

Six Plays on the theme of

Men Behaving Badly

By Don DiVecchio

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INTRODUCTION

by Terry Crystal

There is a certain bias involved in writing about one's partner, but there is also familiarity that uniquely qualifies the person who is most intimate with that person's work and thinking. In that capacity, I have edited this collection of six plays. The volume initially came together as an inexpensive way to copyright seven plays with the library of congress for the price of one. When I noticed that many of the plays had a common theme, I whittled the collection down to six. They are very different plays with a diverse group of characters in various geographic locations, but they all have one common thread - men behaving badly.

Don DiVecchio is a playwright and founder of the Boston area Men's Consciousness Raising Group in the early '70s. This collection of plays incorporates Don's involvement as an early feminist activist, his gift for storytelling, deeply felt characters, and ear for dialog. The plays were selected, based on this common theme, but also because they were written in a ten-year timeframe, distinct from his earlier full-length plays and one acts. Though, Don will say he likes all of his "children" equally, in my own opinion, these plays represent a flowering of his talent, examining existential questions such as the existence of good and evil and nature vs. nurture. While they are always entertaining, they are also challenging. Always, there is someone or something to challenge a character in some way.

In many of these plays, Don questions whether it is possible to change. So it is in CRACKERMAN where we meet Fred, an ex-Klan member who struggles with past sins as he lies dying on a hospital bed. He is the first in our rogues gallery of compromised individuals, and is challenged, in turn by Noreen, his African American nurse, his nephew Justin, and Noreen's granddaughter, who prevail on him to do one last good deed. The

tension between good and bad also animates JUAREZ, where two women confront their abductors (two members of a drug cartel) in distinctly different ways. Here again, Don throws man a lifeline in the form of a woman. The abductors are portrayed as products of their environment, but more sympathetic as they struggle with their own sense of right and wrong confronted by the women they have kidnapped. The four characters challenge each other's preconceptions, and it is not clear, up until the very end, how things will turn out.

To lighten things up a bit, I added THE SIDE EFFECT PILL, Don's satire on corporate misbehavior at a pharmaceutical company. Here, none of the five characters are immune from compromise, even the women. In this madcap romp, the worst transgressions are perpetuated by the two men at the top of the organization, but in this case, the transgressions are part of the corporate culture and played for laughs. In the third act, we find that the Side Effect Pill is also a truth serum, which allows it's users to see the errors of their ways. Though enlightenment is brought about by synthetic means, it allows the characters to look within, and strive for change.

With FLETCHER AND BLIGH, an alternative version of the *Mutiny on the Bounty* story, we see that it sometimes takes two. Written in the rich language of Elizabethan England, Fletcher and Bligh is a face-off between two characters with varying degrees of imperfection struggling with a harsh breakup. Where the affections of one lover is spurned, rejection turns into a weapon yielded by the more powerful of the two. In the end, the author offers two possible endings. One where the antagonist yields to his harsher instincts to do his friend in. In the second potential ending, he is able to rise above his nature in a moment of grace.

Don is a great believer that man's environment is the biggest factor in bad behavior, and we see this most starkly in two of his earlier plays. DEER RUN, explores the generational legacy of an abusive father. The bad behavior is hidden at first, and revealed over time at a family barbeque. Where Deer Run is an

intimate betrayal of a family doing battle with the bad behavior of a parent, *FINDING WHITEY B.*, examines a damaged individual in the context of a damaged society. In this play, inspired by the disappearance of Boston area mobster Whitey Bulger (before he was found), Whitey is portrayed as a character totally formed by his environment who embraces his shadow side in the context of a society that embraces bad behavior. When challenged on his behavior by three amateur reporters, Whitey uses society's excesses, as an excuse for his own. In both plays, one severely damaged individual exerts power over those around him, and we get to see how those around him react.

And there we have it. Six plays about men behaving badly, their effect on those around them, and the challenges that those around them represent. Six very different plays with robust characters and distinct voices. Hope you enjoy.

Editor's note: Terry is a composer/lyricist who writes musicals with her partner Don DiVecchio. So far they have written two - *CAITLIN COUNTY* and *THE SIDE EFFECT PILL* - with a third on the way. The Side Effect Pill is based on one of the plays in this collection.

Cracker Man

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Noreen - African American Grandmother/Nurse

Sondra - Noreen's Granddaughter/Architecture Student

Fred - Uncle/Klansman

Daniel - Fred's Nephew/ High School Teacher

Charlie - Ghost of young Klansman/Fred's Gang Leader

Time: Present

Place: Selma, Alabama

ACT I

Scene 1

This is a split stage. Center stage left of audience is a dining room table with three chairs, a cabinet and a sideboard/credenza. The cabinet, which is to the left of the dining room table has a record player on top with vinyl records stacked next to it. An old blues guitar leans against the cabinet door. To the right of the dining room table is the sideboard/credenza containing three plates, three wine glasses, silverware and a bottle of cough medicine. Center stage to the right, in the second half of the split stage is a hospital setting. There is a hospital bed with an open curtain surrounding it. Next to the bed is a Formica table with a phone, pill bottle, water pitcher, and empty glass. Upstage in the hospital room are two suspended windows with shades. Downstage, far left, is a raised sign reading "Rehabilitation". There is an empty chair under the sign.

You hear several buzzing sounds as light rises on Fred who is propped up in a hospital bed looking extremely distressed.

FRED

Who's in charge goddamit! Where is everybody?! For Chrissakes will someone-

Enter Noreen in nurse's uniform.

NOREEN

I'm coming Mr. Parsons. Hold your horses.

FRED

It's not horses I'm holdin'! Where's the Goddamn bedpan!

Noreen grabs bedpan from floor and hands it to him.

NOREEN

Here you go Mr. Parsons.

FRED

It's about time!

Fred slips bedpan under the covers. He groans. Noreen tidies up area while he's finishing. Fred sighs, finally handing her the bedpan.

FRED

Man!...This has gotta be the longest friggin' piss I've ever taken...Jesus! who's running this place, the three stooges?!

NOREEN

We're short staffed sir.

FRED

Who are you?!

NOREEN

I was transferred here.

FRED

Well that Goddamn figures.

She puts bedpan on floor.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...I can't say I'm a Christian woman, because I'm not...But there are patients here, some very sick...And they need quiet, not loud vulgar language.

FRED

So who died and made you king?

NOREEN

My name is Noreen...I'm one of the floor nurses and while I'm here you need to respect my wishes.

Fred grimaces.

NOREEN

That means, pushing the call buzzer only once. Do you understand?

FRED

I need a pain pill.

NOREEN

Do you understand Mr. Parsons?

FRED

All right I get it!

Noreen walks to side table. Pours glass of water.

NOREEN

Here is your pill.

He quickly grabs water and pill and gulps it down.

FRED

Pull down the shades.

She walks to suspended windows pulling down shades.

FRED

You're kind of uppity, aren't you—

NOREEN

Remember what I said.

FRED

What's your name?

NOREEN

Noreen.

FRED

I'll remember that...Get me another blanket.

NOREEN

What color do you want?

FRED

What?

NOREEN

We have green, blue, and pink.

FRED

Christ I don't care...Anything...Not pink.

NOREEN

Why not?

FRED

Are you messin' with me? Cuz if your messin' with me.

NOREEN

I'm just curious.

FRED

(loudly)

Pink is for sissy's and Commies.

NOREEN

Isn't red Communist?

FRED

Pink is halfway there.

NOREEN

Oh I see...What about blue...Does blue remind you of anything?

FRED

Blue?...Yeah, blue's good.

NOREEN

I'll be back in a few minutes.

She picks up bedpan and begins to exit.

FRED

And get me some more water!

Noreen leaves. Phone rings. Fred answers.

FRED

Yeah. Hi Daniel...I'm all right...Yeah...There are good days and bad ones. Last night was a bad one...Yeah... Yeah...Tell me now...Why not!...I want to get out of here. The food is shitty, the room smells, they never come when you need them - and I got this negro woman...I know! I know! You're not gonna change me. I am who I am...Yeah...Okay...I'll see ya soon...And bring me some Milky Way bars.

(slams phone)

African American! African American! Jesus Christ!

Enter Noreen carrying a pink blanket and water pitcher. She puts pitcher on side table.

FRED

I told you no pink.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...That's all we have for the moment. Do you want it or not?

FRED

I don't know - maybe...If you put it halfway on me and get some newspaper's to cover the color.

Noreen stifles laugh.

FRED

What?!

NOREEN

Nothing.

Fred grimaces in pain.

NOREEN

What's the matter?

FRED

Nothing!

Noreen drapes blanket over him.

FRED

Remember the newspapers...And adjust my pillow.

NOREEN

(moves pillow around)

How's that?

FRED

Good!...My water!

NOREEN

(points to water)

It's over there - along with your manners...And you need to keep your voice down.

FRED

Keep my voice down. Do this! Swallow that! Roll over! Now a pink blanket and you.

NOREEN

Oh shush up! You're makin' trouble for me - that's what you're doing - I've got enough problems an you're givin' me a dishful -
I'm sedatin' you.

FRED

No - no. I'll be quiet - I promise...It's just that I'm so damn sick of it all.

She pours glass of water and gives it to him.

NOREEN

Here, drink this - you'll feel better.

(speaks rapidly)

Now I've gotta go...But before I do, I want you to think about three words. These words are so strange and alien to

NOREEN (cont'd)

you, that if I hear them, it's like I've gone and died and old Saint Peter has brought me through those pearly gates into a glorious heaven...Do you know what those words are?

FRED

No.

NOREEN

Please and thank you Mr. Parsons...Please and thank you.

She begins to leave.

FRED

Do you know who I am?

NOREEN

I know what you are.

FRED

Who am I?

NOREEN

I heard stories.

FRED

Tell me one.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...I'm not here to spread gossip or tell stories.

FRED

You don't want to guess?

NOREEN

Quiz shows are not in my job description...You do the honors.

FRED

I was an Imperial Wizard of the Klan.

NOREEN

I can see why you wanted a blue blanket, being royalty and all.

FRED

That's it! You're screwin' with me - I'm complaining.

NOREEN

Sir...I don't have time to screw around. The work is too exhausting.

FRED

You're still messin' with me...You have this high and mighty attitude—

NOREEN

Those are the drugs kickin' in...Is there anything else you need Mr. Parsons?

FRED

Listen...I don't like bein' called "Sir" or "Mr. Parsons". Fred is my name.

NOREEN

If you don't mind, I prefer sir.

As Noreen exits

FRED

You call me Fred! Fred's my name!

Fade to black.

Appearing from the shadows is Charlie, the ghost of a twenty-two year old Klansman. He's standing next to Fred's bed wearing a white tee shirt and blue jeans, and is holding a half pint of whisky.

CHARLIE

How's it hangin' buddy boy...Looks like you could use a drink.

Charlie takes a drink.

FRED

What do you want?

CHARLIE

Now is that a way to treat a friend?

FRED

You're not my friend Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey...When you're in the Klan — you're friends for life.

FRED

Easy for you to say — you died young.

CHARLIE

I can't help that Freddy.

FRED

What do you want?

CHARLIE

I'm here to keep you straight man...Look at you in bed
takin' orders from that nigger woman.

FRED

Shut up!...I don't talk like that anymore.

CHARLIE

But ya think that way...Cuz that's who you are — you're
still one of us Freddy.

FRED

Keep your mouth shut.

CHARLIE

That's why I'm here buddy boy — it's all about keepin' your
mouth shut...We have secrets you and me. And Klan business
stays with the Klan.

FRED

No one liked you Charlie. Frank and Stevie hated you.

CHARLIE

But you followed me...Didn't ya.

FRED

We were afraid to go against you—

CHARLIE

Freddy...Little pussy boys is what you were — I shaped you
into men.

FRED

Mickey was my best friend — you almost beat him to death.

CHARLIE

The Klan had work to do, your Mickey got in the way.

FRED

Was it the Klan's work or yours?

CHARLIE

What's the difference.

FRED

Why am I even talkin' to you.

CHARLIE

Remember what I said — mouth shut.

Charlie disappears into the shadows, and exits side door.

Scene 2

Light rises in the dining room. Noreen enters carrying a grocery bag containing Italian bread, cheese and a bottle of inexpensive wine. She quickly puts the bag on the floor and collapses in her chair visibly exhausted. A few seconds pass. She slowly reaches into the bag, pulls out the wine, placing it on the table. Noreen painfully stands up, walks over to the sideboard and reaches for a wine glass. She walks back to the dining room table, and still standing, pours herself a drink. Noreen then shuffles over to the record player and turns it on. A Muddy Waters song begins to play. She walks back to the table and sits. She drinks slowly, listening to the song, dwelling on her difficult life. Suddenly there is a knock on the door.

NOREEN

Hold on...Who is it?

SONDRA

It's your granddaughter.

NOREEN

You know where the key is.

Enter Sondra. She kisses Noreen on the cheek.

NOREEN

You get prettier every time I see you.

SONDRA

You always say that.

NOREEN

It's the truth sweetheart.

SONDRA

Who's singing?

NOREEN

That's Muddy Waters...He grew up in the Delta pickin' cotton...Became the greatest blues singer there ever was.

SONDRA

Sounds real powerful.

Noreen walks to record player, and shuts it off.

NOREEN

You're right about that child...They say to sing the blues, ya have to live it, and old Muddy, he sure lived it.

(beat)

Would you like some wine and cheese?

SONDRA

I'll have some wine.

Noreen collapses in chair.

NOREEN

Sweetheart...Could you take the shopping bag, put it on the counter, and grab a glass.

SONDRA

Sure.

Sondra touches Noreen's shoulder and bends down to grab grocery bag. As she does this, she looks into Noreen's eyes.

SONDRA

You look tired.

NOREEN

I am. I'm dog tired.

Sondra picks up groceries. As she walks over to the sideboard, she turns.

SONDRA

I wish you could leave that damn job.

NOREEN

I know child...But who's gonna help you with college?...No...We both need our jobs.

SONDRA

I'm only there fifteen hours a week, but you're doing double shifts – sixty and seventy hours...Ya gotta slow down.

NOREEN

It's wearing me thin, that's a fact.

SONDRA

And they treat you like crap – there's no union to protect you.

NOREEN

We're all treated badly – it's an equal opportunity dictatorship.

SONDRA

(laughs)

Got that right.

(beat)

NOREEN

But things are a changin'...I'm starting to organize some of the workers – see if we can get us a union.

SONDRA

Just be careful...You know how they feel about unions.

She returns to table with wine glass. Noreen caresses Sondra's hand.

NOREEN

I have one shining light – one thing to live for – it's you sweetheart. Someday you'll get that degree in Architecture and build some nice places for all of us.

Sondra pours wine. They raise glasses.

SONDRA

Until that day.

They drink. Noreen winces, holding arm.

SONDRA

What's wrong?

NOREEN

I have another piece of misery.

SONDRA

What's that?

NOREEN

Don't you know?...I have his royal highness as my patient.

SONDRA

Who?

NOREEN

Why I'm blessed with the Grand High Imperial Wizard of all times.

SONDRA

You mean the Klan?! You gotta be kidding!

NOREEN

Nope...A real honest-to-goodness crackerman.

SONDRA

I thought those clowns were extinct.

NOREEN

Do you really believe that?...A lot of people didn't want a black President – and if Obama's skin was darker he probably wouldn't have won.

SONDRA

Change is slow.

NOREEN

It sure is child...People are stubborn – that's a fact...But I have my ways.

SONDRA

I still wish you could get out of that job.

NOREEN

Marry a rich man and I'll think about it.

SONDRA

Rich and good lookin'.

NOREEN

Ahhh...You want to marry for love.

SONDRA

Yeah...But money wouldn't hurt either.

NOREEN

Me and your grandpa married for love. We didn't have a cent between us – times were hard...But we stuck together for forty years until he passed.

SONDRA

Forty years!

(beat)

NOREEN

Your mother married for love.

SONDRA

And look what it got her.

Sondra pours more wine.

NOREEN

How's she holdin' up?

SONDRA

Four months out of rehab – everyday's a struggle.

NOREEN

She still have her job?

SONDRA

(rapidly)

Yeah, but I gotta drag her out of bed at six, pour two cups of coffee in her and drive her to work before class five days a week.

NOREEN

It must wear you down.

SONDRA

We're hangin' on...She gets the minimum wage...I have my part time job – and your help...We're gettin' by.

NOREEN

Your mom's been through some tough times. God knows she deserves better.

(beat)

SONDRA

That's weird.

NOREEN

What?

SONDRA

You said: "God knows".

NOREEN

And?

SONDRA

I haven't heard you say "God" in a long time, not since Grandpa died.

NOREEN

I haven't seen much of God in my life — especially growin' up in Selma — all those riots — all that hatred...If there's a God of hate, I've seen plenty of him.

SONDRA

Did you know anyone who was killed?

NOREEN

Of course child...People were disappearing everywhere. There were two neighbors killed by the Klan. They never found their bodies — and there was that George Wallace spitting out his venom...A crazy madness took over white folks back then...It's hard to talk about.

SONDRA

Those were terrible times Grandma.

Noreen coughs.

NOREEN

They were indeed child — dark times...But we fought back...Whites and Blacks, mothers and fathers — entire families marchin' together...It was glorious to see.

(coughs)

NOREEN (cont'd)

Sondra honey, will you grab me that bottle of cough medicine and a spoon.

Sondra walks to sideboard. She grabs cough syrup and spoon, and walks back.

NOREEN

Speakin' of fathers...I know you found out where he lives.

SONDRA

So what.

NOREEN

He might be able to help.

SONDRA

I'm not beggin'...He left us - remember?

NOREEN

Maybe he's afraid-

SONDRA

I don't care! He's an adult, he should know better.

NOREEN

Being older don't qualify for smarter in this world.

SONDRA

He's had all this time to visit us - to send money...He didn't ...So now he's got a new family, a new wife, let him choke on it.

(slams table with cough syrup bottle)

I don't want to talk about it!

NOREEN

I'm sorry child...I didn't mean to-

SONDRA

That's all right...Listen, you shouldn't mix alcohol with cough syrup - it'll make ya drowsy.

NOREEN

Sometimes I could use a little more drowsy.

SONDRA

(laughs)

I know what ya mean.

Noreen stands up, slowly walks to phonograph player.

NOREEN

Have you heard this Billie Holliday album? There were two songs she was famous for - "Strange Fruit" and "God Bless the Child". Billie was friends with Ella Fitzgerald - sang with Artie Shaw and Count Basie. She was a great jazz singer, but that woman sure knew how to belt out the blues.

*She puts record on turntable.
Light fades with Billie Holliday
singing "God Bless the Child".*

Scene 3

Light rises on hospital room. Fred is propped up in bed drinking water. Charlie appears from the shadows in usual attire holding a half pint of whiskey.

CHARLIE

What's up buddy boy.

FRED

Oh it's you...Why don't you go back to the hell ya came from.

CHARLIE

That would be in your mind Freddy.

(takes a drink)

Your nephew's comin' soon. You're gonna get all sappy on him - spill your guts.

FRED

That's none of your business.

CHARLIE

The Klan is my business - You took an oath.

FRED

That was a long time ago.

CHARLIE

It doesn't matter Freddy.

(beat)

FRED

How did ya die Charlie?

CHARLIE

I made the mistake of travelin' up North - went in some beer joint sayin' the wrong kind of words - got myself stabbed.

FRED

Can't say as I'm sorry for ya.

CHARLIE

Remember what I said buddy boy. Keep it to yourself.

Charlie backs into shadows. Exits side door. Enter Daniel carrying candy.

DANIEL

Hey Uncle Fred...Am I interrupting anything – were you on the phone?

FRED

Nah...Just blabin' to myself.

DANIEL

So how are ya?

FRED

What do you think?

DANIEL

Here are some Milky Way bars.

He gives him candy.

FRED

Thanks...I miss your cousin Lila's spare ribs. Her barbecue sauce was amazing – the best in the world...Looks like those fine eatin' days are over. It's shitty hospital food for me.

DANIEL

They told me three doctors saw you this morning.

FRED

Doctors! What the hell do they know. They come in here like a pack of wolves, pokin' and probin', asking all kinds of questions...There was this colored doctor who touched me and looked at my X-rays and Cat Scans–

DANIEL

So what did they say?

FRED

(rapidly)

They're sayin' I have a tumor near my pancreas...Inoperable.

DANIEL

All the doctor's said this?

FRED

Everyone except this negro doctor – a specialist. He thinks there's a chance. The rest of the quacks sent me here to die.

DANIEL

What are you going to do?

FRED

Hell if I know...Back when the Klan was strong, we had our own doctor. We went to him, he'd patch us up – send us on our way. It was simple...Not like it is today...How can you trust the bastards.

DANIEL

(sarcastically)

Especially an African American doctor.

FRED

(rapidly)

Speakin' of that. There's this negro nurse...She's a smart one all right. She comes in nice as can be – a little too nice to my liking – she's not foolin' anybody.

DANIEL

C'mon Uncle Fred, she's just doing her job.

FRED

She knows who I am and she's gettin' even with me.

DANIEL

You're overreacting.

FRED

Look, I asked her to get me a blue blanket, I specifically said blue. What does she do? She comes back with this sissy pink blanket.

DANIEL

(smiles)

Maybe that's all they had.

FRED

I know she's messin' with me...I know it...Can you check to see if they have a blue one?

DANIEL

Sure...Besides that, do you need anything from the outside — magazines, newspapers, cookies?...Do you eat Oreos? You probably don't — it's black and white together.

FRED

Cut the crap! You're another smartass.

(beat)

Ya know what I'd like?...Some blueberry pie...Your cousin Tess made great blueberry pie...Can you ask her?

DANIEL

Shouldn't you be on a special diet?

FRED

Screw the diet and screw the doctors.

DANIEL

I'll call her tonight.

Fred grimaces.

FRED

Get me those pills.

Daniel walks over to side table, picks up pill bottle with glass of water and gives it to Fred. He swallows two pills.

FRED

Your aunt Christine couldn't cook worth squat, burnt everything she touched. But there was this girl named Debbie, she was the wife of one of the Klansmen. She cooked the best strawberry rhubarb pie in the county. We all came over to eat her fried chicken and biscuits, then we'd have our meetin'...I swear, a lot of those guys just came for the food. Some of them were dumb as rocks. Debbie didn't

FRED (cont'd)

like most of 'em, but she fed us all...I think she hoped the food would improve our dispositions.

DANIEL

Did it?

FRED

Sometimes...But then—

DANIEL

What?

FRED

I don't want to talk about it.

DANIEL

Why not?

FRED

Because when I start to, I see how embarrassed you get.

DANIEL

I'm sorry Uncle Fred...My dad never talked about your side of the family...I'd like to know more.

FRED

Why the hell should I when you end up makin' fun of me.

DANIEL

I promise I won't do that.

(beat)

I mean it.

FRED

I'll tell you family stuff — no Klan business.

DANIEL

Whatever you want.

(beat)

FRED

There's not much to say...Your dad and I went through tough times growin' up. Your grandfather was a mean son-of-a bitch. If you disobeyed him on anything he'd knock you

FRED (cont'd)

clear across the room, that's how tough he was...He was a big drinker and a hard workin' man.

DANIEL

He worked for the railroads.

FRED

That's right, he was a brakeman - worked every kind of job there was on the tracks...Jobs were hard to come by back then.

DANIEL

Did he get you in the Klan?

FRED

Of course he did - and into the union when I joined the railroad.

Fred grimaces.

DANIEL

What's wrong?

FRED

I'm okay.

(beat)

I miss the Klan...No matter what the reason...If you were in a bad way, they'd be there for ya.

Cries out in pain.

DANIEL

What can I do?

FRED

I'll be all right. Goddammit.

DANIEL

I'll get the nurse.

FRED

No!..Give me some water.

Daniel pours Fred a glass and gives it to him. He takes a long drink and sighs.

FRED

That's good.

(beat)

Your grandfather was a good union man, but there were times he hated his boss...Back then there were a lot of hobos hitchin' rides in the box cars. He was expected to rough 'em up and throw 'em off. And he was told to make it extra hard on the Blacks... He cracked a lot of heads – maybe even killed a few... You did what you were told or ya lost your job.

DANIEL

Sounds like real hard times.

FRED

Boy, you don't know what hard times were.

(beat)

Can you straighten my pillows?

DANIEL

Sure.

*Daniel straightens pillows under
Fred's back.*

FRED

I remember your dad and me went to the yards to see your grandfather cuz he was late for supper...There he was, beatin' the shit out of some hobo – his hands all bloodied. I was used to seein' it, but your father wasn't...He had this crazy look on his face, like someone had ripped his guts out.

Fred coughs several times.

DANIEL

What happened after that?

FRED

Well your grandpa looked real embarrassed, like his pecker was hangin' out...In a heart-beat, he ran over to your dad and hit him hard in the jaw – knocked the boy a foot in the air.

DAVID

That explains a lot.

FRED

Like what?

DANIEL

Why he never talked about your father.

FRED

After that...Your dad and me drifted apart. Your grandfather died a year later. Your father went up north to live with relatives. I stayed with your grandma and the Klan became my family...And once you join the Klan, they expect complete loyalty. You never talk about Klan business.

Fred coughs.

Sondra enters carrying a blue blanket.

SONDRA

(to Fred)

Are you Fred...Fred Parsons?

FRED

Yeah.

SONDRA

Noreen, my grandmother, asked me to give this to you...Ya wanted a blanket.

FRED

Goddamn right! Get this pink thing off of me!

Daniel takes pink blanket off of Fred. Sondra puts blue blanket on but accidently bumps Fred's arm.

FRED

You touched me! You touched my arm!

SONDRA

I'm sorry Mr. Parsons.

FRED

You did that on purpose!

SONDRA

It was an accident!

FRED

Leave me alone! Both of you get out of here...Now...And pull the curtains around!

*Sondra pulls curtains around bed.
Light dims on bed as Daniel and
Sondra walk out downstage center.*

SONDRA

What's his problem?

DANIEL

My uncle is a-

SONDRA

Oh right! I forgot!..My grandmother warned me about him - your uncle the Klansman.

DANIEL

(embarrassed)

Yeah, that's him.

SONDRA

Why are you even here?

DANIEL

Because he's alone.

SONDRA

Maybe guys like him should be.

DANIEL

I used to feel that way, but...

SONDRA

What?

DANIEL

I don't know...I need to find out what makes people like him tick...Maybe if we understood the reasons why something is-

SONDRA

Listen, you might have all the patience in the world, but me, I don't have time to waste on dumbass racists.

DANIEL

I hear ya...But I teach high school history and I need to know the truth about things...You know what they say about history.

SONDRA

Look, history is always repeating itself. Every second, life is filled with positive and negative patterns...I see a lot of negative ones.

DANIEL

You're pretty cynical.

SONDRA

I guess it depends on which side of the fence you're on...I bet they're still teaching a bunch of lies.

DANIEL

You mean, am I?

SONDRA

That's right you...I bet you still believe we live in a great democracy.

DANIEL

Of course.

SONDRA

(rapidly)

Then how is it that one percent of the population own over forty percent of the wealth and people of color still hold most of the low paying jobs.

DANIEL

I try to be balanced in my opinions.

SONDRA

(paces)

Oh, cut the New Age crap! Life isn't balanced! The rich prey on the poor. That's a fact. And the powerful pass laws to protect their interests, not the needs of some strugglin' immigrants.

DANIEL

But I—

SONDRA

Balanced...Life is unbalanced! It's unfair...And if you're a black family in segregated times, you're gonna have an unbalanced point of view.

DANIEL

Okay, Okay! Maybe balanced is a poor choice of words.

SONDRA

(rapidly)

Why don't you tell that to a Holocaust survivor or a Native American.

DANIEL

All right enough!

SONDRA

What's the matter Mr. I need to know the truth about things — a little too honest for ya...Look, if you want to know about History, try reading Howard Zinn's "Peoples History of the United States." I'm sure your school doesn't have it as required reading.

Daniel takes a deep breath.

DANIEL

I don't even know your name...I'm Daniel.

SONDRA

I'm Sondra...And you just pulled an old trick...Have you heard of Jonathan Kozol?

DANIEL

I studied him in college.

SONDRA

He would say what you did, is diffuse justified outrage.

DANIEL

(smiles)

Ouch! Ouch! And more Ouch! You're really rubbing my face in it...You're making me feel I'm as ignorant as my uncle.

SONDRA

Well?!

DANIEL

Do you want me to admit that change is slow?..Okay...Change is real slow...And maybe I'm fooling myself about the nobility of man...But sometimes...Sometimes ya gotta fight hard against the bad guys.

SONDRA

Fine...But I choose my battles...And I don't have time to teach some redneck how not to be a racist or some rich guy how to love his daughter.

DANIEL

Maybe if you fight a little harder.

SONDRA

What!..Who are you to tell me!

DANIEL

Look, I'm sorry...Really...I had no right.

(beat)

SONDRA

(loudly)

I'm a first year architecture student...And right now, my only struggle is trying to get through the school year without being buried in debt.

DANIEL

What about family?

SONDRA

(laughs)

What a naïve white boy.

DANIEL

I know.

SONDRA

My mom has her own problems...My grandma helps, but it's barely enough.

DANIEL

You mentioned something about a father?

SONDRA

He doesn't know I exist — he doesn't want to know. He left us a year ago, married a wealthy black woman and lives in the burbs.

DANIEL

So you tried?

SONDRA

What?

DANIEL

To get in touch.

SONDRA

Why am I telling you this. I don't even know you.

DANIEL

It doesn't have to be that way...We could be friends.

SONDRA

I don't know...I'll think about it.

Daniel looks at his watch.

DANIEL

I have to go...It was great meeting you...Enlightening really...Like a sledge hammer — a good sledge hammer.

(beat)

SONDRA

(smiles)

I work here on the weekends with my grandmother. Maybe we can have coffee.

DANIEL

I'd like that.

As they exit together.

SONDRA

(rapidly)

I bet you never heard of Daisy Bates?

DANIEL

Who is she?

SONDRA

(rapidly)

She was this amazing Civil Rights Activist, an African-American woman from Southern Arkansas—

*They exit.
Shouting is heard from Fred's
room. Light rises slowly on the
closed bed curtains. Fred is
dreaming.*

FRED

Over there!...What?!...No...Don't give it to me...I said
no...Bend it!

*Enter Noreen. She opens bed
curtains and shakes Fred.*

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons!

FRED

Be careful!...Stop!

NOREEN

Fred!

He wakes up with groggy voice.

FRED

What do you want?

NOREEN

You were dreaming.

FRED

I was what?

NOREEN

You were shouting in your sleep.

He sits up.

FRED

What did I say?

NOREEN

I don't pay attention to these things.

FRED

I've gotta know.

NOREEN

(rapidly)

Besides saying when the world will end and who's behind the Kennedy assassination, I'm not sure.

FRED

Oh, that's Goddamn funny! That's a good one! You heard me shouting something – I know you did.

NOREEN

Mr. Parson's, if you don't calm down I'm going to give you a shot.

FRED

You people are all alike. We gave you freedom and look what you do with it – you become a smart-ass.

NOREEN

I know...We're an ungrateful bunch...Shot!...Give this cracker- man a shot!

Fade to Black

End of Act I

(Optional Scene)

FRED

Please no shots – I'll behave...I mean it...Please.

NOREEN

(taps head)

What am I sayin' – I'll give ya that shot.

FRED

Don't do it!

She pulls out a needle and grabs Fred's arm. He's struggling but she manages to sedate him.

NOREEN

There now!

FRED

(slurred)

You didn't have to—

Noreen exits, light dims slightly. A drug induced dream sequence takes place. Fred's tossing and turning in his sleep, mumbling to himself. Suddenly and simultaneously, on the wall behind his bed, there are flashing white lights along with discordant (jazz like) saxophone music, and slides of the Klan marching, burning crosses and standing in a circle. Fred continues to toss and turn. Charlie appears, toasting to the Klan images.

CHARLIE

To the days when we were kings! Long live the Klan!

Charlie takes a drink. Fred sits up in his bed screaming.

FRED

No!

He crawls to the end of his bed reaching for Charlie.

FRED

I'll kill you!

Charlie backs into the shadows and exits. Fred collapses in his bed whimpering.

Fade to Black
End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

Light rises in the dining room. A Bessie Smith song is playing in the background. The music slowly fades out. Noreen is at the table pouring Sondra a cup of tea. Sondra is cutting a slice of coffee cake.

NOREEN

I'm telling you, that Fred Parson's has some dark secret hidden deep inside him.

SONDRA

His nephew says the same thing.

NOREEN

Whatever it is...It's eatin' at him like a tick on a hound dog.

SONDRA

You say he shouts in his sleep.

NOREEN

I've heard him a few times, but I couldn't make it out.

SONDRA

From what Daniel was saying, his childhood was pretty twisted.

NOREEN

Yeah...Those Klansmen are a crazy bunch.

SONDRA

In school, we're studying counter opposing forces that work for and against a structure — I'm starting to see people that way... Sometimes they do things that work against themselves.

NOREEN

Could be they're afraid to look at the overall design.

SONDRA

(smiles)

I suppose you're right.

(beat)

Were you playing Bessie Smith?

NOREEN

Yes indeed. Bessie was one of the greats. They called her the Empress of the blues. In the 20's Bessie was the highest paid black performer of her day...Poor girl died before her time in a controversial car accident.

SONDRA

She has such a soulful voice.

NOREEN

Old Bessie worked hard at it. She was singing in the streets of Chattanooga at age nine.

SONDRA

That's amazing...Speaking of work, are they still giving you a hard time?

NOREEN

Even harder, because they know I'm organizing the nurses and aides...It's a matter of time before I get fired.

SONDRA

Don't let them push you around – you still have rights...Look, I gotta tell ya something.

NOREEN

Before you do...I hear you've been seeing a lot of Daniel.

SONDRA

Yeah...We've become kind of close.

NOREEN

You mean boyfriend close?

SONDRA

No...Just good friends...Of course he's naïve about a lot of things. He has this New Age streak that makes him a little dumb, but I give him a strong dose of reality – it wakes him up...He's been giving me leads on various grants.

NOREEN

That's nice child.

SONDRA

Yeah...He can still be a pain in the ass...He nags me worse than you about getting in touch with dad...We'll argue over it, then we're friends again.

NOREEN

He seems like a good man...But watch yourself.

Sondra stands up, walks around table.

SONDRA

Ya know at first, I didn't like him. We'd have these discussions and I'd tell him what an ignorant "white" boy he is and he'd laugh and say "I was incredibly right". It was the way he said it — so sweet and sincere, almost childlike...He said he knew someone who could offer mom a library job at the High School...

NOREEN

That's great!

SONDRA

I don't know...I'm not so sure.

NOREEN

Why?

SONDRA

Like why is he doing this? Does he feel guilty because of his uncle?

NOREEN

I know what you mean...Trusting white folks is hard after what I've seen...Can I tell you something?

SONDRA

(sighs)

I don't know if I can hear it right now Grandma.

NOREEN

It's that Fred Parson's bringin' it all up in me.

Sondra walks over to Noreen and touches her shoulder.

SONDRA

Of course you can...I know it's hard to talk about.

NOREEN

There are some things you don't know child - some things I can't tell you. The worst of it is...Seein' people you grew up with, people you were close to, being dragged away by men in white hoods...The police wouldn't do anything - most of them were in the Klan.

(beat)

I had this girlfriend...Never mind child...Sometimes it's tough gettin' over the hurt.

Sondra hugs Noreen.

SONDRA

I guess that's why we have each other.

(beat)

I'll be careful with Daniel.

NOREEN

Not too careful girl...Trust your instincts.

SONDRA

That's when life gets strange and real hard sometimes.

NOREEN

I truly understand.

SONDRA

Talk about strange...Daniel told me something.

NOREEN

What's that child?

SONDRA

His Uncle Fred knows a lot about union organizing.

NOREEN

Really?!

SONDRA

Yeah! Imagine that! The guy's a bonafide racist but he was an organizer...Daniel says he's going to talk with Fred – see if he can help organize the Rehab center.

NOREEN

Isn't that weird...Didn't know that dumb son-of-a-bitch had any sense.

(beat)

Don't know if I want to talk to him.

SONDRA

Whatever you want to do Grandma.

Noreen stands up, walks over to record player.

NOREEN

Right now I want to hear some Bessie Smith...

A Bessie Smith song begins to play as light dims. Simultaneously light rises on Fred and Daniel in hospital room. Charlie is standing near Fred and slowly withdraws to side door as Daniel and Fred converse.

DANIEL

How was the blueberry pie?

FRED

Didn't touch it – I have no appetite.

DANIEL

Sorry to hear it.

(beat)

FRED

That doctor looked at me this morning.

DANIEL

You mean the African American specialist.

FRED

Who do you think?

DANIEL

What did he say?

FRED

That negro still thinks I have a chance. He wants another Cat- Scan and a liver biopsy.

DANIEL

So when are you going to do it?

FRED

You don't understand...He touched me. He touched my chest, tapped my side - looked into my eyes - felt my back.

DANIEL

So what?!

FRED

Suppose he's wrong!

DANIEL

If he's wrong, what do you have to lose - the white doctors will be right and you'll die in a few months.

FRED

Thanks for your kind thoughts.

DANIEL

I'm telling you like it is Uncle Fred...Live or die...It's up to you.

FRED

You think it's that simple.

DANIEL

No I don't...It's never that simple...But sometimes...Sometimes ya gotta jump out of your own way.

FRED

Out of my way?

DANIEL

Yeah...Like stepping out of your bitterness to make a better choice.

FRED

For who?

DANIEL

For yourself – and maybe for someone else...You can still make a difference – feel useful.

FRED

Bull! The world's not the same anymore. The old Klan's dead ... There's no place for people like me.

DANIEL

(chuckles)

Thank God.

FRED

You think that's funny don't you. Well I'm sick of being laughed at...Maybe I'm better off dead.

DANIEL

Yeah...Maybe the old you...But suppose there's something new inside that carcass of yours...Noreen's granddaughter is challenging the old me all the time – it's amazing.

FRED

You're a Goddamn fool is what you are...What's the point?

DANIEL

I don't know...All I know is I feel alive around her.

FRED

I'm telling you, don't get involved...Don't get close to their kind.

DANIEL

Why Uncle Fred?

FRED

Because they're trouble...The whole thing is trouble.

DANIEL

No one's looking over your shoulder. The Klan isn't running your life anymore.

FRED

It doesn't matter...They're always watching.

DANIEL

You're being paranoid.

FRED

Am I?

DANIEL

Look...Noreen could use your help. She's trying to unionize the Rehab center – they may fire her for doing it.

FRED

Good! The old bitch will get her due.

DANIEL

Shame on you...And you call yourself a union man. This place treats their workers like shit and the patients – well look around.

FRED

(coughs)

Blah! Blah! Blah!..My backside is killing me! Where's the Goddamn nurse?! Close the fucking curtain!

Daniel closes curtain, light dims, he exits room. There is complete darkness. For two minutes you hear an old Lead Belly song. Light slowly rises on Daniel talking on his cell phone downstage left of center.

DANIEL

Yes Doctor, I'm his nephew...Yeah...Yeah...Basically I'm his only family...Yeah...He has two living relatives but they want nothing to do with him...What can I say...He doesn't want to see any more doctors...I understand you can help him...Look Doctor, I don't know if you know this, but my uncle is a Klansman, has been for most of his life...Yeah...If you were a white doctor and you said he had a chance he'd say no...He's sick of doctors...No, I don't think he wants to go on...Sure I'll tell him.

He closes phone.

Enter Sondra downstage.

DANIEL
Sondra, Hi.

SONDRA
(coldly)
Hey.

DANIEL
Did you forget our lunch date?

SONDRA
Yeah...I forgot.

DANIEL
What's wrong?

SONDRA
What's wrong is you sticking your nose in my business.

Daniel touches her arm.

SONDRA
Don't touch me!

DANIEL
I don't understand.

SONDRA
(loudly)
Of course you don't...You think there's a happy ending for everything.

DANIEL
You saw your dad.

SONDRA
I made the dumb mistake of thinking he actually wanted to see me.

DANIEL
Sondra...

SONDRA
And where did I get this silly idea from? A white boy whose uncle is an old racist.

DANIEL

I was trying to—

SONDRA

You don't know anything. Let me show you something.

She shows Daniel a check.

SONDRA

Take a good look. Here's another lesson for ya...How much will a white dad pay to make their black off-spring disappear?

Sondra cries. She begins to exit stage right.

DANIEL

Sondra!

Sondra exits. Enter Noreen stage left, downstage.

NOREEN

Did I hear someone cryin'?

DANIEL

You're Noreen, Sondra's grandmother.

NOREEN

That's right.

DANIEL

I'm Daniel...I've heard a great deal about you.

They shake hands.

NOREEN

The same here...Was that Sondra cryin'?

DANIEL

Yes.

NOREEN

I need to talk with her.

DANIEL

Please wait...She'll be all right.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...Daniel...She holds you in the highest regard...Did you do anything to change that?

DANIEL

Of course not—

NOREEN

Cuz if you hurt my granddaughter—

DANIEL

I was trying to help.

NOREEN

She gets all the help she needs from me.

DANIEL

(rapidly)

No offense...But Sondra is under extreme stress. She's worried about school, she's worried about her mother and she's worried about you...I thought if her father could help.

NOREEN

(loudly)

Let me tell you something. Our family's been through a lot worse, but we survived because we stuck together...Do you hear me son...And the last thing we need is help from the nephew of some Klansman.

DANIEL

(paces)

So here we go...It never ends does it? Do I ever get a break?...No! All you see is my crazy uncle. You don't see me...I'm just another 'crackerman' to you. When is it going to change Noreen?...Can we ever get past this black and white thing?

NOREEN

(coughs)

I didn't make this world son.

DANIEL

I'm going after her.

As Daniel exits.

NOREEN
You be gentle!

*From the darkness in Fred's room
you hear shouting. He's having
another nightmare.*

FRED
No! No! Over there! Give it to me! That way!

*Light rises as Noreen enters his
room. Charlie, standing near
Fred's bed, withdraws into the
shadows and out the side door.*

FRED
(shouts)
Look at your hand!

NOREEN
(coughs)
Wake up!..Wake up! Wake—
Fred quickly sits up.

FRED
I said something didn't I?!

NOREEN
Your usual gobbilty-gook.

FRED
I didn't say anything specific? No names, right?

NOREEN
No names...But who knows what's going on in that dark melon
of yours.

FRED
So I have a melon for a brain.

NOREEN
It's only an expression Fred...Look I don't have time for
this...Do you want a shot for the pain or a pill to go to
sleep.

FRED

I don't want anything.

(as Noreen leaves)

I was never an Imperial Wizard...I said that to scare you -
I'm a nobody, a regular Klansman.

She turns, walking over to Fred.

NOREEN

I figured as much...Anything else?

FRED

No.

NOREEN

Get some rest.

She begins to leave.

FRED

Wait!

Noreen stops. Her back is to Fred.

FRED

I killed a black boy.

She quickly turns around.

NOREEN

You what?!

FRED

(rapidly)

We had just left a Klan meeting. We were dumb teenagers all
liquored up with nothing to do - most times we'd burn a few
crosses, harass some demonstrators, nothing
serious...Except for this one day...There was this new guy,
Charlie, he was a gung-ho-type.

NOREEN

What are you doing?! I don't want to hear this...No sir!

*Noreen walks up to Fred and
spreads her hand in front of his
face.*

NOREEN

Stop it!

Fred keeps quiet. She lowers her hand, glaring at him with controlled rage. Noreen turns to leave and is almost gone.

FRED

Please...I can't hide it.

She quickly turns around with folded arms, glaring and bracing herself. Fred manically scratches his hand.

FRED

Charlie knew this black teenager who'd ride his bike home from a supermarket job. He said: "Let's shake the kid up - scare him a little." We were afraid to say no, so we went along with it...We saw him on his bike - drove up next to him and cut him off. I pulled him into the pick-up and we drove to the town woods. It was meant to be a joke.

NOREEN

A joke?!

FRED

(rapidly)

We pushed him around, called him names, then Charlie tied him to a tree - he was cryin', beggin' to be let go...I wanted to, but Charlie kept pushin' us to go further - next thing I know I was throwin' rocks at the kid - we all were...Then we were hittin' him with large sticks. I was afraid, but I couldn't stop. No one wanted to go that far, but we were afraid to look weak. Barry and Mickey had this wild look - they were scared...I knew Mickey wanted to stop-

Fred covers face crying.

NOREEN

I don't want to hear your crazy garbage! No sir!

She walks over to the suspended windows, pulls the shade up and covers her ears. As Fred confesses

she lowers her arms to folded position.

FRED

(rapidly)

The boy stopped screamin'...He was limp - bloody and limp and half naked tied to a tree. We untied him and dragged him to a nearby pond. The boy was still alive...We didn't want to get caught so we tied rocks to him and pulled him to the water's edge...I'll never forget it. While he was strugglin' he was callin' this girl's name over and over...Then he sank...Mickey started cryin' so loud Charlie beat the shit out of him - told him if he ever talked about what he'd done, he'd kill him...I see that black boy every night callin' that girl's name.

Noreen stomps out of room and stops. She stomps back in, standing next to Fred's bed.

NOREEN

(rapidly)

Jesus Christ! What do you want me to say?! Do you expect forgiveness? Are you looking for redemption?!. Maybe you think I'll say you were just some crazy white boys who made a mistake...You killed an innocent black boy who did nothing to hurt you.

Noreen raises hand to hit Fred. He covers face. She grabs glass of water and throws it in his face.

NOREEN

You hold onto those words until it kills you.

She exits room looking distressed. Enter Daniel downstage. He sees Noreen.

DANIEL

What's the matter

NOREEN

(coughs)

I'll be all right.

(her breathing is rapid and shallow)

NOREEN (cont'd)

I'm sorry about what I said...You're not like your uncle.
You couldn't do what he did.

*Noreen holds chest, staggers and
collapses. Daniel kneels down
beside her, checks pulse and
breathing.*

DANIEL

Emergency here! Don't you die on me! No goddamn it! You
breathe.

He performs CPR and mouth-to-
mouth.

Fade to Black

End of Act II

ACT III

Scene 1

Light rises on the dining room stage left. Sondra and Daniel are drinking coffee and eating coffee cake. They're listening to a Robert Johnson song. The music fades.

SONDRA

Noreen loves these songs...She knows them all – Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Lead Belly. She knows everything about the Delta Blues...Years ago Noreen had a guitar – she wrote her own music, blues songs mostly...She had this dream of singing in blues clubs up in Chicago.

DANIEL

I had no idea.

SONDRA

Of course she gave it up to study nursing and raise a family. Everything was hard back then – there were a lot of obstacles. It was unheard of for a black woman to study nursing.

(beat)

Thank you for saving my grandmother's life.

DANIEL

No need to—

SONDRA

Ya know she means the world to me.

DANIEL

Noreen's an amazing woman.

(beat)

SONDRA

Look, I'm sorry I was so hard on you. I know you were only tryin' to help.

DANIEL

I meddle too much.

SONDRA

You're a good friend – that's what friends do...And you got my mother that library job. How incredible is that!

DANIEL

She deserves it...She's a good woman.

(beat)

So what's Noreen's condition?

SONDRA

They're not sure...They think it's heart related – she calls it a fainting spell...Anyway, she's up-an-about in a wheelchair, as if nothing happened. They have her at our Rehab Center in a room next to your uncle's.

DANIEL

Can you imagine them being roommates?!

SONDRA

(laughs)

My God!...The original odd couple!

DANIEL

Speaking of my uncle...I struggled with not telling you – but I think you should know.

SONDRA

What is it?

DANIEL

You have to promise you'll let me handle it my way.

SONDRA

Sure.

DANIEL

Noreen was holding her chest after she came out of Fred's room.

SONDRA

You think it was something he said that triggered it?

DANIEL

I don't' know...She wasn't holding her chest right away. She was apologizing for something she said earlier...The she held her chest...I'm not sure.

SONDRA

Noreen hardly complained about Fred getting to her...She had a sense of humor about him.

DANIEL

She made fun of him.

SONDRA

Well yeah...He is pretty ignorant.

DANIEL

Of course...The bastard deserves it.

SONDRA

But she also said your uncle was tormented by some dark secret...He would cry out in his sleep...She actually felt sorry for him.

DANIEL

Ya know I've felt the same vibe from Fred...I'd like to understand his demons.

SONDRA

All I can say is, you may not like what you find.

DANIEL

I don't know...More than anything, I love teaching kids...But ever since college I had this dream – it was to travel around the country recording people's life stories. I'd be like a Social Anthropologist – an Archivist.

SONDRA

There was a guy named Studs Terkel who did that for a living.

DANIEL

That's right...I always thought, if you heard people's stories, their fears, their dark side, that after the sharing, they'd realize we all have this desperate need for love and acceptance ...Even forgiveness.

Sondra stands up and walks around table.

SONDRA

(loudly)

Maybe for you...But for me, forgiveness is in short supply. I don't have anymore to give. My father rejected me twice – the man's a scumbag...And I told you before, there aren't always happy endings – maybe some people aren't worth fighting for.

DANIEL

Everyone's worth fighting for.

SONDRA

Sweet Daniel! Always the eternal optimist.

DANIEL

I know...I'm acting like the naïve white guy again.

SONDRA

You are! But I can't help likin' you anyway.

(beat)

Ever since I was a kid I had this fantasy about creating lush green spaces – like those Urban Gardens with fruit trees and flowers and giant maples.

DANIEL

That's wonderful.

SONDRA

Yeah...It would be a place where folks could come together –
play music. There'd be a sign at the entrance saying "One People".

DANIEL

Do you still have your dream?

SONDRA

Deep down I do...But priorities change...You grow up...Life gets harder...The neighborhoods need decent housing – there are too many homeless in the city.

DANIEL

Maybe there's a place for both visions.

SONDRA

Where do you get this optimism?!

DANIEL

Not from my dad, he died when I was fifteen...But my mom...She was a Social Worker and Activist...And she believed, there was nothing that couldn't be accomplished if people cared for one another.

SONDRA

She sounds amazing...I guess what we believe in could either enlighten or destroy us.

DANIEL

That's so true.

SONDRA

Right now I believe in finishing that coffee cake and listening to some B.B. King.

Sondra walks up to phonograph player and puts on record. A B.B. King song is being played.

Scene 2

Light rises on hospital room. Fred is propped up in bed drinking a glass of water. Charlie appears from the shadows.

CHARLIE

Look at you man...Spillin' your guts all over the place...I knew you couldn't keep a secret - they're comin' after you Freddy.

FRED

I should have killed you and my dad...Two sick son-of-bitches.

CHARLIE

You're still one of us buddy boy - you'll always be one of us.

FRED

We did some terrible things Charlie.

CHARLIE

Freddy...C'mon...Back then, everything was that way...You're getting' all sissy on me – aren't you.

FRED

Go away – I don't have time for you.

CHARLIE

You'll always have time for me Freddy boy.

Charlie exits side door.

Enter Noreen in wheelchair with cane on lap.

NOREEN

How's it going?

FRED

No doctors are bothering me – that's a good thing. I can handle the pain, but I don't like the new nurse. I think she's Russian.

NOREEN

Are you gonna start the Cold War again?

FRED

(smiles)

That's a good one.

(beat)

I heard you took a spill the other day.

NOREEN

They say I might have some heart problems – a blocked artery or something like that.

FRED

I wouldn't trust what those doctor's say.

NOREEN

Ya gotta trust somebody sometime Fred...Like you trusted me.

FRED

About the other day...I was a little out of it from the medication.

NOREEN

So you're sayin' it didn't happen?

FRED

I was a little craz—

NOREEN

What?!

(beat)

FRED

Yeah it did...It happened.

*Noreen raises her cane, holding it
over his head.*

NOREEN

I don't know if I should call the police or kill you
myself.

FRED

Go ahead. I'm gonna die anyway.

She lowers cane.

NOREEN

Why did you tell me? If you want forgiveness you're not
gettin'it...No sir.

FRED

I don't expect anything...I don't want anything — I was a
dumb kid — seventeen.

NOREEN

That changes nothing.

*Noreen holds chest and sits in
chair.*

FRED

Are you okay?

NOREEN

Doctors say I shouldn't get excited — the hell with them.

(beat)

FRED

I thought if I kept hating, then what I did a long time ago wouldn't feel so bad — maybe it was okay to do...I was a fool for thinkin' that way.

NOREEN

Well Fred...Looks like I'm not gonna be around for you to hate anymore. The Rehab Center is firing me. In two weeks I have to go — I'll lose my crummy health benefits.

FRED

They can't do that!

NOREEN

They are.

FRED

The bastards...They're firing you because you're tryin' to get a union in.

NOREEN

That's right...They found out I've been organizing the nurses.

FRED

Son-of-a-bitch bastards! They won't get away with it.

NOREEN

There's nothing you can do.

FRED

(rapidly)

The hell there isn't...I know a few labor lawyers — maybe the ACLU could advise, they helped the Klan a few times...We'll bring in some union organizers — AFL-CIO. You're rights have been violated ...We're talkin' retaliation...Discrimination.

Noreen rolls chair back.

NOREEN

Mother of God! Look who's on my side...Look who I'm working with!...Give me a minute.

FRED

Who owns the Rehab Center? Are they Jews? I bet they're Jews or Italians.

NOREEN

Oh man...Here we go again. You're not going to start with that crackerman thinking.

FRED

All right...But stop calling me that name.

NOREEN

Only if you stop thinking like an idiot.

FRED

I've had a lot of rage beaten into me — change is hard.

NOREEN

There are two things I want to say if we're gonna work together. The first is...It isn't going to change anything about what you've done...And secondly...Have you told your secret to anyone else?

FRED

Only you.

NOREEN

I think you should tell your nephew.

FRED

He can't handle it. I see it in his eyes. He wants to know, but he's afraid and ashamed at the same time.

NOREEN

Let me tell you something...When I was young, I beat up a white girl so badly she almost died...She said such hateful things. When the police came, my brother took the blame. They gave him a twenty year sentence. I never visited him or wrote a letter — I was too ashamed...About the fourth year they found him dead in his cell...He'd killed himself...I blame myself for his death... I should have talked to him and apologized...I know now, how important it is to tell my granddaughter what happened.

(beat)

You should tell Daniel what you did. He cares about you.

(beat)

Do you have a pencil and paper?

FRED

Yeah.

NOREEN

Let's get to work.

Light fades to darkness as Noreen takes out a pen and Fred reaches for the side table draw.

Scene 3

Light focuses on Sondra as she enters downstage left of center. She sits in the chair under the rehabilitation sign. Sondra takes out a note-pad, writes something in it, and pulls out her cell phone to make a call.

SONDRA

Hi Doctor it's Sondra Russell. I'm calling about Noreen my grandmother...How are you...Good...I'm fine...How were the test results?...Yeah...Yeah...That's great...She's a strong woman... Yeah...Yeah...So, surgery in about three weeks...Does she have to do anything beforehand?...Yeah...No solid foods...Okay...I'll be driving her there...Right...How long is her recovery?...Wait a sec. I gotta take this call – can I call you later? Thanks.

(beat)

(presses button on cell phone)

Hi mom...Is everything okay? Yeah...Yeah...That's good to hear. I'm happy for you...Yeah...Things are a little weird...Grandma's been working with Daniel's uncle on a lawsuit...Yeah. Strange bedfellows...She'll be going in for heart surgery soon...Yeah ...Yeah...There is something bothering her. Daniel senses it too...I'm sure it has something to do with his uncle. Who knows what's in that guy's mind...Listen I gotta go. I'll see you later.

Sondra closes phone and walks into Fred's hospital room. Light rises

*on Fred propped up in bed writing
some union strategy.*

FRED

You're Sondra, Noreen's granddaughter. We met once.

SONDRA

I wasn't going to come in here...I promised your nephew I wouldn't. But you see...I started thinking...You told my grandmother something terrible – something horrible. You upset her and she's a tough woman...I don't want to know what you've done. But you owe it to Daniel to tell him. He deserves the truth because believe it or not he cares about your sorry ass. I don't have the patience for rednecks like you.

FRED

(grimaces)

It's none of your business Missy.

SONDRA

It is my business. Your nephew has this crazy idea that everyone's worth fighting for, even you – so crackerman.

FRED

(coughs)

Don't call me that!

SONDRA

That's what you are!

FRED

You don't give people a chance to change do ya...You and me, we're set in our ways – we're kinda the same.

SONDRA

Jesus Christ!..I'm not like you. I'll never be like you.

FRED

If you don't care about me...Why are you here?

SONDRA

I told you, I care about Daniel...Besides you seem hell bent on dying.

FRED

That's my business!

SONDRA

Fine...I said what I wanted to say. Tell Daniel what's eatin' you cuz it's eatin' at him.

As Sondra exits

FRED

(shouts)

You're not leavin'...I have somethin' to say to you
Goddamit.

Sondra turns and stomps back in.

SONDRA

What do you want to say! Go ahead!

FRED

You think I'm garbage – a nothing. You like hating me,
don't you.

SONDRA

You're everything I despise in the world.

FRED

Funny thing about hate. It can be your best friend for a
long time – even give you happiness. But then one day ya
wake up lookin' like me – an old pus-bag waitin' to die.

SONDRA

Are you finished? Are you done with your cracker philosophy
– I'm leaving.

As She exits.

FRED

You do that Missy.

*Sondra exits room walking down-
stage far left. She's shaking a
little looking*

*slightly distraught. Sondra takes
out cell phone and sits in chair.
In the same moment Daniel enters
down- stage. He sees Sondra, waves
to her and walks into Fred's room.*

Light shines dimly on Fred and Daniel. They are going through the motions of conversation but you can't hear them talking. Sondra calls her grandmother on cell phone.

SONDRA

Hi Grandma...Yeah I'm okay...Yeah...Listen, I gotta tell you something...I had a run-in with Fred...Yeah...I told him he should tell Daniel what's bothering him...Yeah...I got a little tough...I'm sorry...I know how important that lawsuit and the union thing is to you...Yeah...Really!...Well that's a relief...I'm glad to hear it...Good...I'll see ya soon.

As Sondra puts her phone away you hear shouting from Fred's room.

DANIEL

You sick son-of-a-bitch...What! My God! My God – no!

Daniel rushes out of Fred's room visibly upset. Sondra rushes over to him. Daniel is weeping, covering his face in shame.

DANIEL

He told me...He told me he tortured and killed a black boy – a teenager – years ago. I know Fred was a little crazy, but a killer – I didn't see it in him...The man is a monster...A beast!

SONDRA

(paces)

Well, well, well...Listen to Mr. Everybody's worth fighting for...What a hypocrite...How could I fall for your crap!...What a fool I've been!

(beat)

Now you listen to me...You wanted to know what was buggin' Fred. Well now you do. So deal with it. If you want me as a friend, you go back into that room and square it with him. He needs you...And I need you not to give up on him.

DANIEL

That's a tall order.

SONDRA

Yeah, life's a bitch. Just go back in there and work it through.

*Daniel stares sadly at Sondra.
They hug and he walks back into
Fred's room. Light dims to
darkness.*

Scene 4

*A Bessie Smith song is playing.
Light rises slowly on David and
Sondra sitting at the dining room
table. Noreen is standing by the
phonograph player. There is a half
bottle of wine on the table. They
are holding glasses of wine.*

NOREEN

Five months ago I didn't think I'd live to hear old
Bessie...But here I am.

(raises glass)

To Bessie Smith.

DANIEL

To Bessie.

They raise glasses and drink.

SONDRA

And to my grandmother, who not only survived open heart
surgery—she won her lawsuit and unionized the Rehab Center.

DANIEL

Here, here.

They raise glasses and drink.

NOREEN

And a toast to your uncle Fred — the crazy crackerman who
helped make it happen.

SONDRA

Cheers to Freddy.

To Uncle Fred.

DANIEL

They raise glasses.

May he rest in peace.

NOREEN

They drink.

I have this Koko Taylor album I'd like you to hear.

NOREEN

She begins to put album on turn table, then stops. She slowly looks up at Sondra and Daniel.

What's wrong?

SONDRA

I wrote this blues song a few days ago...I'd like you to hear it.

NOREEN

She grabs guitar.

It goes like this...

NOREEN

Fade to Black

End of Act III

Juarez

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Dramatis Personae:

Miguel – First Cartel guard/late twenties

Julio – Second Cartel guard/ late twenties

Isabel – First captive Juarez girl/mid to late twenties

Maria – Second captive Juarez girl/early twenties

Place:

Juarez, Mexico

Time:

Present

Act I

Scene 1

Two empty jail cells occupy center stage. One cot is in each cell; they are placed on the left side of the first cell and the right side of the second cell as it faces the audience. In front of both cells are two chairs on either side downstage. There is also a small table with a radio and a bottle of water downstage left. Light rises on Miguel wearing a suit jacket and jeans.

He answers his phone.

MIGUEL

Sí...Sí...The trucks are ready to go...They'll leave in twenty minutes...Sí...The room is clear...Two clean cells ...Yeah...The girls are from the factory – the gringo store...Right now they're in the main house...Yeah...After the coke is dropped off...Sí – then the party.

(laughs)

If you think they're ugly they can be mules...I know you'll like the girls. We watched them for three days before we grabbed them.

(laughs)

That's right! So you'll be back at seven...Bueno...Yeah... We have a case of tequila...You want two cases...Okay – and a case of Irish whiskey.

(laughs)

Sí...That should do it.

Miguel turns on radio and sits in chair left of center. You hear the faint sound of Mexican music (Rancheras). He lights a cigarette, takes a few puffs and stares sadly into the void. There is the sound of a doorknob being fumbled with. Miguel shuts off radio. He stands up reaching for a gun inside his suit jacket. Enter

Julio dressed casually with a shoulder holster and gun.

JULIO

Qué tal?

MIGUEL

You scared the shit out of me!

JULIO

Por qué?

MIGUEL

Remember the signal?

JULIO

Shit...What is it?

MIGUEL

Two quick knocks, wait a second, then a third.

JULIO

I can't believe I forgot.

MIGUEL

I could have blown your head off! Remember...New orders, new signals...We can't afford mistakes – the trucks are leavin' soon.

JULIO

I'm sorry amigo.

Miguel sits. Julio grabs the chair from across the stage and sits next to Miguel. Julio takes out a flask.

JULIO

Want a drink?

MIGUEL

Carlos would kill you if he caught us drinking.

JULIO

C'mon man...He won't be back for a while.

They stare at each other for a few

*seconds. Miguel takes the flask
from Julio and drinks.*

MIGUEL

You drink too much.

JULIO

I know.

(beat)

Anna is pregnant again.

MIGUEL

This is your fifth.

JULIO

Sí.

MIGUEL

Don't you use any protection?

JULIO

She's a devout Catholic...There's nothing I can do.

MIGUEL

Look there's a girl I know in town. She's forty dollars –
when you get the urge.

Julio takes the flask from Miguel.

JULIO

That would be cheating.

MIGUEL

No man...It's sex, not love – you can imagine she's your
wife.

JULIO

No...It wouldn't feel right.

MIGUEL

What's right anymore...Forget I said that.

JULIO

I love my wife...I could never betray her.

*Julio takes a long drink and
grimaces.*

MIGUEL

That stuff will kill you.

JULIO

It's this job that's killing me.

Miguel grabs Julio.

MIGUEL

(loudly)

Don't you say that – don't ever talk that way...Do you want to end up on the streets with your head chopped off?!

JULIO

I don't care.

MIGUEL

You better care. You have a family to support.

JULIO

We kidnapped these girls and–

MIGUEL

And what?!

JULIO

It's that I'm tired of–

MIGUEL

Shut up!..How would you feed your family – where would you get that kind of money – no. They won't let you leave man – there's no way out.

JULIO

My cousin knows someone–

MIGUEL

Forget it. They'll kill you and your family...Just do your job and shut up!

(beat)

Give me the flask.

Miguel takes a long drink.

MIGUEL

You want a decent house don't you...You want to get out of that cruddy shack you live in – don't make it personal.

(beat)

JULIO

Sí...You are right.

Miguel gives Julio the flask.

JULIO

When are they coming?

MIGUEL

Any minute...Fredrico will take them to the door – you bring them in...Same as always...Just remember the signal.

JULIO

Can you bring them in?

MIGUEL

No. It's your turn.

JULIO

Okay...All right.

He stands up.

(beat)

MIGUEL

Ellena says "Hi" by the way.

JULIO

How is she?

MIGUEL

(sarcastically)

She's fine.

JULIO

What's wrong?

MIGUEL

It doesn't matter.

JULIO

C'mon man.

MIGUEL

(beat)

The bitch is cheating on me.

JULIO

How do you know?

MIGUEL

She leaves the house and—

*There are several signal knocks.
Julio stares at Miguel for a
second.*

JULIO

I'll be right back.

*Julio exits.
Miguel lights another cigarette
and straightens his posture in the
chair. He's thinking about his
girlfriend and shakes his head.
Julio enters with Isabel and
Maria. They are blindfolded,
handcuffed, with tape over their
mouths. Miguel drops cigarette and
instinctively pulls out his gun.
Julio leads Isabel to the first
cell, stage left; she is pulled
in. Miguel guides Maria into the
second cell stage right; She is
pulled in. They remove the
blindfolds and duct tape on both
women. Maria, clearly distressed,
is shaking and mumbling. She sits
on the cot. Isabel is shaking
slightly and is still standing.*

ISABEL

(to Julio)

What are you going to do — what do you want? Tell me.

JULIO

Shhh...Don't worry.

*Julio leaves the cell, locking it,
and drinks from a bottle of water.
Miguel also leaves Maria's cell,
locking it; he walks over to his
chair in front of Isabel's cell.*

ISABEL

Do you have water?

JULIO

We'll get some.

ISABEL

What about the cuffs?

MIGUEL

Shut up!

ISABEL

You think I'm going to escape?

MIGUEL

They stay on.

(beat)

Your friend's not talking.

Isabel stares at Maria.

ISABEL

She's in shock.

Miguel points to Maria.

MIGUEL

(to Julio)

Give her some water.

*Julio grabs his water bottle and
walks into Maria's cell.*

ISABEL

She doesn't look well.

*Julio pours water in his hand
touching her forehead and cheeks.*

He pours a little water into her mouth. She barely swallows. Maria just stares though the cell. Julio gently shakes her.

JULIO

Hey...Wake up...Wake up!

ISABEL

You should let her go.

MIGUEL

What's her name?

ISABEL

Maria.

MIGUEL

(to Julio)

Say her name.

JULIO

Maria.

He gently touches her cheek.

JULIO

Maria.

Maria mumbles. Isabel walks to Maria's side of the cell.

ISABEL

Maria...Despierta!

JULIO

(to Miguel)

What are you going to do?

Miguel's cell phone rings. He answers it.

MIGUEL

Sí... Sí...Right away.

(closes phone)

(to Julio)

They want you at the house.

Julio takes a drink from his water bottle and leaves Maria's cell.

JULIO

I guess everything's under control.

MIGUEL

Hurry up.

As Julio exits.

MIGUEL

Bring back some water.

Julio exits.

Miguel takes a long drink from Julio's flask. He lights another cigarette, taking a long drag. Miguel and Isabel stare at each other for a while.

MIGUEL

What?! Suddenly you have nothing to say?

(beat)

ISABEL

I'm not going to scream — or cry.

MIGUEL

Good.

ISABEL

Just tell me.

MIGUEL

What?

ISABEL

Is it the sex trade...Organs?...Drugs?

MIGUEL

What does it matter?

ISABEL

It matters to me.

MIGUEL

Why?

ISABEL

If you were me...You'd want to know.

Miguel turns his back on Isabel.

MIGUEL

I shouldn't be talking to you.

He walks over to his chair and sits. He turns on the radio in a low tone. A Mexican song (Rancheras) is playing. He takes a quick drink.

ISABEL

(loudly)

Do you have a family?...A wife?

Miguel turns the radio up.

ISABEL

(shouts)

Two kids! I have two children waiting for me. My aunt's with them right now.

Miguel shuts radio off and walks over to Isabel's cell.

MIGUEL

Do you want me to gag you?

ISABEL

I want you to—

Maria starts screaming. She continues screaming in short bursts while crying.

MIGUEL

What is she doing?!

ISABEL

She's hysterical.

Do something!

MIGUEL

Let me out!

ISABEL

He unlocks the cell door. She raises her cuffed hands. They stare at each other for a few seconds. Miguel unlocks her cuffs. Maria is mumbling and rocking on her cot. Miguel has his hand

on his gun pushing Isabel in front of him.

Don't try anything.

MIGUEL

They hurry over to Maria's cell. Isabel crouches beside her stroking her hair. Maria has a blank stare.

It's okay...It's okay.

ISABEL

Maria continues to mumble and rock.

(to Miguel)
Do you have a rag?

ISABEL

Miguel pulls out a handkerchief from his back pocket. She takes it, pressing it against Maria's forehead.

Give me some water.

ISABEL

Miguel walks swiftly to the table, grabbing Julio's water bottle. He returns, handing it to her. Isabel

*pours water in the handkerchief
and caresses Maria's forehead and
cheek.*

ISABEL

There, there now...It's all right...Everything's going to
be all right.

*Isabel loses her balance and falls
backward. Miguel reaches to pull
her up. She grabs his arm, pushing
into him, trying to knock him off
balance, while reaching for his
gun. They struggle for control,
pushing and pulling, until Miguel
holds both her arms by her side.
They stare at each other for a few
seconds.*

MARIA

(hysterically)

No! You can't do that. No! It's not right!

*Miguel loosens his grip. Isabel
grabs Maria's arms.*

ISABEL

She's somewhere else.

*Maria screams. Miguel begins to
pull out his gun.*

MIGUEL

Get her to stop!

ISABEL

Maria!

Isabel shakes her.

ISABEL

Suficiente y cállate.

MARIA

He's over there!

Isabel raises her hand to slap her. Maria is suddenly quiet.

MIGUEL

What's she doing?

ISABEL

(sarcastically)

I don't know...Staring.

She strokes Maria's hair.

ISABEL

(to Miguel)

She'll need more water – she'll be okay.

MIGUEL

If she starts again, I'll have to hit her.

ISABEL

I'm sure you won't scratch her face.

MIGUEL

You're a smart one...C'mon...Get out of the cell.

He briefly stares at Isabel, admiring her beauty.

MIGUEL

A woman like you is out of my league.

ISABEL

(sarcastically)

I belong to the bosses – don't I.

She walks out in front of him then suddenly turns to knee him in the groin. He catches her knee, pushing her leg back down. Miguel stands inches from her face.

MIGUEL

Don't do that again.

Miguel escorts Isabel to the front of her cell. She glares at him. He cuffs her again.

MIGUEL

Get in.

Isabel walks into her cell. She quickly turns around.

ISABEL

Why are you doing this?! ¿Dónde está su corazón?!

Miguel turns his back on her and walks to his chair. He sits facing audience.

ISABEL

Señor...Hombre!

MIGUEL

Quiet Mujer!

He drinks from Julio's flask and lights a cigarette. Maria is whimpering. She lies on cot and curls up. Miguel turns on radio. A Mexican song is playing. Isabel sits on cot stroking her arm. She suddenly stands up, walks to front of cell, grabs bars and stares at Miguel.

ISABEL

Señor.

Miguel turns up music.

ISABEL

Señor!

MIGUEL

What!

ISABEL

Are you married?

Miguel turns up music.

ISABEL
Do you have a woman?!

He lowers music.

MIGUEL
What?!

ISABEL
Do you have a girlfriend?

MIGUEL
Why should you care?

ISABEL
I'd like to know.

(beat)

MIGUEL
I have a woman.

He turns up music slightly.

ISABEL
And?

He turns chair around to face Isabel.

MIGUEL
And what?

ISABEL
Tell me.

MIGUEL
Tell you what?! That the bitch is cheating on me – that I'd like to kill her! What do you want to know?

ISABEL
You must love her very much.

MIGUEL
Bullshit...There's nothing I can do about it.

ISABEL

Why?

MIGUEL

Because the bosses do what they want.

Maria groans in the corner.

ISABEL

And you just take their crap?

MIGUEL

That's right...If I want to live...I do as I'm told...Why
am I talking to you.

*Miguel turns chair around and
turns up music.*

ISABEL

You must have a family – children?

Miguel turns up music.

ISABEL

A mother?!..Children need their mothers.

*Miguel turns up music in louder
tone. Maria sits up and screams.*

MARIA

He'll come for you! You'll see!

*She screams. Miguel turns off
radio, quickly stands, grabbing
his gun.*

MIGUEL

Get her to shut the fuck up!

*Isabel rushes to Maria's side of
the cell.*

ISABEL

Maria! Tienes que mantenerte callada.

*Miguel walks close to Maria's cell
with gun drawn.*

MARIA

No Papa...I won't let them.

ISABEL

(softly)

Quiet Amiga...Quiet.

*Maria quiets down rocking and
mumbling to herself.*

MIGUEL

Goddamn fucking job!

*He kicks second folding chair in
front of Maria's cell.*

ISABEL

(nervously)

I think she'll be okay – she needs food and water.

*Miguel puts gun away, takes drink
from Julio's flask, and walks over
to*

*Isabel's cell staring at her for a
few seconds.*

MIGUEL

I never knew her.

ISABEL

What?

MIGUEL

(bitterly)

Mi Madre died after I was born – tuberculosis.

As Miguel turns around.

ISABEL

Your father raised you.

*He turns around quickly, laughing
bitterly.*

MIGUEL

(rapidly)

Yeah...When the motherfucker wasn't drunk he was working at
a gringo factory for four dollars a day. Anything else?

ISABEL

Maria and I work in the same kind of place for the same
shitty wages.

MIGUEL

There are no choices for people like us – you work, ya live
and then you're gone.

(chuckles)

It's not gonna work for you.

ISABEL

What do you mean?

MIGUEL

You're making it personal...I'm not gonna let you go.

ISABEL

You're a hard son-of-a-bitch.

MIGUEL

You think you're the only one who's played this game?..You
got balls, I'll give you that – and your smart and pretty.

ISABEL

So tell me.

MIGUEL

What?

ISABEL

Do you have brothers?

MIGUEL

All right, I'll play along...After I tell you, promise me
you'll shut the fuck up. Comprende?!

ISABEL

Sí...I promise.

One brother.

MIGUEL

Maria sits up and yells.

He's coming for you!

MARIA

Miguel takes out his gun and stomps over to Maria's cell. As he is unlocking the door.

ISABEL
(nervously)
What happened to him?!

Maria keeps screaming. Miguel enters cell and raises gun to strike her head.

ISABEL
You're brother?!

Miguel stops, and turns toward Isabel with hurt expression.

He died in prison!

MIGUEL

There are a series of door knocks. Enter Julio carrying bottled water, bread and cheese. Maria quiets down and is mumbling and rocking. Miguel lowers gun staring in a controlled rage at her.

MIGUEL
(loudly)
What took so long?

JULIO
They wanted me to escort the bosses into the main room.

MIGUEL
(sarcastically)
A big goddamn meeting.

JULIO

I brought water and food.

Julio puts food on table. Miguel points to Isabel.

MIGUEL

Give her the water first.

JULIO

They want to see you at the house.

MIGUEL

What for?

JULIO

I don't know.

Miguel opens cell phone and dials number. Julio walks into Isabel's cell giving her water. Miguel is talking on phone.

MIGUEL

It's Miguel...Sí...Sí...Is it important?...Sí...What about the girls?...Sí...All right...I'll be there.

He closes phone sadly and stares at Julio.

MIGUEL

I'll be back soon.

(points to Isabel)

Don't talk to her – she's poison. If the other one starts yelling – hit her.

Miguel exits.

(beat)

JULIO

I have cheese and bread.

ISABEL

Why don't you give her the food.

JULIO
She's still not talking?

ISABEL
Mumbling mostly.

JULIO
You gotta control her.

ISABEL
There's not much I can do sitting in this cell.

Julio stares at her.

JULIO
No...You can't leave.

Julio leaves Isabel's cell, grabs cheese and bread from the table and walks into Maria's cell. He sits down beside her, pulls out a bandana pouring water into it. He dabs her forehead, stroking her hair.

JULIO
There now...Everything's all right.

Maria slowly comes to life.

JULIO
Drink this.

She sits up. He pours water into her mouth. Maria grabs the bottle drinking it in a feverish manner.

JULIO
Slowly...Slowly.

Maria slows down. Julio continues to wet and caress her forehead.

ISABEL
She's coming out of it.

JULIO

Here's some bread and cheese.

*She takes the food and wolfishly
eats it.*

JULIO

Easy.

MARIA

Where am I?

JULIO

You're in a room.

MARIA

With bars?

JULIO

It's to keep you safe.

MARIA

Safe?...No – no...I'm late. My father's expecting supper.

ISABEL

We'll be leaving soon Maria.

MARIA

(loudly)

No...I have to get home.

JULIO

Drink some more water. You'll feel better.

*Maria knocks the water out of
Julio's hands.*

MARIA

Who are you!?

JULIO

You need to keep quiet.

*Isabel leans up against the bars
on Maria's side.*

ISABEL

Maria!...It's me!

*Maria stares at Isabel, then at
Julio.*

MARIA

Isabel.

ISABEL

That's right.

Maria turns to look at Julio.

MARIA

Who are you?

JULIO

A friend.

MARIA

No you're not! - I know who you are. You're one of them.
(shouts)

Help..Help me! Please! They're going to kill me!

ISABEL

Maria!

MARIA

Please!..Someone help!

JULIO

Silencio!

(reaches for his gun)

You have to keep quiet!

ISABEL

Maria!

Maria stops shouting.

ISABEL

Rest now...You'll be all right...We'll leave soon.

Maria looks at Isabel and at Julio. She slowly lies down. Julio slides a blanket over her. He leaves Maria's cell and walks over to Isabel.

JULIO

Gracias.

ISABEL

She'll be okay.

(beat)

I think she has hypoglycemia.

JULIO

What's that?

ISABEL

Low blood sugar...Extreme stress can set it off...Her father is very sick.

JULIO

What's wrong with him?

ISABEL

He has cancer...He worked in a rubber factory for thirty years - lungs are gone.

JULIO

Tough luck.

Julio turns around and walks over to radio. Isabel partially unbuttons her blouse.

ISABEL

I could use some food...And more water.

Julio grabs water and food. He points to cot.

JULIO

Sit there.

Isabel sits on cot. Julio enters cell and gives her water. She is still handcuffed.

JULIO

Don't try anything.

Isabel quickly drinks water and voraciously eats bread and cheese. Julio stares in Maria's direction.

JULIO

Is she gonna be all right?

ISABEL

The food helped her.

JULIO

She looks better.

ISABEL

Maria could be diabetic – she should be in a hospital.

MARIA

That's not going to happen...You'll have to look after her.

ISABEL

I don't know her very well – we're not close friends.

JULIO

We thought you were together.

ISABEL

We're co-workers who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Isabel notices Julio looking at her unbuttoned blouse.

ISABEL

Could you take the cuffs off?

JULIO

No.

ISABEL

I won't do anything. Please...They're uncomfortable.

JULIO

No...I can't.

He turns to leave.

ISABEL

What do you want with us?

He turns around.

JULIO

I shouldn't be talking to you.

*Julio lights a cigarette. He
stares at Isabel's partially
exposed breasts.*

JULIO

You are so beautiful.

ISABEL

They want us for sex – don't they?

JULIO

Miguel warned me.

Isabel stands up.

ISABEL

I'm not trying to change your mind.

JULIO

You can't. Siéntense.

Isabel sits.

ISABEL

Will you let me explain.

JULIO

If I let you go...They will kill my family – then they'll
kill me. Comprende?! I have four children with one
coming...I have to follow orders.

Julio turns his back.

ISABEL

I can get you help – I know a lawyer...Give me a chance.

He turns around.

JULIO

I could never betray Miguel – I've known him for a long time.

ISABEL

I could help both of you.

JULIO

He would never go for it.

ISABEL

You're not like him...You have kindness in you.

*Julio bends down, looking sadly
into Isabel's eyes.*

JULIO

I am like him...We've done some bad things together.

ISABEL

Now is your chance to do better.

JULIO

There is no chance for us.

He walks out of cell.

ISABEL

(loudly)

I have two little girls waiting – you're a father.

Julio turns around.

JULIO

I have to tape your mouth...Miguel is right – you're
poison.

Maria sits up.

MARIA

Isabel.

ISABEL

Sí Maria.

MARIA

Are we leaving soon? My father needs me.

ISABEL

Sí...We are.

MARIA

It feels like I had a bad dream.

Isabel walks over to Maria's side of cell.

ISABEL

It'll all be over soon...Lie down and get some rest.

Maria lies down. Julio's cell phone rings.

JULIO

Sí...Sí...Right away.

There are a series of knocks.
Enter Miguel.

JULIO

He just came in... Sí.

(to Miguel)

They want to talk to you.

He hands phone to Miguel.

MIGUEL

Sí...One's okay, but the other girl—

Miguel looks in Maria's direction.

ISABEL

Don't take her!..Take me.

Miguel cups phone.

MIGUEL

Shut up.

(back on phone)

No...Nothing wrong...One girl feels a little dizzy...Sí...
We have one ready to send up...Yeah...Her name is Isabel...
Yeah...Right away.

(closes phone) (to Isabel)

I should shoot you for interfering.

*Miguel unlocks Isabel's cell and
pushes her out.*

MIGUEL

(to Julio)

Go check the other girl.

Julio walks to Maria's cell.

ISABEL

She's not ready.

Miguel grabs Isabel's mouth.

MIGUEL

You're mouth could get you killed.

Julio returns.

JULIO

She's sleeping.

MIGUEL

Leave her.

He straightens Isabel's clothes.

MIGUEL

Do what they want and you won't get hurt...Understand?

Isabel glares at Miguel.

ISABEL

Yes.

MIGUEL

Don't resist...Don't talk back. And you'll live.

Isabel glares more forcefully at Miguel. She then assumes a more graceful haughty stance.

ISABEL

I've been through worse.
(points to Maria)
Just don't hurt her.

Julio walks up to Isabel.

MIGUEL

Take her to the house and come right back.

ISABEL

Isabel...My name is Isabel.

MIGUEL

(glares menacingly at Isabel)
You don't let up, do you.

ISABEL

You don't want to bruise the merchandise.

Miguel is tense with rage.

JULIO

Amigo...The other girl needs more water.

ISABEL

(raises hands)
What about my handcuffs?

MIGUEL

Do you have the key?

JULIO

(searches his pockets)
Shit. I can't find it.

MIGUEL

Jesus Christ. What's wrong with you!

JULIO

I know where it is.

He rushes into Isabel's cell and picks key off the floor.

ISABEL

How long will I be there?

MIGUEL

(loudly)

Uncuff her at the house...Get the hell out of here.

Isabel stares fiercely at Miguel.

ISABEL

I'll survive this bullshit.

Julio and Isabel exit. Miguel moves the chair a few times, then throws it across the stage.

MIGUEL

Goddamit!

Miguel stares at chair, lights up cigarette and walks over to it. He picks up chair and brings it back to end table. He turns on radio and sits. A guitar solo by Segovia is playing. Miguel continues to smoke and brood as the music plays on. He puts out his cigarette and pulls out his gun, staring at it. Miguel calmly caresses it, then slowly brings it up to his open mouth. Maria quickly sits up.

MARIA

I know this!

Miguel slowly lowers gun, shuts off radio and turns chair facing her. Maria stands up.

MIGUEL

What?!

MARIA

I know the music...It's Segovia...My father used to play guitar at night to help me sleep. Sometimes it was classical like Segovia...Other times it was Mariachi.

MIGUEL

Go back to sleep.

(beat)

MARIA

My mouth is dry.

Miguel walks into Isabel's cell and grabs a bottle. He walks over to Maria's cell giving her the water. Maria takes a long drink and sits.

MARIA

Gracias.

MIGUEL

Keep the water.

MARIA

Mi Padre sang beautiful lullabies. Sometimes love songs...The words always sounded a little sad...But beautiful...The way he played his guitar...It was like the angels were playing right through him – like God himself suddenly stopped to listen.

She stares off into space.

MARIA

Then the factory horns would scream, calling him to work.

Maria is still lost in thought. Miguel snaps his fingers in front of her.

MIGUEL

Do you know your name?

(beat)

MARIA

Sí...Maria.

MIGUEL

Do you know where you are?

MARIA

I am in a cell.

MIGUEL

Do you know what happened to you?

(beat)

MARIA

We were leaving work...The parking lot was dark – it's
always dark. I was walking next to Isabel...She was asking
me about my father.

*She suddenly stands up and grabs
the cell bars.*

MARIA

You took us!

MIGUEL

Sí...Now listen to me...You have to remain calm – be
rational...If you start acting crazy, they'll get rid of
you...comprende?

MARIA

I understand.

MIGUEL

Bueno.

(beat)

MARIA

Do you have a candy bar?

MIGUEL

Just bread and cheese.

MARIA

I have hypoglycemia – low blood sugar...When I'm
stressed...When I don't have sugar, I can have a fit.

MIGUEL

You've got to control it if you want to live.

MARIA

Are you going to hurt me?

MIGUEL

No.

MARIA

You have plans for us.

MIGUEL

(nervously)

I'll get you some cheese...You need to keep your strength up.

Miguel walks to end table, grabs cheese and returns. He opens cell door and gives her food. She sits.

MARIA

Can you take the cuffs off?

MIGUEL

No.

As he leaves cell.

MARIA

Do you like Segovia?
(beat)

MIGUEL

(turns around)

I played guitar a little – mostly classical.

MARIA

Do you still play?

MIGUEL

(coldly)

There was no time.

MARIA

(loudly)

What do you mean?

MIGUEL

Remember what I said – no hysterics.

MARIA

(calmly)

You stopped playing guitar.

(beat)

MIGUEL

(loudly)

I had two sisters and a brother that needed food. That's it
– no more.

(beat)

MARIA

I'm sorry.

MIGUEL

Sorry for what?!

MARIA

Suffering is suffering...I don't wish it on anyone.

MIGUEL

What are you a saint?! Let me tell you something...Saints
die young – they're spit on and crucified...No one cares
about them.

MARIA

God has reasons for everything.

MIGUEL

Oh Christ...So you think this is about God...There is no
God in Juarez.

MARIA

You need to–

MIGUEL

This is about drug dealers kidnapping and raping girls and
kill–

(He stops himself)

MARIA

I'll pray for you.

MIGUEL

If you want to pray...Pray for yourself.

MARIA

God forgives everyone.

MIGUEL

Shut the fuck up!...I liked you better when you were crazy.
Just sit in the corner and shut up – I don't want to hear
prayers.

*Maria remains sitting on cot.
Miguel walks towards chair and end
table.*

MARIA

You can be redeemed.

*Miguel turns around and angrily
walks to Maria's cell. He pulls
out his gun, aiming it at her.*

MIGUEL

I will kill you right now!...One more word!

(beat)

Put your hand over your mouth and keep it there.

Maria stares at Miguel.

MIGUEL

Do it!

*She covers her mouth. Miguel
lowers his gun and walks back to
his chair, collapsing in it. He
turns on the radio. Mexican music
(Corrido) is playing. He stares at
his gun and grabs bottled water
for a drink.*

Fade to Black

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

Light rises on the holding cells. Miguel is half asleep sitting in his chair downstage. Mariachi music is playing. Maria is asleep. There are a series of door knocks. Miguel quickly wakes up. Enter Julio.

MIGUEL

Qué pasó?

JULIO

Bien.

MIGUEL

Any problems?

JULIO

That Isabel was something...She was polite, friendly, even laughing...She had this sexual power over them.

MIGUEL

Did they ask about the other girl?

JULIO

They did...But she sashayed around saying "Isn't she woman enough for them"...Then she put on a show—

MIGUEL

Were they rough on her?

JULIO

I don't know...I could see something in her eyes — a kind of rage.

MIGUEL

(admiringly)

It's defiance...She has a fierce heart.

JULIO

She's something special...

(shakes head)

We're getting too close. You said never make it personal.

MIGUEL

Those scumbags made it personal when they stole my girlfriend.

JULIO

Elena was there.

MIGUEL

Was she with Carlos?

JULIO

Yes.

(beat)

MIGUEL

(sighs)

It's been a long night amigo...Let's sit down...Do you have a cigarette?

Julio gives Miguel a cigarette. Julio walks cross-stage in front of Maria's cell and picks up other folding chair. Miguel lights his cigarette. Julio brings his folding chair downstage. He lights up his cigarette. They both take long drags.

(beat)

MIGUEL

How long have we known each other?

JULIO

A long time.

MIGUEL

We've been through a lot together, haven't we.

JULIO

We fought a thousand battles.

MIGUEL

Do you remember how poor we were – hustling pennies in the street.

JULIO

Sí...I remember when we first met.

MIGUEL

(smiles)

You were crawling under food tables looking for scraps.

JULIO

And you walked toward me carrying this huge knife and a strange look...I thought you were going to cut my throat.

MIGUEL

(laughs)

I remember!

JULIO

(excitedly)

You flashed that knife in front of me...I closed my eyes, thinking this is it...Then I smelled fresh meat...You cut two pieces of hot chicken – paid the man – and said come with me.

MIGUEL

Sí!...We snuck into Raoul's junk yard – found us an old Chevy roof to sit on and drank cheap wine all night.

JULIO

(quickly stands)

That's right! It was a full moon...The night was real clear – the stars looked like bright diamonds...We told stories.

MIGUEL

You couldn't stop talking...It's like you hadn't spoken to anyone in years...You told me your parents were killed by the police...Your brother died in your arms – then you laughed...You kept laughing.

JULIO

And you cried...I was shouting, screaming, laughing – but you cried.

(beat)

We sang crazy folk songs until sunrise.

MIGUEL

(laughs)
You were a lousy singer.

JULIO

So were you!
(beat)
Do you remember any?

MIGUEL

It was a long time ago amigo...We don't sing anymore.

JULIO

What about this one.

*He begins to sing an old Mexican
ballad. Miguel sings along.
Suddenly he stops.*

MIGUEL

Do you ever wonder?...If it could have been different?

JULIO

What do you mean?

MIGUEL

How we got here.

JULIO

It was your uncle who got us in.

MIGUEL

That's not what I mean.
(beat)

I heard about this scientist who studied bats in a South American cave. He lived with them, he slept near them, he was around them all the time...After a while he began to act in strange ways. He had become what he studied...He thought he was better than the bats. In the end he became...Just another bat.

JULIO

Miguel...This is not like you man...You're getting sentimental.

MIGUEL

Jesus...You're right! You have your family to think about!

JULIO

And you'll find a new girlfriend – You'll get married and have children...You'll see.

Miguel's cell phone rings.

MIGUEL

Sí...Sí...Right away.

(closes phone)

They want me at the house.

JULIO

Don't be long...And bring some cigarettes – I have only one left.

Miguel exits. Julio lights up a cigarette. Light shines on Maria sitting up and blessing herself after praying.

MARIA

I heard you.

JULIO

(turns in chair)

Qué?!

MARIA

I heard you talking about Isabel.

He walks over to her cell.

JULIO

You shouldn't be listening.

MARIA

She was always flirting around at work...Now I know what a slut she is.

JULIO

That slut bought you time...She saved your life.

MARIA

I don't understand.

JULIO

Of course you don't...You were hysterical.

MARIA

I wasn't well.

JULIO

If a girl gives us too much trouble, we shoot her – those are the orders...Your Isabel sacrificed herself to save you.

MARIA

Do you believe in God?

JULIO

My wife does.

MARIA

Well God doesn't like loose women. The sins of the flesh are the worst kinds of sins. Don't you know that?

JULIO

(rapidly)

What about judge not and ye shall not be judged or he who casts the first stone...Girl...You don't know what you're talking about.

MARIA

I think I know her better than you.

*There are a series of door knocks.
As Julio walks toward stage left.*

MARIA

She has sinned!

Julio is whispering something to a guard offstage. Isabel is standing there visible to the audience, with a blanket wrapped around her.

JULIO

(offstage to guard)

Okay...I have her now.

Julio escorts Isabel into her cell. She looks shaken, but still in control of her emotions. Julio's cell phone rings. He answers it.

JULIO

Sí...Sí...Yeah, she's here...No problem...That means no one is guarding them...Yeah...All right...You take full responsibility...Okay.

(closes cell phone)

(loudly, to Maria and Isabel)

They want me at the house...Do you want any food or water?

They are silent. Isabel sits on cot in a controlled rage, with blanket around her.

JULIO

(to Isabel)

Are you all right?

ISABEL

(defiantly)

Never better.

JULIO

I won't be long.

Julio exits. Maria walks over to Isabel's side of cell. Maria is about to say something. But Isabel puts her hand up, controlling tears. Maria crosses herself. Isabel desperately looks around the cell. She stands up, shakes the bars, fumbles with the lock, looks around cell, and hits bars hard.

ISABEL

Goddamit! There's gotta be a way out of here!

*She collapses on cot, covering her mouth, squelching tears.
Long pause.*

ISABEL

(turns to Maria)

Did they hurt you?

MARIA

What?

ISABEL
Are you all right?

MARIA
Yes.

(beat)

ISABEL
I could use some water.

*Maria grabs bottle of water and
hands it to her through the cell.
Isabel takes the water with a
slightly shaky hand.*

MARIA
I prayed for you.

ISABEL
You prayed.

MARIA
Sí.

ISABEL
And what did you expect to happen when you were praying?

MARIA
A miracle.

ISABEL
(bitterly)
There was none — there never is.

MARIA
Maybe if you weren't so—

ISABEL
So what?!

MARIA
So flirty.

ISABEL
You ignorant—

MARIA

I see you at the factory.

ISABEL

(points off stage)

The men up there want to rape you.

MARIA

God prevented it.

ISABEL

Girl...You are so naïve!

MARIA

You're friendly to everyone at work – always joking, and whispering.

ISABEL

Maria...I wasn't flirting – I was organizing.

MARIA

You were stirring up trouble.

ISABEL

We need a union...Ya know those Gringo bosses pay us nothing for wages – You and your father are starving.

MARIA

We get by.

ISABEL

No you don't...At the end of the week you borrow money – like everyone else – like I do.

MARIA

That's none of your business.

Isabel paces.

ISABEL

(rapidly)

It is my business Goddamit!...I see you in the parking lot asking the girls for money...The parking lot that has no lighting. The place where we were kidnapped. How many times

ISABEL (cont'd)

did I ask the supervisor to install lights – he ignored me.
How many girls have been kidnapped and found dead along the
road?!

MARIA

It's God's will.

ISABEL

That's bullshit!

MARIA

You come on too strong...Some of the girls are afraid of
you – I'm afraid–

ISABEL

What are you afraid of?...What's worse for you – the truth
or the bosses.

MARIA

(covers ears)

Stop! No more!

MARIA

(walks away praying rapidly)

"Hail Mary full of grace. Our Lord is with thee. Blessed
art though amongst women–

ISABEL

How many women workers have fallen sick from the bad air we
breathe?!

MARIA

"And blessed is the fruit of thy womb–

ISABEL

Cut the shit Maria! Wake up for Godsakes!

MARIA

You don't believe in Jesus do you?

ISABEL

(stops pacing)

(long sigh)

Oh brother...I've seen too many people die on their knees
praying to Jesus...C'mon Maria...You gotta stand up against
these guys and fight...Our boss wants us to act like sheep!

Maria rushes up to Isabel's cell bars.

MARIA

It's all in God's hands, don't you see! You just lack faith...I know I can convince Julio to change his ways.

ISABEL

Maria...The next time those men come, they will come for you...We need a plan.

MARIA

I have faith this won't happen.

Isabel taps head in frustration.

ISABEL

Jesus Christ Maria!

MARIA

Stop your blaspheming.

ISABEL

What about God helping those who help themselves.

MARIA

God works through everybody, even you.

ISABEL

And I suppose God works through the supervisor who gropes all the women.

MARIA

That's the devil reaching out.

ISABEL

(long sigh)

Okay...If God is working through somebody like me, don't you think he'd want you to fight – to save yourself?

MARIA

No!...You're a non-believer. I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

(beat)

ISABEL

And what about your father?

MARIA

What about him?

ISABEL

Girl...I've seen you come to work with bruises.

MARIA

No!

ISABEL

You limp...And your face—

MARIA

Stop it!

ISABEL

Everyone knows your father rapes and beats you.

MARIA

You are a witch! That's what you are...A demon come to plague me.

ISABEL

I'm not your enemy Maria.

MARIA

Then why do you talk to the other girls behind my back. I see you joking and laughing — then you look at me.

ISABEL

That's not true!

MARIA

(paces)

You come to work...And sometimes you look so pretty...I want to say: "Isabel that's a beautiful looking blouse"...But you turn the other way — you smile and snicker.

ISABEL

(stares at Maria)

(loudly)

Okay! You're right goddamit... I hated you... I hate everything you stand for – your naïve ignorance – waving your God around like some personal crusade... You're so self righteous.

(stands close to Maria's side of cell)

(rapidly)

MARIA (cont'd)

I look at you and think, "Here is a beautiful woman and she is some blind slave to religion"... How could I get close to you when your Jesus is blocking the way – how could I compete with that.

MARIA

God forbids such closeness. Only love between a man and woman is sacred.

ISABEL

(hits bars)

No Girl... I'm talking about love between two compañeras – two women workers.

(beat)

Your God is so full of hate and retribution.

MARIA

No, he is–

ISABEL

There was no miracle when my husband bled into a machine... Your God wasn't around when he begged his boss for safer work conditions.

(turns away from Maria)

I was left with two children to support... And I break my back every day to keep them alive.

(turns around and walks up close to Maria)

And you give me a God full of judgments!

Isabel breaks down and cries.

Maria watches, then walks over to the bars and gives her Julio's handkerchief.

ISABEL

This will be the last time I'll ever cry.

She cries again.

MARIA

That's all right.

*Isabel puts her hand up gesturing
her to back off, Maria turns away.
Isabel wipes her tears.*

(beat)

ISABEL

I'm sorry if I ignored you at work...Really I am...But
we're fighting a war here...The government is corrupt, the
police are corrupt – they do nothing to help us.

MARIA

(turns facing Isabel)

It's all too much for me.

ISABEL

Listen...Try...If anything...To think of my children...I
need to get back to them...We need an escape plan.

MARIA

(turns back on Isabel)

I am so tired...I'm afraid of going back...He will beat me
for being late – he'll hurt me.

(suddenly turns facing Isabel)

I should honor my father.

ISABLE

We can help you...Fight Maria...We'll fight together – you
have friends.

*Maria starts to shake. She's
beginning to have a fit.*

MARIA

I have to see my father – he needs me.

Enter Julio carrying water.

JULIO

What's wrong?

ISABEL

She's having a fit. Give her some water.

Julio rushes into Maria's cell with water. He tries to give her some but she is delirious. Julio shakes her and slaps her face.

MARIA

Where are you papa!...I'm here.

JULIO

Shhhhh!

ISABEL

Let me help!

Julio runs out and unlocks Isabel's cell. They run back into Maria's cell. Isabel is stroking Maria's hair.

ISABEL

There, there, now...You're all right.

MARIA

I didn't do it Papa! No...It wasn't me!

JULIO

I have to shoot her.

Isabel shakes Maria.

ISABEL

Maria...It's Isabel! You've got to snap out of it!

She sees Julio reaching for his gun.

ISABEL

(to Julio)

Grab the cheese!

As Julio turns behind him to get the food, Isabel pulls his gun out of the shoulder holster. She points it at him.

ISABEL

Don't you fucking move...Step back!

She shakes Maria. Julio moves closer.

JULIO

(to Isabel)

What are you doing!

ISABEL

Back off!

She shakes Maria again.

ISABEL

Come on girl...Wake up!

JULIO

Don't hurt me...I have a family.

ISABEL

So do I!

MARIA

Papa no!

Isabel looks down at Maria. Julio lunges at Isabel. They struggle for control of the gun. She retains control of the weapon.

ISABEL

Get in the corner...On your knees.

Julio hesitates.

ISABEL

Do it now!

He kneels. Maria slowly comes out of her fit.

MARIA

Isabel.

Enter Miguel. He sees Isabel with the gun.

MIGUEL

Julio!

He begins to draw his weapon.

ISABEL

Don't try it...Put your gun on the floor.

MIGUEL

You don't want to hurt anyone.

Isabel points weapon at Julio.

ISABEL

I'll shoot him...I swear to Christ I will...Put the gun down.

Miguel places his weapon on the floor.

MIGUEL

Calm down.

MARIA

(to Isabel)

What are you doing?

ISABEL

Kick it over here.

He kicks the gun.

ISABEL

Now get in the cell and close the door.

Miguel walks into Isabel's cell and closes door.

MARIA

You're not going to hurt Julio? I can bring him to God — I can change him.

ISABEL

We've got to move now.

*While Isabel bends to help Maria,
she knocks the gun out of her
hand.*

MARIA

I can save him!

*The weapon lands near Julio.
Isabel and Julio struggle.*

MIGUEL

Grab the gun!

*Julio regains control of the
weapon.*

ISABEL

(to Maria)

You fool!

MARIA

Don't worry...It'll be all right – he can be saved.

*Julio nervously points gun at
Maria.*

JULIO

(to Maria)

Get in the corner and kneel down.

MARIA

You won't hurt me will you?

JULIO

Just do it.

*Maria kneels in corner, closes her
eyes and prays.*

MIGUEL

(to Isabel)

I want you to back up slowly to the bars.

ISABEL

You don't want to do this.

Isabel doesn't move. Julio points gun at her.

JULIO

Do what Miguel says.

ISABEL

(to Julio)

I know there's some good in you.

MIGUEL

You have the chloroform bottle in your pocket.

JULIO

Sí.

MIGUEL

(to Isabel)

Move or your dead.

Julio nervously cocks gun. Isabel walks backward until she is up against Miguel's bars. He reaches through the cell holding her arms in place. Julio approaches Isabel with chloroform and a rag. She struggles, kicking Julio in the knee. Eventually he subdues her. She slowly slides to the floor.

MARIA

Jesus loves you.

Julio walks over to Maria.

MARIA

Don't hurt me!...Please!

He uses the chloroform on Maria. She collapses. Julio limps as he unlocks Miguel's cell. Together they carry Isabel and Maria to their cots. While they are doing this, they talk. Maria is placed on her cot first.

MIGUEL

How's your knee?

JULIO

She kicked me hard, but I'll be okay.

MIGUEL

What happened?

JULIO

Isabel caught me off guard – she took my gun.

MIGUEL

You've got to be more careful.

JULIO

You're right...I'm sorry.

(beat)

That Maria has a bad case of religion.

MIGUEL

(chuckles bitterly)

She thinks we can be saved.

JULIO

Sí, I know...How long will they be out for?

MIGUEL

About forty minutes.

JULIO

They'll want them in the morning...If Maria acts up, I'll have to—

MIGUEL

(sadly)

I know.

JULIO

Will you do it?

MIGUEL

Sure.

They finish carrying Isabel to her cot. Miguel stares down at her.

MIGUEL

What a waste...She's so beautiful...Proud looking.

Julio takes out a flask and drinks.

JULIO

Want a drink?

MIGUEL

Why not.

He grabs the flask and takes a long drink.

JULIO

It's never been like this...It used to be simple...Kidnap the girls, and get rid of 'em.

MIGUEL

(sighs)

It's catching up with us.

JULIO

Yeah...But you convinced me there was some value to what we're doing...You made me remember my family...I need to think of them...Am I right?

MIGUEL

(chuckles sadly)

What else are we good at.

Julio's cell phone rings. He answers it.

JULIO

Sí...Sí...They're sleeping...Okay...I'll be right there.

(closes phone)

I have to take care of my knee and get some rest...Will you be okay?

MIGUEL

Sure...Bring back some food.

Sí.

JULIO

Julio begins to exit but then slowly turns around.

JULIO

We're not bad people are we?

MIGUEL

We are good soldiers following orders – doing our job.

Julio stares sadly at Miguel for a few seconds. He exits. Miguel turns on radio. A Mexican song (Corrido) is playing as light dims.

Fade to Black.

End of Act II

Act III

Scene 1

It's complete darkness. Suddenly you see the light from a cigarette. Slowly light rises on Miguel sitting in chair smoking. He takes a few more puffs and turns on radio. Rancheras music is playing. He slowly stands and walks to both cells checking on Maria and Isabel. Miguel walks back to chair, takes out wallet and stares at photograph of his former girlfriend. He shuts off radio and sits. Miguel raises photograph to eye level, extending his arms.

MIGUEL

Loyalty was never your strong point – was it...Hell I can't blame you. When the head of the Cartel wants to fuck you – you can't say no.

(laughs bitterly)

We had great dreams, didn't we...You and me getting as far away from this shit hole as possible – a place in the country where they can't find us...A fresh start.

(coughs)

And so, here we are...You with a drug lord and me kidnapping and killing women...Ya know...When he's done with you, he'll throw you away.

(laughs loudly)

Maybe you're with him to protect me...I'd like to believe that.

Miguel hears Isabel waking up. She sits up on the cot. He turns the chair to face her.

MIGUEL

Welcome back.

Isabel rubs eyes.

(beat)

MIGUEL

Why are you so quiet?

ISABEL

Why bother.

MIGUEL

That's not like you...The fire in your eyes hasn't gone out...I can see it...You're like a female Che Guevara.

ISABEL

Look señor...What do you want?...Do you want me to beg?...I tried that with Maria – and here we are.

MIGUEL

You're not the begging type.

ISABEL

Sometimes you find yourself doing horrible things to survive.

MIGUEL

(sadly)

Sí...I've experienced desperate acts in my life.

ISABEL

(bitterly)

So you want me to feel sorry for you?

MIGUEL

Do you think it's possible to change one's direction –
despite the past?

*Maria wakes up. Isabel walks over
to cell bars on Maria's side.*

ISABEL

Maria.

MARIA

(groggy voice)

Yes.

ISABEL

Are you all right?

MARIA

Sí.

ISABEL

Did they hurt you?

MARIA

No.

Miguel continues to smoke and
listen.

ISABEL

Why did you knock the gun out of my hand?

MARIA

I didn't want you to kill Julio...He can be saved – and
it's against God's commandments...Thou shall not kill.

ISABEL

Maria...Haven't you heard anything I said?!

(points in Miguel's direction)

They are going to come for us and we will be raped...And when they're finished, we will be killed.

MARIA

Maybe I'm better off dead.

ISABEL

How can I fight that?!

MIGUEL

Maybe you won't have to.

Miguel puts out cigarette, slowly stands up, and unlocks Isabel's cell. She is almost outside of the cell when Julio enters without knocking.

JULIO

Sorry I forgot to-

(sees Isabel outside of cell)

What are you doing?

He draws his gun. Miguel moves close to Julio.

MIGUEL

It's not what you think. Listen to me!..Listen!

JULIO

You are letting them go! You said don't get involved - don't make it personal.

MIGUEL

It isn't!

JULIO

Don't let them go!

Miguel grabs Julio and they struggle. Isabel is poised, ready for the outcome. Miguel turns Julio's gun on him and he's

fatally shot. Julio slumps into Miguel's arms.

MIGUEL

Oh no!...No – no...God no!

They slump to the floor. Julio's head is in Miguel's lap. He's rocking and stroking Julio's hair. Isabel is standing next to them looking down at Miguel.

MIGUEL

Don't die...Don't die on me...Please God.

JULIO

(whispers)

It's all right Miguel...It's okay.

MIGUEL

Stay with me!

JULIO

I'm so tired.

MIGUEL

Remember this song – You-you know the words – we sang it a long time ago.

He begins to sing a Mexican ballad (Corrido). Miguel looks down at Julio and sees that he is dead.

Miguel screams in agony and begins to cry. He reaches inside his jacket, takes out his gun and throws it at Isabel's feet. She quickly picks it up.

ISABEL

Give me the key.

Miguel throws the cell key on the floor. He continues to cry and rock. Isabel grabs the key, runs over to Maria's cell and unlocks

it. Maria is sitting on the cot looking lethargic.

ISABEL

C'mon Godammit!

Maria moves slowly. Isabel grabs her hand, pulls her out of the cell and drags her to the door.

ISABEL

(to Miguel)

Don't stop me!

Miguel slowly raises Julio's gun to his head intending to shoot himself. Isabel shoots him first.

MARIA

You killed him!

ISABEL

He could have turned on us - C'mon Maria.

As Isabel drags Maria offstage left, she pries herself loose and kneels by Julio's side.

MARIA

Please Lord, forgive this man his sins and let him enter into your eternal-

Isabel pulls at Maria's arm.

MARIA

I'm not going!

Isabel grabs Maria, pulls her up on her feet and slaps her across the face. She pushes Maria against the cell raising her hand to hit her again.

ISABEL

You ignorant-

MARIA

(defiantly)

Go ahead papa!

Isabel stares at Maria for a long second. She lowers her hand.

ISABEL

Vamos!

Isabel grabs Maria's hand and they swiftly exit stage left.

Fade to Black

End of Act III

The Side Effect Pill

by Don DiVecchio

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Dramatis Personae

Liz - Undercover Journalist

Justin - Research Scientist

Susan - Head of Research & Development

Max - President of Pillco Corp.

Aldo - Head of Marketing

Place:

Pillco Pharmaceutical Company,
Northeast Massachusetts

Time:

Present

ACT I

Scene 1

Center stage in darkness is a boardroom table with three chairs. Stage left from the table are two suspended windows. Stage right is a mobile cart containing a liquor bottle, three glasses and spring water. Downstage are two desk-chairs; one stage right and the other stage left. Justin is sitting in his chair stage right reading and underlining important facts. Liz enters and sits in her chair. She begins to look at her paperwork and starts underlining sentences. Justin pretends not to notice Liz. As they continue to read their material, he begins to glance at her and she at him. This continues for a few minutes.

Liz drags her desk over and sits.

Liz

I haven't seen you here before.

Justin

Th-they sent me up from level three.

Liz

How long you been with the company?

JUSTIN

About s-six months.

LIZ

Ahhh...Fresh meat.

JUSTIN

Wh-What does that mean?

LIZ

Just kidding.

(Moves closer)

Usually it means they want you for something special—something weird and kinky...Kidding.

JUSTIN

How-How do you know this?

LIZ

I'm what you call a three year Pharma-Veteran—short for Pharmaceutical...Liz is my name. I'm a second level researcher. Got my PhD in Neuro-Biology...How about you?

JUSTIN

How about me?

LIZ

Yeah...What's your game...and your name?

JUSTIN

I'm J-Justin...Micro-Bi-Biology research scientist.

LIZ

Well Justin Micro-Biology research scientist, something weird is going on here...It's strange that their calling you up after only six months in the company...I've seen them come and go...And sweetie, you're one of the quickest climbers of the bunch.

JUSTIN

I-I was a little surprised they gave me the advancement...I'm—I'm expected to pa-participate in some new research study.

LIZ

Hmmm...In house...Using one of their own...That's really odd.

JUSTIN

Odd? The-they strike me as being considerate and generous.

LIZ

Are we talking about the same company?

JUSTIN

Why are you so sus-suspicious?

LIZ

The question is...Why aren't you? They're one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world...And they produce a lot of drugs with some nasty side effects...The word is, they might be under investigation...Where have you been hiding?

JUSTIN

Look...If you don't li-like it here wh-why don't you leave?

LIZ

I've been thinking about it until you came along.

JUSTIN

Wh-What does that mean?

LIZ

(Moves closer)

What do you think it means?

JUSTIN

Are all y-you second level people so-so pushy?

LIZ

Sorry...They work us pretty hard down here...And I may have lost some social skills but-

JUSTIN

What?

LIZ

Do you ever have that feeling? Like when you meet someone and there's something in them that brings something out in you.

JUSTIN

Wh-what is it?

LIZ

I don't know...Like you're in some kind of danger...And need my help.

JUSTIN

Danger!? M-maybe the danger is you!

LIZ

No...You don't understand.

JUSTIN

Look...I-I need this job...I feel per-perfectly fine here. There's no boogey man around th-the corner. I can take care of myself...So d-don't worry.

LIZ

I'm not but—

JUSTIN

I-I have to get some work done.

They stare at each other for a few seconds.

LIZ

Fine! But I'm not giving up!

Liz moves her desk-chair back to center stage and feverishly underlines sentences. She looks visibly hurt.

JUSTIN

Psssst...Psssst.

Liz looks up.

JUSTIN (cont'd)

There's an investigation?

LIZ

That's what I heard.

JUSTIN

Not that I believe you. T-tell me what you know.

LIZ

Maybe this is a bad idea...You like the company.

JUSTIN

Y-you started it.

She moves her desk closer.

JUSTIN (cont'd)

Not too close!

LIZ

All I know is this—

As Liz begins to whisper in Justin's ear, she gets a cell phone call.

LIZ (cont'd)

(to caller)

Hi...Yeah...Yeah...Okay...In a few minutes...All right.

She closes phone

JUSTIN

Y-you gotta go.

LIZ

Yup...I'll talk to you later...One more thing...Don't be so trusting.

JUSTIN

An-and you be less suspicious.

Liz smiles as she exits. Justin works feverishly on his paperwork, underlining sentences. He suddenly stops and looks in Liz's direction. The desk-chairs are removed.

FADE TO BLACK

Scene 2

Light rises center stage on the boardroom table. Max is sitting at the head. Aldo and Susan are sitting on either side. They're looking at various pieces of paperwork inside their folders. Susan points to one paper chart.

Their dialogue is quick and lively.

SUSAN

As you can see, the sales on all our prescription drugs are falling...Some drastically...If you look at the sales of our most popular selling drugs "Senbril" and "Toloft", you'll see that they have fallen 20% from last year, "Fuesta" is off 15%, "Pestor" 10%, "Cimera" 20%. Our current line of anti-depressants are down 30% including "Kozac". If our sales follow this current trend, we are looking at roughly four billion in revenue losses.

MAX

(mumbles)

Thank God we have cancer.

SUSAN

What sir?

MAX

I'm babbling—don't mind me.

ALDO

In short...Adults are feeling more anxious and out of control, more fearful, but they're not buying our drugs.

SUSAN

Our campaign to convince parents to put their children on anti-depressants at age five was successful for a while, but that has tapered off. The teen market has also fallen...And we're still recovering from our disastrous line of hormone replacement drugs.

Aldo walks around the table.

ALDO

On the upside, the only drug that's doing well is our testosterone enhancing pill and "Reagra"...Our research is showing that people are finding their lifestyles more distressful and joyless. They want more passion and lust in their lives.

MAX

Well done...My next question to both of you is Why?..Why are our sales so dramatically off?

SUSAN

Essentially the side effects from our drugs are causing major problems. The data is pouring in, and we're beginning to see the long term harmful effects of our top selling pharmaceuticals.

ALDO

The pattern is consistent sir...Thousands of people are suffering serious if not deadly side effects from our drugs.

MAX

We always factored that in...The number of deaths and permanent injuries—all the potential lawsuits matched against our profits...And we always come out sixty billion dollars ahead.

SUSAN

True...But none of these drugs have endured twenty or thirty years of sustained usage—and the results are devastating.

MAX

What devastating! What...The F.D.A. approved all our pharmaceuticals—God bless 'em.

ALDO

(paces)

What Susan is saying is: More people are experiencing ill effects from our drugs than any good they are doing.

MAX

That's not possible!

ALDO

The data is irrefutable.

SUSAN

(speaks rapidly)

"Ruestra"—liver damage, pulmonary thrombosis, cancer death..."Toloft"—heart attack, stroke, seizures, death..."Cimera"—suicide, depression, kidney and liver damage.

ALDO

"Oriva"—bone loss and hip fracture..."Spaz"—brain damage, stroke, kidney failure, death...The list goes on.

SUSAN

Some drugs we created to decrease suicide have actually increased it...Especially in teens.

ALDO

What we are paying out in lawsuits, which is roughly one billion, has increased by 30%.

SUSAN

The cost of maintaining these drugs is seriously cutting into our profitability margins.

MAX

So what's the bottom line?

SUSAN

Well sir...Since more people are becoming sick from our pharmaceuticals—they're beginning to look at more natural, more homeopathic solutions.

MAX

This is the worst news!

SUSAN

Not necessarily.

ALDO

R&D has come up with a few possible solutions.

SUSAN

If we create one pill that would counter the side effects of all our drugs, we'd be reversing the downward spiral.

ALDO

And, if we inject into that pill a compound that will increase the libido for both sexes, we'll have a winning combination and make a fortune.

MAX

Can it be done?

SUSAN

We're developing it as we speak sir.

MAX

(stands up)

We could market it as the worry free side effect pill...When you eliminate side effects, there is no fear or worry, only passion for life-something like that...How far along are we in R&D?

SUSAN

We'll have something ready in a few months. It's already going through some preliminary testing with positive results.

(beat)

There is one issue.

MAX

What?

SUSAN

Some people might think that selling a pill that would eliminate the side effects from your own drugs would be profiteering from the side effects.

MAX

Hmmm.

ALDO

Right...And—

MAX

Let Susan speak.

SUSAN

The critics would say...Why not create pills with no side effects.

MAX

Right!...And of course they don't realize it would take millions and millions of more research dollars and dozens of years to perfect these drugs. We don't have the time...People want their cures! And they want them yesterday...

(coughs)

Sorry...I'm getting a little too excited...I have this condition.

Max walks over to the cart, takes out a bottle of pills, and tosses two into his mouth followed by water.

MAX (cont'd)

Okay...What can we do?

ALDO

I-

MAX

Quiet Aldo.

SUSAN

Sir...If you don't mind, Aldo is better equipped to-

MAX

(to Aldo)

Go ahead.

ALDO

(speaks rapidly)

Thank you sir...We could set up another pharmaceutical company selling our side effect pill—advertising itself as a concerned competitor that has created a healthy solution...Not to mention something that will enhance your love life.

MAX

Not bad.

ALDO

And, we could sell a host of over-the-counter drugs for headaches, diarrhea, colds, etc. just to cloak our real side effect money maker.

MAX

Sounds workable...What does legal say?

SUSAN

There might be some problems down the road, but for now it'll be just another company selling pharmaceuticals.

(beat)

SUSAN (cont'd)

If the short term tests are positive—if the pill actually works and the FDA approves it...It could greatly improve our situation.

MAX

What about the long term scenario?

SUSAN

Of course legal always worried about the long term, especially twenty years from now...This is where we've been getting into trouble...But nothing's perfect...Nothing lasts forever...We think it's our best bet.

MAX

It just might work...We need a name for it.

SUSAN

People seem to like a drug with a name ending in "era" or "esta" like "umera" or "unesta" or "il" like "axil" or "fenbril".

ALDO

How about something celestial like "Venutia" or "Saturna"?

MAX

No...These are planets for God's sakes—too Astronomical.

SUSAN

What about "Raptura"?

MAX

Nope...Too close to the religious "Rapture" folks and "Extacy" drug users.

ALDO

How's "Collabria"?

MAX

Too Mafia.

SUSAN

"Remora"!

MAX

That's a monster Godzilla fought.

ALDO

I got it..."Centera".

MAX

Not bad..."Centera" or "Pentera". The worry free pill that restores confidence and passion...Pass it on to advertising and see what they say.

ALDO

Sir...If I may—

MAX

What now!

ALDO

The projected profits from the side effect pill are off the charts. We could virtually destroy the competition.

MAX

Let's not get too greedy...After all we're not ruthless scoundrels...We have families like everyone else...And we don't want to attract too much attention.

SUSAN

Speaking of drawing attention...Our side effect pill will have to counter the side effects of some of our competitor's drugs...We don't want a paper trail leading right to our door.

MAX

Outstanding!

Max gets a phone call on his cell.

MAX (cont'd)

Yeah...Yeah...Excuse me...I have to take this.

Max leaves the room. There is a knock on the door.

ALDO

Come in.

Enter Liz.

LIZ

You paged me sir?

ALDO

Right...We're running a little behind...We have an exciting new project we'd like you to be a part of—it comes with a salary increase and a new job title...I'll give you the details in about an hour.

LIZ

Sounds intriguing sir.

ALDO

Call me Aldo...Have you met Susan?

LIZ

No I haven't...Nice to meet you.

SUSAN

We've been hearing great things about your work.

LIZ

We don't get a lot of praise in our department...I feel like a mole working in an isolation chamber.

ALDO

Well we're going to change all that.

(beat)

(seductively)

I have to say...You're the prettiest mole I've ever seen.

Susan rolls her eyes.

LIZ

Thank you sir...I mean Aldo.

ALDO

We'll talk in about an hour.

LIZ

(to Susan)

Nice to meet you.

SUSAN

Same here.

Liz exits.

SUSAN (cont'd)

(laughs)

Prettiest looking mole I've ever seen? What a line! Is that from the Marx brothers?

MAX

I couldn't help it...She's really hot...And I get what I go after.

SUSAN

You always come on too strong...Does sexual harassment ring any bells?

ALDO

I can't help myself.

Max enters.

MAX

I guess there's hope for us yet!...Anymore business?...Let's have a toast!

ALDO

(speaks rapidly)

There's a little more sir...Advertising has said that the new pill should have a more personal, more down to earth touch...Which is why they suggest we test it on one of our own research scientists...The implied idea is: We are one of you folks...We've tried it and it works!

MAX

Very inventive!

ALDO

(paces)

One commercial could have our scientist coolly saying how healthy, horny and side effect free he or she feels.

MAX

(hits table)

If you weren't my nephew, I'd say you were after my job!

ALDO

(laughs)

No sir...I'm happy where I am.

MAX

Do you have a scientist in mind? Is it a woman?

ALDO

We're starting with a man and his name is Justin Hobart, a third level researcher. He's been with us for about six months.

MAX

Have you talked with him?

SUSAN

Only briefly sir.

ALDO

We plan to start our major trials in a few days...He'll be fully briefed...And of course he'll be expected to participate.

SUSAN

We selected him because he's boyishly handsome, intelligent looking, and falls within the twenty-to-thirty age group...And he's using one of our heart murmur pills.

ALDO

Of course we want our side effect pill to appeal to all ages, but everyone identifies with the young.

MAX

Fabulous! Is that it!

ALDO

Nothing else sir.

Max walks over to the cart, grabs the liquor bottle and pours three drinks. All three raise their glasses.

MAX

To the side effect pill!

They swallow their drinks. Max looks at his watch.

MAX (cont'd)

I have another meeting in five minutes, keep me in the loop.

Max exits.

(Susan and Aldo speak rapidly and in a hushed tone.)

SUSAN

You are after his job!

ALDO

And like you aren't.

SUSAN

I don't want it!

ALDO

Ohhh...Sure you're more graceful in your approach—but if I can see through it—so can he.

SUSAN

(irritated)

I told you it's not important to me...If this side effect pill takes off, we'll both be in for huge salary increases—so what does it matter who's on top.

ALDO

True...But I am his nephew.

SUSAN

Take it!..You can have the whole damn thing if you want! It's getting a little too crazy anyway.

ALDO

Do I detect a slight conscience?

SUSAN

Part of me thinks we're in way over our heads.

ALDO

Buck up Sue...That's the business we're in...People need relief from their pain...And we give it to them.

SUSAN

We're giving it to them all right.

ALDO

Relax...It'll work out.

SUSAN

Speaking of relaxed...Max has been acting a little spacey lately.

ALDO

Yeah...It's the stress he's under.

SUSAN

He's probably taking some of his company's drugs.

ALDO

Jeez...He'd be crazy to...But if he became incompetent...I'm ready to step in...And they know I can keep a cool head under fire.

SUSAN

Speaking of fire...The lawsuits against us are burning down the house. That side effect pill better work.

ALDO

You're magicians in R&D. You can do anything. Just toss in a little of this and a little of that...Throw in the kitchen sink and poof, a new pill.

SUSAN

Maybe that's been our problem all along...You know we're under investigation.

ALDO

We're always under investigation...C'mon, stop your worrying.

(looks at watch)

It's lunch time...I'm buying.

*Aldo puts his arm around Susan.
She frowns and pulls it off. Aldo
and Susan exit. Max enters. He's
on his cell phone speaking
rapidly.*

MAX

Hi Bill...It's me...What?...It's Max—ya know Max, your client from the Pillco Corporation...Your my lawyer. Have you been smoking weed? Ohhhh...You're feeling dizzy from some allergy medication...One of ours?...Yeah...Don't worry, the side effects are temporary...Yeah...Yeah...I know things are getting rough for the company...That's why I'm visibly pretending to slip a little. We talked about this, remember?...Yeah...Yeah...Well if the company keeps failing, I'll show more visible signs of deterioration...Then I'll quietly slip away with a generous retirement package leaving my conniving little nephew to assume control...Yeah, he'll take the blame...I don't think Aldo knows we're under serious investigation...Yeah, I know I should be nice to him, but not too nice or he'll suspect something... Okay...Ciao...And stop taking our medication, you sound almost drunk. Talk to you later.

Light dims

Scene 3

Light rises downstage on Justin sitting at his desk busily underlining words and shuffling papers. Liz enters.

JUSTIN

Hey.

LIZ

Hey.

JUSTIN

Wh-what have you been up to.

LIZ

I just came from upstairs.

JUSTIN

Y-you look a little pale.

LIZ

They offered me one of the head research positions in this new study.

JUSTIN

(chuckles)

An-and you want to leave them.

LIZ

Aldo, one of their bozo exec's was hitting on me...Ugh...I feel like puking.

JUSTIN

(coughs)

It's-it's shitty, but that's wh-what male exec's do sometime.

LIZ

Are you defending them?

JUSTIN

No!

LIZ

So what is it with guys?

JUSTIN

Oh...G-god...Here we go!

LIZ

You put a single woman in a room with one or more guys and suddenly something goes off in their brains and they think you want to screw them all!

JUSTIN

Y-you're talking as if I'm n-not a guy.

LIZ

You're not like them.

JUSTIN

B-but I'm still a guy.

LIZ

Do you want to be like them!? Is that it?..Like Aldo the Neanderthal.

JUSTIN

(coughs)

Of course not! But I'm n-not impervious to urges.

LIZ

Are you trying to tell me something?

JUSTIN

N-no. What gave you that idea?

LIZ

Look...Women like sweet...We like sensitive...What are you afraid of? You have a cute little stutter...I like that...I think it's sexy.

JUSTIN

But-

LIZ

How's this! You're a decent sweet guy with a little butch thrown in...How's that? You're not a pig.

JUSTIN

I-I can live with that.

(beat)

It's too bad you have t-to deal with Aldo.

LIZ

I can handle myself around men like him.

Justin coughs. He pulls out a bottle of pills and takes one.

LIZ (cont'd)

What are you taking?

JUSTIN

I-I have a heart murmur.

LIZ

Let me see.

He gives her the pill bottle.

LIZ (cont'd)

These are one of our company's medications...How often do you take them?

JUSTIN

One pill t-twice a day. Th-that's one of the reasons they want me in this study...I-I think it's the s-same one you're in.

LIZ

Are you experiencing side effects?

JUSTIN

Yeah...L-lethargy...Depression...S-sometimes intense fatigue.

LIZ

I'm going to look into it.

JUSTIN

W-what do you mean look into it?

LIZ

I don't think you need to take them.

JUSTIN

N-now you're suddenly taking an interest in your job?

LIZ

This drug has terrible side effects.

JUSTIN

How can I t-trust you when y-you're criticizing the company behind they're back...And now y-you're heading up their research team.

LIZ

Yeah...So?

JUSTIN

Doesn't that make you a hypocrite?

LIZ

It depends on your perspective.

JUSTIN

Oh...T-tomaytoe-Tomahtoe.

LIZ

Look...I have my reasons...I don't think you should be in the study...Do you want my help or not?

JUSTIN

No thank you!

LIZ

All right! Forget it then...Jesus you're so stubborn.

JUSTIN

An-and you're so controlling.

They glare at each other.

LIZ

By the way, they want you upstairs.

Justin moves closer to her.

JUSTIN

Liz...I-I didn't mean to—

LIZ

Forget it...We have work to do.

JUSTIN

I'll-I'll see you later.

Justin exits.

LIZ

(mumbles)

Research scientists.

She takes out her cell phone and dials a number.

LIZ (cont'd)

(speaks rapidly)

Hi, It's me...Yeah...Yeah...I have more evidence...They're planning something big...Yeah...That's for sure...Working undercover for three years has finally paid off...Yeah...They made me head researcher on this new pill. Can you believe it?! What a bunch of morons...Yeah...I need to get into their vault-it has important info on all their drugs...I'll call you in a couple of days...Man, I'll be glad when all this is over. I deserve a six month vacation and a Pulitzer...Yeah...Oh, I forgot...I have a friend who has a heart murmur and he's taking ACD inhibitors. Will you

LIZ (cont'd)

look into it to see if it's necessary...I'll fax over the details...Yeah...Talk to you later.

Scene 4

Lights dim. Liz exits. The desk chairs downstage are pulled off to the side. Lights rise on the boardroom table. There is a fourth empty chair. Max, Aldo and Susan enter.

MAX

(to Aldo)

Until we have the new pill in production, I want more happy looking people in our drug commercials.

ALDO

That's brilliant sir.

SUSAN

Am I missing something?

MAX

Who's going to pay attention to the side effects when you see a bunch of good looking people having fun.

There's a knock on the door.

MAX

What is it?!

Justin is standing in the shadows.

MAX (cont'd)

Come in son...Have a seat...This is Susan, head of Research and Development and you've met Aldo, head of Marketing.

Justin shakes their hands.

MAX (cont'd)

And you can call me Max.

(beat)

So do you know why you're here?

JUSTIN

Y-yes...I think so.

MAX

Aldo...Explain it to him.

ALDO

We're developing a revolutionary new pill that will eliminate all the side effects from our current drugs...And this side effect pill will have virtually no side effects...Do you understand?

JUSTIN

I-I think so.

MAX

You're taking ACD Inhibitors for a heart murmur.

JUSTIN

That's right sir...I have a mitral valve prolapse. The drug stabilizes my heart beat.

MAX

May I see the bottle.

Justin gives him the bottle of pills.

MAX (cont'd)

Yup! This is one of our best sellers...It's a great little pill!

He hands the bottle back.

MAX (cont'd)

It does have a few side effects as I'm sure you know.

(beat)

Anyway...How would you like to be on the ground floor of our study researching this new drug.

JUSTIN

Well I-

MAX

Not only do we want you in the study taking our side effect pill. We want to create an elaborate advertising campaign centered on you.

ALDO

In other words, you're one of our research scientists, but you're also our product user.

JUSTIN

I need to think—

MAX

It'll mean a hefty salary increase and you could come out of it with a V.P. position in marketing...Plus you'll be a celebrity...What do you say?

JUSTIN

I'm—I'm overwhelmed sir...I'd still like to th-think about it.

ALDO

We forgot to mention...The new pill has an added benefit...It will increase your libido by 70%.

MAX

It will add a little more "Daniel Craig" into your love life...Is Daniel Craig the current hunk these days?

SUSAN

I believe so...although I'm partial to—

MAX

Whatever!

Aldo looks at a folder.

ALDO

Looking at your work profile, we see that you have floated through three jobs in the last four years...And not long ago you broke up with your girlfriend of five years.

JUSTIN

How did you know that?

ALDO

Your personality profile shows that your self confidence level is still on the downswing—

JUSTIN

E-enough! I'll do it!

MAX

Good Justin! Meet with Aldo to go over the particulars tomorrow.

JUSTIN

Th-thank you sir.

MAX

Welcome aboard!

JUSTIN

Thanks.

Justin exits.

ALDO

What a dweeb!

MAX

Shut up Aldo! That dweeb's gonna make us a fortune...He has the looks—he fits our profile...We need to get a speech therapist to work on his stutter. And he needs to ditch the glasses...Are you getting this?

SUSAN

I'm already on it.

ALDO

(paces)

We could do a before and after scenario...We'll film him with his whimpy stutter...Then after taking the side effect pill—coupled with an intense weight lifting program...We'll show the new and improved hot and buffed Justin...The manly man, sex machine.

MAX

(hits table)

Yes!..Smart and Sexy...He's not only our key employee...But he's a client!

ALDO

Maybe we could say as an added feature, the pill cures stuttering.

MAX

Might have some problems with legal on that one.

SUSAN

One thing.

MAX

What?

SUSAN

Will he go along with it?

MAX

Are you kidding?..We've given him all the incentives...Yeah, the kid's a little naïve, but he's looking for love and sex like the rest of us...And we're giving it to him on a silver platter!

SUSAN

But if all this goes south...He could get hurt.

ALDO

He'll get over it.

MAX

(to Susan)

You're not getting soft on me?

SUSAN

Of course not sir.

MAX

The future of this company and our families are on the line...And we need to stay the course...Did I say stay the course?..I guess I did...Well you know what I mean...I gotta go...Call me tonight Aldo.

Max exits.

ALDO

The guy's definitely losing it.

SUSAN

(looks at watch)

I have to go...We'll talk later.

ALDO

Ciao.

Susan exits. Aldo pours himself a drink and smiles at the audience. Fade to Black.

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

Light rises on Liz's desk-chair downstage. She's on her cell phone.

LIZ

Yeah...It's me...How are things going?...Yeah...Besides feeling I need to take a shower four times a day, I'm okay...Yeah...Well ya know what they say about lying with dogs, not to insult dogs, I feel like I have a mess of fleas all over me.

(laughs)

Yeah...I hated the testing-dispensing all those drugs...I've become part of the problem...Yeah...The ends never justify the means...So far the pill has no side effects—they've already sold several million of them...Yeah...Yeah. They're using a dummy corporation...I have to get into that Vault. It contains all the toxicity levels on their pharmaceuticals...Yeah...I need more time.

(laughs)

And I have a little surprise for them...I gotta go.

She closes her cell phone, shuffles papers, and crosses out words. Aldo enters and circles her.

ALDO

If it isn't old Lizzie B...How's it going?

LIZ

(coyly)

I'm okay.

Puts his arm around her.

ALDO

You don't look it...You should be ecstatic. The side effect pill is a huge success...Your guy Justin has become an overnight celebrity.

Liz gently pulls Aldo's arm off her.

LIZ

Justin is not my guy.

ALDO

Really...I thought you had a thing for him.

Liz walks around Aldo.

LIZ

(slyly
Aldo...Everyone knows I have a thing for you.

She puts her arm around him.

ALDO

You're such a tease!

LIZ

Remember your promise...You were going to show me the vault...That sexy, mysterious, hot vault.

ALDO

C'mon Liz...The vault's off limits...Why the vault?

LIZ

(circles round him)
We all have a kinky side. Now don't we...For me it's dark moist vaults with sleek iron doors.

ALDO

Okay,okay...But you can't tell anyone...I'll lose my job.

LIZ

Of course not...You wild piece of beefcake.

ALDO

That's what I want.

*Aldo kisses Liz.
Justin enters seeing them kiss.*

ALDO (cont'd)
(points to Liz)

After work.

*As Aldo leaves, he bumps into
Justin. Liz is off to the side
wiping her mouth and quietly
retching from her encounter.*

ALDO (cont'd)
(to Justin)
Well if it ain't the celebrity.

JUSTIN
Hey Aldo.

ALDO
They need you upstairs.

JUSTIN
I'll be there in a minute.

*Aldo leaves. Justin approaches
Susan.*

JUSTIN (cont'd)
What did he want?

LIZ
What every man wants I suppose...Really nothing.

JUSTIN
It didn't look like nothing.

LIZ
He's an annoying little mosquito.

JUSTIN
Is that what men are to you?

LIZ
Don't say that! That's not fair!

JUSTIN

I'm sorry...I didn't mean it.

(beat)

LIZ

I don't see much of you anymore.

JUSTIN

They've been keeping me busy.

LIZ

How do you like it upstairs?

JUSTIN

It's pretty good.

LIZ

I hear you've become quite the movie star.

JUSTIN

Yeah...Because of all the ads I did, I'm going to play the lead in a science fiction movie.

LIZ

That's great...You deserve it.

JUSTIN

Thanks.

(beat)

LIZ

You lost your stutter.

JUSTIN

Isn't it terrific!

LIZ

It was one of the first things I liked about you...You were cute and innocent.

JUSTIN

Let me tell you about cute and innocent...Being a nice guy has got me nowhere. Nice guys are stepped on...And the assholes always get their way.

LIZ

Ya think so...And you don't think you got anywhere with me?
Are you that blind?! Ya big baboon!

JUSTIN

You didn't like me. You felt sorry for me.

LIZ

Really?...And who are you to decide what I feel?!

They move closer.

JUSTIN

You were over protective-almost motherly...I don't need a mother!

LIZ

You don't understand!

JUSTIN

That's part of the problem. Isn't it! You don't open up.

(beat)

This side effect pill has worked wonders for me...I feel so alive!

LIZ

There are things you don't know!

JUSTIN

Like what?

LIZ

I can't tell you.

JUSTIN

There you go with your goddamn secrecy.

(beat)

Anyway...I didn't come here to argue...I-I wanted to thank you...You were right...I didn't need that heart murmur medication.

LIZ

So you don't have to take the side effect pill.

JUSTIN

I suppose not...I got used to taking it.

(beat)

Anyway, I thought you'd like to know...I have to go

Justin turns to leave.

LIZ

Justin.

He turns facing her.

LIZ (cont'd)

I wanted to tell you...I wanted to tell you how happy I am for you.

JUSTIN

Thanks.

Justin exits. Liz covers her face crying.

Scene 2

Light rises center stage on the boardroom table. Max, Aldo and Susan are seated looking at paperwork.

MAX

Outstanding!..Amazing!..So let's re-cap...All the preliminary tests came out positive...There were no side effect issues, and the FDA approved it. God bless them again.

ALDO

They're so easy...Given the right incentives.

MAX

And...And...We've already sold five million pills!

ALDO

(claps)

It's estimated by the end of our fiscal year, we will have sold about one hundred million pills with an estimated profit of five hundred million dollars...And we're just starting.

SUSAN

We're already driving our competitors crazy.

MAX

Incredible!...Isn't this country great!..Now all this is for the short term...What about twenty years from now when we get the lawsuits...Who knows what side effects, the side effect pill will have.

ALDO

C'mon boss...We'll handle it the way we always do...The hundreds of billions we'll make in profits will more than offset any litigation.

MAX

(hits head)

Right! How stupid of me...And we don't have to drop our more toxic drugs because after all we have a side effect pill to neutralize them.

(beat)

SUSAN

Justin seems to be adjusting as our spokesperson...Funny though-

MAX

What? What's funny?

SUSAN

He seems different.

MAX

Different! I should hope so! We spent a lot of money on him...He's Mr. Side Effect Pill.

(beat)

Is there any other business?

ALDO

Actually there is...Children and young adults.

MAX

Of course...They're our future.

Aldo paces around the table.

ALDO

That's right...But that future is full of terrible stresses and fearful unknowns. The world is a tough, highly competitive place, a scary place, with high pressure exams, ADD, ADHD, Autism and Cancer. Kids react to it all...They become anxious, depressed, difficult.

MAX

Which is why they need drugs to relax!..To feel safe...We will keep them focused and in control...And on top...But relaxed.

ALDO

Right!..And as you know, we've been pitching this same scenario to adults for years...And adults have been lapping it up...Thanks to our highly co-operative medical establishment and our finely honed lobbying talents.

MAX

God bless those convention incentives!

ALDO

I need a drink!

Susan pours him a drink. He swiftly gulps it down. He continues to pace. Aldo speaks rapidly, almost maniacally.

ALDO (cont'd)

In the past...Adults were given prescription drugs by their overzealous doctors and they in-turn gave them to their kids...But now...Now we're going to advertise directly to kids...Get it!..We'll be advertising on their computers, near the playgrounds, in their schools, and on T.V...It'll be subtle of course. We'll work through the child psychologists and social workers...Anti-anxiety medication is the key here...Everyone wants their child to be an Alpha kid...It's an Alpha centered world!..And the beauty of this is that kids will be asking their parents for very specific drugs...Get it!..We're on the vanguard of a new frontier!..The names of our drugs will be on the lips of thousands of young people. Which is why we're creating a side effect pill for children and teens minus the libido enhancing compound—not that they don't get horny—

MAX

Stop! You're scaring me!

(he laughs)

Sorry...I'm kidding...But honestly, do you believe that crap!...Why did I say that?

ALDO

It's already being done...You approved this strategy a while ago...I'm only reminding you.

MAX

Okay then...I have another meeting...Let's stay on track with the side effect pill...It's a winner...One more thing... Erectile Dysfunction! Are we winning the war on sagging dicks? Think about it.

ALDO

Right sir.

Max exits.

ALDO (cont'd)

I think the boss is really losing it.

SUSAN

Maybe...But you were laying it on a little thick.

ALDO

Hey...I love my work...What can I say.

SUSAN

Does Napoleonic complex mean anything to you?

ALDO

Jesus Sue...I'm sorry if you don't feel as passionate about your work as I do...I'd like to think we're doing some good here.

SUSAN

I guess it depends on your perspective...Sometimes I think we are but—

ALDO

But what!...It's a crazy toxic world out there...And we're trying to make it more—

SUSAN

Digestible?...More sugar coated?

ALDO

More tolerable I guess...I don't know...Jesus Sue, if I didn't know you—

SUSAN

Forget it...I don't know why I said it.

ALDO

Look...We're not perfect...Why did I say that?

Susan looks at her watch.

SUSAN

It's 5:30. I gotta go...See you tomorrow.

Susan exits. Aldo rubs his eyes and sadly stares into space. Liz enters carrying a handbag.

ALDO

Hey Liz.

LIZ

How's it going hot stuff.

ALDO

I'm a little tired.

LIZ

(seductively)

Let's see if we can change that.

ALDO

Ohhh...You are a vixen aren't you.

He pours them both drinks and hands her a glass. He toasts her.

ALDO (cont'd)

To us.

They quickly drink, slamming glasses on the table. Liz looks around the room.

LIZ

So this is it...The inner sanctum, where all the important decisions are made.

ALDO

Yup...This is it! The power center! The finely tuned engine that drives a multi-billion dollar industry.

LIZ

Wow!..You sound like you're already head of the company.

ALDO

(whispers)

Just between you and me, Max is on his way out...We think it's Alzheimer's...I'm next in line.

He moves closer to her.

ALDO (cont'd)

And with it comes all the privileges.

LIZ

(seductively)

Isn't that interesting.

She moves away from him and around the table.

ALDO

Lucky for you.

He tries to get closer. She moves away.

LIZ

Lucky for you if there's a vault around.

ALDO

Ahhh...The Vault!...So doing it in a vault gets you hot?

LIZ

What can I say...Is it nearby?

He keeps moving toward her. She keeps moving away.

ALDO

Why should I tell you?

LIZ

It'll be the best sex you ever had.

*He catches up to her.
She kisses him.*

LIZ

It's in the next room isn't it?

ALDO

Yes.

He tries to kiss her.

LIZ

Wait a sec...Close your eyes.

He shuts eyes.

ALDO

(smiles)

Let the games begin.

*She takes a pair of panties out of
her handbag and soaks them in
chloroform.*

LIZ

Let's start with this...Open your eyes!

She dangles her panties.

ALDO

Yours?

LIZ

What do you think?

She walks closer to him.

ALDO

Let me smell them...Please...

LIZ

Okay you baaad, bad, boy...Close your eyes.

She walks up to him and shoves her panties in his face, knocking him unconscious. Liz leaves her underwear near his nose while she searches for the vault keys. She finds them and pours herself a drink. Liz gargles and spits on the floor in disgust. She calls her editor.

LIZ

Hi it's me...Yeah...Yeah...I have the keys to the vault...Yeah...Ugh...Don't ask...Men and their willies.

(she laughs)

What this girl has done for Queen and country...Yeah...I'll call you when I've photographed everything...Okay, see ya.

Liz exits. Aldo is still unconscious and mumbling.

ALDO

Mommy...Come here...Over here...No-no-no. I built it...Tommy didn't...It was me.

Justin enters. He stares at Aldo mumbling away. He lifts his head up by his hair and abruptly drops it down.

Liz enters.

ALDO

(mumbling)

Tommy's running.

JUSTIN

What are you doing here!

Liz walks over to Aldo, abruptly lifts his head, pushing her panties closer to his nose.

LIZ

It's not what you think.

JUSTIN

And what am I supposed to think!?

LIZ

Well, what do you think!?

JUSTIN

No-no-no...Y-you tell me!

LIZ

No you tell me!

ALDO

Mommy!

JUSTIN

This is ludicrous.

He begins to leave.

LIZ

(speaks rapidly)

All right!..I'm an investigative reporter doing a piece on the unethical and possibly illegal activities of this company. I've been undercover for three years and the vault has invaluable research notes on the toxicity levels of all their drugs including the side effect pill.

(beat)

JUSTIN

That was easy.

LIZ

You wanted the truth!

JUSTIN

W-why couldn't you trust me?

LIZ

In my line of work it's hard to...Besides, you said you needed the job...And then you got promoted.

JUSTIN

What did you do to Aldo?

LIZ

I drugged him...I needed to get into the vault...There was nothing between us.

She moves closer to Justin.

JUSTIN

Y-you used him...Were you using me?

LIZ

No...Never! What I feel for you is real! But—

JUSTIN

What?

LIZ

There's more.

JUSTIN

Oh no.

LIZ

In the trials I made sure you didn't get the side effect pill...You got a placebo.

JUSTIN

Are you kidding?!

LIZ

Whenever you requisitioned more side effect drugs, I made sure you got more sugar pills.

JUSTIN

Jesus Liz...Th-this is right out of a Frank Capra movie.

LIZ

Don't you see!...All that confidence...All that extra energy... It's from you and nobody else...You didn't need the heart murmur pills...You don't need pills.

JUSTIN

Wh-what do I need?

Liz moves closer to him.

LIZ
You need this.

She kisses him.

LIZ (cont'd)
You're stuttering.

JUSTIN
I-I know.

LIZ
It's so hot.

She puts her arms around him.

JUSTIN
Th-They're going to come at you with the b-best lawyers in the country.

LIZ
I'm expecting it.

*Aldo mumbles. She moves her
panties closer to his nose.*

JUSTIN
I'm still pissed at you b-but I understand why you did it.

LIZ
C'mon...I did you a favor...I never trusted that side effect pill...I hated giving it to test subjects.

JUSTIN
T-trust is a rare concept in this company.

LIZ
There's one more thing...I spiked their water cooler with that stupid pill...I figure what's going to happen to the public is going to happen to them...Pill Karma.

JUSTIN
(laughs)
You are amazing!

Aldo begins to wake up.

LIZ

We should go.

JUSTIN

I'll-I'll meet you later.

Justin exits. Liz begins to leave and returns grabbing her panties. She hits Aldo in the back of the head. She exits.

Fade to Black

End of Act II

ACT III

Light rises on Susan watching Max and Aldo nervously pacing around the board-room table. You can hear an angry crowd protesting outside. They keep looking out the windows, wringing their hands and pacing.

CROWD VOICES

No more pills! No more pills! Stop the bad drugs! Your drugs kill!

MAX

My God!..What's going on out there! They're yelling at us...Why are they yelling? Get me the police!

SUSAN

Actually sir, they have the right to protest as long as they keep moving—

MAX

They're trying to get through the front door! Get me security... Why are they doing this?

SUSAN

Well sir...It seems that our side effect pill has a few side effects.

MAX

So that's the problem! That's it?

SUSAN

The research is in and it looks like our new pill puts people into a heightened state of consciousness. They're more self aware and critically aware...It's a smart pill and a truth drug rolled into one.

MAX

What are you talking about?! Make some sense!

SUSAN

Basically, people are looking at themselves and the world more truthfully and they don't like what they see...It's like a veil has been lifted.

MAX

So what the hell does that have to do with us?

ALDO

Simply this...They're tired of the bullshit...They're pissed at us...And they're not buying our drugs.

SUSAN

Our pharmaceutical sales have fallen by 80%.

MAX

80%!..My God!..What's your name?

SUSAN

Susan sir.

MAX

(paces)

We need to take the pill off the market immediately!..And we need to create another drug to offset the side effect pill...A dumbing down pill.

ALDO

That's brilliant...But I have a better idea...Keep the side effect pill on the market and promote the dumbing down pill

ALDO (cont'd)

as an enhancement drug—a new and improved side effect pill...This way people will be paying for both and they'll be back where they started from—buying all our drugs again...I have to say it's a pretty devious plan...Why did I say that?

MAX

Damned if I know...Frankly you're smarter and more corrupt than I thought—

Susan laughs.

ALDO

Sir?

MAX

Sorry I said that!

(coughs)

I was telling my lawyer that if things went bad with the company, I'd retire—sneak out and leave you holding the bag.

ALDO

Hell, I deserve it...Even though you've become a senile old fart.

They give each other a shocked look.

SUSAN

What's going on? Have you two gone mad?

ALDO

I didn't mean what I said.

MAX

Neither did I.

Aldo taps his head. Max digs wax out of his ears.

MAX (cont'd)

We've got to grab hold of ourselves...Let's have a drink.

*He pours three drinks. They
quickly gulp them down.*

MAX (cont'd)
Something weird is happening here.

SUSAN
Duh! No kidding! I'm working with idiots...Sorry sir.
(beat)
There's another problem.

MAX
What now?!

SUSAN
One of our head research scientists, a Liz Collins is
actually a journalist working under cover for the Times.

ALDO
I knew it!...That sneaky little—

MAX
What does she have on us?

SUSAN
We have a videotape of her in the vault taking pictures of
sensitive material.

ALDO
It was me sir...she played me to get into the vault.

MAX
You are one dumb bastard.

ALDO
Believe me I know.

SUSAN
Liz is close to Justin Hobart, the scientist we focused our
advertising campaign on.

MAX
Okay!...So what we'll do is kidnap Justin and hold him until
she gives back all the incriminating evidence.

SUSAN

(chuckles)

You are a despicable weasel.

She covers her mouth in horror.

MAX

What?!

SUSAN

I'm sorry sir...But you are.

She covers her mouth again, in shock.

MAX

Both of you bring me Justin...Tie him up and put him in my side office.

Aldo and Susan exit. Max stares out the window. The crowd continues to protest.

CROWD VOICES

No more pills! No more pills!
Pharmaceuticals kill! Side effects kill!

Max takes out his cell phone and calls his ex-wife.

MAX

Hi Tracy it's me...Yeah...I'm having a real bad day...No I haven't heard the news...What?...Major lawsuits against the company?!...Can't say as I blame them...I didn't mean to say that...What I meant to say was...I'm sorry for being such an asshole all those years...You deserved better...No...I'm not myself—then again, maybe I am.

(speaks rapidly)

You had a right to divorce me. I had one mistress on the side and I was after another. Damn...Yeah it's me talking...And no it's not...Something weird is happening. I'll call you later...Wait a sec—

(takes a deep breath)

By the way, I know I owe you ten years of child support...Yeah I'm a selfish jerk...I gotta go.

Max dials another number.

MAX

Hi Pam it's me...You were right...I was an insensitive bastard.

Aldo and Susan enter.

MAX (cont'd)

I've gotta go—

Max closes cell phone.

ALDO

We have Justin tied up in the outer office.

*Aldo walks over to the window
staring out.*

CROWD VOICES

People before drugs!...People before drugs!...Stop the side effects!

ALDO

In a way ya gotta admire them.

MAX

What?

ALDO

Nothing sir.

MAX

I suppose you're right.

(beat)

I've been having this wild craving to call my ex-wives and apologize to them.

ALDO

Maybe there's a virus going around.

SUSAN

It's strange...We're showing symptoms of—

MAX

Aldo...I want you to go downstairs and explain to Liz the situation. Tell her we want all the incriminating evidence...And if she doesn't give us what we want...We'll hurt Justin—only a little, nothing too harsh.

Max taps his head.

MAX (cont'd)

Just do it!

ALDO

Right!...I would have acted more despicably...But that's me.

Aldo slaps his own face.

ALDO (cont'd)

I'm leaving now.

Aldo exits. Max and Susan stare at each other for a while. The protestors are heard in the background. Max taps the table.

SUSAN

Those protesters are making themselves heard...Maybe we should listen.

MAX

Ya know...I was always fond of you.

SUSAN

Me sir?

MAX

Yeah...But I guess I never saw myself worthy of your affection. I'm a rough edged, competitive, sex addict—more Aldo's type.

SUSAN

You're right about that...But I'm sure you have a sweet side. Even though this job knocks every bit of gentleness out of you. Look how much I've compromised.

MAX

I have a sweet side?

SUSAN

Yeah I think so...Somewhere under that cast iron exterior lies a tender heart.

MAX

If my father heard that, he'd kill himself all over again.

(beat)

I can't believe I'm opening up to you.

SUSAN

It's okay...We're unscrupulous people...Sometimes we need to comfort each other.

She covers her mouth looking slightly shocked.

MAX

(laughs)

That's all right...We're all feeling a bit odd.

SUSAN

Sir...There's something I need to tell you—

Liz and Aldo enter. Aldo speaks rapidly to Liz.

ALDO

So you're saying my acting like a "dick" goes way back to my dad's male behavior...That makes sense...I wanted you the minute I saw you...It's the way I've been all my life...Objectifying women—assuming every girl wants me...I wonder if that's an alpha trait? It has to go way back.

LIZ

(speaks rapidly)

And you didn't care whose feelings you hurt.

ALDO

(speaks rapidly)

No I didn't...It's because I'm so damn insecure. Who would like me the way I am unless I bullied my way around.

LIZ

Well said! You're a perfect candidate for therapy.

MAX

Excuse me! You have something of ours?

LIZ
I want to see Justin first.

MAX
(to Aldo)
Bring in Justin.

Aldo exits.

MAX (cont'd)
Don't worry, we would never hurt him.

Max taps his head.

MAX (cont'd)
Then again you never know...We want what you took from us.

SUSAN
(to Liz)
I'm guessing you know something about the strange feelings
we're experiencing.

LIZ
I might.

MAX
Well girl...You better come clean!

LIZ
Not until I see Justin.

(beat)

MAX
So you're an investigative reporter.

LIZ
Yup.

MAX
And you've been working undercover for three years.

LIZ
Don't think you're going to get away with this!..People are
waking up and they're not buying your lies.

MAX

You're right!..They deserve to know! I mean...All we want is the incriminating evidence.

Aldo and Justin enter.

ALDO

(to Justin)

I was always jealous of you...You seem like such a decent guy-kind, sensitive, not like the rest of us.

JUSTIN

(speaks rapidly)

I'm far from perfect...I-I got sucked into your world d-didn't I...But Liz tried to warn me.

ALDO

She's something special.

LIZ

Thanks.

MAX

Hello!

ALDO

Shut up Max.

MAX

Okay.

JUSTIN

I-I think the point is you have to work at b-being a decent person...Do you know what I mean?

ALDO

Yeah...This is a wizard of Oz moment...If I learn my lesson, can I go back to Kansas?

JUSTIN

(laughs)

Maybe. But you're no Dorothy.

ALDO

Just for the record...Liz and I did nothing...I was chasing her.

SUSAN

(to Liz)

You spiked the water cooler with the side effect pill!

Max and Aldo look horrified.

LIZ

Finally! Ya got it!...A taste of your own medicine.

MAX

Of all the sneaky—

LIZ

(to Justin)

Did they hurt you?

JUSTIN

I'm—I'm fine...How about you?

LIZ

Okay.

MAX

Are you done with the high school reunion...You have something for us.

Max looks hurtfully at Liz. She fumbles in her purse for the disc.

MAX (cont'd)

We trusted you...How could you betray us?

JUSTIN

C'mon guys...You should be ashamed of yourselves...L-look at what you've done...Y-you've deceived a lot of people.

LIZ

Way to go Justin!..You've been very bad boys.

MAX

Indeed we have.

The protesters are shouting and chanting. Aldo walks over to the window.

ALDO

(yells)

Yeah...Down with the man!...Stop the bad drugs!

SUSAN

Aldo.

ALDO

What?

SUSAN

They're shouting at us!

ALDO

Right!

He yells to the crowd.

ALDO (cont'd)

You have the right to be upset! We're greedy and unscrupulous!

(shouts)

No scruples! No scruples!

Max walks to the window and pushes Aldo aside.

MAX

Let me try.

(shouts)

We've made billions off you poor schlubs!...We are corrupt and despicable!

(beat)

(chants)

We are corrupt! We are corrupt!

ALDO

(yells)

And I think we're sorry!

MAX

Well that was fun! I haven't felt this good in a long time.

JUSTIN

An-an attack of conscience?..Too bad it took a pill to do it.

LIZ

(to Susan)

You don't seem to be too penitent.

SUSAN

I never liked office water...And never liked my job to begin with.

ALDO

Ya know what...I think we should screw the incriminating evidence—turn ourselves in...And confess the whole damn thing... How does that sound?

MAX

That should be my decision...But it's the brightest idea you had in a while.

JUSTIN

Wh-why don't we go down to the Attorney General's office and tell our story.

MAX

Why not!

ALDO

(to Justin and Liz)

Listen...I may have been a creep, but I know love when I see it.

LIZ

Maybe there's hope for you yet.

Liz puts her arm around Justin.

JUSTIN

S-some time the truth is a hard pill to swallow.

MAX

(laughs)

Man that's corny...But you're right kid!

SUSAN

What happens when the side effect pills wear off?

ALDO

God!...I never thought of that.

MAX

Will we be stuck with our old selves?

LIZ

Who knows...Maybe the changes are permanent.

ALDO

(yells out window)

Did you hear that?!...Yes we're despicable...But we can change!

JUSTIN

Let's go out the back entrance.

MAX

Allow me a little of my John Wayne bravado...Let's face 'em head on.

They all hold hands and exit stage right.

End of play.

Fletcher and Bligh

Dramatis Personae

Fletcher Christian - Officer on the HMS Bounty, 20 yrs. old

William Bligh - Captain of the H.M.S. Bounty, 50 yrs. old

Victor - Fletcher's father

Alicia - Fletcher's fiancé

* Fletcher and Bligh is a fictional prequel of an historical event known as the mutiny on the Bounty.

Time:

Late 1700's

Location:

Pacific Islands/ London, England

Act I

Upstage there are three panels equidistant from one another. Upstage right is a panel of a tropical island with palm trees. In the middle background is a panel of a living room library. Stage left of the middle panel is a painting of the English ship the H.M.S. Bounty. Alongside the panel of the Bounty is a second floor walkway with a railing and stairs representing the ship's upper deck. Black curtains are drawn over the library and the Bounty panels.

Light rises on Fletcher Christian stage right. He is sitting on the stage floor with the tropical island panel visible behind him.

He is watching the Bounty burn staring out toward left of center stage addressing the audience.

FLETCHER

(pointing)

Dear God look at that! Can you not see it! It flared up so quickly... Like a fireball... Like a barn full of blazing hay... Did you see that! That's the main mast falling. The deck is glowing...The sky is lighting up with it! Lord in heaven, it's all ablaze.

(beat)

Everything of appreciable value was removed...Bligh's letters and the sexton were taken... We left nothing behind...The ship must burn completely... There must be no remains...Nothing of our lives...Of my life...There it goes! It's burning quickly...You can feel the heat from it...It's almost gone now...You can see that!

*Light dims. Exit Fletcher.
Curtain is drawn over the tropical
panel. Lights focus on Bligh
center stage. The black curtain is
drawn, revealing the library
center panel. Bligh is
thoughtfully scribbling something
on paper. He dries it with a
blotter and begins to read what he
has written loudly to himself.*

BLIGH

These entries are meant for no one's eyes except his
majesty's chief prosecutor. These accounts should be
delivered post-haste to the aforementioned party upon my
death. Should Fletcher Christian and companions return to
England, they are to be absolved of all charges levied
against them by myself and surviving officers. Your humble
servant William Bligh, Captain of his Majesty's H.M.S.
Bounty.

*Bligh stands up, walks downstage
addressing the audience.*

BLIGH (cont'd)

And so it is done...A trivial token really...Fletcher
will never know my pardon...His crew will never see this
declaration of my guilt. For by my former actions, I have
condemned their souls to a foreign land...They can never
return...And this is the heart of it...This is the final
nail. Fletcher will not be at my side when death deals its
last insult...He will be worlds away...Worlds apart.

*Light dims. Exit Bligh. Curtain is
drawn over the library panel.
Lights focus on Fletcher center
stage at a local Inn. He's seated
at a table with an empty chair and
is holding up a glass of brandy.
He gazes at it as he addresses the
audience.*

FLETCHER

We were worlds apart when we first met... It was under the
oddest circumstances. I had just completed a short tour on

a small Clipper ship to Ireland and I was just finishing this wonderful bottle of brandy when—

Bligh staggers through the door.

BLIGH

Please... Help me! Somebody!

*He collapses to the floor.
Fletcher runs over to him,
crouches, checks his breathing and
shakes him.*

FLETCHER

Sir... Wake up... Sir!

*Fletcher shakes him but still no
response. He rushes back to the
table, grabs the glass of brandy
and raises it to Bligh's mouth. At
first there is no response. Then
Bligh coughs and sputters as he
slowly regains consciousness.
Fletcher notices a cut on the side
of Bligh's head. He is now awake
cradled in Fletcher's lap.*

FLETCHER (cont'd)

You gave quite a fright sir.

BLIGH

(coughs)

Where am I?

FLETCHER

This is a local tavern.

BLIGH

I only remember these three brigands surrounding me,
demanding my purse...They were a damnable bunch.

He winces holding his head.

FLETCHER

They left a sizable mark on you sir.

Bligh tries to sit up but quickly

*collapses in Fletcher's lap
grimacing in pain.*

FLETCHER (cont'd)
(facing stage right)
Barkeep! Please fetch the physician immediately.

BLIGH
No! I am quite alright!

FLETCHER
No you are not!

BLIGH
I have incurred much worse in battle.

FLETCHER
Drink this.
*As Fletcher tilts the glass to
Bligh's lips, he looks at Bligh
with a curious affection,
surprised at having such a
distinguished looking man in his
lap.*

BLIGH
(sits up)
I feel much better now sir.

FLETCHER
Please come to my table.

*Bligh nods. He stands up slowly,
but falters. Fletcher helps him to
the table.*

FLETCHER (cont'd)
Be still for one minute...I will procure something a bit
stronger to drink and something to apply to your wound.

*Fletcher leaves stage right.
Bligh's head drops slightly. He is
re-living the assault. He suddenly
raises his head swinging his right
arm.*

BLIGH

(swinging)

Filthy swine! Here is one for you! And that! And that! How is your eye sir! You bilge scum! No one sneaks up on William Bligh!

Fletcher enters carrying a white cloth, another glass and a bottle of very strong brandy. Bligh shakes off his Gestalt trauma and smiles at Fletcher.

FLETCHER

(subdued affection)

It's good to see you more alert. For a moment I thought you would leave this world.

BLIGH

I am afraid the devil is not ready to take me yet. I am Captain William Bligh of his Majesty's Royal Navy and the H.M.S. Bounty.

FLETCHER

And I am Fletcher Christian, mid-shipman in his Majesty's Navy as well.

BLIGH

I owe you my life sir.

FLETCHER

Nonsense...It was the brandy that saved you, not I.

BLIGH

(pours drink and swallows)

And a damned good brandy it is...But I must compensate you for it.

FLETCHER

No... I won't hear of it sir.

BLIGH

Please call me William.

FLETCHER

Mr. Bligh...Excuse me William...You've experienced a most terrible ordeal...Allow me this one gesture of kindness.

BLIGH

As you wish... But I will pay for the next bottle.

FLETCHER

Let me look at that wound.

Bligh waves him off, but Fletcher dabs his head with the cloth.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

What possessed you to stroll in such a dangerous district.

BLIGH

I obtained my first apprenticeship aboard a merchant schooner here...It was the first time I had ever gazed upon the sea. I remember how strikingly blue it was. There was a wild beauty to it that completely entranced me. As a result I traveled all over the South Seas.

FLETCHER

It must have been quite remarkable.

BLIGH

It was indeed Mr. Christian...Quite remarkable.

FLETCHER

Did you see military action?

BLIGH

War is a terrible business Fletcher. So much blood is shed for the failure of governments.

FLETCHER

I believe you are right William...But there is so little I know of life...and I crave the nectar of experience.

They toast each other.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

To our newly found friendship and the joining of two worlds.

Light dims on Fletcher pouring himself another drink. He continues to drink in the shadows as lights focus on Bligh walking

across center stage addressing the audience.

BLIGH

As fate would have it. We drank through most of the night sharing stories of our childhood and our fathers... Fletcher came from a well respected family. His father was a prominent Barrister practicing law in London. But this in some strange way did not impress him. He was not enamored by the cultured ways of a proper London gentleman...Quite the contrary. It was the stories of our reckless youth that enchanted us... There was something quite special in the way he spoke... His features were fair and untouched by life's calamities... When he laughed, his eyes shined like great onyx stones. What passion and joy this young man possessed... I was completely enraptured.

Light dims on Bligh standing stage left his head bowed. Lights focus on Fletcher addressing the audience.

FLETCHER

Bligh was an articulate, educated man. A man of deep secrets. His father was an Admiral in the Royal Navy but that was of no consequence to him nor I for that matter. He had this sad but kindly grace...A steadiness...There was this unpretentious beauty about him even though he was thirty years my senior. I was quite drawn to his sincerity and directness, to his mystery.

Lights focus on Bligh. Fletcher stands up and slowly moves towards Bligh. Both are addressing the audience.

BLIGH

We took a room upstairs with two single beds. The innkeeper had seen this many times before. He suspected nothing... Thinking only of two drunken friends helping each other to sleep. I suspected nothing until-

Fletcher stands next to Bligh.

FLETCHER

Until I helped him onto his bed and undressed him looking deeply into his tender vulnerable face.

Fletcher and Bligh are caressing each other as they address the audience.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

His eyes were like vast calm oceans... I felt safe there... Loved...I wanted nothing else.

BLIGH

His radiance...His joy of life was so incorruptible...It was like a starburst drawing me to him...His heart had become mine in one clear and constant beat.

They kiss hard and passionately. Light dims on Bligh as he withdraws into shadow. Lights focus on Fletcher downstage addressing the audience.

FLETCHER

Now you may think that our encounter was a brief drunken moment of abandonment. I assure you it was not. For we had met five more times, discreetly of course...We had fallen rapturously in love...Bligh and I were like school boys on a Christmas vacation... We would run through the Commons, ride horses in the countryside and find delight in the simplest of things... We thought of no one but each other's happiness until quite by accident we encountered my father...He was clearly dismayed to see me, for I decided not to contact him when I reached port, preventing our usual disagreements over my future. I introduced Bligh as my friend and mentor which he viewed with immediate suspicion. Clearly my father was struck by the boyish glee in both our faces. I could feel his uneasiness with the spontaneity of the situation. Bligh excused himself with the agreement that we would meet at a nearby pub for dinner in five hours and I would go with my father to his country estate.

Light dims on Fletcher withdrawing into shadow. Lights focus on Bligh addressing audience downstage.

BLIGH

I could see the contempt and distrust in his father's eyes...Perhaps he saw that I could understand Fletcher better than he...His pain was obvious and cutting. I wanted desperately for him to feel at ease with me, but he would have none of it...All I could do was leave.

Light fades quickly on Bligh as he exits. Curtain is drawn up revealing the library panel. Lights focus on Victor sitting at the table. Lights also focus on Fletcher as he turns from the audience approaching his father.

VICTOR

It appears the sea has treated you very well.

FLETCHER

It has indeed sir...

(beat)

How is mother?

VICTOR

She is fine...She asks about you.

FLETCHER

Tell her I am in good health.

VICTOR

Why did you not visit me upon your return?

FLETCHER

I had important matters that needed my immediate attention.

VICTOR

If I may...What are you doing with a man who is clearly your senior?...He is not your family...What is your purpose with him?

FLETCHER

It is not of your concern sir...But if you must know...The man was robbed, physically accosted and quite near death... I helped him regain his health.

VICTOR

It is a dangerous port with dangerous men. Who knows what kind of criminals prowl around such places.

(beat)

When are you going to give up this romantic sailor delusion of yours. It is unsavory...You could be a great Barrister in London or the provinces...If you would only follow my counsel...And there is Miss Alicia from that prominent Boston family who has expressed a great deal of interest in you.

(beat)

Now you have done your act of charity. It is time to quit this nonsense and continue with your law studies.

FLETCHER

(loudly)

I signed on to another ship for one year...I have advanced in rank!

VICTOR

You disappoint me son...I expected great accomplishments from you.

FLETCHER

I need more time! Time on my own sir! And that is all.

VICTOR

You are a fool! Turning your back on financial stability, a lucrative law practice...And a proper wife!

FLETCHER

Whose life am I living sir? There is more out there than you have meticulously planned for...And I must find my own way in it.

VICTOR

You are still a fool...I cannot give you my blessing... But I will give you your year...If in that time you have not found your proper place, then I will personally disown you...Is this understood?

FLETCHER

It is sir...But I am your son whether you approve or disapprove of me.

VICTOR

Good day.

Light dims on Victor and Fletcher. Victor exits stage right. Black curtain is drawn over the library panel. Fletcher sits at the table with his head resting down. Bligh enters addressing the audience pacing center stage.

BLIGH

And so we met one final time in a room above the pub where we first loved one another. He cried in my arms and spoke profanely of his father and the pressures that were placed on him. I sensed guilt through his tears. I grabbed him gently saying, 'You must be true to your own soul.' He wept again and kissed me harder with more affection than I had ever felt from him. We loved each other through the night and into the morning...It was joyous! Exalting!

(beat)

Our ships were leaving at exactly the same time. We would not see one another for one year...Twelve months of painful separation.

Light dims on Bligh withdrawing into the shadows stage right. Lights focus on Fletcher raising his head from the table.

FLETCHER

Within a year I rose in rank to Master's mate. I could be lieutenant in my third year and quite possibly Captain of my own ship in seven.

(beat)

I love the sea more than my life...And the feeling of freedom and fresh salt air was a wondrous consolation to my problems. The Captain of the ship was levelheaded and kindly which was unusual for superior officers in her Majesty's Navy. The men respected my judgment...The orders I dispensed were never questioned or rebuked...There was this unspoken sense of comradeship between us.

(beat)

Bligh sent me letters...Forty to be precise. All of them mailed to a desolate postal office in the Virgin Islands...Of the forty, I had read only three.

(beat)

FLETCHER (cont'd)

He recounted our first meeting in detail, describing our bodies' innocent explorations. He remembered admiringly the contours of my pelvis and the soft sheen of our thighs.

(sighs)

We did love each other with such complete surrender...But I could read no more than three letters...I had my responsibilities to the ship and crew. I was still new to my post and had much to learn and very little personal time...The men demanded a certain composure and hardness.

Light dims on Fletcher, Lights focus on Bligh standing stage right reading one of his letters to Fletcher.

BLIGH

Dear Fletcher...This is my twelfth letter to you without response. Are you ill or indisposed in some inexplicable way? I am concerned for your well being and will continue to write to you until we meet seven months from now. I understand that you may be absorbed in your duties. If this is so, you will have quite a surprise, for there will be a considerable bundle of correspondence waiting for you...I miss you deeply...I miss the softness of your lips and your long beautiful fingers sliding across my chest. My life seems desolate without your joyous face resting on my shoulder...The burden of my command is completely intolerable especially on endless weeks at sea...Although I am fair and very tolerant towards my men, the thought of leading them is most unpleasant, because dear Fletcher, I would rather be with you...In your arms...I will love you all my days...Faithfully yours...William.

Light dims on Bligh withdrawing into the shadows stage right. Fletcher stands up from the table and walks to center stage addressing the audience.

FLETCHER

(paces)

My ship's Captain has shown a great paternal interest in my future. If I continue to apply myself and work diligently at my assigned tasks, I could rise swiftly in the ranks. The thought of someday coming home to my father as a Captain of my own ship may vindicate my position with him.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

In a strange way I miss him.

(beat)

Maybe my compromise would be to take a wife of stature such as Alicia...To rise in rank in the Admiralty, one must display stability and a desire for a family.

(beat)

Now I know what you are thinking and indeed you are entitled to your opinion...But it is time for me to grow up, if I am to make a mark for myself in this world.

(beat)

What Captain Bligh and I had will remain close to my heart forever and the sweet memory of it will never leave me... But I am a man now and must act in the ways of men...Is that wrong?

Light fades on Fletcher. Lights focus on Bligh stage right reading another letter.

BLIGH

Dear Fletcher...As per my instructions at our departure eight months ago. I have arrived in Haiti and have found no correspondence from you. Do you not like to write letters? Perhaps something has happened to your writing hand? I would be horrified to think so...Your long unblemished hands are one of your most admirable qualities.

(beat)

Sweet Fletcher...I must say again, the thought of leading men has become so objectionable to me, it is beyond comprehension...I am so weary of the role of domination and responsibility that my office requires...It sickens me. Fletcher...I desire only to surrender to your passions...To be free with you at my side. I have enough saved for the both of us...I miss you more than life itself...And I eagerly await our meeting in four months... Yours always...William.

Bligh exits stage right. Fletcher exits stage left.

BLACKOUT

End of Act I

ACT II

Curtain rises revealing the center panel library. Lights focus on Victor as he enters and sits at the table. Fletcher enters carrying a duffel bag.

VICTOR

I am glad you have come back to me safely.

FLETCHER

Thank you father.

VICTOR

You look well.

FLETCHER

You seem tired.

VICTOR

I have a slight cold, but I will be just fine.

(beat)

I regret the circumstances under which you had left. You are still my son and I love you...However my feelings have changed very little since last—

FLETCHER

Father...I could be a Captain of my own ship in seven years and a member of the Admiralty in ten...Having a ship is my most ardent dream. It's—

VICTOR

Son...You are a very intelligent young man. We sent you to the very best schools... You grew up in comfort and privilege...You could be a great Barrister, perhaps even a judge if you would only settle down and apply yourself.

FLETCHER

Father.

VICTOR

(hits table)

What is this obsession with the sea!

(coughs)

FLETCHER

There are no pressures! It's a feeling I have never known on land. I am seeing new worlds...I'm encountering fascinating cultures and I am learning a great deal about life... what else can I tell you!

VICTOR

(coughs)

Are you considering what is before you! Our family tradition in law!

(beat)

Are you willing to thoughtlessly discard all of it for your boyish dreams!

FLETCHER

(loudly)

What can I say to make you understand! I am not a boy anymore! Since I was a child you have asserted your will, planned our family's lives, controlled our futures; always saying how you expect Richard and I to be in your law practice without question, without rebuttal. Always I have felt trapped by your expectation of me. So I must do this myself.

VICTOR

I wish only the best for you...Is this not a father's love?

FLETCHER

You must give me a chance to find myself...To be what I must be without your interference. This is love as well.

Victor coughs.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

You must see a doctor about that cough.

VICTOR

Is there to be no change...No compromise?

FLETCHER

I have thought a great deal about my situation and if it pleases you and Alicia, you may announce our engagement... I will visit her before I leave.

VICTOR

So you will leave again.

FLETCHER

I have given you my compromise. All I ask of you is one more year...I will be serving under a dear friend of mine...A Captain Bligh whom you once met... I believe if I serve him well, he will advance my rank and quite possibly award me my lieutenant's papers.

VICTOR

Bligh is not your father.

FLETCHER

But he too will have power over my life for one year.

VICTOR

And after that...Will you be done with this madness?

FLETCHER

We will see father...But this is not madness... I know if I accomplish this-

VICTOR

I am still against this endeavor. I don't like the danger you subject yourself to...Neither does your mother.

FLETCHER

I can take care of myself!

VICTOR

Bah!

(beat)

Do you have any feelings for Miss Alicia?

FLETCHER

We are old friends...But does it matter?...Does it? When I return from my duties at sea I will try to fit in...This is what you want...Isn't it father?

VICTOR

(coughs)

(waves Fletcher away)

I cannot continue this conversation...I need to rest.

FLETCHER

Very well.

Light dims on Victor as he bows

his head on the table. Fletcher addresses audience downstage.

FLETCHER

I left him quietly asleep in his chair. For I could not offer him an affectionate farewell.

(beat)

I fear I have compromised myself far too much...God forgive me. I still need his approval...This is one such reason to be at sea. The salty ocean air always clears my mind and revives my soul.

(beat)

Tomorrow I will see Alicia, do my duty and declare my love for her although I have no true affection for this woman... I must try...And the following day, I will see Bligh. We will reminisce and laugh over our joyous experiences. And I will sail with him for one year...I must however be honest with him on my change of heart...It is most imperative to do so.

Light dims on Fletcher as he exits stage left. Victor is still in darkness with his head resting on the table. Lights focus on Alicia as she enters stage right addressing the audience downstage.

ALICIA

You would think I should be angry with Fletcher...Well indeed I am...I am furious with this man... He has ignored me for twelve months...He escaped to his precious sea one year ago with not as much as a visit, a greeting or farewell. Of course I am upset...And hurt.

(beat)

But there are other issues at play here...And a dance must be danced.

Fletcher suddenly enters.

ALICIA

Fletcher!

FLETCHER

I startled you...I am sorry. Your man allowed me to come to you. He was preoccupied with—

ALICIA

Never mind...It is good to see you.

*Fletcher walks over to her and
kisses her cheek.*

FLETCHER

You look radiant as ever.

ALICIA

You are too kind...I fear each year leaves its own unique marks.

FLETCHER

Nonsense Alicia...You are absolutely glowing.

ALICIA

Thank you Fletcher.

(beat)

I understand your father is ill.

FLETCHER

It's not very serious...A touch of bronchitis I believe.

ALICIA

You know of course hot tea with brandy is good for that.

FLETCHER

As well as an old Jamaican remedy I have available to me.

ALICIA

Ahhh...Jamaica...I understand you have been quite the explorer.

FLETCHER

I have been to a few remarkable places...Did you know there is a ritual practiced by an African tribe, that when a baby is born, the mother and father lie down on either side of the infant and talk to it, sharing themselves, until they believe that the spirit and essence of both parents equally enter the child...Only then would the baby be fully alive and human.

ALICIA

That is quite remarkable...It seems that you have become more worldly, more mature than the boy I remember who left a year past without as much as a farewell.

FLETCHER

Alicia I am—

ALICIA

No...I think we can dispense with the false apologies...I know you well enough to know that you do not truly love me.

FLETCHER

That is not—

ALICIA

That is not what?

FLETCHER

I care for you.

ALICIA

Care for me? And would you care enough to give up the sea and marry?

FLETCHER

I am not sure...It is possible, but not for one year.

ALICIA

Understand this...My father is placing considerable pressure on me to choose a husband...And I am beside myself with the strain of it.

FLETCHER

I am sorry.

ALICIA

You have no idea of the callous buffoons that have courted me. It's a terrible world when a woman cannot be left alone to live her own life.

FLETCHER

I understand...My father is the same in his ambitions for me.

ALICIA

We've known each other most of our lives...Haven't we... And from a distance I have loved you...But I know you're attentions lie elsewhere.

FLETCHER

It is true.

ALICIA

Perhaps we could come to some arrangement.

FLETCHER

You mean some common ground.

ALICIA

Yes...Some mutually beneficial agreement...Both our parents want our union...I want to leave my father's house...If we marry-

FLETCHER

If.

ALICIA

Then...With our combined family's wealth, in time, I could leave you to go into the world on my own...With security.

FLETCHER

But Alicia...I would need you to stay with me if I decide to pursue the Admiralty or become a Barrister.

ALICIA

Fletcher did you not hear my predicament?

FLETCHER

I did...And I do apologize...Perhaps within a year we can find a solution to our problems.

ALICIA

If I can endure this oppression that long.

FLETCHER

You are a strong woman Alicia.

ALICIA

And you are an ambitious man Fletcher Christian.

FLETCHER

Perhaps we both are.

ALICIA

No...I am a desperate woman.

FLETCHER

Maybe our desperation is mutual.

ALICIA

I will announce our engagement. But don't consider disappointing me. Your father would not look kindly on your sexual choices.

FLETCHER

Are you blackmailing me now?

ALICIA

No dear Fletcher...I am sorry...But as I stated, my situation is most dire...And I will not be spurned.

FLETCHER

One year Alicia...This is the time I need...It will be resolved.

Light dims on Fletcher and Alicia as they exit. Light shines on Victor as he raises his head. He's a little groggy and is visibly upset. Victor knocks his chair over, walks around the table and sits on it addressing audience.

VICTOR

(loudly)

Fletcher continues to vex me! I am challenged at every turn...Every turn! He just can not see his folly! Fletcher could have everything if he would only follow my counsel!

(slams the table)

(loudly)

Dammit! I cannot understand his rebelliousness.

He walks downstage.

VICTOR (cont'd)

And who is this William Bligh...Who is this man Fletcher speaks so highly of...Something is amiss here...Something is deeply off...I feel I have lost him to experiences I am unable to grasp...A certain wildness...

(beat)

To be true I was never an affectionate father. Children frightened me with their base needs. They cannot speak proper English...They are odd looking creatures, small an

VICTOR (cont'd)

uncoordinated. Being with them was always a strange and messy affair. But this should not be the problem! We grow up and conform to the ways of our traditions...If we are to prosper in this world we behave as our society dictates...Is that wrong?

(beat)

Indeed I will look into my son's interests. Most assuredly I will pursue this!

Light dims on Victor as he exits.

BLACKOUT

End of Act II

ACT III

Curtain is raised revealing the HMS Bounty panel, stage left. Bligh is standing on the crosswalk representing the upper deck of the ship. You can hear the sounds of men working, loading and unloading goods. Bligh sees Fletcher entering stage right carrying his duffle bag. Bligh's expression lights up with a carefully controlled passion.

BLIGH

(shouts)

Fletcher Christian!

FLETCHER

(shouts)

Captain Bligh!

Bligh is walking down the stairs.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

Hurry up Captain Bligh...You're as slow as a sea turtle!

Bligh looks with pure delight into Fletcher's eyes.

BLIGH

(shakes head)

Just look at you! My God man! How you have grown!

FLETCHER

(smiles)

It's the fresh sea air...And you are a sight yourself sir!
I see the men haven't mutinied on you yet.

BLIGH

(laughs)

Not yet! Although they may be planning to as we speak.

(touches Fletcher's uniform)

I see you have advanced in rank.

FLETCHER

I have been most fortunate.

BLIGH

Some would see your position as a curse.

FLETCHER

(smiles wryly)

I suppose so sir.

BLIGH

Well...Under my guidance your good fortune will continue to grow.

FLETCHER

Thank you sir.

BLIGH

Fletcher...You can dispense with the formalities...After all—

FLETCHER

The men sir.

*Bligh and Fletcher walk downstage
perusing the audience.*

BLIGH

Ahhh...The men...Yes...Let's look at them...There are a few old dogs who have been at sea all their lives...And there are the young ambitious ones over there, full of dreams of glory, along with several conscripts and a few eager officers...The entire lot of them appear to be quite loyal to his Majesty's Royal Navy...And of course there is you Mr. Christian...I will rely on you to keep the men's spirits high, their passions low and their minds and muscles on their duties...Can you do that for me Fletcher?

FLETCHER

Of course I can.

BLIGH

I am pleased to hear it. Loyalty is an important value in our profession.

FLETCHER

I understand.

BLIGH

Then I must ask you this...Why did you not answer my letters? For almost seven months I thought you had perished on your journey to the Islands.

FLETCHER

(nervously)

I am sorry William...I had read some of your letters... But I was so consumed with my duties. The ship's Captain and crew demanded a great deal of my attention...My nerves were often frayed...I was weary through much of the voyage...But I did earn their respect and admiration through many difficult times...I did try to write—

Bligh gently touches Fletcher's shoulder.

BLIGH

It's all right Fletcher...I forgive you...I know the Captain on your ship. It was because of your distinguished leadership and of course my gentle persuasion, that he commissioned you to the Bounty...We are aware of your sacrifice...And it's highly regarded by me among others in the Admiralty.

FLETCHER

I am in your debt William.

BLIGH

Fletcher...You have earned this voyage!

FLETCHER

Thank you.

(beat)

And where will the winds take us?

BLIGH

To paradise! To Tahiti Fletcher! We have been commissioned to bring back breadfruit plants for the King, and we will be there for six months. Come! We have much to talk about.

Light dims on Bligh. Lights focus on Fletcher addressing the audience downstage.

FLETCHER

And indeed we had much to share. We joyously reminisced our first encounter and smiled seductively remembering our blissful weeks exploring one another...As we drank and laughed sharing our stories of past and current travels, I found myself once again inexorably drawn to his passionate charm and commanding personality.

(beat)

We made love several times in the weeks following our reunion, taking great care to hide our most intimate discretions which was indeed quite difficult...And so it had started...I had become extremely conflicted between the compromises I had made with my father and the current situation with Bligh. Since it was obvious I could not resist his willful desires...I rebelled in more subtle ways.

Light dims on Fletcher withdrawing stage right. Lights focus on Bligh addressing audience downstage.

BLIGH

Something had changed in Fletcher. There was a coolness about him...I could not see it at first...It was after the last time we had been together... It was in the way he stroked my hair or touched my cheek and his kisses afterward...He had become stiff and awkward...It felt as though he was somewhere else.

Light dims on Bligh as he withdraws stage left. Lights focus on Fletcher addressing the audience downstage.

FLETCHER

By resisting in certain affections, I created a small oasis from which I could collect myself and hold my ground...As it were, I was unable to reveal the past course of events involving Alicia and the future decisions that have been made on my behalf...I was withdrawing and helpless to explain why.

Light dims on Fletcher withdrawing stage right. Lights focus on Bligh stage left addressing audience downstage.

BLIGH

(pacing)

He would not discuss his personal matters with me despite my most arduous efforts...At times I pleaded with him to do so...And what was most hurtful, he became more involved in the affairs of his men, lavishing considerable attention on the completion of their most mundane tasks. He was praising everyone for jobs well done...And I! And I was losing him to some unknown force! Some unspoken words! The men had now become his family and I was feeling desolate!

Light dims on Bligh as he retreats to the table and chair upstage. Lights focus on Fletcher downstage.

FLETCHER

(pacing)

As the days past, Bligh had become moody and disconsolate. He often locked himself in his cabin for days on end without an appearance. The men looked to me for guidance which I tried to satisfy, despite my feelings of guilt. Countless times I stood outside Bligh's cabin amidst the sounds of his deep sobbing, trying to find the courage to enter, but to my shame the necessary inner strength was not there... We battled several storms and freezing gale winds that threatened to sink the poor Bounty...And still Bligh remained secluded like some self absorbed alchemist... Stories were thrown about...The ship was clouded in irrevocable gloom for which their seemed no reprieve. Despair shadowed our every action...Until...Until four bells were struck declaring land. Land Ho! It was the azure shores of Tahiti! My God it was beautiful! Suddenly, the dark clouds lifted from our souls! The men came to life with remarkable vigor. Even Bligh stepped out from his self imposed seclusion, in full naval regalia, to meet the omnipotent ruler of Tahiti...As our ship slowly advanced toward shore, I noticed some glimmer of hope in Bligh's eyes...Perhaps he thought there was still some slight chance for us...A new beginning as it were...But I could only avoid his imploring glances, coward that I am.

Light dims to blackness on Fletcher. Lights focus on Bligh sitting at his table. He throws a book on the floor and kicks back his chair. He paces center stage.

BLIGH

He is mad! A most damnable man this Fletcher Christian! He avoids my eyes! Avoids them! I have received news from one of my subordinates that Fletcher has befriended one of the Chief's daughters...And is quite possibly married!..The fool! Is this what he is trying to tell me? That he loves women as well? That he wants to be with another woman over me! Is he willing to abandon everything he has achieved and jeopardize our mission, for the Chief's daughter? The damn idiot! It is now quite clear to me that a lack of discipline has been the problem all along. I have been far too liberal with my men and they have taken advantage of my easy nature... But all of that will change...It will end here and now!

Light dims on Bligh. Lights focus on Fletcher as he addresses audience center stage.

FLETCHER

(pacing)

And end it did. We were ordered back to the Bounty post-haste. Our leave had been cancelled after four months. We were to gather up the remaining stacks of breadfruit plants and bring them immediately to the ship.

(beat)

Now I must digress for a moment. I was deeply saddened to say goodbye to Maimiti the Chief's daughter. We were immediately drawn to one another, more in a spiritual sense than a physical one...Although I did feel some stirrings of desire that left me a bit confused... We spent several intoxicating days swimming and canoeing around the nearby islands. It was quite extraordinary and innocent. The experience was a much needed reprieve from Bligh's gloom... I had time to breath and think about my life.

(beat)

Now of course I realize I had been hurtful to Bligh and I still love him so...But I can not be under his protection or control... Nor feel groomed as his young protégé...I cannot be his future dream!..No this is impossible!

(beat)

When I returned to the Bounty, the mood of the men was tense and rebellious. They deeply resented Bligh for calling short our stay. Some of them had become quite attached to the natives and their way of life. The false rumor that the Chief's daughter and I were married remained

FLETCHER (cont'd)

whispers in the wind. There was a part of me that wanted Bligh to believe this, so that leaving him would be easier...There was no time to sort out my feelings in this matter. Bligh was in a fury and demanded my presence...I had become fearful of the man.

Light fades as Fletcher and Bligh exit stage left. Light rises on Bligh standing on the second floor deck of the Bounty. Fletcher enters stage right carrying a bread fruit plant. The audience becomes the crew as Bligh shouts down to Fletcher.

BLIGH

(loudly)

Well Mr. Christian. We are so pleased to see you grace us with your company.

FLETCHER

I-

BLIGH

You are one hour late for roll call mister. And it will be duly noted in the ship's log. Perhaps you were delayed by the affections of your newly appointed wife?

FLETCHER

William-

BLIGH

How dare you sir! How dare you address me so informally! I am your Captain Mr. Christian and I will be addressed accordingly. This infraction will also be noted... Discipline sir...Discipline!

Bligh walks down the stairs addressing the audience as crew.

BLIGH (cont'd)

(pacing)

This ship has been infected by the heathen ways of these Tahitian natives! They are not Christians!..And it is most clear to me that their primitive impulses have taken hold of each and every one of you...This flagrant disregard for

BLIGH (cont'd)

my authority will no longer be tolerated. So gentlemen... Due to the current reigning anarchy, I have decided, that the crew of the Bounty shall strictly observe the Kings rules of seamanship to the letter. Failure to do one's duty will result in the dispensing of the King's justice which will be flogging or keelhauling...And for treasonous activity...Hanging! Are there any objections! Is this clear enough for you! Good! Now...It's about time we act like the crew of the H.M.S. Bounty in his Majesty's Navy and may God have mercy on the man who falters in his tasks. Have I made myself clear Mr. Christian.

FLETCHER

Yes Captain Bligh.

BLIGH

(to audience)

Very well then...Put your backs into it men...There is a mighty hell to pay...You will lose your heathen ways for I will burn it out of you!

*Light dims on Bligh as he exits.
Lights focus on Fletcher
addressing audience center stage.*

FLETCHER

And indeed Bligh was true to his words. We were on the ship one week at sea when we had lost our trade winds. It had become extremely hot and we were in a dead calm sea for seven days. Our water rations were cut in half. Bligh demanded we keep the breadfruit plants moist and healthy. The men were beginning to suffer from heat exhaustion. Despite the sparse amount of water at our disposal, Bligh ordered the decks washed and scrubbed twice a day, just to keep the men busy... On our third windless day, some of the men had become lethargic and irrational...Two of the ship's duties were neglected...And Bligh's rage had risen to full fury.

*Fletcher is pacing feverishly
across center stage wringing his
hands.*

FLETCHER (cont'd)

Minor infractions were met with severe floggings. Rebellious attitudes were squelched with keelhauling. Some men were tied to the mast without food or water. Verbal berating was a common practice. The men were ordered to scrub and re-scrub the decks until the wood splintered. Indeed Bligh's heart was splintering and I was the reason for it.

(beat)

On our sixth day without wind we were down to a quarter ration of water...One man died from wounds suffered at the whipping post, four others were sick from dysentery and dehydration, and another man was hung for treason. I could no longer allow this to continue...I could not avert my eyes...Bligh's behavior had become an atrocity to man and God...It was madness! Absolute madness!

(beat)

That night, several crew members came to me and-

Light dims on Fletcher withdrawing stage right. Lights focus on Bligh entering stage left carrying a whip and a sheet of paper. He addresses the audience center stage.

BLIGH

(loudly)

It is these moments that determine whether we are men or animals. Do we let chaos rule or do we respect the rules of military behavior and the laws of his Majesty's Royal Navy...I will not allow disrespect and anarchy on my ship. I will not allow it! Mr. Christian! Come here at once!

Lights focus on Fletcher stage right. Fletcher and Bligh stand fairly close to each other.

FLETCHER

(softly)

William.

BLIGH

You will be charged with insubordination! My rank sir!

FLETCHER

(softly)

William.

BLIGH

Damn it man...You will address me—

FLETCHER

Captain Bligh sir.

BLIGH

You will read the indictment against Mr. Spencer on the charge of slander and incitement to mutiny. And you will execute the punishment upon my orders.

Bligh gives him the paper.

BLIGH (cont'd)

Read the indictment Mr. Christian.

FLETCHER

On the 28th day of our Lord April 1789 Mr. Spencer was overheard making slanderous remarks against Captain Bligh while encouraging the men to act in rebellious ways on board his Majesty's ship the H.M.S. Bounty.

(beat)

(softly)

Captain Bligh.

BLIGH

Finish it!

FLETCHER

Punishment for these offences will be one hundred lashes to be administered immediately.

BLIGH

Mr. Fletcher you will administer the punishment.

FLETCHER

One hundred lashes will surely kill him.

BLIGH

Well Mr. Christian, he should have thought of that before spreading mutinous lies.

Bligh gives him the whip.

BLIGH (cont'd)

Now carry out your orders sir.

Light dims on Bligh. Fletcher addresses the audience raising his arm with whip in hand.

FLETCHER

I raised the whip to this innocent young man feeling Bligh's sorrow and fury upon my shoulders. I struck him once...Hard. His back convulsed exposing a fiery welt. His desperate scream shocked me back to my sanity. I turned on Bligh.

Light shines on Bligh. Both stand very close to each other.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

It's me you want to flog...Isn't it!

BLIGH

Carry out your orders!

FLETCHER

(loudly)

I am to blame here...

(points to audience)

Not them!

(beat)

A few men came to me talking of mutiny, but I dismissed them until now. It's your relentless brutality sir! I cannot be a part of it. Punishing them will not bring back my love for you.

Bligh slaps Fletcher. Fletcher throws the whip at Bligh's feet.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

Give that to whatever pig God you believe in.

BLIGH

Silence you mutinous dog...You are attacking the Crown.

FLETCHER

No William... I am attacking your lies... We had loved each other once.

BLIGH

(to audience)

Arrest him! I said arrest this treasonous scum.

FLETCHER

(holds hand up to audience)

Wait!

(to Bligh)

I am sorry for the pain I caused you.

Fletcher tries to embrace Bligh,
but he slaps Fletcher again
throwing him to the floor. Bligh
sits alongside him with his fist
raised.

BLIGH

You fool! I would have shared everything with you! I could
have left this desolate cage.

FLETCHER

And do what? Whose dream would I be living? It was too much
man! Can you not see that?

BLIGH

What I see is a confused little boy too frightened to stand
up to his father...And too frightened to know his true
self.

FLETCHER

(points to audience)

Do not hold them to task...They are innocent...Do your
worst with me.

Bligh tries to summon the strength
to hit Fletcher. He raises and
lowers his fist but then restrains
himself. Bligh withdraws looking
somewhat defeated. He stands up.

BLIGH

You are a villainous scoundrel and a mutineer sir!

(to audience)

Arrest him!

Light dims on Bligh. Lights focus on Fletcher as he stands up addressing the audience.

FLETCHER

What happened next was swift and deliberate.

Lights focus on Bligh flailing and fending off the crew as Fletcher narrates.

FLETCHER

The majority of the crew surrounded Bligh as he fought against them to his last breath. Days of suppressed rage were unleashed in wild spurts upon him. It was a miracle he survived with little injury.

Bligh falls to the floor, his arms covering his face and head.

FLETCHER (cont'd)

Once subdued he could not hide his anguish. It was a terrible sight to see him so broken...There were several men that remained loyal to him. From our severely limited provisions, we gave them enough food and water to sustain each man for six days. After putting them adrift in a twenty-three foot launch, Bligh cursed us and swore eternal revenge until he disappeared from our view...I believe the wound of our separation was more deeply felt than the mutiny.

(beat)

As for myself and my crew, we were a damned lot indeed... We could not return to England for we would most assuredly be hanged...As it were, the trade winds rose up from the East...We turned the Bounty about and made course back to Tahiti.

(beat)

Our final decision was to sail with provisions and leave with native women and men who were close to us, to Pitcairn Island.

(beat)

When we arrived, we journeyed into the hills and sat on scarred rocks watching the Bounty burn, seeing our past disappear into flames...Exiles for the rest of our lives.

Light dims on Fletcher as he exits. Curtain is drawn revealing the Library panel. Light rises on Bligh sitting at table upstage addressing audience.

BLIGH

(coughs)

After forty-seven days at sea, we had reached Timor, severely dehydrated and near death. Several of my men died from the hardship. The British fleet was alerted and we found ourselves in London within a month's time. Fletcher and his crew were given death sentences for their mutiny... And my men were sworn to secrecy about my love affair with him...Although I was found innocent of any wrong doing, some of the members of the Admiralty chastised me for exacting excessive punishment...And of course they were right...There is a good deal of blood on my hands... Perhaps I wanted Fletcher's youth too desperately... I don't know...I do miss him so.

Bligh stands up from the table, walks toward the audience addressing them center stage.

BLIGH (cont'd)

On occasion I would meet a sailor who had been to the Islands. He told me a story of a sad eyed English man meticulously reading letters near a waterfall. He lived as a recluse I am told, quite unapproachable...Always reading.

Very quickly light dims on Bligh to blackout. Lights focus on Fletcher sitting stage right with the curtain drawn revealing the tropical Island panel. He is reading Bligh's letters.

FLETCHER

(to audience)

I...I like this one the best. This...This was Bligh's fifth letter to me... Here... Dear sweet Fletcher... You mean more to me than anything in this world...Just...Just imagine the vastness of the ocean and realize that my love for you is far greater than that... When we are apart

FLETCHER (cont'd)

remember me in this way...Here...There is this other letter...Wait! It's...It's his eighth one...He says... He says right here...He would give up his Rank, leave the Navy and let me follow my dreams...He would support my dreams!...I could do what I wanted!...Anything! My dreams...My ambitions!

Light fades on Fletcher as he bows his head.

BLACKOUT

The End

Alternate End

Victor quickly walks out to center stage addressing the audience.

VICTOR

Well my dear friends...Our story could end this tragic way... It would be most appropriate given Fletcher's unbridled ambitions...Or it could end with Bligh swallowing a fatal poison revealing his final thoughts and wishes reprieving Fletcher and his men...Also completely valid...Or it could end this way.

Light dims on Victor and focuses on Alicia as she swiftly enters addressing the audience. She speaks quickly, reading Fletcher's letter.

ALICIA

Dear Alicia...Greetings from your exiled fiancé Fletcher Christian...I trust you are well and are still fending off a gaggle of buffoonish suitors... Enclosed is the sum of eight hundred pounds for you to leave your father's charge and start a new life. You can thank Captain William Bligh for this generosity. He has come back to me through a long arduous journey involving death and mutiny among other calamities...He has made amends to us all and I most sincerely to him. I understand now that love can be a most mighty struggle worth fighting for...Bligh reminded me of this... More funds will be sent to you in three months. Money is of little value here, neither are my ambitions. It seems we are quite happy after all - Bligh, Maimiti and myself. Give my love to my father and mother...God keep you...Yours always, Fletcher.

BLACKOUT

The End

DEER RUN

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Dramatis Personae

Carly - Seth's wife *(In her late 20's)*
Jenna - Carly and Seth's daughter *(7 or 8 yrs. old)*
Seth - Carly's husband *(In his early 30's)*
Russell - Father to Jackie and Carly *(In his 60's)*
Jackie - Russell's daughter *(In her 30's)*

Time:

Present

Place:

Summer in a small New England coastal town.

ACT I

Scene: *Light rises on a modest size living room. Carly is sitting in a comfortable easy chair reading a book. Next to her is an end table with a small lamp. To the right of the table hangs an abstract painting. There is another easy chair and a coffee table with a vase of flowers. Carly's daughter Jenna is lying on an Indian rug coloring a horse she copied from a photo magazine.*

JENNA

There...That's a good color.

CARLY

Let me see.

Jenna grabs the magazine and her drawing. She shows it to Carly.

CARLY (cont'd)

Looks nice...Let's compare.

She holds the magazine next to the horse drawing.

CARLY (cont'd)

It could be a little lighter...A light brown...See...The magazine horse is a chestnut brown.

JENNA

I like it this way.

CARLY

Sweetie...It's not the same as the picture. Don't you want it like the magazine?

JENNA

This is the way I drew it.

CARLY

(rubs forehead vigorously)

I'm so sorry honey...It's fine...It's a nice horse...Really... Mom's got a little headache that's all.

JENNA

I'm gonna draw a tree to give it some shade.

CARLY

That's nice of you.

Jenna walks over to her colored pencils, sits down and begins to draw.

(beat)

CARLY (cont'd)

We're going to visit Grandpa Russell this Sunday.

JENNA

Mom...I was gonna see Meghan Sunday... Do we have to go?

CARLY

Yes...It's real important... You can go swimming in his pool... Wouldn't that be cool?

(beat)

JENNA

Grandpa smells funny.

CARLY

Like how?

JENNA

A sweet smell.

CARLY

From his mouth?

JENNA

Yeah...When he talks...And he acts kinda weird.

CARLY

Your grandfather drinks too much sometimes...It's the alcohol.

JENNA

Can we go next week?

CARLY

(irritated)

We haven't seen him for a while Jenna and it's important to me...Listen I'll make it up to you.

JENNA

Will you take me to the movies next week?

CARLY

Sure sweetie...I promise.

JENNA

Do you want me to rub your forehead?

CARLY

No!...Maybe a little.

Jenna walks over to Carly, sits on her lap and begins to gently rub her forehead.

CARLY (cont'd)

Grandpa's having a barbecue with all your favorites.

JENNA

Cool!

CARLY

And Aunt Jackie will be there. You like Aunt Jackie don't you?

JENNA

She's great! She taught me how to...How to waltz.

CARLY

You're right! I remember...You're Aunt Jackie is a real good dancer...Maybe she'll teach you some new dance steps.

Jenna finishes her massage.

JENNA

How's your headache now?

CARLY

It's better...Thanks honey.

(beat)

JENNA

Are you gonna be okay mom?

Carly holds back tears.

CARLY

Mom's going to be just fine...Why don't you grab the colored pencils-

Enter Seth

SETH

Heh guys!

He kisses Carly.

JENNA

Daddy!

Jenna slides off Carly's lap, grabs her drawing and runs over to Seth. He picks Jenna up, swings her around, holding her in his arms. Jenna's laughing.

SETH

How's my amazing artist!

JENNA

Awesome!

Seth sees her drawing.

SETH

Beautiful looking horse!

JENNA

I drew it from a magazine.

SETH

Terrific job...Some day people from all over the country are gonna come to see your artwork...You'll be world famous!

JENNA

Ya think so?

SETH

If you keep it up.

JENNA

Cool! Everyone will come to see my drawings.

CARLY

(smiles)

Meanwhile...Before you become world famous, you still have your homework.

JENNA

C'mon Mom...You don't like my horse do you?

SETH

Yes she does.

CARLY

Of course I do...Let me see it again.

Seth lets go of Jenna. She shows the drawing to Carly. She sadly stares at it.

CARLY (cont'd)

I love your drawings...I forgot how good your artwork is.

Carly hugs her.

CARLY (cont'd)

Your drawing is amazing...I just forgot.

SETH

It's going to take time for your mom to-

CARLY

(irritated)

She knows that...You don't have to say it.

SETH

I was only-

JENNA

(to Carly)

Can I go next door to see Meghan?..She promised to help me with my math.

CARLY

Okay...For an hour...Then supper.

JENNA

(to Seth)

Can you show me how to draw a camel later?

SETH

Sure Jenna.

JENNA

Cool! See ya.

She begins to exit, then suddenly turns around.

JENNA (cont'd)

You guys aren't gonna fight are ya?

Carly looks at Seth.

CARLY

No honey we're not.

*Jenna waves goodbye and exits.
Carley puts the drawing on the end table and nervously picks up her book.*

SETH

What are you reading?

CARLY

(rubs forehead)

I wish you wouldn't remind Jenna about my condition.

SETH

Sorry...I wasn't thinking.

CARLY

(loudly)

You've been doing it a lot lately. When Phil and Myra came over and I had a memory lapse, you said the same thing: "It's going to take some time."

SETH

I was trying to-

CARLY

I feel like you've been apologizing for me...Poor little brain damaged Carly - it's insulting.

SETH

That's not what I meant.

CARLY

(rubs forehead)

It already happened Seth...You can't protect me from it.

SETH

Look...I'm sorry...Okay! Can you let it go for now.

(beat)

You're getting those headaches again.

CARLY

Yeah.

SETH

We need to see that neurologist next week.

(beat)

CARLY

They think they found the driver.

SETH

No way!

CARLY

(wrings hands)

The have to interview a few more witnesses.

SETH

I never thought we'd find him.

CARLY

And they believe he lives nearby.

SETH

Oh man...Did he think he wouldn't be found?!

CARLY

I'd like to see the car.

SETH

The car?!

CARLY

Yeah.

SETH

What about the guy! If it was me I'd-

CARLY

It was the car I remember...It was that horrible steel bumper...And the cold...And that stupid plastic grille...The screeching sound...And those ugly moon headlights.

SETH

Carly!

CARLY

It's so strange... It comes to you in a split second. This is the last thing I'm ever going to see...This is it...And then you realize...Death is not an angel...It's not a hospital room... It's some crazy car with glass and metal, and you're its target.

(beat)

No, I need to see it...Face it down.

SETH

So what about the driver?

CARLY

(rubs forehead)

I know it's weird...But I almost feel sorry for him... It felt like the car was driving him.

SETH

The doctor would say that's a delayed trauma reaction...You'll eventually feel anger at the man.

CARLY

Who the hell knows! I can't remember much goddamn it! I can hardly remember a month ago.

SETH

(hugs her)

It'll come back to you. This type of head injury isn't permanent.

CARLY

That's what they say. But what do they know.

SETH

Here, let me massage your head.

He starts massaging her forehead.

SETH (cont'd)

It's good you still have your job with the kids.

CARLY

Thank God I remember how to teach theatre.

SETH

And you got that interior design gig last week.

CARLY

Yeah...But there's so much missing.

SETH

(kisses her)

You need to keep your mind off it for a while.

CARLY

Funny...It feels like I should be doing the opposite...You're so lucky you're an artist...You can paint anything you want from your unconscious.

SETH

Why don't you try painting, it might help...Which reminds me! I sold a piece today.

CARLY

Great! Which one?

SETH

It was the abstract...\$4,000 minus 50% for the gallery.

CARLY

They really take a chunk.

SETH

It's the standard gallery fee Carly.

CARLY

I think you could do more to beef up your website...Didn't your friend...What's his name-

SETH

Jeff.

CARLY

Didn't Jeff say he'd help you with the computer stuff?

SETH

Yeah...Over the weekend.

CARLY

Shit...I forgot...My dad called.

Seth stops massaging Carly.

SETH

Oh Jesus.

CARLY

He wants us to come up.

SETH

I don't know Carly.

CARLY

I feel the same...But he said it's really important.

SETH

So what is it?

CARLY

What do you mean?

SETH

What's the problem?

CARLY

He wouldn't tell me...His voice sounded strange.

SETH

That's nothing new...The guy always creeped me out.

CARLY

We still have to go.

SETH

He never calls you...He visited us once last year...Oh yeah, he saw you for ten minutes at the hospital. Big deal.

CARLY

I hear ya.

SETH

He pisses me off. I don't like how he puts us down. Russell's always reminding us of how successful he's been and what a poor, artsy lifestyle we have...The man is an old school racist, did you know that? And I'm sure he's an alcoholic.

CARLY

He can help me.

SETH

What are you saying?

CARLY

There's some past stuff...Some memories he could help me with.

SETH

You've changed Carly...You've never taken his side before.

CARLY

I'm not on his side...I'm not defending him...I just feel it's important to see him...And his voice...His voice sounded fearful...Like a frightened little boy.

SETH

All I know is, you never showed any sympathy toward your dad.

CARLY

I don't remember a damn thing about him... It's like looking straight at the car that hit me...When I think about it... That's what it's like...Russell's a goddamn car.

SETH
What does your therapist say?

CARLY
What does it matter?

SETH
I'm curious.

CARLY
She says I have several layers...Some blocks...And a wall.

SETH
Jesus Carly, it sounds like a construction sight.

Carly laughs.

SETH (cont'd)
What does that mean...A wall?

CARLY
It means some psychic trauma.

SETH
Well yeah...A car ran you down.

CARLY
No...She thinks before the accident...The accident slammed the door shut.

SETH
It's funny...You never liked to talk about your childhood...Now all of a sudden-

CARLY
I have to do this.

SETH
Did you talk to Jackie?

CARLY
Jackie is Jackie...She always keeps our conversation at one level...Pleasant...Whenever I ask her anything about my past, she wiggles out of it and asks me about Jenna or you.

SETH

I feel sorry for her. Living with Russell can't be easy...She needs to break away from him.

CARLY

I suppose your right.

(beat)

I think she's got a little thing for you.

SETH

(laughs)

She's not my type.

He hugs Carly passionately.

SETH (cont'd)

You're the only one for me babe.

CARLY

(jokingly)

Yeah, me and the gorgeous young chicks who pose for you.

SETH

(cowboy drawl)

No way darlin'...Ya know I'm not the cheatin' kind.

Carly smiles.

(beat)

SETH (cont'd)

One thing...If your dad's drunk, we'll leave right away.

CARLY

I agree.

(beat)

CARLY (cont'd)

So we'll go early Sunday morning.

SETH

It's a long drive.

CARLY

We'll break it up...Wasn't there a diner you liked up there.

SETH

That's right! They had great comfort food...And there was this roadside sculptor we met...Remember?

Enter Jenna

JENNA

Heh everyone.

SETH

Look who's back.

CARLY

You're early.

JENNA

They're having supper.

CARLY

How was the math lesson?

JENNA

Okay...Sometimes it's so hard. Why do I need to learn this stuff?

CARLY

I know sweetie...When you get older it'll make more sense to you.

JENNA

But I want it to make sense to me now. Shouldn't it be that way?

Seth picks Jenna up and swings her.

SETH

I hear ya Jenna bear...If we understood it all right now we'd be the smartest people in the whole universe...We'd all be Gods!

JENNA

Or angels!

SETH

That's right. Angels.

CARLY

And all the walls would crumble.

SETH

(laughs)
Hallelujah...Hallelujah!

*He puts Jenna down. A stove timer
rings off stage.*

CARLY

Supper's ready! Seth can you set the table and take the
chicken out?

SETH

Sure.

JENNA

I'll help you.

SETH

Yum! It smells great.

*Seth holds Jenna's hand as they
begin to exit. He turns around.*

SETH (cont'd)

(cowboy drawl)
Don't be long darlin'.

CARLY

(smiles)
I'll be there in a minute, ya big lug.

*Carly picks up Jenna's drawing.
She looks pained but
affectionately at it. She rubs her
forehead slowly bowing her head.*

BLACKOUT

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene: *Lights rise on Russell's upscale living room. It contains two stuffed chairs, a coffee table (with magazines), a medium size sofa, tan colored rug, one elegant floor lamp, and a fireplace with a mantelpiece. On the mantelpiece are three framed photographs one of which is Russell's wife. A music box is next to her photo. On the wall above is an antique quilt. There is a stairway that leads to a second floor door. Russell is dancing with his daughter Jackie across the living room floor. It's a waltz and he is briskly leading her from one corner to another. Jackie is smiling, doing her best to keep up, but he's moving too fast. She suddenly pulls away from him.*

RUSSELL

(smiles)

Phew! Just like your mother!

JACKIE

Way too fast!

RUSSELL

No! You dance just like her...Just like your mom...If you could have seen her...She had all the right moves...All the moves...And when she swayed...Everyone loved to watch—

JACKIE

I get it dad.

He reaches out to her, but she gently pushes him back smiling wryly.

RUSSELL

C'mon...Just a little more...For your old man.

(extends his arms)

Please?

She walks up to him and extends her arms. He pulls her close to him and starts to move.

JACKIE

Stop! Stop!

(they stop)

You've been drinking.

RUSSELL

Just a little...So what.

He begins to move.

JACKIE

OK...All right...But slower.

RUSSELL

We'll dance around the living room into the kitchen.

He starts to vigorously lead her around the room.

JACKIE

Slow down...Will you.

RUSSELL

(pulls her closer)

Your mom was a close dancer...Every week we'd go to the Bigelow ballroom.

JACKIE

Dad.

They keep dancing.

RUSSELL

She could kick up her heels.

JACKIE

Slow down.

RUSSELL

To any tune.

JACKIE

Stop...Slow down!

Russell slows down.

RUSSELL

Your mom was a real looker.

JACKIE

I know...You've told me a million times.

(beat)

So when are they coming?

RUSSELL

Who?

JACKIE

Who do you think? Carly and—

RUSSELL

Soon...In about twenty minutes.

JACKIE

Just be nice...Don't give them a hard time...She's still recovering from the accident.

RUSSELL

Does she have her memory back?

JACKIE

Not really, the concussion left her with some long term memory loss.

RUSSELL

Which means?

JACKIE

It means she can only remember bits and pieces of her past...It'll take time.

RUSSELL

I hope they caught the bastard.

JACKIE

I think so...She doesn't like to talk about it for some reason.

RUSSELL

Let's dance out the kitchen door. I got to check the barbecue.

Russell grabs Jackie tightly and begins to dance to the exit.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

That's my girl!

They are halfway off the stage. Only Russell is visible.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

(shouts to Jackie)

I'll be out there in a minute. I want to get this magazine.

He walks over to the coffee table and grabs a magazine. Russell slowly looks up at the mantelpiece and sees the photograph of his wife. He walks over to it and gently grabs the photo. Staring at the image, he begins a brief dialogue with his dead wife.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

You were always the Belle of the ball.

(laughs)

I know...I know...I could never keep up with you...You had this great dance teacher...What can I say...I was just an amateur...But you—

(laughs)

Yeah of course...Remember what you called me...What was it? A Hippo. I was like a Hippo on the dance floor.

(laughs)

And you were right...Two left feet. But I...But I...

He realizes he is talking to himself and is slightly ashamed. Russell puts the photograph back on the mantelpiece.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

(shouts to Jackie)

I'm coming.

As he exits, he looks back at his wife's photograph in a perplexed manner.

(beat)

Offstage there is the sound of several doorbell rings and door knockings. Enter Carly, Seth and Jenna.

SETH

I tried the bell four times - knocked on the door. He's expecting us anyway...I'm sure it's okay to-

CARLY

No problem...I'm a little nervous...It's been a while.

Jenna runs over to the sofa and starts jumping on it.

CARLY (cont'd)

Jenna honey, take your shoes off if you're going to jump on the sofa.

Jenna sits down.

JENNA

Don't worry, I'm not gonna jump mom. I'm gonna lie down...I'm kinda tired.

She lies down.

CARLY

Okay sweetie...That's okay.

SETH

(to Jenna)

We won't stay long...We'll be with Grandpa for a few hours and leave.

Carly is visually drawn to the quilt above the mantlepiece.

CARLY
It's not that easy...He has—
(stares at quilt)

SETH
I'll give the cue.

CARLY
He has this bullish will.

SETH
I'll just say...Well it was great seeing you and—

CARLY
You can't say no to him.

SETH
We have to work tomorrow.

CARLY
Smothering...

JENNA
(sits up)
Mom...

CARLY
He has these huge rough hands...Bigger than frying pans...

JENNA
Mom!

CARLY
(irritated)
What honey?

*Carly stops staring at the quilt.
Jenna walks up to her.*

JENNA
I wanna go home.

CARLY
(caresses Jenna's hair)
We won't be here that long sweetie, just a few hours.

SETH

Mmmm! I smell barbecue!

JENNA

Me too daddy...Can we go out to the yard to see Aunt Jackie?

Russell enters humming a song, twirling Jackie around, dancing swiftly across the room.

RUSSELL

(loudly)

Well hello there you two!

He hugs Carly and shakes Seth's hand giving him a critical look and a strained false smile. Jackie also hugs Carly and Seth and kisses Jenna on the cheek.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

(to Jenna and Carly)

My two little girls!

He bends down opening his arms.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

Let me take a good look at you! Wow! It's been a long time...Grandpa's missed you!

Jenna shyly holds on to Carly's hand.

CARLY

She's grown a bit since last—

RUSSELL

What a beauty you are!

He hugs her in a slightly smothering way. Jenna gently has to pries herself from him.

RUSSELL (cont'd)
(whispers to Carly)
She's really pretty.

JENNA
Mom...Can I go into the backyard.

RUSSELL
I have a present for you.

JENNA
Ya do?

RUSSELL
I sure do...I'll show you later. Would you like that?

JENNA
Yes...Maybe...

Everyone laughs.

RUSSELL
Good girl...I'll meet you out in the yard.

JENNA
Okay...Daddy will you come with me?

SETH
In a minute honey...I need to talk to your grandfather.

Jackie nervously grabs Jenna's hand.

JACKIE
We'll go out together Jenna.
(to Seth)
Did you have any trouble getting here?

SETH
The traffic wasn't bad, but it was still a long haul.

JACKIE
They drive a bit crazy around here.

SETH

Yeah, I noticed.

JACKIE

How ya feeling Carly.

CARLY

I still get these headaches.

JACKIE

They say frequent hot showers can help.

RUSSELL

Did you catch the guy?

SETH

His car was parked a half mile away.

RUSSELL

What a moron.

CARLY

(rubs forehead)

He was arrested last night.

JENNA

(pulls Jackie's hand)

Let's go to the backyard.

JACKIE

Okay sweetie.

(to everyone)

Don't be long.

They begin to leave.

RUSSELL

Heh remember...Keep away from the barbecue!

JACKIE

Don't worry.

Jackie and Jenna exit.

RUSSEL

It's good to see ya Carly.

CARLY

We can't stay long...Seth's got to get back...He has-

RUSSELL

He has what...A commission to paint a mural for the Rockefeller Center?

CARLY

Don't start dad.

RUSSELL

What...I'm just joking-

SETH

Why is it so hard for you to accept what I do?

RUSSELL

Because my daughter-

CARLY

Dad!

RUSSELL

Because my daughter is used to more.

CARLY

We're doing fine!

RUSSELL

Let me help you with-

SETH

I love Carly and-

RUSSELL

You're struggling!..You're living out some Bohemian artist's fantasy.

CARLY

Stop it!

RUSSELL

Ahhhh! I'm sorry! I didn't want to talk about this...In fact I asked you to come here because I was thinking of your future.

SETH

We already have a future.

RUSSELL

This is about my "Will"! It concerns all of you...Get it!

*He takes a deep breath and puts
his arm around Carly.*

RUSSELL (cont'd)

Look, let's all calm down and have something to eat...I
have some great barbecue...Corn, burgers, ribs,
chicken...C'mon!

CARLY

(to Russell)

Go out there...Go...We'll be there in a minute.

RUSSELL

(smiling)

Hurry up...By the looks of you...You need to put some meat
on your bones...Seth is starving you.

CARLY

Go!

Russell exits smiling.

SETH

That son-of-a-bitch has been drinking. I can smell it on
him.

CARLY

I know...I know...I promise we won't stay long. Don't let
him get to you.

*Seth hugs her and senses something
is wrong.*

SETH

What's the matter?

*Carly stares at the mantelpiece
and begins to wring her hands.*

CARLY

Just being here gives me the creeps...I don't know why.

SETH

What is it? What are you looking at?

CARLY

It's just something...

Carly walks over to the mantelpiece. She runs her fingers over the quilt lost in thought, searching for a memory. She reaches for the music box sitting next to it and turns pale.

CARLY (cont'd)

What the hell is this doing here?

SETH

What's wrong?

CARLY

Goddamn it...He said he buried the music box with her. It belonged to my mother...He gave it to her as a present...It was an anniversary thing...She loved it.

(beat)

Sometimes he'd show the box to me...He'd open it...And this old Austrian song would play.

She opens the box trembling; there is no music.

CARLY (cont'd)

There was something about the song. I...I couldn't get it out of my head. All through grade school...I couldn't shake it.

SETH

But it was your mother's.

CARLY

I know that...That's what's so crazy about it...I felt it belonged to me.

SETH

Carly...You're creeping me out. Close the lid and open it again.

She opens the lid and still no music.

CARLY

Russell lied...It should have been buried.

SETH

What's the big deal?

CARLY

I don't know...It just is.

SETH

Your mom—

CARLY

What?

SETH

You never told me how she died.

CARLY

What's there to know...She just died.

SETH

What do you mean she just died...Jesus Carly talk to me.

CARLY

What!...She had a weak heart that's all! What do you want!

SETH

(hugs her)

Okay...Okay...Calm down.

CARLY

The Blue Danube...That was the song...That was it...I remember when he opened the box...He'd say: "Imagine being on a boat, a white row-boat on a beautiful lake...And the sky is a brilliant blue, a turquoise blue."

(beat)

CARLY (cont'd)

The music was fast, rhythmic...And then it would gradually slow down until you could hear only a few lonely notes...Then it stopped...It was strange...He'd always tell me a different story...But he always started with a white row-boat in this...In this beautiful lake.

She is lost in thought.

SETH

Carly!

JENNA

(enters running)

Grandpa wants to know when you're coming out.

SETH

Right now! I'm starving!

He puts his arm around Jenna.

SETH (cont'd)

I'm taking my two best girls to a barbecue.

CARLY

Jesus you sound like my father.

SETH

God help us!

CARLY

(holds stomach)

I feel a little sick...It'll pass.

(suddenly perks up)

C'mon let's chow down!

JENNA

I'll beat ya!

Jenna runs.

They quickly exit.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

ACT III

Scene: Jackie and Jenna enter dancing a Foxtrot. Carly, Seth and Russell are trailing behind carrying coffee and cake. They walk to their various seats. Russell is mildly drunk.

JACKIE

Good job Jenna!

RUSSELL

You're good enough to be on "Dancing with the Stars"!

JENNA

(to Jackie)

What's it called?

JACKIE

A Foxtrot.

JENNA

Fox Trot.

JACKIE

There ya go.

*They stop dancing. Jenna sits.
Jackie collapses in a chair.*

JACKIE (cont'd)

I am really full.

SETH

That chicken was great.

CARLY

The barbecue sauce was amazing!

RUSSELL

Ya know what they say...It's an old family recipe.

CARLY

That's funny...I don't remember you making it.

RUSSELL

(laughs)

You're getting a little senile Carly.

JACKIE

(nervously)

Wasn't the potato salad great?

RUSSELL

(laughs)

Oh yeah? It was store bought.

(beat)

Do you remember all of us going to the beach on the weekends?

CARLY

No I don't.

RUSSELL

There were two things you loved more than anything...Onion rings and bumper cars...Man how you loved your rings! You'd order a large box and scarf them down in a second—your face all covered in ketchup.

CARLY

(wryly)

That must have been a sight.

RUSSELL

(to everyone)

And the bumper cars...She thought the whole idea of the cars was not to hit anyone.

(laughs)

She was real proud of that...I'd be screaming: "Hit them...Hit them." But she kept driving around in circles...Smiling...She never listened to me.

CARLY

(defensively)

Like I said, I don't remember any of it.

(beat)

Russell suddenly reaches out to Jackie.

RUSSELL

C'mon let's dance a little.

JACKIE

No! Not right now.

RUSSELL

(to Seth)

Did you know that Jackie won a "Swing" dance contest at her High School?

JENNA

Mom!

CARLY

What honey?

JENNA

I don't feel so good.

CARLY

Let me see.

(puts her hand on Jenna's forehead)

You feel a bit warm.

JACKIE

It was probably the long ride up...And it's a hot day.

CARLY

Why don't you go upstairs and lie down for a while.

JENNA

Will you come up with me?

CARLY

Sure honey...Let's go.

Jenna looks visibly unwell. She's shaking slightly. Jackie walks over to her and kisses her cheek.

JACKIE

Have a nice sleep.

Seth hugs and kisses Jenna.

SETH

Sweet dreams Jenna bear.

RUSSELL

(extends his arms)

Give your old Grandpa a big hug.

*Jenna looks slightly frightened.
She shrinks back holding on to
Carly's leg. Russell looks a
little hurt.*

CARLY

She's just tired...Let's go honey...I'll tell you a story.

(to everyone)

I'll be back in a few minutes.

They go upstairs and out the door.

RUSSELL

(to Seth)

If you ask me...You and Carly spoil that child too much.
Life can be a vicious jungle and sometimes you got to face
it head on...Despite how you feel...Don't you know that?

SETH

Russell, she's only seven years old.

JACKIE

He's right, dad.

RUSSELL

Quiet Jackie...He needs to understand something.

SETH

This isn't about Jenna...Is it?

RUSSELL

Let me tell you something...When I was about her age, maybe
a little older, my father, who was a real son-of-a-bitch,
took me camping up in the mountains. We were walking along
this narrow
path, the Skyline Trail, up in the Cascades. There were
these giant blueberry bushes all around us. Man! The
sweet smell of it almost knocked us unconscious.

(beat)

RUSSELL (cont'd)

Suddenly we heard this sound. It was something huge shaking the bushes...At first we thought it was a bear...A grizzly...My dad put his massive hands on my shoulder and forced me to the ground...We crouched in the dirt for a few seconds, but it felt like an hour. I looked over at my dad's face which always looked hard and fixed, but now had this frenzied look, like he could tear the heads off children...The noise got closer...The sound of shaking leaves was intolerable...And just like that, four deer ran by. They were a buck, a doe and two fawn. The second fawn couldn't keep up. My dad grabbed my arm - almost tore it off...And he started running...I never saw a grown man run so fast. He was like some crazed animal.

(looks at Seth)

Do you know what I mean? Like the wolf man from some old "Lon- Chaney" movie...The deer sensed us from the beginning. They were sprinting full out. My dad let go of me after a few yards...But I could still see him clearly. He ran up a small incline and sprang into the air falling on the last fawn.

JACKIE

Dad!

RUSSELL

Don't interrupt me!

(beat)

So he screamed for me to come over...I was stunned and a little shaken...But this was my father I thought, why should I be afraid...When I got there, he had the fawn's neck in his arms...I could see its enormous black eyes frightened and pleading. He held its head looking wild eyed.

(talks fast)

He said: "Weakness is your enemy. I'm doing it a favor...Saving it from slow starvation." And like that...

(snaps finger)

He snaps its neck.

(beat)

I screamed at him. He dropped the fawn and hit me square in the face...It lifted me right off the fucking ground...The son-of-a-bitch knocked me out!

(beat)

When I woke up...I'm seeing things a little blurry...But there's his face, a few inches from mine...And he says: "If you're weak, take your medicine...It'll make you stronger"...Imagine that!

RUSSELL (cont'd)

And ya know...The bastard was right...It made me stronger...Better.

(beat)

SETH

Jesus Russell...That's one hell of a story.

JACKIE

(sarcastically)

Yeah, thanks for sharing dad.

Carly enters walking downstairs.

SETH

How's Jenna?

CARLY

She'll be okay...But there is something bothering her.

SETH

I'm sure it was the long ride.

CARLY

So did I miss anything?

SETH

Your father told a childhood story.

RUSSELL

(defensively)

It was a life lesson story! Something you need to pay close attention to.

CARLY

Was this the fishing yarn about his father?

SETH

This was about deer.

CARLY

Huh...I don't remember that one.

JACKIE

You wouldn't want to.

RUSSELL

Well that's you all over isn't it Jackie...Head up in the clouds...Never touching earth...That's why you can't find a job.

CARLY

Stop it!

RUSSELL

Look...I'm sorry but I had a reason to call you all together...And I'm going to say what I want to say and that's that!

JACKIE

(stands up, subdued tone)

Asshole.

RUSSELL

(blurts)

I've been diagnosed with mild to moderate stage Alzheimer's.

CARLY

What! You're kidding...I didn't know.

RUSSELL

Of course not...That's why I'm telling you now.

JACKIE

Why didn't you tell me?

RUSSELL

And what would you have done? We all have our secrets Jackie. I was just waiting for the right time. Like right now.

JACKIE

You still could have said something.

RUSSELL

Enough!

(beat)

The reason I wanted you all here is because I've re-drafted my "Will"...And while I still have my wits about me...I'm going to tell you what my final wishes are...Okay?

CARLY

Are you sure?

RUSSELL

Yes dammit!

(beat)

First off...Jackie will inherit the house and both of you will share equally in my estate which is about three million dollars...Now of course all of this depends on what kind of long term care-

Carly and Seth whisper to each other.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

What! What are you whispering!

CARLY

Dad...Don't be offended but-

SETH

Actually Russell, we...We don't want your money.

RUSSELL

You don't want my money. You Don't Want My Money. First of all...This is Carly's inheritance not yours!

SETH

Excuse me!

JACKIE

Dad!

CARLY

I don't want your inheritance.

RUSSELL

Are you insane?

CARLY

Actually we're doing all right.

(speaks rapidly)

I have interior design work and teaching theatre to disadvantaged kids is a steady paycheck. Seth just sold a painting-

RUSSELL

I don't give a flying shit...You stand to inherit over a million dollars and you don't want it?

CARLY

It comes with—

RUSSELL

What? Let me tell you something...Neither of you bleeding hearts have any ambition...And your loser husband here—

SETH

(stands up)

What did you say!

RUSSELL

Sit down!

SETH

Screw you!

CARLY

Your money always comes with a price tag...You love to control us...Even now.

JACKIE

Look...Why don't we go out in the backyard for a nightcap—

RUSSELL

That's just like you Ms. Martha Stewart, sugarcoating—

Carly stares at the quilt.

JACKIE

You have no right!

RUSSELL

I have every right...I'll be losing my mind in a while.

SETH

If you ask me—

RUSSELL

I didn't ask you...Now you listen to me...I've worked Goddamn hard all my life...And I mean hard...I marketed every cruddy piece of shit under the sun—from fucking cigarettes to Napalm...And I've crushed every bastard that threatened my position...Family is what I did it for...I hated—

SETH

(claps)

Great! Here we go with "I did it all for my family" crap. I heard that line on the soaps a month ago...What a cliché...What a great way to absolve yourself.

*Carly is at the mantelpiece
touching the music box, lost in
thought.*

RUSSELL

Heh...Earth calling Seth. The 60's are long gone! There's no more of your Kumbaya Socialism left!

CARLY

(to Russell)

Son-of-a-bitch. Now I remember. Mom fought with you all the time...And I think you cheated on her.

(beat)

You liked making music boxes and small wood sculptures.

Carly nervously caresses the box.

RUSSELL

(low tone)

Goddamn boxes.

CARLY

You lied to me.

RUSSELL

What?

CARLY

You said you buried the box with mom.

RUSSELL

No I didn't!

CARLY

I remember!

*Jenna screams from upstairs.
Everyone looks toward the second
floor door. Jenna screams again.
Seth and Jackie run halfway up the
stairs. Jenna opens the door and
walks halfway down pointing her
finger at Russell.*

JENNA

(rubs tear filled eyes)

Grandpa touched me!

SETH

What?!

JENNA

He touched me and he did it before.

RUSSELL

(nervously)

Oh c'mon! What are you...What...She just had a bad dream
that's all...Jackie...Put on some music and let's
dance...Jackie is an amazing—

CARLY

(touches quilt)

It was this quilt and the music box.

RUSSELL

What are you talking about?

CARLY

The Quilt.

RUSSELL

You're ranting...

(snaps finger)

Heh Carly!

*She caresses the quilt trying to
remember.*

CARLY

Sometimes he'd put on the radio...Sometimes it would be the music box playing the Blue Danube...It was always a little different.

(beat)

But he'd always take the quilt and drape it over me when he was about to...When he was about to—

Carly looks at Russell enraged and starts gagging. Seth, Jackie and Jenna rush over to console her.

CARLY

You motherfu—

JACKIE

Carly!

CARLY

I remember now!

RUSSELL

Carly, c'mon...You're not making any sense.

Carly pushes everyone aside and rushes over to Russell. Jackie tries to block and subdue her. Their eyes meet. Jackie sees the hurt in Carly's eyes and steps aside. Before Russell can put his hands to protect himself, Carly slaps him in the face.

CARLY

You pig!

Carly screams, unleashing a barrage of slaps.

RUSSELL

(screams)

Get her off me!

SETH
(grabs Carly)

Carly!

JENNA
Mom!

*Suddenly Carly stops struggling.
She stares at Jackie, then raises
her hand again. Russell raises
his arms and cowers.*

RUSSELL
Stop her!

*Carly lowers her hand and turns to
Jenna.*

SETH
(glares at Russell)
Don't you move!

CARLY
(more composed)
Jenna honey where did Grandpa touch you?

JENNA
He rubbed me in front...With his hand.

CARLY
Did he do more?

JENNA
No.

RUSSELL
What bullshit!

CARLY
Jenna could you go upstairs?

JENNA
I'm old enough...I want to stay.

CARLY

Please sweetie...Seth take her.

JENNA

I'll go myself.

(glares at Russell)

Shame on you Grandpa. Shame on you.

She walks upstairs and exits.

SETH

(to Russell)

Sick bastard.

Russell frowns and waves him off.

CARLY

(to Seth, composed manner)

When my mother was away or passed out somewhere, Mr. Big Shot here would turn on the radio or this stupid music box...Then I would hear a waltz or sometimes "Swing" music.

(she stares at Russell)

I could smell the alcohol on his breath. It was the only way he could do it...But he was still sober...He knew what he was doing.

(beat)

He'd wrap that filthy quilt over me...And talk sweetly...Always sweetly...Like...Like I'm his little girl...That he was proud of me...That he'd always protect me. I could hear the music play louder and louder...And then he'd slip his hand under the quilt. And...And I'd feel his hands on me...All over me.

She begins to shake.

RUSSELL

Carly I-

JACKIE

Carly!

SETH

(grabs her shoulders)

Honey!

CARLY

(glares at Russell)

And then he unzipped himself. He tried to be gentle...He said he would be gentle...Then he shoved it in.

JACKIE

Carly! This isn't the place!

CARLY

What! Are you kidding! When is it the place!

(beat)

You knew didn't you...You knew this was going on all the time...You knew! Christ he was probably doing it to you.

RUSSELL

This is absurd.

SETH

Shut up!

JACKIE

(holds Carly)

I tried to protect you...I tried to get in his way...To protect you...I told him to take me instead...But he said I wasn't innocent enough...Pure enough...He shoved me down the basement stairs and locked the door.

(beat)

When he let me out...I saw you on the floor crying and rocking.

(Jackie strokes Carly's hair)

We played a game with the quilt. Remember? Like a tent...Like an outdoor tent covering us...We told stories...Stories about sailboats and dolphins...You were laughing again.

Carly begins to cry on Jackie's shoulder.

JACKIE (cont'd)

I said when we grew up, we'd go to Hawaii and live on a sailboat.

RUSSELL

(claps)

Bravo...Bravo...That's quite a performance...Really...Both of you...I didn't know you had it in you Jackie...You finally found your true vocation...Community Theatre.

JACKIE

(enraged)

You raped your daughter...You molested your granddaughter and you would have raped me...But I wasn't little girl enough for you!

Russell tries to stand up.

SETH

(raises fist)

Stay right there...You stay or I'll kill you. I swear to God.

RUSSELL

Now I'm seeing some balls. C'mon hit me...Kill me...C'mon.

Seth covers his face and begins to cry.

RUSSELL (cont'd)

Coward! Crybaby!

Seth is suddenly poised to hit Russell. Carly rushes to stop him. She stands between them touching Seth's shoulders.

CARLY

No Seth...Please.

SETH

(glares at Russell)

I'll never be like you.

Russell frowns and waves him off again.

JACKIE

(to Carly)

Mother knew...She heard something about him and a next door neighbor's child. She heard it then...That's when she started drinking and taking pills...She knew about everything.

RUSSELL

Bahhhh! She was too damn weak...She could never hold up...You don't understand. A man has his needs.

JACKIE

And that's what killed her...An overdose of valium and alcohol-

(points to Russell)

And this ugly truth she couldn't face.

RUSSELL

(taps head)

Oh...Now wait a Goddamn minute! Why didn't I see this before. What a fool I've been! Of course you bastards want my money. It was planned from the beginning!

CARLY

You're crazy.

RUSSELL

No...No...Here you're pretending to not want my money...And you concoct these wild stories about me...Just so you can put me away...Have me committed...And take everything. It's all clear to me now.

*Jackie stands a few feet from
Russell's face.*

JACKIE

I've taken care of you all these years. Hiding from myself. Hiding from the lies. Taking your abuse. I was living a pretend life for a long time! But that's over now.

RUSSELL

You stayed for the money...That's what you did...I'll fight all of you in court! I have the money...The power...And the stability. Who are they going to believe. A couple of hippy artists and another lunatic daughter.

CARLY

I'm not going to put you away.

SETH

But I might!

CARLY

(to Russell)

No! You look at us! Look at us and see what you've done. Remember my daughter...And look at us...You'll never see us again!

SETH

(shouts)

Jenna come downstairs...Quickly!

Jenna enters and runs downstairs.

JACKIE

(to Russell)

I'll come back for my things later.

(beat)

You won't admit anything will you...My God you need help.

*Jackie, Carly, Jenna and Seth
quickly exit.*

RUSSELL

(stands up, shouts)

It's a hard world out there without money. There are monsters everywhere...All kinds of beasts...But you go ahead run...Run! You're like...You're like sheep scurrying out the door...That's what you are. You're like that little deer...And we all know what happened to her...Don't we...Don't we!

*Russell collapses in the chair,
bows his head, covers his face,
and sobs.*

BLACKOUT

THE END

FINDING WHITEY B.

c. 2008

Dramatis Personae

Mr. B	Whitey Bulger
Mike	Whitey's bodyguard
Reva	Waitress/Writer
Alan	Small Town Newspaper Journalist
Teri	Obituaries Writer

Time:
Present

Location:
Obscure country town somewhere in the Midwest.

ACT I

A dim light shines on a medium-size motel room. We see a coffee table and two chairs, a bureau and a mini-fridge. On top of the bureau is a liquor bottle and plastic cups. A woman [Reva] is sitting on the edge of a queen-size bed. Reva's friend Teri, dressed in a business suit, is pacing the room. (Alan, the third member of the team, is hiding in the bushes of the house next door.) It is the first hour into nightfall.

TERI

How long has Alan been over there?

REVA

I don't know...About ten minutes.

TERI

That long!

REVA

It's not that long.

TERI

We should have heard from him by now.

REVA

Will you relax...It's only been ten minutes. He's probably scoping out the place.

TERI

What?

REVA

Scoping...Ya know, checking out the house...Lookin' for Whitey-

TERI

The whole thing's crazy!...We shouldn't have done this.

REVA

You wanted it like I did!...You said it was my chance to break out of waitressing...The story of a lifetime.

TERI

I know what I said...I know...But this guy's a killer.

REVA

Believe me...It's worth it.

TERI

You're crazy.

REVA

This is our break! This is it! Do ya want to be writing obituaries for the rest of your life?

TERI

What difference does it make if you're dead?

REVA

Sweetie, it'll work out...Have a little faith.

TERI

Faith!? We found Whity Bulger...We've got him, America's most wanted! And you act like you're going on a first date!...What's wrong with you?

REVA

Remember! You and Alan came to me with the scoop. You convinced me to come! So here we are...Right?

TERI

What?

REVA

So why do you manage to take a good thing and crap all over it?

TERI

The problem with you-

REVA

I don't have problems.

TERI

The problem with you, Reva, is that you never think about the details...Like the consequences of your actions.

REVA

Consequences...Details! You and your sense of-

TERI

First of all, we don't work for a large newspaper. Second, you're a waitress with no journalism experience. And third-

REVA

I love how you categorize one...Two...Three.

TERI

And third, Whitey's bodyguard is coming over in about ten minutes and you!..You offered him one million dollars from our vast expense account to interview the man himself! Did I leave anything out?

REVA

Well, no...I think you just about covered everything.

TERI

(exasperated)

How do you think Whitey's going to react when he finds A-we have no money and B-we're not hot shot reporters!

REVA

There you go with the A and B...

TERI

(shouts)

Wake up and smell the 32 caliber bullets!

REVA

Look, sweetie...we'll improvise.

TERI

You've got to be kidding!

REVA

(waves check)

See this?

TERI

What...What is it?

(she grabs at it)

REVA

It's a check!

(keeps waving it)

TERI

(takes it back,
laughs nervously)

Yeah, it's a phony one...You're going to fool him with a five hundred thousand dollar personal check...Are you out of your mind?

REVA

I'll use my irresistible charm.

TERI

You're going to use charm on a guy that stuffs dead people into trunks.

REVA

That's right. You've heard of beauty and the beast. Wait till he sees this little number.

Reva pulls a provocative looking dress from her handbag and dances around the room.

TERI

Unbelievable...Unbeliev-

REVA

Look, I want this story. I want him!

TERI

Aren't you a feminist?

REVA

Of course I am...But I'll do what's necessary to nail this Whitey bastard. It's my chance, I told you.

TERI

Keep rationalizing. Keep telling yourself it's for a noble reason.

REVA

Okay, so I'll just show a little cleavage.
(sits on the bed)

TERI

I don't believe you!

REVA

What?

TERI

A little cleavage is the least of our problems.

*Reva's cell phone rings. She
raises her hand to stop the
conversation.*

REVA

Alan! We were beginning to worry about you...Yeah...Yeah...
You haven't seen him yet...Yeah. Okay just stay out there
for another fifteen minutes and then call me...Don't leave
that spot...No, I'm sure he can't see though the bushes...
Okay. Terry says hi.

*Reva puts the cell phone on the
coffee table.*

REVA

He's okay. Just a little bored.

TERI

Call Peter...call him.

REVA

Are you crazy? I'm not going to call my boyfriend!

TERI

I'm just thinking of you.

REVA

No you're not. You're afraid. And that's okay. But Whitey's
bodyguard is coming over here in five minutes.

(moves to Teri, takes her arm)

And I gotta know...Are you on my side? Are we together on
this?

(intently)

'Cause of you're not-

TERI

We're in way over our heads.

REVA

Trust me, honey, it'll be all right.

TERI

I don't want to die...Out here...In the middle of nowhere.

REVA

(embraces her)

Don't worry. I won't let you.

TERI

It's just that simple.

REVA

Well, yeah...It's that simple.

TERI

You amaze me. You have such faith in things.

REVA

(laughs)

No...I just hate my job that much. It's desperation and tons of coffee.

(her cell rings, answers it)

Yeah, Alan...Did you see him?!...Really!

(whispers to Teri)

Alan saw Whitey.

(into phone)

Great! The bodyguard's coming over. Okay...Good.

(hangs up, to Teri)

He said he got a good look at Bulger.

TERI

Are you sure...are you sure this bodyguard's going to give us Whitey?

REVA

Yes...An exclusive interview.

TERI

What about the Feds?

REVA

Remember...He said, no outside interference.

TERI

Yeah, but-

REVA

Look, the Feds don't want to find Whitey. With what he knows he could probably burn ten more agents.

TERI

You think the FBI is that corrupt?

There is a KNOCK on the door.

REVA

Who is it?

(puts her fingers to her lips)

MIKE

(low voice)

It's Mike.

REVA

The bodyguard?

MIKE

Yeah, Miss...We talked on the phone.

REVA

Wait a minute.

Reva walks over to the bureau and opens one of the drawers. She takes out a mini tape recorder and swiftly presses it into Teri's hand, whispering.

REVA (cont'd)

Here's the recorder...Hit the button...Put it in your suit jacket. I guess there's no time to put on that hot-lookin' dress.

Reva runs to the door, opens it.
Mike stands there.

REVA (cont'd)

Hi! I'm Reva.

MIKE

How ya doin'?

He shakes Reva's hand. Mike is a huge man about six feet tall, broad shouldered, overweight, comfortable in his own skin. They walk to the center of the room.

REVA

I'd like you to meet my partner Teri.

MIKE

(shakes Teri's hand)

Nice to meet ya.

REVA

Have a seat.

MIKE

(he does)

I can't stay long. Mr. B. will get suspicious.

REVA

Mr. B.?

MIKE

He doesn't like to be called Whitey. He hates the name.

REVA

(slightly nervous)

I understand.

(beat)

MIKE

Can I see your IDs?

REVA

I guess you want to make sure we're not Feds.

They give him their licences.

MIKE

No press cards?

*He briefly examines the licenses
and gives them back to Reva and
Teri.*

REVA

We didn't want to arouse suspicion in case we were stopped.
(beat)

MIKE

You're a pretty clever kid, figuring it all out.

TERI

(clears her throat)

Actually, it was our associate Alan...He did the detective
work-followed some leads.

REVA

(sighs)

So, here we are. The whole country's lookin' for your
Mr. B.

MIKE

Yeah...Mostly the Italian mob.

REVA

And the FBI?

MIKE

(laughs)

Mr. B. could nail a lot of agents...And some politicians.

TERI

They probably want him dead.

MIKE

That's right, Miss. They'd like him to disappear. We're in
kind of a tight spot.

(to Teri)

Sit down. You're making me nervous.

REVA

(to Mike)

Do you want a drink?

MIKE

Sure.

REVA

We only have scotch and soda.

MIKE

Fine with me.

Reva gives Teri and Mike drinks in plastic cups. Mike breathes deeply and looks at Reva.

MIKE (cont'd)

Yessir, you're a real clever girl.

They raise their glasses in a toast.

REVA

To a productive interview!

They toss down their drinks. Teri coughs, stares at her glass, and laughs nervously.

TERI

I'm not used to this crap.

MIKE

That's funny. Journalists are supposed to be good drinkers.

REVA

Well...That's the image...But our jobs come first.

TERI

Actually, I'm a wine and beer kinda girl.

REVA

(nervously)

Yeah...Sometimes she gets a reaction from drinking hard liquor.

MIKE

I know what you mean. I like to drink wine myself. It's good for the heart. And I gotta watch my weight.

TERI

Sir...

MIKE

Call me Mike.

TERI

Sorry...Mike...Why are you doing this?
(Reva reacts)

MIKE

Doing what?

TERI

Why are you giving us Whitey?

REVA

(nervously)
What she's saying is-

MIKE

I'm not giving him to you...Who said I was giving him to you?

He rises, puts his hand in his jacket pocket.

MIKE (cont'd)

Are you setting me up? Are there cops outside?

TERI

He's got a gun...he's gonna shoot us!

MIKE

(removes hand from pocket)
What an imagination you have, kid!

REVA

Relax, Mike. It's no setup.

TERI

I thought after the interview...you would turn him in.

Reva, shocked, looks at Teri and moves her finger across her neck to signal "cut" the conversation.

MIKE

Hell no! Are you kidding?

REVA

I'm sorry, Mike. This is a terrible misunderstanding. Of course it's confidential. We'd never think of betraying you.

Mike sits. Silence. He turns to face Teri with a pained expression.

MIKE

Ya know, it's funny you said what you said. I thought about it...Turning him in and all...Bodyguards don't get treated too good in this business. We take a lot of risks. We do what we're told without question. It's stressful...I miss my family.

TERI

(beat)

So why do you stay with him?

MIKE

Loyalty. My dad was a bum. But he taught me one thing...The most important thing you can do in life...Even if your life's a mess...Is to be loyal to your family. Blood is loyalty. And friendship is like blood.

TERI

Intense!

REVA

(beat; glares at Teri)

Have you known Mr. B for a long time?

MIKE

It's a long story. He took me out of the projects, cleaned me up. I was hooked on heroin when I was fourteen. My mom and dad were in jail by then. Whitey took me in. No one else would.

REVA

Sounds like a rough beginning.

MIKE

Yeah, it was. But I'm not complainin'.

TERI

(beat)

So Whitey...I mean Mr. B....He knows about our arrangement?

MIKE

Of course he does. The money is a different story. I'm takin' two hundred thousand dollars off the top for myself.

TERI

(low tone)

Well there's a little disloyalty!

MIKE

Disloyalty?!...I've risked my life for that bastard a dozen times. What do you know about loyalty? People do some shitty things in this business...You see it...You're around it. You have to follow orders. What do you know? You probably grew up in some lily white suburbs with mommy and daddy paying for everything.

REVA

(controlled rage)

Oh...You think so?

TERI

(quickly interrupts)

Well, I got this scholarship to Wellesley college.

MIKE

There ya go. There was nothing for somebody like me. I just had the street, Mr. B....He gave me something to live for.

REVA

(controlled frustration)

It doesn't sound like a piece of cake!

MIKE

It's been rough bein' on the run...I miss my kids.

TERI

How old are they?

MIKE

I don't want to talk about it.

REVA

(long beat)

Did anyone tell you, you look just like that guy in the Billy Crystal movie...What is it?

MIKE

Analyze This.

REVA

Yeah, that's it.

TERI

That's right...DeNiro's bodyguard.

MIKE

I've been told that. Even Mr. B. told me that. I never saw the movie. I really don't like how they stereotype us. We're just like everybody else. I mean, we have families... And...And...

(lost in thought)

REVA

Mike!

MIKE

We're not like the Sopranos.

REVA

Mike!

MIKE

Sorry.

REVA

Why does Mr. B. want this interview?

MIKE

He wants to set the record straight on a few things.

Teri stifles her laughter. Mike suddenly looks upset.

MIKE (cont'd)

What are you laughing at?

TERI

I'm sorry...But your Mr. B. isn't exactly a saint.

MIKE

(rises)

You're here to bust us, are'nt you!

(hand in pocket)

Isn't that right?

TERI

(rises)

You're going to shoot us now. He's going to kill us.

(wrings her hands)

REVA

(rises; shouts)

We just want an interview...That's all!

MIKE

(takes out cell, chuckles)

I'm not going to shoot you. Not yet, anyway. Geez-what an imagination.

TERI

Who are you calling?

MIKE

Who do you think?

(looks at Reva)

Your friend is a little jumpy.

REVA

Are you calling this off? We have the money.

(shows him the check)

MIKE

(looks at it)

And another five hundred thousand after the interview?

REVA

That's right. One million total. From our publisher.

MIKE

(looks quizzically at check)

It's a personal check.

REVA

Don't worry. It's all been arranged. We're good for it.

MIKE

(shrugs shoulders)

What do I know?

(checks watch, cell to pocket,
Sits)

Let's finish our drinks.

(to Reva)

So what about you? Why are you doing this?

REVA

Why?

MIKE

You're not exactly interviewing the pope, are ya?

REVA

I think I told you before. It's a big story.

MIKE

Ahhhh-a big story.

REVA

Well, yeah. I'll be taken seriously. I can leave my-
(catches herself)
It'll help my career. I'll be respected.

MIKE

I know the feeling.
(beat)
I never got much respect...Never.

TERI

(beat, then bursts out)

I've been writing obituaries for the past-

REVA

(shouts)

Teri!

TERI

I mean...I was writing obits. Now I'm a freelance
writer...Full time.

MIKE

Writing about dead people. No wonder you're so jumpy.

Reva's cell phone rings. She answers it.

REVA

Yeah...Hi...Everything's alright. Yeah...Yeah...
(Mike laughs mildly)

TERI

What's so funny?

MIKE

Is that your Alan on the phone?

TERI

I think so.

MIKE

(laughs again)
Sorry...Ya think Mr. B.'s next door.
(laughs)

TERI

(shouts)
What!..you mean he isn't?

MIKE

We're not stupid.

REVA

(still into phone)
I'll call you right back.
(hangs up)
What's the matter?

TERI

He's saying Mr. B. isn't next door.

REVA

But on the phone you said-

MIKE

No, I didn't. You wanted to believe he was-

REVA

But we trusted-

MIKE

(laughs)

You're a little "green" for journalists, aren't you!

REVA

Go on, have your laugh.

MIKE

Mr. B. does like a good joke.

TERI

(shouts back)

Well, so do we!

(indicates corner of wall)

Say hello to Mr. Camera.

*Mike stands up, puts his hand in
his jacket.*

REVA

(shouts at Teri)

Are you crazy?

(at Mike)

It isn't true!

*Mike pulls out a gun and points it
at them.*

MIKE

Where is it?! Where?

TERI

Ha! Ha!

MIKE

(herds them closer)

Get over there!

(checks walls)

Where is it?

REVA

(whispers to Teri)

I don't believe you.

TERI

Look Mike, I'm sorry. It's not true.

REVA

You have to believe us. We wouldn't do it.

TERI

I'm sorry.

Mike slowly puts the gun away.

REVA

I think Teri was reacting to being toyed with.

MIKE

Hey-I don't blame you. It wasn't my idea...It's okay.

TERI

Reva, honey...Don't be my shrink.

REVA

(nervously)

I guess ya have to laugh at the absurdity of it all. If you don't, it'll kill ya.

TERI

(a deep breath)

So what's gonna happen next?

MIKE

Relax. Eventually I'm gonna have to blindfold ya.

TERI

Are you kidding?

(Reva calmly holds Teri's arm)

MIKE

Do you think I want you to know where we are? C'mon!

TERI

(resigned)

Blindfolded...

MIKE

Oh, and your friend...what's his name?

REVA

Alan.

MIKE

(laughs)

I saw him in the bushes with a pair of binoculars.

REVA

Yeah...Yeah. I'm sure it looked hilarious.

MIKE

And he's a reporter?

REVA

Yeah, a damn good one.

MIKE

Mr. B. wants to see him first.

REVA

Why?

MIKE

Beats me. Usually Whitey has a thing for the ladies. I think he wants to make sure this guy isn't a Fed.

REVA

He definitely isn't.

MIKE

That's the way it's gotta be. I'm driving him first...Then you two.

TERI

(nervously)

Why not all three of us?

MIKE

Too many people in one vehicle. It makes me nervous.

REVA

So this isn't a mob thing. Ya know, like a technique.

MIKE

What?

REVA

Ya know...A tactic. Divide and conquer-

MIKE

You gotta stop watching those Soprano shows.

TERI

That's what I always tell her.

MIKE

Now, I'm trusting you to not call anyone. Besides, if we get caught you'll lose your story. And Mr. B. instructed me to tell you-I hate to say this 'cause you've been nice to me-Mr. B. said if he smells anything wrong, we have your Alan...

(Teri rolls her eyes)

Don't call Alan on your cell phone. I'll go by the bushes and pick him up.

(sympathetically)

You're gonna have to trust me.

REVA

Whatever you say.

TERI

When will you be coming back for us?

REVA

Whatever you say.

TERI

When will you be coming back for us?

MIKE

In about an hour.

REVA

So nothing's going to happen to him?

MIKE

Don't worry...Just take it easy. I'll see you in an hour.

Mike rises, and walks toward the door. He turns and looks sadly at Teri and Reva.

MIKE (cont'd)

Nice to meet you...Really. I'll see ya in a while.

*Mike leaves. Reva and Teri
collapse in nervous exhaustion.*

TERI & RIVA

Oh man...Shit!

Reva quickly takes out her cell
phone and dials.

REVA

How could you tell the bodyguard we're turning Whitey in?!
Are you crazy?!

TERI

(paces, wringing her hands)

It's really over! Why did we do this...Why? I think A. we
should call the Feds and B. we should call the police.

REVA

(into phone)

Hi Alan...Yeah. The bodyguard's coming over in a minute...
Don't be frightened...Yeah...Yeah...He's taking you first.
Alan?...Alan!

(hangs up)

Shit!

TERI

(still pacing)

They're gonna find us out. I know it. We have to call the
Feds.

REVA

(grabs Teri, intensely)

Teri, c'mon. We're almost there...We can do this.

TERI

Did you see the size of that guy? He's built like an RV.
Like a goddam bulldozer!

REVA

(gently shakes her)

Listen to me. Remember what I said-stickin' together, like
sisters. You and me hangin' tough against the bad guys.

(releases her)

TERI

This is not the movies! This is the real deal here. We should be calling the police, the goddam marines.

REVA

I told you before. I want this story! We both do.

TERI

This story isn't gonna mean squat if we're six feet under.

REVA

You said this before. And I told you, I'm not going back to waitressing. I'm sick of it! I'm sick of dealin' with businessmen slobbering all over me...Thinking they own a piece of me.

TERI

After three years of writing obits I'll finally be in one-maybe tomorrow's issue.

REVA

Remember what I said. Trust me. We'll get through this.

TERI

I wish I could.

REVA

I won't let you down.
(beat, steps away)
I told someone.

TERI

What!

REVA

I told my uncle where we'd be...He's been like a best friend to me.

TERI

So they'll be tracking us?

REVA

Not for a while.

TERI

I didn't tell anyone...I really don't have anyone I'm close to.

Reva's cell phone rings. Reva puts her hand up to silence Teri, answers.

REVA

Alan?!Mike! It's you!

BLACKOUT

End of Act I

ACT II

A large well decorated room. Two landscape paintings share the walls with a Matisse and a Picasso. In the center of the room is a small comfortable-looking sofa and two chairs. A few feet opposite the sofa is a walnut bookcase. Tucked away near the walnut desk is a mini-fridge.

Mr. B., a casual well dressed bald man in his early sixties, is sitting at the desk. He looks relaxed but is absorbed in his newspaper reading. There are three precise knocks on the door. Mr. B quickly pulls out a pair of sunglasses and a handgun from the desk drawer. He puts on the sunglasses and hides the gun under the pages of a book. He walks over to the door and opens it. Mike is standing behind Alan, who is blindfolded, handcuffed, and shaking fearfully. Mike gently nudges Alan into the room.

MIKE

Here he is, Mr. B. Is there anything else?

MR. B.

No, Mike. I'll take it from here.
Mike looks a little critically at Alan, who is still standing.

ALAN

Where's Reva and Teri?

MR. B.

Quiet!

ALAN

Are they all right?

MR. B.

Quiet! Or I'll hurt you!

MIKE

I'll be nearby if you need anything.

Mr. B. nods at Mike, who leaves. Mr. B. escorts Alan to a chair directly opposite the desk. The black blindfold is slowly pulled away. Mr. B. and Alan Stare at each other for a few seconds. Mr. B. presses gently on Alan's shoulders. Alan sits. His hands remain shackled. Mr. B. walks over to his desk and sit down. The men continue to stare at each other for another minute. Mr. B. looks down at the newspaper for about five seconds and then slowly looks up at Alan.

Mr. B.

I was reading about this genetics stuff. Do you know anything about it?

ALAN

(nervously)

A little.

MR. B.

They say that with a simple blood test they can predict what kind of disease you'll get in the future. Sounds weird to me. Suppose there's no cure. Would you want to know?...Hell...The fear of knowing would be enough to kill you in a year. What do you think son?

ALAN

I don't know...I-

MR. B.

I wouldn't do it.

ALAN

Are Reva and Teri all right?

MR. B.

Don't worry son. The girls are fine.

ALAN

It wasn't supposed to happen like this.

MR. B.

What do you mean?

ALAN

We're supposed to be together...The three of us...We were going to interview-

MR. B.

I wanted to meet with you first, Alan. It's Alan Bateman, right?

ALAN

Yes.

MR. B.

I'm doing it this way.

ALAN

That wasn't the plan.

MR. B.

You work for a large newspaper.

ALAN

The New York Times.

MR. B.

A freelance writer?

ALAN

Yes.

MR. B.

And they sanctioned this interview?

ALAN

Of course.

MR. B.

So you're a big-time reporter.

ALAN

We all are.

MR. B.

I see...Funny thing is, I never heard of you or your-

ALAN

We often write under a pseudonym.

MR. B.

I see.

(removes sunglasses, louder)

The truth is you work for some small town rag out in the sticks!

ALAN

That's not true!

MR. B.

I have your work history right in front of me!

ALAN

Actually, the paper's a subsidiary of-

MR. B.

Fact is, you lied to me, son.

ALAN

Well not exact-

MR. B.

What?

ALAN

Yes, sir.

MR. B.

Your friends aren't journalists, are they?

ALAN

No, not really. Teri writes obituaries for the Chronicle, and Riva...She's a waitress.

MR. B.

Good.

ALAN

Can you take the cuffs off?

MR. B.

Not possible. Not yet.

ALAN

There are people who know I'm here.

MR. B.

So, you were followed?

ALAN

Of course we were.

MR. B.

You just told another lie, didn't you!

ALAN

No, I-

MR. B.

What did you say?

ALAN

I said, we're being followed!

MR. B.

You're putting your friends in harm's way!

ALAN

All right, I lied! I'm nervous. What do you expect.

MR. B.

I'll give you a break...But no more lies! You want your interview, don't you?

ALAN

Yes.

MR. B.

Good. So, who do you think I am?

ALAN

Well, I-

MR. B.

Say it!

ALAN

(shouts)

Whitey Bulger...You're Whitey.

Mr. B. leans back in his chair slowly shaking his head. He's pensive for a moment, then begins to laugh. The laughter increases to almost hysterical proportions.

MR. B.

Whitey Bulger...That's a riot. You know, I've been called a few things in my day...But Whitey Bulger!

ALAN

(shouts)

I know who you are!

MR. B.

Whitey!...It's a kind of repulsive name, isn't it.

ALAN

We talked to your bodyguard. He said you liked to be called Mr. B.

MR. B.

So who is this Whitey guy anyway? I heard some things.

ALAN

He is you, for Chrissakes! You've killed over twenty people. You're a mobster!

MR. B.

(looks at ceiling)

Over twenty people, is it.

ALAN

And you've been on the run for eleven years. Always a few steps ahead of the game...You still have some FBI guys in your pocket.

MR. B.

What an amazing imagination you have.

ALAN

I know you...I know who you are!

MR. B.

What do you know about anything? If I was this Whitey guy, I could have killed you anytime...Before you even thought about coming here.

ALAN

So, who are you? What about the handcuffs? And the interview?

MR. B.

It doesn't matter. You're with me now.

ALAN

You're in hiding.

MR. B.

Let's just say I'll be your Whitey for a while. I know a little bit about the guy.

Mr. B. stands up from his desk, walks over to Alan and puts his right hand in his pocket as if he were taking out a knife. He puts his left hand on Alan's shoulder.

MR. B. (cont'd)

I don't know you kid...You're a risk to me.

ALAN

Look, I gotta go.

(rises)

I thought we could have-

MR. B.

(hands forcefully on Alan's shoulder)

Relax son. I'm not going to hurt you. I was just kidding.

Mr. B unlocks Alan's handcuffs, then walks over to the mini-fridge and pulls out a bottle of apple juice. He walks to his desk and

takes out two glasses and a bottle of Jim Beam. He pours a glass of whiskey for Alan and pours himself a glass of apple juice.

ALAN

Whitey never drinks alcohol.

Mr. B. pours Alan another drink and points to the chair. Alan sheepishly sits down.

MR. B.

You need to behave yourself. We have the girls...Remember?

ALAN

Yes, I do.

(beat)

MR. B.

There's some great stories out there, like Bush lying about the WMDs or the church and child abuse scandal. Instead... You want to do a story about some hood missing for eleven years?

ALAN

He isn't just some hood. He got away with it all! He played the Feds against each other...and the Italian mob...and Southie-

MR. B.

What would you do for his story?...How far would you go?

ALAN

I'm here, aren't I? I'll do whatever it takes.

MR. B.

Whatever it takes?

ALAN

Well yeah...Within reason.

MR. B.

Suppose you had to do whatever it takes to get the story...To succeed...To be known...Would you?

ALAN

Yes I would.

MR. B.

Are you sure about that?

ALAN

I'm sure!

MR. B.

You'd have to break some rules. Maybe hurt a few people.

ALAN

What's your point?

MR. B.

Maybe that's what this Whitey guy did. Maybe he had to do whatever was necessary to survive, to protect his neighborhood.

ALAN

You killed people...He killed-

MR. B.

I protected what was mine! My territory! My friends! Their families! What do you know about anything?

ALAN

I know that you-

MR. B.

I consolidated power! Hell, this country does it all the time. We go to war to protect our interests...Or what we think belongs to us...Christ, American corporations take over countries for the same reason.

ALAN

That's different!

MR. B.

Are you that naïve? I heard there were over three thousand Iraqi civilians killed in the invasion of Baghdad. For what? Oil? It's Vietnam again, isn't it?

ALAN

That doesn't make what you did right-whatever you are.

MR. B.

No one's innocent, son. Only God's fingers are clean.

ALAN

I'm not like you...Not even close. I don't kill people. And I sure as hell don't sell drugs.

MR. B.

Oh really. But you'll vote for a president who'll start a war that kills people. If you ever bought grass, you bought it from my suppliers. And if my people didn't sell coke or grass, you and your yuppie friends wouldn't be able to party. You're guilty!

ALAN

So maybe we got lazy...We got dependent on people like you.

MR. B.

(shouts)

Dependent! The world needs people like me. It's always needed people like me. That's capitalism! The free enterprise system! It's the American way. I grease the wheels...People get their cuts. Everyone is happy. That's how Vegas was built. That's how the economy works.

(walks around Alan)

You don't think the Rockefellers or the J.P. Morgan's knew this? And you don't think they killed people to build their empires? C'mon, are you stupid? They broke strikes...Killed demonstrators...Starved workers to death, and the law was on their side. You're not innocent, son.

ALAN

Are you done with your sermon on the mount?

MR. B.

You want your interview, don't you?

ALAN

Not like this.

MR. B.

Well, that's tough...Let's look at the government's war on drugs.

ALAN

Oh Christ!

MR. B.

Shut up and listen! Millions of dollars have been given to Central and South American governments, to paramilitary groups, so they can slaughter peasants...destroy their villages...And take their land for corporate development.

(shouts)

There's your war on drugs!

ALAN

I didn't know, in your absence you'd developed into Mahatma Ghandi!

MR. B.

(to desk, slams it)

Not everything is what it appears to be! Southie was in chaos before your Whitey took over. There were murders, assaults, rapes, B and Es. Drug dealers were killing one another and their customers. No family was safe until I took over...And brought order.

ALAN

Sure you brought order...and your own kind of horror and tyranny.

MR. B.

It's not that simple.

ALAN

Sometimes it is...You are Whitey Bulger!

MR. B.

Maybe, maybe not. But you have a mouth on you.

ALAN

I don't like being taught ethics by someone like you.

MR. B.

(slams desk again)

Shut up and understand something!

(sits on desk)

You're so naïve. I bet you're the whole earth tree hugger type.

ALAN

What?

MR. B.

What do you see when you walk through the woods? Beautiful nature...Plants and trees living in harmony. Well, that's crap! They're all viciously competing for light and space. Some plants destroy each other to survive. It's the law of nature!

ALAN

We're not plants!

MR. B.

No, we're not. But everyone has their gray area...A moment when the line is crossed.

ALAN

Look, I'm tired of your philosophies.

(rises, to door, turns)

I'd like to think we're capable of being better than that.

(reaches for door)

MR. B.

I'll just call Mike.

ALAN

That's your style, isn't it?

MR. B.

You will sit down and listen.

(Alan shakes head, to chair

Sits)

How far would you go to protect "what's yours"

ALAN

I don't know...But I wouldn't-

MR. B.

That's an honest reply.

(pours another juice)

ALAN

I wouldn't hurt anyone.

MR. B.

(quickly)

Let's say you're with your girlfriend. You leave your favorite restaurant...You've had a great meal. You walk toward your brand new Honda Accord.

ALAN

I can't afford-

MR. B.

Whatever! You're walking to your car. And from a distance you see a guy walking over to it. He starts scratching it with a rock. He smashes the back window. What would you do?

ALAN

I'd probably call the police.

MR. B.

Is that all?

ALAN

Yell at him, I guess.

MR.B.

And after you yell at him he comes running over to you with the rock still in his hand.

ALAN

I don't know...I'd run...We'd run.

MR. B.

This guy is faster.

ALAN

I'd protect myself...Protect her.

MR. B.

Would you kill him?

ALAN

It would be self defense...Maybe...I don't know.

MR. B.

So you're angry and afraid.

ALAN

I'd subdue him...

MR. B.

The truth is, the guy's angry because the poor slob bought a car just like yours. Turns out it was a lemon and he parked it right behind your car. An hour earlier he'd gone into a bar and gotten drunk. When he came out he started bashing his own car, not yours. Of course, you're screaming at him because you think it's your car he's smashing. He comes charging at you from across the street, yelling. You meet him halfway, screaming.

(shouts)

If you had a gun you'd probably kill him.

ALAN

(rises)

No, I wouldn't. What's the point.

MR. B.

As I said: things aren't always as they seem.

ALAN

And I told you-I'm not like you.

MR. B.

(rises)

Given the right conditions, you could hurt-even kill!

ALAN

You killed your girlfriend and over twenty people!

MR. B.

(shouts; slams desk)

You think so!?

ALAN

You're a monster!..Some people think about what they do. They have a conscience.

MR. B.

(shouts)

You sound like a broken record!

There is a knock on the door. Mike enters.

MIKE

Is everything all right, Mr. B.?

MR. B.

(irritated)

It's okay. Just go away.

Mike goes out and quietly closes the door.

MR. B. (cont'd)

Maybe there's a little of your Whitey in all of us.

ALAN

That's ridiculous.

MR. B.

Sure, everyone's a little like me one way or another. You want your precious story. You'd risk your life for it. For what? A little glory? Power?

ALAN

I'd like to leave now. Where's Reva and-

MR. B.

(takes out gun; aims at Alan)

If I was Whitey I would have killed you by now.

ALAN

But you are Whitey!

Mr. B. cocks the trigger of the gun. Alan puts his arms up to protect himself. Mr. B. pulls the trigger. There's a loud click; Alan lets out a deep sigh.

MR. B.

I'm just kidding around. I always leave one chamber empty.

ALAN

(rises, shaking with rage)

What's your problem?

MR. B.

(still aiming gun)

You need to learn a little fear, son. Respect and fear.

ALAN

You're crazy!

MR. B.

(shouts)

If you want to leave hear alive, sit down!

ALAN

(sits)

I just don't understand-

MR. B.

Of course you don't. The Romans knew how to do it. They ruled for a thousand years using fear to create order.

(yells)

Fear breeds respect. You and your friends come poking around with a blind desire for a great story. That was dumb. People have been killed for less. I could have killed you and your friends an hour ago. And the world wouldn't have blinked.

ALAN

That's always your solution.

MR. B.

If I was Whitey cornered, I'd have no choice.

(beat)

Where are you from?

ALAN

Why?

MR. B.

I said, where are you from?

ALAN

Ann Arbor.

MR. B.

Michigan...I bet your father's a lawyer.

ALAN

A doctor.

MR. B.

And your mother?

ALAN

A real estate agent.

MR. B.

I'm sure they did a great job protecting you from all the problems of the world. All the boogey men.

ALAN

They were good parents.

MR. B.

Loving parents...Well, that's the key, isn't it, son? Love...Support. We're all molded by our environment, aren't we? Peer pressure and all that.

ALAN

I don't know. I-

MR. B.

Of course you wouldn't. I, on the other hand, grew up in a rough environment. I had to be tough to survive. There were fights...beatings.

ALAN

Maybe.

MR. B.

We adapt to our surroundings. It's a matter of survival.

ALAN

What about your brothers? They weren't mobsters.

MR. B.

(raises voice)

You don't know the full story, do you?

ALAN

(raises voice)

You had a choice.

MR B.

What if being a mobster was the only thing I was good at? What if everything fell into place as if it was meant to be...As if there was no other choice?

ALAN

You mean fate?...I don't believe in it.

MR. B.

People looked to me to make decisions, to give protection.
People felt safe in my neighborhood.

ALAN

But you were still a-

MR. B.

(rapidly)

You don't understand. Southie was a mess. I stepped
in...Took control. Nothing went on without my permission.
Every player had to pay tribute to me. And you know what,
son? I helped poor families. Gave them turkeys, paid old
ladies rents. Gave sneakers to the project kids. I even
settled family arguments.

ALAN

Sure. You were a real Mother Teresa.

MR. B.

(moves to Alan)

Listen to you...Mr. Fearless Reporter.

ALAN

I heard you liked underage girls. And got those sneakered
kids hooked on drugs.

(Mr. B. slaps him)

Are you going to kill me now?

MR. B.

(walks around Alan)

You know, in the old days neighborhoods revolved around one
man who wielded great power. They were charismatic
figures...The great patriarchs. They acquired jobs for
immigrants, organized workers, helped people who were loyal
to them.

ALAN

And if you didn't go along with it, you didn't work. If you
challenged them, you wound up dead.

MR. B.

It's no different than your corporate world...If you're not
a team player, you get downsized. Lives are damaged.
Families have to relocate...Office politics is full of
backstabbing. Everyone is competing for a top position.
Some people kill themselves after they're laid off. No, I

Mr. B (cont'd)
think it's worse. With people like me, you know who's boss,
you know the rules...And you know you're place.

ALAN
You kill your competitors!

MR. B.
We take care of our neighborhood and families.

ALAN
You rule with fear!

MR. B.
Trust and respect!

ALAN
(shouts)
And fear!

MR. B.
Fear becomes respect! People are afraid of power. They need
to be controlled. They are given chances to be loyal.
(shouts)
Mike, come in here!

Mike enters.

ALAN
Oh, c'mon. You're not going to do this prove your loyalty
crap.

MR. B.
Why not! Mike take out your gun and aim it at your head.
(Mike does)
On the count of three pull the trigger. One...Two...Stop!

ALAN
What a dumb movie cliché.

MR. B.
(quickly)
Aim your gun at the kid and shoot now!

MIKE
(hesitates)
Mr. B...I don't-

MR. B.

(shouts)

I said shoot!

ALAN

You bastard!

Mike pulls the trigger. There is a click.

ALAN (cont'd)

(laughs bitterly)

You never seem to have bullets, do you!

MR. B.

You can go now, Mike.

Mike looks a little critically at Mr. B. and leaves.

MR. B. (cont'd)

Fear is the great equalizer. People need to be afraid. At the same time, they need someone to keep them safe. That's why Reagan did so well. He was everybody's pleasant looking father figure. He projected this "everything's going to be all right" look. Meanwhile, he started a Star Wars "first strike" program...And funded a war against the Nicaraguans. Hell, he made more people homeless than the Great Depression.

Mr. B. walks over to Alan with his hand in his pocket and stares intensely at him.

MR. B. (cont'd)

I can see you're grateful you're not dead.

ALAN

I fear you, yes, but...

MR. B.

You're half way there. My school was the street. It was my college and my church. The stupid learn quickly one way or another.

(sits on desk)

Mr. B (cont'd)

Life is a powerful struggle. It's that simple. Everyone is positioning to get their share. You do favors for me and I expect to do favors in return. Everybody does this...Even kids.

(beat)

So what do you want from life?

ALAN

Are you kidding!? What do you care?...You've been torturing me!

MR. B.

You're right. I get carried away...But I really want to know...What's your dream?

ALAN

Stop intimidating me!

MR. B.

All right. I promise.

ALAN

I don't believe you're capable of keeping a promise.

MR. B.

You're gonna have to trust me...So what's your dream?

(beat)

ALAN

(controlled anger)

Every journalist wants a Pulitzer.

MR. B.

(paces around Alan; quickly)

The deal is-I've said it before-you have to know you're place. Play the game, stick with the strongest. Fight along with them to keep your position. Trust no one. Show no fear, but respect your superiors. Make everything you do a calculated move until your time comes...These are good old American business tactics.

ALAN

But I-

MR. B.

(continues pacing)

Never betray someone who has the power to destroy you. When you're ready, and you'll know, make your move. I could have killed you in a second. No one would have known what happened. You'd just be alligator food. But I've already calculated the advantage and disadvantage of keeping you alive. So far it's to my advantage to keep your heart beating.

ALAN

I...I-

MR. B.

That's right, son. Feel the fear. Let it sink in.

(shouts)

Am I your Whitey Bulger?

ALAN

(shouts)

No!

MR. B.

(shouts)

Say it again!

ALAN

(shouts)

No!

MR. B.

That's right. I could be saving your life.

(beat)

There was this silly little writer who wanted to write a play about me. He didn't understand the meaning of fear and respect.

ALAN

Did you kill him?

MR. B.

I told him this isn't a James Cagney musical, for Crissakes. It's real life.

(sarcastically)

A play about me! Who could play me? I'm a complex man. I don't want my life on Broadway.

(beat)

Mr. B. (cont'd)

Did I kill him? Remember what I told you? Every move I make has its reasons. You figure it out.

ALAN

(nervously)

People would die for that kind of celebrity attention.

MR. B.

(looks fearful)

Yeah, me and Jerry Springer. Everyone want a piece of me these days. Some law enforcement folks would lose big time if Whitey Bulger was caught...Including a few politicians. Yeah, there are a bunch of people who want me dead, including the Italian mob. I guess I don't blame them.

(becomes somber and reflective)

ALAN

You're definitely in a corner.

MR. B.

Maybe I could have done things differently...I don't know.

ALAN

You said yourself, it was fate.

MR. B.

(still reflective)

Do you have a philosophy?

ALAN

I don't know...I guess.

MR. B.

You have to believe in something.

ALAN

I believe in friendship.

MR. B.

Friendship-that's good. You're going to need that devotion to your friends soon enough.

He looks at his watch. There is a knock at the door and Mike enters.

MIKE

Mr. B., the girls are getting restless.

ALAN

(jumps up)

Let me see them.

MR. B.

(shouts)

Sit down! Haven't you learned anything?

(throws handcuffs to Mike)

Handcuff him!

ALAN

I won't do anything, I promise.

Mike wrestles with Alan. As Alan continues to struggle, he is handcuffed. Mike escorts him to the chair and forces him to sit.

MR. B.

(slams desk, shouts)

Now shut up and wait!

BLACKOUT

End of Act Two

Act III

Reva and Teri are escorted blindfolded and handcuffed into Mr. B's office. Teri is obviously nervous. Alan is relieved to see them. Mike is standing behind the two women. Mr. B. is sitting behind his desk. Alan addresses Reva and Teri.

ALAN

Are you guys all right?!

REVA

Alan!...Are you hurt?

ALAN

I'm okay.

MR. B.

You see, that's what it's all about...Loyalty.

TERI

(whispers to Reva)

It's over for us.

MR. B.

(looks at Teri)

What did you say?

TERI

Nothing.

MR. B.

I don't like liars and I hate whisperers.

TERI

I said it's over for us. You're probably going to kill-

REVA

This wasn't our agreement! You said you were living next door.

MR. B.

Where are my manners Mike...Take those blindfolds off.

*Mike begins to remove the
blindfolds.*

REVA

What about the handcuffs?

MR. B.

Sorry, but they have to stay on for a while. You can't be too careful.

Reva and Teri rush to Alan's side.

REVA

Did he hurt you?

ALAN

(whispers)

No...he's just crazy. What about you guys?

REVA

We're all right.

TERI

Man, we were worried!

MR. B.

Excuse me!

*Reva, Teri and Alan suddenly stop
talking.*

MR. B. (cont'd)

Reva, sit! You too, Teri.

(they both sit down)

I apologize for the wait. I trust your ride over here was comfortable.

TERI

A. It was a little stressful, and B.-

REVA

You tricked us!

MR. B.

I had my reasons.

REVA

We could have done without the extra drama...and the blindfold thing-

MR. B.

They say being blindfold heightens your senses. I tried it myself. It definitely gives you a better understanding of what the "blind" experience...Eyesight is precious.

ALAN

What do you know about precious!

MR. B.

I see you still haven't learned your manners!

REVA

(nervous silence)

Sir, did anyone tell you...You bear an uncanny resemblance to that actor...Ahhh! Sir Laurence Olivier.

MR. B.

(irritated)

I've never been told that.

ALAN

(blurts out)

I want to know if you felt anything when you killed those people.

Mr. B. Glares at Alan.

MIKE

(interrupts)

Mr. B., may I go now?

MR. B.

No, Mike, stay a while.

REVA

(nervously addressing Mr. B.)

It must be difficult being on the run...Living in secret.

MR. B.

(glares at Alan, slowly rises)

As, I said before, son, I killed them to protect my power. I don't kill randomly. You think in black and white...right and wrong. It's not that simple. Life is full of gray areas. Shadow choices.

ALAN

I don't think your victims thought about gray areas when you shot them.

REVA

(gently kicks Alan)

You know, sir, you have a great office space here.

Mr. B. takes his gun from underneath the newspaper and points it at Alan.

MR. B.

You haven't learned respect, have you!

REVA

(rises)

You don't want to do that!

TERI

Please don't, Mr. B. He'll behave.

ALAN

Go ahead!

REVA

Shut up, Alan.

(pleads with Mr. B.)

Mr. B, he's really a good guy. You don't want to-

MR. B.

Good has nothing to do with it. He doesn't know when to shut up, do you!

ALAN

(controlled anger)

No, I guess not.

Mr. B.

You gotta learn your place in the world. Right, Mike?

MIKE
(slightly nervous)

Yes, sir!

MR. B.
See...Mike has been loyal to me for a long time. He'd do anything I ask. Isn't that right, Mike?

MIKE
(softly)
Yes, Mr. B.

MR. B.
(loudly)
What?

MIKE
(loudly)
Yes, sir, I would!

MR. B.
Here is a man who hasn't changed in twenty years. Have you?

MIKE
No. No, I haven't.

MR. B.
(points gun at Mike)
You know how I hate liars.

Alan and Teri suddenly stand up.

MIKE
I'm not lyin'.

MR. B.
I heard otherwise.

Alan moves slowly toward Mr. B. Mr. B stares at Alan and shouts.

MR. B. (cont'd)
Sit down!...All of you sit!
(they do)

TERI

Mr. B., we don't-

MR. B.

Shut up!

(to Mike)

I hear you want to sell me out.

MIKE

I wouldn't do that to you!

MR. B.

Maybe you'd take extra money from an interview or maybe you'd sell me to the Feds.

REVA

Mr. B., I don't think he'd do that.

MR. B.

What do you know?

TERI

(nervously)

We talked with him, Mr. B...He seems very loyal.

MR. B.

Shut up!

(to Mike)

I know you're trying to sell me out!

MIKE

I can't argue with you.

MR. B.

It's true then!

MIKE

I'm tired...That's all.

MR. B.

Tired of what? What!

MIKE

Tired of you! Tired of not feeling anything. Tired of being treated like shit.

MR. B.

So you're going soft on me...Growin' a conscience?

MIKE

I've given you twenty years of my life. I've done things...
Horrible things.

MR. B.

That's the way it's supposed to be.

MIKE

I have a wife and-

MR. B.

So what?...You turned your back on that a long time ago.

Reva and Alan are sitting on the edge of their chairs, poised to charge Mr. B. They keep bending into position. Mr. B. addresses them.

MR. B. (cont'd)

Don't move!

Mike is trying to put his hand in his jacket to grab his gun. Mr. B. shouts at Mike.

MR. B. (cont'd)

Put your hand down!

Mike removes his hand and lowers his arm.

MR. B. (cont'd)

It's a little too late to be thinking of your family, isn't it!?

MIKE

You did whatever you wanted to do.

MR. B.

That's right-I did.

MIKE

Well, I'm sick of taking care of your messes. And now you want me to hurt these kids?

Mr. B. slightly lowers the gun. He talks with affection.

MR. B.

Mike, we've had some good times together, haven't we?

MIKE

Yeah, we did.

MR. B.

Remember those two Feds chasing us in Southie? They were looking all over the goddam place.

MIKE

(chuckles)

Yeah.

MR. B.

And there we were standing behind them chowing down on hot dogs.

MIKE

Yeah. I remem-

Mr. B. shoots Mike. Mike falls. Alan and Reva rush Mr. B. Teri runs to Mike. Mr. B. points the gun at Reva. Alan grabs Mr. B. but is struck on the head with a gun butt.

Alan falls to his knees. Mr. B. points the gun at Reva again. He shouts.

MR. B.

I'm not going to tell you again! Sit down!

Reva retreats. Mr. B., still pointing his gun, takes a small blue bottle and a wool cloth from his desk.

REVA

Are you gonna kill us?

MR. B.

Maybe, maybe not. You won't know until you stop. Just get back there and sit.

(she does, he shouts)

And you...

(to Teri, indicates chair)

...get over there...You can't do anything for him.

TERI

(shouts)

You killed your bodyguard!

Teri walks back to the chair and sits. Alan remains stunned. Still pointing the gun at Reva and Teri, Mr. B. pours a clear liquid into the wool cloth using his free hand. He swiftly holds the cloth over Alan's nose and mouth. Reva and Teri stand up looking horrified. Alan sinks into unconsciousness.

MR. B.

Don't worry...It's only chloroform. Looks like he's finally learned to keep quiet.

REVA

You bastard!

MR. B.

What?

REVA

You assho-

MR. B.

(shouts)

Both of you come here and carry him back to his seat.

(they hesitate)

Now!

They walk over to Alan and carry him to the sofa.

MR. B. (cont'd)

Good!...He'll be out for a while. And you didn't talk to each other. That's good!...You're learning your place.

*He pours himself some apple juice
and quickly drinks it.*

REVA

I was told you had manners.

TERI

(nudges Reva)

Shhhhh.

REVA

No, I don't care.

TERI

(whispers)

He will kill us.

MR. B.

You should listen to your friend.

REVA

(stares at Teri)

He'll kill us anyway.

MR. B.

Aren't you the pessimist.

REVA

(to Teri)

Can't you see he's toying with us?

TERI

Just don't provoke him.

REVA

What do you say...Can you take the cuffs off?

MR. B.

No. You haven't earned it.

(pours more juice)

Have some juice!

TERI

(bitterly)

No, thank you.

MR. B.

A healthy body is very important.

REVA

Look, Mr. B., we gave you a five hundred thousand dollar check for an interview, with another five hundred thousand coming. Is this how you treat your guests?

MR. B.

Oh yes...What's your name?...Wait.

(puts hand up)

Reva. I wanted to ask you about that.

(takes out check)

Five hundred thousand from your personal account? You must be making damn good money as a reporter!

REVA

The newspaper backs the check.

TERI

(nervously)

We've written some great exposés in the past.

MR. B.

(laughs)

You've got to be kidding! What's the name of your paper?

REVA

(nervously)

The Times-The New York Times.

TERI

We've worked freelance for-

MR. B.

(slams gun on desk)

That's a lie!

REVA

No it isn't.

MR. B.

(shouts)

You're lying!

(to Teri)

I know about Miss Obits.

(stares at Reva)

But you...You, I don't know anything about.

REVA

(rapidly)

Me! What do you want to know? What? I'm a waitress. I've worked as a waitress for five years. I had to quit college in my second year...What else? What else do you want to know? My life is going nowhere.

(slowly; with emphasis)

But I am a writer! A damn good writer. And now an asshole like you is going to kill me...You're going to kill us all!

MR. B.

It's nice to be good at something.

REVA

(rises; moves to Mr. B.)

You know what? You're not worth it...You're not worth the compromise. You're not worth selling my soul. I mean, who are you? What are you?

TERI

(rises; grabs Reva)

What are you doing?

(turns to Mr. B.)

Why don't you stop picking on her? Haven't you done enough? Haven't you killed enough people?

(they back off)

MR. B.

(laughs)

Whatever gave you the idea I was worth it? I'm a gangster. But I'm also a businessman. I've killed people and I've helped others. Let God figure it out. You want your interview? I'll give it to you.

TERI

(nervously)

Can I record what you say?

REVA

(to Teri)

Are you crazy? Look what he's done!

TERI

(grabs Reva)

Remember, you said we'd come this far...We have! And we can do it! You're going to have to trust me now.

REVA

I don't think he's worth it.

MR. B.

Excuse me! Are you done?...No recording. Just keep quiet and listen.

Reva and Teri sit. Mr. B. gets up and walks around them.

MR. B. (cont'd)

I wanted to disappear but no, everyone's become fascinated with me! Why is that? For justice? Maybe...But some people think I'm a hero. Why? Because I got away with it? Because I played the Feds against the Italian mob and got away with murder? Maybe...There are people in Southie that hate the government. They distrust outsiders. They're poor, struggling families. If you can beat the system, folks admire that.

TERI

So you think some people see you as a folk hero.

MR. B.

That's right. The rebel who played by his own rules...The wise guy who beat the system.

TERI

It's a sick world.

MR. B.

Yeah, maybe. But people are fascinated by horror and murder. The silence of the Lambs. Charlie Manson. They want to be close to it-to the power of it. The ultimate fate. You came for a reason.

REVA

I came...I came because I hated my job. I'm sick of being unappreciated. I wanted a chance-

TERI

We both wanted a chance to change our lives...To get out of the rat race...We wanted to make a difference. Do something important.

MR. B.

And I was going to do that for you?

REVA

Yes.

MR. B.

And maybe you were just a little fascinated by me?

REVA

I'm ashamed to say I was. But you're just an animal. You're-

TERI

(glares at Reva)

What are you saying!

MR. B.

(laughs)

So, what did you expect? A kindly middle aged mobster? Or maybe a Don Corleone sitting in a chair cracking walnuts?

REVA

(rises)

I expected a little decency...a little kindness. I expected not to be killed.

Reva moves toward Mr. B. He grabs his gun and points it at her. Teri grabs Reva.

MR. B.

(to Teri)

Get her back there!

(Teri pulls Reva back)

TERI

So why did you kill those people?

MR. B.
Don't you listen? As I told him...
(points to Alan)
...And you...My control was threatened...and Southie needed me.

TERI
How can you say that?

MR. B.
It's true...Southie needed me. The cops and Feds needed me. Society will always need people like me. I'm a part of the system. And Reva, honey, you needed me to make your career.

REVA
You bastard!

MR. B.
(slams desk)
I'd like some respect!

TERI
Reva!

MR. B.
(raises voice)
Southie was overrun by drug dealers. Crime was out of control. I stopped it all. No one did anything without my permission. And loyal people got their share. The cops... The Feds...Politicians...Even the church. I greased a lot of wheels. Everyone was happy. Everyone looked the other way. And it worked. Business was done this way for years with the Italians. It was good for a long time until-

REVA
Until what?

MR. B.
Until the Italian mob was finished. Then the heat fell on me. Important people I was taking care of were investigated. They turned states evidence. Then I became a public enemy...Ungrateful bastards.

TERI
You left a pile of bodies behind. You didn't think it would eventually catch up with you?

MR. B.

I told you what I had to do for control.

TERI

To build your empire!

(Mr. B. Glares at her)

REVA

(protecting Teri)

Leave her out of this.

(struts to Mr. B.)

TERI

Reva, don't!

REVA

I can handle this.

(to Mr. B.)

I know people like you. I've always known people like you. You want to rule the world, kill everything that gets in the way of your destiny. Well, Mister, your day is over.

Reva spits in Mr. B.'s face. Mr. B. grabs his gun, points it at Reva and cocks it. Reva yells.

REVA (cont'd)

Go ahead, shoot!

Teri runs over and steps in front of Reva, blocking Mr. B.'s view. Reva pushes Teri aside. Suddenly Alan moans and Mr. B. is temporarily distracted. Reva, still handcuffed, suddenly grabs Mr. B.'s hands. They struggle with the gun. Teri pushes Mr. B. by jumping over the desk. Reva follows.

REVA (cont'd)

Go ahead, you son of a bitch! You asshole!

Mr. B. gains control of the gun. Teri backs off. Reva steps back about two feet. Alan groans, Teri rushes over to him.

MR. B.

(to Reva, still pointing gun)
I think we're alike in some ways.

REVA

I'll never be like you!

ALAN

(regains consciousness)
What happened?

TERI

(kneels by Alan)
He knocked you out with chloroform.

ALAN

(groggily)
Man! My head hurts!

REVA

He hit you with his gun.

TERI

Do you remember?

ALAN

Yeah, I'm beginning to. And we're still alive.

MR. B.

Have you learned any respect while you were away from us?

ALAN

(pained)
No, I don't think so.

MR. B.

You're a slow learner, son.

ALAN

(rises groggily)
People know we're in town.

MR. B.

C'mon, it doesn't work for you.

TERI

So you're just going to shoot us.

ALAN

(goes to desk, holds head)

Yeah, didn't you know, we'll be the next statistic in the Whitey Bulger story?

Alan suddenly falls to the floor. Mr. B. is distracted. In a second, Reva knocks the gun from Mr. B.'s hand. Mr. B. jumps over the desk and Reva follows. They wrestle on the floor for the gun, but this time Reva gains control of the weapon. She quickly points it at Mr. B. who is still sitting on the floor.

REVA

You stay right there, you son of a bitch. Don't move!

Mr. B. rises

TERI

Alan's all right. Let's get out of here!

ALAN

Just a dizzy spell.

Mr. B. moves closer to Reva; Alan is still on the floor. Reva takes some deep breaths. Mr. B. moves a little closer. Reva wraps both hands tightly around the gun.

REVA

So, now what, Mr. Crime Boss. What are you going to do?

ALAN

Let me have him!

TERI

(Restrains Alan)

Don't get up!

Reva looks at Alan. Mr. B. lunges toward Reva. She jerks back and shouts.

REVA

You stay right there, goddamit!

MR. B.

You don't have it in you to shoot me.

REVA

Look at you. You're not such a tough guy without you're stupid gun.

TERI

We gotta get the handcuffs off. Let's go!

MR. B.

(moves slowly to Reva)

You can't pull the trigger.

(closer)

You need ice cold resolve.

(closer)

No emotion.

*Teri rushes over and hits Mr. B.
hard in the face. Mr. B. falls.*

ALAN

Yeah girl! Hit him again! You want loyalty...Here's loyalty.

(screams)

Hit him again!

*Teri, still standing over Mr. B.,
raises her handcuffed hands.*

REVA

(shouts at Teri)

Don't waste your energy! He's not worth it!

TERI

(to Mr. B.)

Give us the key to the handcuffs.

*Mr. B. fumbles in his pocket for
the key and hands it to her. She
unlocks her and Alan's handcuffs.*

MR. B.
I have something to tell you.

ALAN
(rises; staggers to desk)
I want a piece of him!

*Alan grabs the gun from Reva,
turns the gun around, raises the
gun butt to hit the cowering
Mr. B.*

REVA
Do you want to be like him? Do you? That's exactly what he
wants.

ALAN
He deserves it!

MR. B.
(begins to rise)
Remember what I said? Given the right conditions-

ALAN
Shut up! Don't you move.
(raises arm to strike)

REVA
(gently)
Please don't do this.

ALAN
No! He's gotta know how it feels!

MR. B.
(smiles)
Hey, Mike!

*Reva, Alan and Teri turn in shock
to see Mike pointing a gun in
Alan's and Mr. B.'s direction.*

MIKE
(holds side; pained smile)
Hi Folks!

MR. B.

I see you have your gun.

Mr. B. stands up and straightens his clothes. Alan keeps the gun aimed at Mr. B.

ALAN

He doesn't have bullets.

MIKE

You want to test me?

REVA

(to Mike)

So, what are you going to do?

Teri slips Reva the key. She unlocks her handcuffs.

MR. B.

Mike! Mikey boy. Just grab the gun from them.

MIKE

I don't think so, Whitey.

MR. B.

You don't think so.

(shouts)

You don't think so! After all these years I've taken care of you.

MIKE

You tried to kill me.

MR. B.

You betrayed me! You were disloyal! But that's over...You have a chance to turn it around.

MIKE

It's not about you anymore. You wanted to kill these kids! You wanted me to do it! It's over. They're going to leave.

MIKE (cont'd)

(turns gun toward Reva and Teri)

You're going to leave now.

REVA

Are you crazy? He tried to kill you.

MR. B.

You see, he's still loyal.

MIKE

(to Mr. B.)

Shut up!

(to others)

This is between Whitey and me.

REVA

He belongs to us!

MIKE

And what are you going to do? Turn him in?

REVA

Yes! That's exactly what we're going to do. Turn the bastard in!

TERI

(to Reva)

Look...We survived this. We made it through. Please, let it go.

(they embrace)

ALAN

He belongs to us!

MIKE

No! Count yourself lucky. No one ever walks away from Whitey.

MR. B.

That's my boy.

MIKE

Shut up, asshole!

Alan raises his fist to hit Mr. B. Mr. B. cowers. Reva grabs Alan's arm before he uses any real force. They stare sadly at each other as Reva lowers Alan's arm.

REVA

Let's get out of here.

Alan nods affirmatively. Reva gives Mr. B. a very contemptuous look.

REVA (cont'd)

I thought you had some class. But you don't. You are what you've always been...A frightened little mobster.

They start to leave with their arms around one another.

MR. B.

(shouts desperately)

If you want your precious stories, you're going to need people like me! We need each other! You hear me?

Reva, Teri and Alan are almost at the door. Alan gives Mike Mr. B.'s gun.

Teri breaks from her friends and rushes over to Mr. B. He cowers as Teri looks at him contemptuously.

TERI

Ya know, after a half hour around you, writing obits seems like a dream job.

MIKE

You better leave now. And don't look back. Find your way home...Forget about us.

REVA

What are you going to do...Shoot him?

MIKE

Don't worry about it. And thanks.

REVA

For what?

MIKE

For caring about me. No one cared about me for a long time. Get going. Hurry!

(grabs Reva's arm)

And don't give up on your dreams.

Alan and Teri exit. Reva, the last one to leave, turns to look at Mr. B., shakes her head in disgust and exits. Mike and Mr. B. stare at each other for a few minutes. Suddenly they break out in uncontrollable laughter. They slap each other on the back in appreciation.

MR. B.

Was I Whitey Bulger or what?

MIKE

(laughs)

You were amazing!

MR. B.

You think I was despicable enough?

(laughs)

MIKE

Oh yeah. Devious...Menacing! You were great!

MR. B.

Thanks.

(tempered laugh)

MIKE

One thing...We have to talk to the playwright about the dialogue in the second act. Our Mr. B. sounds a little too bleeding heart. I don't think he'd say all those enlightened things.

MR. B.

Yeah. I think you're right. I'm pretty sure the writer's a socialist. You know, maybe we should include the fact that when Whitey was in prison, the government experimented on him with LSD.

MIKE

That's a good idea! Hey, you were pretty rough on that Alan kid.

MR. B.

Look, I had to be convincing. I didn't want him chasing creeps like Whitey. But you're right, I was into my character a little too much. The kid pushed hard and I pushed back.

MIKE

You gotta watch those lawsuits. And that Teri! She gave you a good whack!

MR. B.

(rubs his face)

You're not kidding! She almost took my head off! But you! You really had 'em going!

MIKE

You don't think I acted too wimpy?

MR. B.

I'm telling you, the director will love your performance.

MIKE

Ya think so? I know I convinced the girls. But that Alan kid.

MR. B.

No, no. You were terrific-really.

MIKE

The play begins in two weeks?

MR. B.

Yeah.

MIKE

You think we have time to hook a few more fish?

MR. B.

I think so. But we have to find another place. You know what they say-

MR. B. & MIKE

Location is everything!

(they laugh uproariously)

BLACKOUT

THE END