-

MARY
-if you're gonna' knuckle down and
be a citizen-

KATHERINE
-don't be like your father-

GEORGE
-I'm not-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (105)

MARY
-and quit day dreaming-

KATHERINE
-don't quit on me-

MARY
-you got to act like a man now-

GEORGE
-not, I wanna', I wanna'-

KATHERINE
-you're not Charlie Brown, you can
have anything you want-

MARY
-but whatever you choose, you got
to stick to-

George pulls on his shirt, almost as if something inside him was turning, that had never turned before. George tries to speak but no words come.

KATHERINE
-what are you saying, George?-

MARY
-we don't have all day you know-

KATHERINE
-What are you trying to say?

George looks at Mary, then back at Katherine.

GEORGE
The Statue of Liberty. I really
want to see it.

KATHERINE
Be the first thing we do.

KATHERINE
All right. We'll wait for you in
the car. Don't be long.

GEORGE
I won't.

KATHERINE
I'll call you, mother.

OFF STAGE SOUND of a car horn honking impatiently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (106)

KATHERINE

God damnit, Tim! You do NOT honk a car horn in a graveyard! What is wrong with you?!

Katherine EXITS UPSTAGE RIGHT. Mary turns back to Al's stone, kneels.

MARY

Bring those flowers over here, George.

GEORGE

Sure.

George brings the flowers to Mary.

GEORGE

They're real pretty.

MARY

They are.

GEORGE

I'm glad I can still call you Mary.

MARY

Me too.

GEORGE

And I'm gonna' come visit you, every chance I get. I'll help you with the grass and anything you want.

MARY

You do that. And make sure you work, really hard at school.

GEORGE

I will. I promise!

MARY

Gonna' hold you to that.

GEORGE

Mary?

MARY

What?

GEORGE

I didn't choose her. You know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (107)

MARY

Oh, George. Better keep that one under your hat.

GEORGE

Yeah. I guess.

MARY

Go on, shake-a-leg. I'll finish up here.

GEORGE

Shouldn't we say a prayer?

MARY

Sure. Couldn't hurt.

George kneels by Mary.

GEORGE

"Dear Lord, we ask you to take into your care, Al. He had his good days and his bad days. But his good days were so much better than other people's, I know, I know they gotta' count for more. He made us laugh and he was always on the lookout for zebras. He was an individual and not a copy. And he will be missed."

George hesitates.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He was better at this than me.

MARY

Well, it's not exactly "Hail Mary" but it'll do.

George shivers suddenly, touches the back of his head, then jumps to his feet. George looks around but sees nothing out of the ordinary.

MARY (CONT'D)

George? George, what's the matter?
George, are you all right?

George looks at Mary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (108)

 GEORGE
I don't know.

BLACK OUT, THE
END.