

# **BURIED CHILD**

By Sam Shepard

**FINAL Script 12/12/2011**

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

DODGE

HALIE

TILDEN

BRADLEY

SHELLY

VINCE

FATHER DEWIS

## ACT ONE

*Scene: Day. Old wooden staircase down left with pale, frayed carpet laid down on the steps. The stairs lead offstage left up into the wings with no landing. Up right is an old, dark green sofa with the stuffing coming out in spots. Stage right of the sofa is an upright lamp with a faded yellow shade and a small night table with several small bottles of pills on it. Down right of the sofa, with the screen facing the sofa, is a large old-fashioned brown TV. A flickering blue light comes from the screen, but no image, no sound. In the dark, the light of the lamp and the TV slowly brighten in the black space. The space behind the sofa, upstage, is a large, screened-in porch with a board floor. A solid interior door to stage right of the sofa, leads from the porch to the outside. Beyond that are the shapes of dark elm trees.*

*Gradually the form of Dodge is made out, sitting on the couch, facing the TV, the blue light flickering on his face. He wears a well-worn T-shirt, suspenders, khaki work pants, and brown slippers. He's covered himself in an old brown blanket. He's very thin and sickly looking, in his late seventies. He just stares at the TV. More light fills the stage softly. The sound of light rain. Dodge slowly tilts his head back and stares at the ceiling for a while, listening to the rain. He lowers his head again and stares at the TV. He starts to cough slowly and softly. The coughing gradually builds. He holds one hand to his mouth and tries to stifle it. The coughing gets louder, then suddenly stops when he hears the sound of his wife's voice coming from the top of the staircase.*

**AMB LIGHT RAIN, OUTDOORS – PERHAPS PATTERNING THROUGH  
ONTO THE SCREENED-IN PORCH – TV WHITE NOISE IN BACKGROUND  
(FADES UNDER)**

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge? *(Dodge just stares at the TV. Long pause. He stifles two short coughs.)* Dodge! You want a pill, Dodge? *(He doesn't answer. TAKES A BOTTLE OUT FROM UNDER CUSHION OF SOFA, PULLS THE CORK and takes a long swig. PUTS THE BOTTLE BACK, stares at TV, pulls blanket up around his neck.)* You know what it is, don't you? It's the rain! Weather. That's it. Every time. Every time you get like this, it's the rain. No sooner does the rain start than you start. *(Pause)* Dodge? *(He makes no reply. PULLS A PACK OF CIGARETTES OUT FROM HIS SWEATER AND LIGHTS ONE. Stares at TV. Pause.)* You should see it coming down up here. Just coming down in sheets. Blue sheets. The bridge is pretty near flooded. What's it like down there? Dodge? *(Dodge turns his head back over his left shoulder and takes a look out through the porch. He turns back to the TV.)*

DODGE

*(To himself.)* Catastrophic.

HALIE'S VOICE

What? What'd you say, Dodge?

DODGE

*(Louder.)* It looks like rain to me! Plain old rain!

HALIE'S VOICE

Rain? Of course it's rain! Are you having a seizure or something! Dodge? *(Pause.)* I'm coming down there in about five minutes if you don't answer me!

DODGE

Don't come down.

HALIE'S VOICE

What!

DODGE

*(Louder.)* Don't come down! *(He has another coughing attack. Stops.)*

HALIE'S VOICE

You should take a pill for that! I don't see why you just don't take a pill. Be done with it once and for all. Put a stop to it. (**HE TAKES A BOTTLE OUT AGAIN. CORK. ANOTHER SWIG. RETURNS BOTTLE.**) It's not Christian, but it works. It's not necessarily Christian, that is. A pill. We don't know. We're not in a position to answer something like that. There's some things that ministers can't even answer. I, personally, can't see anything wrong with it. A pill. Pain is pain. Pure and simple. Suffering is a different matter. That's entirely different. A pill seems as good an answer as any. Dodge? (*Pause.*) Dodge, are you watching baseball?

DODGE

No.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*Louder.*) No! I'm *not* watching baseball.

HALIE'S VOICE

What are you watching? You shouldn't be watching anything that'll get you excited!

DODGE

Nothing gets me excited.

HALIE'S VOICE

No horse racing!

DODGE

They don't race here on Sundays.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*Louder.*) They don't race on Sundays!

HALIE'S VOICE

Well they shouldn't race on Sundays. The Sabbath.

DODGE

Well they don't! Not here anyway. The boondocks.

HALIE'S VOICE

Good. I'm amazed they still have that kind of legislation. Some semblance of morality. That's amazing.

DODGE

Yeah, it's amazing.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

*(Louder).* It is amazing!

HALIE'S VOICE

It is. It truly is. I would've thought these days they'd be racing on Christmas even. A big flashing Christmas tree right down at the finish line.

DODGE

*(Shakes his head.)* No. Not yet.

HALIE'S VOICE

They used to race on New Year's! I remember that.

DODGE

They never raced on New Year's!

HALIE'S VOICE

Sometimes they did.

DODGE

They never did!

HALIE'S VOICE

Before we were married they did!

DODGE

“Before we were married they did!” (*Dodge waves his hand in disgust at the staircase. Leans back in sofa. Stares at TV.*)

HALIE’S VOICE

I went once. With a man. On New Year’s.

DODGE

(*Mimicking her.*) Oh, a “man.”

HALIE’S VOICE

What?

DODGE

Nothing!

HALIE’S VOICE

A wonderful man. A breeder.

DODGE

A what?

HALIE’S VOICE

A breeder! A horse breeder! Thoroughbreds.

DODGE

Oh, thoroughbreds. Wonderful. You betcha. A breeder-man.

HALIE’S VOICE

That’s right. He knew everything there was to know.

DODGE

I bet he taught you a thing or two huh? Gave you a good turn around the old stable!

HALIE’S VOICE

Knew everything there was to know about horses. We won bookoos of money that day.

DODGE

What?

HALIE'S VOICE

Every single race.

DODGE

Bookoos of money?

HALIE'S VOICE

It was one of those kind of days.

DODGE

New Year's!

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes! It might've been Florida. Or California! One of those two.

DODGE

Can I take my pick?

HALIE'S VOICE

It was Florida!

DODGE

Aha!

HALIE'S VOICE

Wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! The sun was just gleaming. Flamingos. Bougainvilleas. Palm trees.

DODGE

*(To himself, mimicking her.)* Flamingos. Bougainvilleas. Palm trees.

HALIE'S VOICE

Everything was dancing with life! Colors. There were all kinds of people from everywhere. Everyone was dressed to the nines. Not like today. Not like they dress today. People had a sense of style.

DODGE

When was this anyway?

HALIE'S VOICE

This was long before I knew you.

DODGE

Must've been.

HALIE'S VOICE

Long before. I was escorted.

DODGE

To Florida?

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes. Or it might've been California. I'm not sure which.

DODGE

All that way you were escorted?

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes.

DODGE

And he never laid a finger on you I suppose? This gentleman breeder-man.  
(*Long silence.*) Halie? Are we still in the land of the living? (*No answer.*  
*Long pause.*)

HALIE'S VOICE

Are you going out today?

DODGE

(*Gesturing toward rain.*) In this rain?

HALIE'S VOICE

I'm just asking a simple question.

DODGE

I rarely go out in the bright sunshine, why would I go out in this?



HALIE'S VOICE

I'm just asking because I'm not doing any shopping today. And if you need anything you should ask Tilden.

DODGE

Tilden's not here!

HALIE'S VOICE

He's in the kitchen. (*Dodge looks toward L., then back toward TV.*)

DODGE

All right.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*Louder.*) All right! I'll ask Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

Don't scream. It'll only get your coughing started.

DODGE

Scream? Men don't scream.

HALIE'S VOICE

Just tell Tilden what you want and he'll get it. (*Pause.*) Bradley should be over later.

DODGE

Bradley?

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes. To cut your hair.

DODGE

My hair? I don't need my hair cut! I haven't hardly got any hair left!

HALIE'S VOICE

It won't hurt!

DODGE

I don't need it!

HALIE'S VOICE

It's been more than two weeks, Dodge.

DODGE

I don't need it! And I never did need it!

HALIE'S VOICE

I have to meet Father Dewis for lunch.

DODGE

You tell Bradley that if he shows up here with those clippers, I'll separate him from his manhood!

HALIE'S VOICE

I won't be very late. No later than four at the very latest.

DODGE

You tell him! Last time he left me near bald! And I wasn't even awake!

HALIE'S VOICE

That's not my fault!

DODGE

You put him up to it!

HALIE'S VOICE

I never did!

DODGE

You did too! You have some fancy, idiot house social planned! Time to dress up the corpse for company! Lower the ears a little! Put up a little front! Surprised you didn't tape a pipe to my mouth while you were at it! That woulda looked nice! Huh? A pipe? Maybe a bowler hat! Maybe a copy of the *Wall Street Journal* casually placed on my lap! A fat Labrador retriever at my feet.

HALIE'S VOICE

You always imagine the worst things of people!

DODGE

That's the least of the worst!

HALIE'S VOICE

I don't need to hear it! All day long I hear things like that and I don't need to hear more.

DODGE

You better tell him!

HALIE'S VOICE

Well he won't do it again.

DODGE

There's no guarantee. He's a snake, that one.

HALIE'S VOICE

I promise he won't do it without your consent.

DODGE

(*After a pause.*) There's no reason for him to even come over here.

HALIE'S VOICE

He feels responsible.

DODGE

For my hair?

HALIE'S VOICE

For your appearance.

DODGE

My appearance is out of his domain! It's even out of mine! In fact, it's disappeared! I'm an invisible man!

HALIE'S VOICE

Don't be ridiculous.

DODGE

He better not try it. That's all I've got to say.

HALIE'S VOICE

Tilden's the oldest. He'll protect you.

DODGE

Tilden can't even protect himself!

HALIE'S VOICE

Not so loud! He'll hear you. He's right in the kitchen.

DODGE

*(Yelling off L.)* Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge, what are you trying to do?

DODGE

*(Yelling off L.)* Tilden, get your ass in here!

HALIE'S VOICE

Why do you enjoy stirring things up?

DODGE

I don't enjoy anything!

HALIE'S VOICE

That's a terrible thing to say.

DODGE

Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

That's the kind of statement that leads people right to an early grave.

DODGE

Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

It's no wonder people have turned their backs on Jesus!

DODGE

TILDEN!!

HALIE'S VOICE

It's no wonder the messengers of God's word are shouting louder now than ever before. Screaming to the four winds.

*(Dodge goes into a violent, spasmodic coughing attack.)*

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge, if you don't take that pill nobody's going to force you. Least of all me. There's no honor in self-destruction. No honor at all.

DODGE

*(Between coughs.) TILDEN!!!! (Tilden enters from L., his arms loaded with fresh ears of corn.)*

**FX DOOR OPEN – RUSTLING OF CORN IN ARMS**

*(Tilden is Dodge's oldest son, late forties, wears heavy construction boots covered with mud, dark green work pants, a plaid shirt and a faded brown windbreaker. He has a butch haircut, wet from the rain. Something about him is profoundly burned-out and displaced. He stops C. with the ears of corn in his arms and just stares at Dodge until he slowly finishes his coughing attack. Dodge looks up at him slowly. Dodge stares at the corn. Long pause as they watch each other.)*

DODGE

*(To Tilden.)* Where'd you get that corn?

Picked it. TILDEN

You picked all that? DODGE

*(Nodding in assent.)* Mm. TILDEN

You expecting company? DODGE

No. TILDEN

Where'd you pick it from? DODGE

Right out back. TILDEN

Out back where! DODGE

Right out in back. TILDEN

There's nothing out there—in back. DODGE

There's corn. TILDEN

There hasn't been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! That's the last time I planted corn out there! DODGE

It's out there now. TILDEN

DODGE

*(Yelling at stairs.)* Halie!

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes dear! Have you come to your senses?

DODGE

Tilden's brought a whole bunch of sweet corn in here! There's no corn out back is there?

TILDEN

*(To himself.)* There's tons of corn.

HALIE'S VOICE

Not that I know of!

DODGE

That's what I thought.

HALIE'S VOICE

Not since about nineteen thirty-five!

DODGE

*(To Tilden.)* That's right. Nineteen thirty-five. That was the last of it.

TILDEN

It's out there now.

DODGE

You go and take that corn back to wherever you got it from!

TILDEN

*(After pause, staring at Dodge.)* It's picked. I picked it all in the rain. Once it's picked you can't put it back.

DODGE

I haven't had trouble with neighbors here for fifty-seven years. I don't even know who the neighbors are! And I don't wanna know! Now go put that corn back where it came from!

*(Tilden stares at Dodge. He walks slowly over to him.)*

TILDEN

Here. It's all yours.

*(TILDEN DUMPS ALL THE CORN OFF DODGE'S LAP and steps back. Dodge stares at the corn then back to Tilden. Long pause.)*

DODGE

Are you having trouble here, Tilden? Are you in some kind of trouble again?

TILDEN

I'm not in any trouble.

DODGE

You can tell me if you are. I'm still your father.

TILDEN

I know that.

DODGE

I know you had a little trouble back there in New Mexico. That's why you came out here. Isn't that the reason you came back?

TILDEN

I never had any trouble.

DODGE

Tilden, your mother told me all about it.

TILDEN

What'd she tell you?



DODGE

I don't have to repeat what she told me! She told me all about it!

TILDEN

Can I bring my chair in from the kitchen?

DODGE

What?

TILDEN

Can I bring in my chair from the kitchen?

DODGE

That's not a chair, it's a stool. Milking stool.

TILDEN

Can I bring it in here?

DODGE

Sure. Bring it in here. Bring it on in here. Just don't call it a chair when it's a stool.

*(Tilden exits L. **DODGE PUSHES ALL THE CORN OFF OF HIS LAP ONTO THE FLOOR.** He pulls the blanket off angrily and tosses it at one end of the sofa.)*  
Goddamn corn...

*(**HE PULLS OUT THE BOTTLE. CORK. TAKES ANOTHER SWIG.** Tilden enters again from L. with **A MILKING STOOL AND A PAIL, WHICH LOUDLY ANNOUNCE HIS REAPPEARANCE.** Dodge hides the bottle quickly under the cushion before Tilden sees it.*

DODGE

What's that pail for?

TILDEN

Shuckin'.

**TILDEN SETS THE STOOL DOWN BY THE SOFA, SITS ON IT, PUTS THE PAIL IN FRONT OF HIM ON THE FLOOR. TILDEN STARTS PICKING UP THE EARS OF CORN ONE AT A TIME AND HUSKING THEM. HE THROWS THE HUSKS AND**

**SILK IN THE CENTER OF THE STAGE AND DROPS THE EARS INTO THE PAIL EACH TIME HE CLEANS ONE. HE REPEATS THIS PROCESS AS THEY TALK.**

*After pause.*) Pretty good-lookin' corn.

TILDEN

Golden.

DODGE

Hybrid?

TILDEN

What?

DODGE

Some kinda fancy hybrid?

TILDEN

You planted it. I don't know what it is. *(Pause.)*

DODGE

I never planted it. *(Pause.)* Tilden, look, you can't stay here forever. You know that, don't you?

TILDEN

I'm not.

DODGE

I know you're not. I'm not worried about that. That's not the reason I brought it up.

TILDEN

What's the reason?

DODGE

The reason is I'm wondering what you're gonna do with yourself.

TILDEN

You're not worried about me, are you?

DODGE

I'm not worried about you. No. I'm just wondering.

TILDEN

You weren't worried about me when I wasn't here. When I was in New Mexico.

DODGE

No, I wasn't worried about you then either.

TILDEN

You shoulda worried about me then.

DODGE

Why's that? You didn't do anything down there, did you? Nothin' serious.

TILDEN

I didn't do anything. No.

DODGE

Then why should I have worried about you?

TILDEN

Because I was by myself.

DODGE

By yourself?

TILDEN

Yeah. I was by myself more than I've ever been before.

DODGE

Why was that? (*Pause.*)

TILDEN

Could I have some of that whiskey you've got?

DODGE

What whiskey? I haven't got any whiskey.

TILDEN

You've got some under the sofa.

DODGE

I haven't got anything under the sofa! Now mind your own damn business! Judas Priest, you come into the house outa the middle of nowhere, haven't heard or seen you in twenty-some years and suddenly you're making accusations.

TILDEN

I'm not making accusations.

DODGE

You're accusing me of hoarding whiskey under the sofa!

TILDEN

I'm not accusing you.

DODGE

You just got through telling me that I had whiskey under the sofa!

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge?

DODGE

*(To Tilden.)* Now she knows about it!

TILDEN

She doesn't know about it.

DODGE

She knows!

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge, are you talking to yourself down there?

DODGE

I'm talking to Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

Tilden's down there?

DODGE

He's right here!

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

*(Louder.)* He's right here!

HALIE'S VOICE

What's he doing?

DODGE

Don't answer her.

TILDEN

*(To Dodge.)* I'm not doing anything wrong.

DODGE

*(To Tilden.)* I know you're not.

HALIE'S VOICE

What's he doing down there!

DODGE

*(To Tilden.)* Don't answer. Whatever you do, don't answer her.

TILDEN

I'm not.

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge! (*The men sit in silence.* **DODGE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. TILDEN KEEPS HUSKING CORN.**) Dodge! He's not drinking anything is he? You see to it that he doesn't drink anything! You've gotta watch out for him. It's our responsibility. He can't look after himself anymore, so we have to do it. Nobody else will do it. We can't just send him away somewhere. If we had lots of money we could send him away. But we don't. We never will. That's why we have to stay healthy. You and me. Nobody's going to look after us. Bradley can't look after us. Bradley can hardly look after himself. I was always hoping that Tilden would look out for Bradley when they got older. After Bradley lost his leg. Tilden's the oldest. I had no idea in the world that Tilden would be so much trouble. Who would've dreamed. Tilden was an All-American, don't forget. Don't forget that. Fullback. Or quarterback. I forget which.

TILDEN

(*To himself.*) Halfback.

DODGE

Don't make a peep. Just let her babble. (**TILDEN GOES ON HUSKING.**)

HALIE'S VOICE

Then when Tilden turned out to be so much trouble, I put all my hopes on Ansel. Of course Ansel wasn't as handsome, but he was smart. He was the smartest probably. I think he probably was. Smarter than Bradley, that's for sure. Didn't go and chop his leg off with a chain saw. Smart enough not to go and do that. I think he was smarter than Tilden too. Especially after Tilden got in all that trouble. Doesn't take brains to go to jail. Anybody knows that. Course then when Ansel passed that left us all alone. Same as being alone. No different. Same as if they'd all died. He was the smartest. He could've earned lots of money. Lots and lots of money.

DODGE

Bookoos. (**HALIE ENTERS SLOWLY FROM THE TOP OF THE STAIRCASE** *as she continues talking. Just her feet are seen at first as she makes her way down the stairs a step at a time. She appears dressed completely in black, as though in mourning. Black handbag, hat with a veil, and pulling on elbow-length black gloves. She is about sixty-five with pure white hair. She remains absorbed in what she's saying as she descends the stairs and doesn't really*

*notice the two men who continue sitting there as they were before she came down, smoking and husking.)*

HALIE

He would've took care of us, too. He would've seen to it that we were repaid. He was like that. He was a hero. Don't forget that. A genuine hero. Brave. Strong. And very intelligent.

TILDEN

Ansel was a hero?

HALIE

Ansel could've been a great man. One of the greatest. I only regret that he didn't die in action. It's not fitting for a man like that to die in a motel room. A soldier. He could've won a medal. He could've been decorated for valor. I've talked to Father Dewis about putting up a plaque for Ansel. He thinks it's a good idea. He agrees. He knew Ansel was his favorite player. He even recommended to the City Council that they put up a statue of Ansel. A big, tall statue with a basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other. That's how much he thinks of Ansel.

TILDEN

Ansel was a hero?

DODGE

**(DODGE KICKS HIM.** *Under his breath:)* Shut up!

*(Halie reaches the stage and begins to wander around, still absorbed in pulling on her gloves, brushing lint off her dress and continuously talking to herself as the men just sit.)*

HALIE

Of course, he'd still be alive today if he hadn't married into the Catholics. The Mob. How in the world he never opened his eyes to that is beyond me. Just beyond me. Everyone around him could see the truth. Even Tilden. Tilden told him time and again. Catholic women are the Devil incarnate. He wouldn't listen.

TILDEN

I don't remember that. I must've been gone somewhere.

HALIE

He was blind with love. Blind. I knew. Everyone knew. The wedding was more like a funeral. You remember? All those Italians. All that horrible black, greasy hair. The rancid smell of cheap cologne. I think even the priest was wearing a pistol. When he gave her the ring I knew he was a dead man. I knew it. As soon as he gave her the ring. But then it was the honeymoon that killed him. The honeymoon. I knew he'd never come back from the honeymoon. *(She stops abruptly and stares at the corn husks. She looks around the space as though just waking up. She turns hard and looks hard at Tilden and Dodge who continue sitting calmly. She looks again at the corn husks. Pointing to the husks.)* What's this in my house! (**KICKS HUSKS.**) What's all this mess? Corn husks? *(Tilden stops husking and stares at her. To Dodge.)* And you, Dodge. You encourage him! (**DODGE PULLS BLANKET OVER HIMSELF AGAIN.**)

DODGE

You're going out in the rain for a little soiree.

HALIE

It's not raining now, is it. (**TILDEN STARTS HUSKING AGAIN.**)

DODGE

Not in Florida it's not.

HALIE

We're not in Florida!

DODGE

It's not raining at the racetrack.

HALIE

Have you been taking those pills? Those pills always make you talk crazy. Tilden, has he been taking those pills? Those teeny little blue pills.

TILDEN

He hasn't took anything.

HALIE

*(To Dodge.)* What've you been taking?



DODGE

It's not raining in California or Florida or at the racetrack. Only in Illinois. This is the only place it's raining. All over the rest of the world it's bright golden sunshine. (*Halie goes to the night table next to the sofa and CHECKS THE BOTTLE OF PILLS.*)

HALIE

Which pills did you take? Tilden, you must've seen him take something.

TILDEN

He never took a thing.

HALIE

Then why's he talking crazy?

DODGE

Crazy. Crazy, crazy, crazy.

TILDEN

I've been here the whole time.

HALIE

Then you've both been taking something!

TILDEN

I've just been husking the corn.

HALIE

Where'd you get that corn anyway? Why is the house suddenly full of corn?

DODGE

Bumper crop! Unexplainable.

HALIE

(*Moving C.*) We haven't had corn here for over thirty years.

TILDEN

The whole back lot's full of corn. Far as the eye can see. Like an ocean.

DODGE

*(To Halie.)* Things keep happening while you're upstairs, ya know. The world doesn't stop just because you're upstairs. Corn keeps growing. Rain keeps raining.

HALIE

I'm not unaware of the world around me! Thank you very much. It so happens that I have an overall view from the upstairs. A panorama. The backyard's in plain view of my window. And there's no corn to speak of. Absolutely none!

DODGE

Tilden wouldn't lie. If he says there's corn, there's corn.

HALIE

What's the meaning of this corn, Tilden!

TILDEN

It's a mystery to me. I was out in back there. And the rain was coming down. And I didn't feel like coming back inside. I didn't feel the cold so much. I didn't mind the wet. So I was just walking. I was muddy but I didn't mind the mud so much. And I looked up. And I saw this stand of corn. In fact I was standing in it. Surrounded. It was over my head.

HALIE

There isn't any corn outside, Tilden! There's no corn! It's not the season for corn. Now, you must've either stolen this corn or you bought it.

DODGE

He doesn't have a red cent to his name. He's totally dependent.

HALIE

*(To Tilden.)* So you stole it!

TILDEN

I didn't steal it. I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois. I was kicked out of New Mexico and I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois.

HALIE

You're going to get kicked out of this house, Tilden, if you don't tell me where you got that corn! (*Tilden starts crying softly to himself but keeps husking corn. Pause.*)

DODGE

(*To Halie.*) Why'd you have to tell him that? Who cares where he got the corn? Why'd you have to go and threaten him with expulsion?

HALIE

(*To Dodge.*) It's your fault you know! You're the one that's behind all of this! I suppose you thought it'd be funny! Some joke! Cover the house with corn husks. You better get this cleaned up before Bradley sees it.

DODGE

Bradley's not getting in the front door!

HALIE

(**KICKING HUSKS**, *striding back and forth.*) Bradley's going to be very upset when he sees this. He doesn't like to see the house in disarray. He can't stand it when one thing is out of place. The slightest thing. You know how he gets.

DODGE

Bradley doesn't even live here!

HALIE

It's his home as much as ours. He was born in this house!

DODGE

He was born in a hog wallow.

HALIE

Don't you ever say that!

DODGE

He was born in a goddamn hog wallow! That's where he was born and that's where he belongs! He doesn't belong in this house! (*Halie stops.*)

HALIE

I don't know what's come over you, Dodge. I don't know what in the world's come over you. You've become an evil, spiteful, vengeful man. You used to be to be a good man.

DODGE

Six of one, a half-dozen of another.

HALIE

You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off 'til all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!

DODGE

He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's out there in the backyard! *(They freeze. Long pause. The men stare at her.)*

HALIE

*(Quietly.)* That's enough, Dodge. That's quite enough. You've become confused. I'm going out now. I'm going out to have lunch with Father Dewis. I'm going to ask him about a monument for Ansel. A statue. At least a plaque.

DODGE

That oughta heal things up. A statue. *(She crosses to the door up R. She stops.)*

HALIE

If you need anything, ask Tilden. He's the oldest. I've left some money on the kitchen table.

DODGE

I don't need a thing.

HALIE

No, I suppose not. **(SHE OPENS THE DOOR and looks out through porch.)** Still raining. I love the smell just after it stops. The ground. It's like the ground is breathing. I won't be too late. *(She goes out door. She's still visible on the porch as she crosses toward L. screen door. She stops in the*

*middle of the porch, speaks to Dodge but doesn't turn to him.) Dodge, tell Tilden not to go out in the back lot anymore. I don't want him back there in the rain. He's got no business out there.*

DODGE

You tell him yourself. He's sitting right here.

HALIE

He never listens to me, Dodge. He's never listened to me in the past.

DODGE

I'll tell him.

HALIE

We have to watch him just like we used to now. Just like we always have. He's still a child.

DODGE

I'll watch him.

HALIE

Good. We don't want to lose him. I couldn't take another loss. Not at this late date. *(She crosses to screen door, L., takes an umbrella off a hook and **OPENS THE SCREEN DOOR, WHICH SLAMS BEHIND HER.** Long pause. **TILDEN HUSKS CORN, stares at pail. DODGE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE, stares at TV.)***

TILDEN

*(Still husking.)* You shouldn't a told her that.

DODGE

*(Staring at TV.)* What?

TILDEN

What you told her. You know.

DODGE

What do you know about it?

TILDEN

I know. I know all about it. We all know.

DODGE

So what difference does it make? Everybody knows, everybody's forgot.

TILDEN

She hasn't forgot.

DODGE

She should've forgot.

TILDEN

It's different for her. She couldn't forget that. How could she forget a thing like that?

DODGE

I don't want to talk about it!

TILDEN

Why'd you tell her it was *your* flesh and blood?

DODGE

I don't want to talk about it.

TILDEN

What do you want to talk about?

DODGE

I don't want to talk about anything! I don't want to talk about troubles or what happened fifty years ago or thirty years ago or the racetrack or Florida or the last time I seeded the corn! I don't want to talk period. Talking just wears me thin.

TILDEN

You don't wanna die do you?

DODGE

No, I don't particularly wanna die either.

TILDEN

Well, you gotta talk or you'll die.

DODGE

Who told you that crap?

TILDEN

That's what I know. I found that out in New Mexico. I thought I was dying but I just lost my voice.

DODGE

Were you with somebody? A woman? A woman'll make you think you're dying, sure as shooting.

TILDEN

I was alone. I thought I was dead.

DODGE

Might as well have been. What'd you come back here for?

TILDEN

I didn't know where else to go.

DODGE

You're a grown man. You shouldn't be needing your parents at your age. It's unnatural. There's nothing we can do for you now anyway. Couldn't you make a living down there? Couldn't you find some way to make a living? Support yourself? What'dya come back here for? You expect us to feed you forever?

TILDEN

I didn't know where else to go.

DODGE

I never went back to my parents. Never. Never even had the urge. I was independent. Always independent. Always found a way. Self-sufficient.

TILEN

I didn't know what to do. I couldn't figure anything out.

DODGE

There's nothing to figure out. You just forge ahead. What's there to figure out? (*Tilden stands.*)

TILDEN

I was standing. It was night. I was full of the smell of New Mexico. It's different than Illinois. Totally different. Foreign, almost. My lungs were full of it. Like pine smoke and mesquite. That was it. It was foreign. So I left there and I came back here. (*He starts to leave.*)

DODGE

Where are you going?

TILDEN

Out back.

DODGE

You're not supposed to go out there. You heard what she said. Don't play deaf with me!

TILDEN

I like it out there.

DODGE

In the rain?

TILDEN

Especially in the rain. I like the feeling of it. Feels like it always did.

DODGE

You're supposed to watch out for me. Get me things when I need them.

TILDEN

What do you need?

DODGE

I don't need anything yet! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute! (*Dodge starts to cough.*)



TILDEN

I'll be right outside. You can just yell.

DODGE

*(Between coughs.)* No! It's too far! You can't go out there! It's too far! You might not even hear me! I could die here and you'd never hear me!

TILDEN

*(Moving to pills.)* Why don't you take a pill? You want a pill? *(Dodge coughs more violently, throws himself back against the sofa, clutches his throat. Tilden stands by helplessly.)*

DODGE

Water! Get me some water! *(Tilden rushes off L. **DODGE REACHES OUT FOR THE PILLS, KNOCKING SOME BOTTLES TO THE FLOOR, coughing in spasms. HE GRABS A SMALL BOTTLE, TAKES OUT PILLS AND SWALLOWS THEM. Tilden rushes back on with a glass of water.***

TILDEN

Here, here. A glass of water.

*(Dodge takes it and drinks, his coughing subsides.)*

You all right now? *(Dodge nods. Drinks more water. Tilden moves in close to him. **DODGE SETS GLASS OF WATER ON THE NIGHT TABLE. His coughing is almost gone.)*** Why don't you lay down for a while? Just rest a little. I'll help you onto the sofa. *(**TILDEN HELPS DODGE LIE DOWN ON THE SOFA. COVERS HIM WITH BLANKET.**)* There's your blanket.

DODGE

You're not going outside, are you?

TILDEN

No.

DODGE

I don't want to wake up and find you not here.

TILDEN

I'll be here.

DODGE  
You'll stay right here?

TILDEN  
I'll stay in my chair.

DODGE  
That's not a chair. That's my old milking stool.

TILDEN  
I know.

DODGE  
Don't call it a chair.

TILDEN  
I won't. (**TILDEN TRIES TO TAKE DODGE'S BASEBALL CAP OFF.**)

DODGE  
What're you doing! Leave that on me! Don't take that offa me! That's my cap! (*Tilden leaves the cap on Dodge.*)

TILDEN  
I know.

DODGE  
Bradley'll shave my head if I don't have that on. That's my cap.

TILDEN  
I know it is.

DODGE  
Don't take my cap off.

TILDEN  
I won't.

DODGE  
You stay right here now.

TILDEN

*(Sits on stool.)* I will.

DODGE

Don't go outside. There's nothing out there. Never has been. It's empty.

TILDEN

I won't.

DODGE

Everything's in here. Everything you need. Money's on the table. TV. Is the TV on?

TILDEN

Yeah.

DODGE

Turn it off! Turn the damn thing off! What's it doing on?

TILDEN

**(TURNS OFF TV, light goes out.)** You left it on.

DODGE

Well turn it off.

TILDEN

*(Sits on stool again.)* It's off.

DODGE

Leave it off.

TILDEN

I will.

DODGE

When I fall asleep you can turn it back on.

TIDLEN

Okay.

DODGE

You can watch the ball game. White Sox. You like the White Sox, don't you?

TILDEN

Yeah.

DODGE

You can watch the White Sox. Pee Wee Reese. Pee Wee Reese. You remember Pee Wee Reese?

TILDEN

No.

DODGE

Was he with the White Sox?

TILDEN

I don't know.

DODGE

Pee Wee Reese. *(Falling into sleep.)* Bases loaded. Top a the sixth. Bases loaded. Runner on first and third. Big fat knuckle ball. Floater. Big as a blimp. Cracko! Ball just took off like a rocket. Just pulverized. I marked it. Marked it with my eyes. Straight between the clock and the Burma Shave ad. I was the first kid out there. First kid. I had to fight hard for that ball. I wouldn't give it up. They almost tore the ears right off of me. But I wouldn't give it up. *(Dodge falls into a deep sleep, snoring. Tilden just sits staring at him for a while. Slowly he leans toward the sofa, checking to see if Dodge is well asleep.)*

TILDEN

*(Under his breath, almost to himself:)* You asleep? *(Beat.)* Where'd you hide it? Here it is.

(**HE REACHES SLOWLY UNDER THE CUSHION AND PULLS OUT THE BOTTLE OF BOOZE.** Dodge sleeps soundly. Tilden stands quietly, staring at Dodge as **HE UNCORKS THE BOTTLE AND TAKES A LONG DRINK. HE CORKS THE BOTTLE AND STICKS IT IN HIS HIP POCKET.** He looks around the husks on the floor and then back to Dodge. He moves C. and gathers an armload of corn husks then crosses back to the sofa.)

TILDEN

Husks ... Corn ... Shucks ... Cover him with husks ...

(He stands holding the husks over Dodge and looks down at him as he gently spreads the corn husks over the whole length of Dodge's body. He stands back and looks at Dodge. **PULLS OUT BOTTLE. CORK. TAKES ANOTHER DRINK, RETURNS BOTTLE TO HIS HIP POCKET.** He gathers more husks and repeats the procedure until the floor is clean of corn husks and Dodge is completely covered in them except for his head. **TILDEN TAKES ANOTHER LONG DRINK (CORK),** stares at Dodge sleeping.)

TILDEN

(He chuckles, retreating and exiting L.) Husks ... Shucks ...

Long pause as the **SOUND OF RAIN** continues. Dodge sleeps on.

(The figure of Bradley appears U.L. outside the screen porch door. He holds a wet newspaper over his head as a protection from the rain. Dodge sleeps on, undisturbed.)

BRADLEY

Sonuvabitch! Sonuvagoddamnitch! Always some obstacle. I'm soaked. Goddamn leg. (Bradley **MAKES IT THROUGH THE SCREEN DOOR** onto the porch. **HE THROWS THE NEWSPAPER DOWN,** shakes the water out of his hair, and brushed the rain off his shoulders. He is a big man dressed in a gray sweatshirt, black suspenders, baggy dark blue pants, and black janitor's shoes. His left leg is wooden, having been amputated above the knee. He moves with an exaggerated, almost mechanical limp. **THE SQUEAKING SOUNDS OF LEATHER** accompany his walk coming from the harness and hinges of the false leg. His arms and shoulders are extremely powerful and muscular due to a lifetime of dependency on the upper torso doing all the work for the legs. He is about five years younger than Tilden. He moves laboriously to R. door and **ENTERS, CLOSING THE DOOR BEHIND**

**HIM.** *He doesn't notice Dodge at first. He moves toward the staircase. Calling upstairs.) Mom! (He stops and listens. Turns U. and sees Dodge sleeping. Notices corn husks. He moves slowly toward sofa. Stops next to pail and looks into it. Looks at husks. Dodge stays asleep. Bradley talks to himself.) Corn. (Pause.) Harvest's over, Pops. (He looks at Dodge's sleeping face and sighs in disgust.)*

**(HE PULLS OUT A PAIR OF BLACK ELECTRIC HAIR CLIPPERS FROM HIS POCKET. Unwinds the cord and crosses to the lamp. HE AWKWARDLY KNEELS TO PLUG THE CORD INTO A FLOOR OUTLET. He pulls himself to his feet again by using the sofa as leverage. He moves to Dodge's head and goes down on one knee.)**

BRADLEY

Let's plug in. Let's get rid of these husks. And that baseball cap. Time for your trim, Pops.

*(He violently knocks away some of the corn husks, then jerks off Dodge's baseball cap and throws it down C. BRADLEY SWITCHES ON THE CLIPPERS. Lights start dimming. Bradley cuts Dodge's hair while he sleeps. Lights dim slowly to black with the sound of clippers and rain.)*

**MUSIC TRANSITION: SOLO DOBRO OR STEEL GUITAR.**

## ACT TWO

### **AMB RAIN, OUTSIDE. NIGHT.**

*Scene: same set as Act One. Night. Sound of rain. Dodge still asleep on sofa. His hair is cut extremely short and in places the scalp is cut and bleeding. His cap is still center stage. All the corn and husks, pail and milking stool have been cleared away. The lights come up to the sound of a young girl laughing offstage left. Dodge remains asleep. Shelly and Vince appear up left outside the screen porch door sharing the shelter of Vince's overcoat above their heads. Shelly is about nineteen, black hair, very beautiful. She wears tight jeans, high heels, purple T-shirt and a short rabbit fur coat. Her makeup is exaggerated and her hair has been curled. Vince is Tilden's son, about twenty-two, wears a plaid shirt, jeans, dark glasses, cowboy boots and carries a black saxophone case. They shake the rain off themselves as they*

**ENTER THE PORCH THROUGH THE SCREEN DOOR.**

SHELLY

*(Laughing, gesturing to house.)* This is it? I don't believe this is it!

VINCE

This is it.

SHELLY

This is the house? Its so dark.

VINCE

This is the house.

SHELLY

It's like a Norman Rockwell cover or something.

VINCE

What's a matter with that? It's American.

SHELLY

American? Where's the milkman and the little dog? What's the little dog's name? Spot. Spot and Jane. Dick and Jane and Spot. See Spot run.

VINCE

Come on! Knock it off. It's my heritage. *(She laughs more hysterically, out of control.)* Have some respect would ya!

SHELLY

*(Trying to control herself.)* I'm sorry.

VINCE

I don't want to go in there with you acting like an idiot.

SHELLY

Yes sir!

VINCE

Well I don't. I haven't had any contact with them for years. I just don't want them to think I've suddenly arrived out of the middle of nowhere completely deranged.

SHELLY

What do you want them to think then? *(Pause.)*

VINCE

Nothing. Let's just go in. *(He crosses porch toward R. interior door. Shelly follows him. HE OPENS THE R. DOOR SLOWLY. Vince sticks his head in, doesn't notice Dodge sleeping. Calls out toward staircase.)* Grandma! *(Shelly breaks into laughter, unseen behind Vince. Vince pulls his head back outside and shushes her. We hear their voices again without seeing them.)*

SHELLY

*(Stops laughing.)* I'm sorry. I'm sorry Vince. I really am. I really am sorry. I won't do it again. I couldn't help it.

VINCE

It's not all that humorous.

SHELLY

I know it's not. I'm sorry.



VINCE

I mean this is a tense situation for me! I haven't seen them for over six years. I don't know what to expect.

SHELLY

I know. I won't do it again. Scout's honor. Just don't say "Grandma," okay? *(She giggles, stops.)* I mean if you say "Grandma," I don't know if I can control myself.

VINCE

Well, try!

SHELLY

Okay. Sorry. *(Vince sticks his head in then enters. Shelly follows behind him. Vince crosses to the staircase, sets down saxophone case and overcoat, looks up staircase.)*

VINCE

I'm gonna go check upstairs.

*(Shelly notices Dodge's baseball cap. Crosses to it. Picks it up and puts it on her head.)*

SHELLY

Look at this old baseball cap! *(Giggling.)*

**(DODGE SNORES.)**

SHELLY

Oh!

VINCE

*(From upstairs.)* Grandma! *(From upstairs.)* Grandma! *(Shelly crosses over to Dodge slowly and stands next to him.)*

DODGE

*(Muttering line; he is coming to.)*

*(She stands at his head, reaches out slowly and touches one of the cuts.)*

SHELLY

Oh... you poor old man. What happened to your head?

*(The second she touches his head, Dodge jerks up to a sitting position on the sofa, eyes open. Shelly gasps. Dodge looks at her, sees his cap in her hands, quickly puts his hand to his bare head.)*

DODGE

Who the...! That sonofabitch cut me! Hey! That's my hat!

*(He glares at Shelly then whips the cap out of her hands and puts it on. Shelly backs away from him. Dodge stares at her.)*

SHELLY

Sorry! I'm uh—with Vince. *(Dodge just glares at her.)* He's upstairs.  
*(Dodge looks at the staircase then back at Shelly. Calling upstairs.)* Vince!

VINCE

Just a second!

SHELLY

You better get down here!

VINCE

Just a minute! I'm looking at the pictures. *(Dodge keeps staring at her.)*

SHELLY

*(To Dodge.)* We just got here. We drove out from New York. Pouring rain on the freeway so we thought we'd stop by. I mean Vince was planning on stopping anyway. He wanted to see you. He said he hadn't seen you in a long time. Pay you a little visit. *(Pause. Dodge just keeps staring at her.)* We were going all the way through to New Mexico. To see his father. I guess his father lives out there. In a trailer or something. *(Louder.)* We thought we'd stop by and see you on the way. Kill two birds with one stone, you know? *(She laughs, Dodge stares; she stops laughing.)* I mean Vince has this thing about his family now. I guess it's a new thing with him. I kind of find it hard to relate to. But he feels it's important. You know. I mean he wants to get to know you again. After all this time. Reunite. I don't have much faith in it myself. Reuniting. *(Pause. Dodge just stares at her. She moves nervously to staircase and yells up to Vince.)* Vince will you come down here please! *(Vince comes halfway down the stairs.)*

VINCE

I guess they went out for a while.

SHELLY

*(Pointing to the sofa and Dodge)* No, look!

*(Vince turns and sees Dodge. He comes all the way down the staircase and crosses to Dodge. Shelly stays behind, near the staircase, keeping her distance.)* Grandpa? *(Dodge looks up at him, not recognizing him.)*

DODGE

Did you bring the whiskey? *(Vince looks back at Shelly then back to Dodge.)*

VINCE

Grandpa, it's me. Vince. I'm Vince. Tilden's son. You remember? *(Dodge stares at him.)*

DODGE

You didn't do what you told me. You didn't stay here with me.

VINCE

Grandpa, I haven't been here until just now. I just got here.

DODGE

You left. Abandoned me. You went outside like we told you not to do. You went out there in back. In the rain. *(Vince looks back at Shelly. She moves slowly toward the sofa.)*

SHELLY

Is he okay?

VINCE

I don't know. *(Takes off his shades.)* Look, Grandpa, don't you remember me? Vince. Your grandson. I know it's been a while. My hair's longer, maybe. *(Dodge stares at him then takes off his baseball cap.)*

DODGE

*(Points to his head.)* See what happens when you leave me alone? Look at my head. That's what happens.

VINCE

What's going on Grandpa? Where's Halie?

DODGE

Don't worry about her. She won't be back for days. She's absconded. She says she'll be back but she won't be. *(He starts laughing.)* There's life in the old girl yet! *(Stops laughing.)*

VINCE

How did you do that to your head?

DODGE

I didn't do it! Don't be ridiculous! Whadya think I am, an animal?

VINCE

Well who did then? *(Pause. Dodge stares at Vince.)*

DODGE

Who do you think did it? Who do you think? *(Shelly moves toward Vince.)*

SHELLY

Vince, maybe we oughta go. I don't like this. I mean this isn't my idea of a good time.

VINCE

*(To Shelly.)* Just a second. *(To Dodge.)* Grandpa, look, I just got here. I just now got here. I haven't been here for six years. I don't know anything that's happened. *(Pause. Dodge stares at him.)*

DODGE

You don't know anything?

VINCE

No.

DODGE

Well that's good. That's good. It's much better not to know anything. Much, much better.

VINCE

Isn't there anybody here with you? *(Dodge turns slowly and looks off to L.)*

DODGE

Tilden's here.

VINCE

No, Grandpa, Tilden's in New Mexico. That's where I was going. I'm going out there to see him. We just stopped off here because it was on the way. *(Dodge turns slowly back to Vince.)*

DODGE

Well, you're gonna be disappointed. *(Vince backs away and joins Shelly. Dodge stares at them.)*

SHELLY

Vince, why don't we spend the night in a motel and come back in the morning? We could have breakfast. A shower. Maybe everything would be different.

VINCE

Don't be scared. There's nothing to be scared of. He's just old.

SHELLY

I'm not scared!

DODGE

You two are not my idea of the perfect couple!

SHELLY

*(After a pause.)* Oh really? Why's that?

VINCE

Shh! Don't aggravate him.

DODGE

There's something wrong between the two of you. Something not compatible. Like chalk and cheese.

VINCE

Grandpa, where did Halie go? Maybe we should call her. I don't understand why you're here all by yourself. Isn't anybody looking after you?

DODGE

What are you talking about? Do you know what you're talking about? Are you just talking for the sake of talking? Lubricating the gums?

VINCE

I'm just trying to—

DODGE

Halie is out with her boyfriend. The Right Reverend Dewis. He's not a breeder-man but a man of God. Next best thing I suppose.

VINCE

I'm trying to figure out what's going on here!

DODGE

Good luck.

VINCE

I expected everything to be different. I mean the same. Like it used to be.

DODGE

Who are you to expect anything? Who are you supposed to be.

VINCE

I'm Vince! Your grandson! You've gotta remember me.

DODGE

Vince. My grandson. That's rich!

VINCE

Tilden's son.

DODGE

Tilden's son, Vince. He had *two*, I guess.

VINCE

Two? No look, you haven't seen me for a long time.

DODGE

When was the last time?

VINCE

I don't remember exactly. We had a big dinner. A reunion, kind of. Turkey. You made some comment about Dad's fastball. I was a kid, I guess. It was quite a while ago.

DODGE

You don't remember.

VINCE

No. Not really. I mean—we were all sitting at the table. All of us—and you and Bradley were making fun of Dad's fastball. And—

DODGE

You don't remember. How am I supposed to remember if you don't.

VINCE

I remember being there. I just don't remember the details.

SHELLY

Vince, come on. This isn't going to work out. I've got a strong feeling.

VINCE

*(To Shelly)* Just take it easy.

SHELLY

I'm taking it easy! He doesn't even know who you are!

VINCE

*(Crossing to Dodge.)* Of course he knows who I am. He's just tired or something. Grandpa, look—I don't know what's happened here, but—

DODGE

Stay where you are! Keep your distance! (*Vince stops. Looks back at Shelly then to Dodge.*)

SHELLY

Vince, this is really making me nervous. I mean he doesn't even want us here. He doesn't even like us.

DODGE

She's a beautiful girl.

VINCE

Thanks.

DODGE

Very "fetching," as they used to say.

SHELLY

Oh my God.

DODGE

(*To Shelly.*) What's your name, girlie girl?

SHELLY

Shelly.

DODGE

Shelly. That's a man's name isn't it?

SHELLY

Not in this case.

DODGE

(*To Vince.*) She's a smart-ass too.

SHELLY

Vince! Can we go?

VINCE

Grandpa look—look at me for a second. Try to remember my face.



DODGE

She wants to go. She just got here and she wants to go. Itchy.

VINCE

This is kind of strange for her. I mean, it's strange enough for me—

DODGE

She'll get used to it. *(To Shelly.)* What part of the country do you hail from, girlie?

SHELLY

Originally?

DODGE

That's right. Originally. At the very start.

SHELLY

L.A.

DODGE

L.A. Stupid country.

SHELLY

I can't stand this Vince! This is really unbelievable!

DODGE

It's stupid! LA is stupid! So is Florida. All those Sunshine States. They're all stupid! Do you know why they're stupid?

SHELLY

Illuminate me.

VINCE

Shelly. Don't!

DODGE

I'll tell you why. Because they're full of smart-asses! That's why. *(Shelly scoffs and turns her back to Dodge, crosses to staircase and sits on the bottom step. To Vince.)* Now she's insulted.

SHELLY

Vince?

DODGE

She's insulted! Look at her! In my house she's insulted! She's over there sulking because I insulted her!

VINCE

Grandpa—

SHELLY

*(To Vince.)* This is really terrific. This is wonderful. And you were worried about me making the right first impression!

DODGE

*(To Vince.)* She's a fireball isn't she? Regular fireball. I had some a them in my day. Temporary stuff. Never lasted more than a week.

VINCE

Grandpa—look—

DODGE

Stop calling me Grandpa will ya! It's sickening. "Grandpa." I'm nobody's grandpa! Least of all yours.

VINCE

I can't believe you don't recognize me. I just can't believe it. It wasn't that long ago. *(Dodge starts feeling around under the cushion for the bottle of whiskey. Shelly gets up from the staircase.)*

SHELLY

*(To Vince.)* Maybe you've got the wrong house. Did you ever think of that? Maybe this is the wrong address!

VINCE

It's not the wrong address! I recognize the yard. The porch. The elm tree. The house. I was standing right here in this house. Right in this very spot.

SHELLY

Yeah but do you recognize the people? He says he's not your grandfather.

VINCE

He *is* my grandpa! I know he's my grandpa! He's *always* been my grandpa. He always *will be* my grandpa!

DODGE

*(Digging for bottle.)* Where's that bottle!

VINCE

He's just sick or something. I don't know what's happened to him. Delirious.

DODGE

Where's my goddam bottle! *(Dodge gets up from sofa and starts tearing the cushions off it and throwing them D., looking for the whiskey.)* They've stole my bottle!

SHELLY

Can't we just drive on to New Mexico? This is terrible, Vince! I don't want to stay here. In this house. I thought it was going to be turkey dinners and apple pie and all that kinda stuff.

VINCE

Well I hate to disappoint you!

SHELLY

I'm not disappointed! I'm fuckin' terrified! I wanna go! *(Dodge yells toward L.)*

DODGE

Tilden! Tilden! They stole my bottle! *(Dodge keeps ripping away at the sofa looking for his bottle, he knocks over the nightstand with the bottles. Vince and Shelly watch as he starts ripping the stuffing out of the sofa.)*

VINCE

*(To Shelly.)* He's lost his mind or something. I've got to try to help him.

SHELLY

You help him! I'm leaving! *(Shelly starts to leave. Vince grabs her.)*

VINCE

No!

SHELLY

Let me go!

*(They struggle as Dodge keeps ripping away at the sofa and yelling.)*

DODGE

Tilden! Tilden get your ass in here! Tilden!

SHELLY

Let go of me!

VINCE

You're not going anywhere! I need you to stay right here!

SHELLY

Let go of me you sonuvabitch! I'm not your property! **(THE INNER DOOR OPENS.** *Tilden walks in just as he did before. This time his arms are full of carrots. Dodge, Vince, and Shelly stop suddenly when they see him. They all stare at Tilden as he crosses slowly C. with the carrots and stops. Dodge sits on sofa, exhausted.)*

TILDEN

I picked these carrots. If anybody wants any carrots. I picked 'em.

DODGE

*(Panting.)* Tilden, where in the hell have you been?

TILDEN

Out back.

DODGE

Where's my bottle?

TILDEN

Gone. *(Tilden and Vince stare at each other. Shelly backs away.)*

DODGE

*(To Tilden.) You stole my bottle!*

VINCE

*(To Tilden.) Dad? What're you doing there?*

SHELLY

*Oh Brother. (Tilden just stares at Vince.)*

DODGE

*You had no right to steal my bottle! No right at all! Who do you think you are?*

VINCE

*(To Tilden.) It's Vince. I'm Vince. (Tilden stares at Vince then looks at Dodge then turns to Shelly.)*

TILDEN

*(After pause.) I picked these carrots. If anybody wants any carrots, I picked 'em.*

SHELLY

*(To Vince.) Now, wait a minute. This is your father? The one we were going to visit?*

VINCE

*(To Tilden.) Dad, what're you doing here? What's going on? (Tilden just stares at Vince, holding carrots, Dodge pulls the blanket back over himself.)*

SHELLY

*This is actually your father? The one in New Mexico?*

DODGE

*(To Tilden.) You're going to have to get me another bottle! You gotta get me a bottle before Halie comes back! There's money on the table. (Points to L. kitchen.)*

TILDEN

*(Shaking his head.) I'm not going down there, Into town. I never do well in town. (Shelly crosses to Tilden, Tilden stares at her.)*

SHELLY

*(To Tilden.)* Are you Vince's father?

TILDEN

*(To Shelly.)* Vince?

SHELLY

*(Pointing to Vince.)* This is supposed to be your son! Is he your son? DO you recognize him? I'm just along for the ride here. I thought everybody knew each other! *(Tilden stares at Vince. Dodge wraps himself up in the blanket and sits on the sofa staring at the floor.)*

TILDEN

I had a son once but we buried him. *(Dodge quickly looks at Tilden. Shelly looks to Vince.)*

DODGE

You shut up about that! You don't know anything about that!

VINCE

Dad, I thought you were in Bernalillo. We were going to drive down there and see you.

TILDEN

Long way to drive. Terrible distance.

VINCE

What's happened, Dad? Has something happened? I thought everything was all right. What's happened to Halie? What're you doing back here?

TILDEN

She left. Church or something. It's always church. God or Jesus. Or both.

SHELLY

*(To Tilden.)* Do you want me to take those carrots for you?

VINCE

Shelly—(*Tilden stares at her. She moves in close to him. Holds out her arms. Tilden stares at her arms then slowly dumps the carrots into her arms. Shelly stands there holding the carrots.*)

TILDEN

(*To Shelly*) Here. You like carrots? Take ‘em.

SHELLY

Sure. I like all kinds of vegetables. I’m a vegetarian.

DODGE

(*To Tilden.*) Hitler was a vegetarian. You gotta get me a bottle before Halie comes back!

TILDEN

(*To Shelly.*) Backyard’s full of carrots. Corn. Potatoes.

SHELLY

You’re Vince’s father, right? His real father. I’m just asking.

TILDEN

All kinds of vegetables. You like vegetables?

SHELLY

(*Laughs.*) Yeah. I love vegetables.

TILDEN

We could cook these carrots ya know. You could cut ‘em up and we could cook ‘em. You and me.

SHELLY

All right. Sure. Whatever works.

VINCE

Shelly, what’re you doing with those carrots?

TILDEN

I’ll get you a pail and a knife.

SHELLY

Okay.

VINCE

Shelly!

TILDEN

I'll be right back. Don't go.

VINCE

Dad, wait a second. *(Tilden exits off L.)* What the hell is going on here? What's happened to everybody. *(Shelly stands C., arms full of carrots. Vince stands next to Dodge. Shelly looks toward Vince then down at the carrots.)*

DODGE

*(To Vince).* You could get me a bottle. *(Pointing off L.)* There's money on the table.

VINCE

Grandpa why don't you lay down for a while?

DODGE

Every time I lay down something happens! *(Whips off his cap, points at his head.)* Look what happens! My head is what happens! *(Pulls his cap back on.)* You go lay down and see what happens to you! See how you like it! They'll steal your bottle! They'll cut your hair! They'll murder your children! That's what'll happen. They'll eat you alive.

VINCE

Just relax for a while. Maybe things will come back to you. *(Pause.)*

DODGE

You could get me a bottle ya know. There's nothing stopping you from getting me a bottle.

SHELLY

Why don't you get him a bottle Vince? Maybe it would help everybody identify each other.



DODGE

*(Pointing to Shelly.)* There, see? She thinks you should get me a bottle. She's a smart cookie. Suddenly, she got smart. *(Vince crosses to Shelly.)*

VINCE

Shelly.

SHELLY

I'm waiting for your father.

DODGE

She thinks you should give me a bottle!

VINCE

Shelly put the carrots down will ya! We gotta deal with the situation here! I'm gonna need your help. I don't know what's going on here but I need some help to try to figure this out.

SHELLY

I'm helping.

VINCE

You're only adding to the problem! You're making things worse! Put the carrots down! *(Vince tries to knock the carrots out of her arms. She turns away from him, protecting the carrots.)*

SHELLY

Get away from me! Stop it! *(Vince stands back from her. She turns to him still holding the carrots.)*

VINCE

*(To Shelly.)* Why are you doing this? Are you trying to make fun of me? This is my family you know!

SHELLY

You coulda fooled me! I'd just as soon not be here myself. I'd just as soon be a thousand miles from here. I'd rather be anywhere but here. You're the one who wants to stay. So I'll stay. I'll stay and I'll cut the carrots. And I'll cook the carrots. And I'll do whatever I have to do to survive. Just to make it through this thing.

VINCE

Put the carrots down Shelly. The carrots aren't going to help. The carrots have nothing to do with the situation here. (**TILDEN ENTERS FROM L. WITH PAIL, MILKING STOOL, AND A KNIFE.**)

TILDEN

Here you go . . .knife . . .pail . . .stool.

(**HE SETS THE STOOL AND PAIL C.** for Shelly. Shelly looks at Vince **THEN SITS DOWN ON STOOL, SETS THE CARROTS ON THE FLOOR AND TAKES THE KNIFE** from Tilden.)

(She looks at Vince again **THEN PICKS UP A CARROT, CUTS THE END OFF, SCRAPES IT AND DROPS IT IN THE PAIL. SHE REPEATS THIS,** Vince glares at her. She smiles.)

DODGE

She could get me a bottle. She's the type a girl that could get me a bottle. Easy. She'd go down there. Slink up to the counter. They'd probably give her two bottles for the price of one. She could do that. She has that air about her. (Shelly laughs. Keeps cutting carrots. Vince crosses up to Dodge, looks at him. Tilden watches Shelly's hands. Long pause.)

VINCE

(To Dodge.) Grandpa, I haven't changed that much. I mean physically. Physically I'm just about the same. Same size. Same weight. Everything's the same. (Dodge keeps staring at Shelly while Vince talks to him.)

DODGE

She's a beautiful girl. Exceptional. (Vince moves in front of Dodge to block his view of Shelly. Dodge keeps craning his head around to see her as Vince demonstrates tricks from his past.)

VINCE

Look. Look at this. Do you remember this? I used to bend my thumb behind my knuckles. You remember? I used to do it at the dinner table. Way back when. You told me, one day it would get stuck like this and I'd never be able to throw a baseball. *(Vince bends a thumb behind his knuckles for Dodge and holds it out to him. Dodge takes a short glance then looks back at Shelly. Vince shifts position and shows him something else.)* What about this? *(Vince curls his lips back and starts drumming on his teeth with his fingernails making little tapping sounds. Dodge watches a while. Tilden turns toward the sound. Vince keeps it up. He sees Tilden taking notice and crosses to Tilden as he drums on his teeth. Dodge turns TV on and watches it.)* You remember this Dad? Rooty-tooty? "St. James Infirmary"? "When the Saints Go Marching In"? How 'bout it, Grandpa? *(Vince keeps on drumming for Tilden. Tilden watches a while, fascinated, then turns back to Shelly. Vince keeps up the drumming on his teeth, crosses back to Dodge doing it. Shelly keeps working on the carrots, talking to Tilden.)*

SHELLY

*(To Tilden.)* He drives me crazy with that sometimes.

VINCE

*(To Dodge.)* I know! Here's one you'll remember. You used to kick me out of the house for this one. Watch my belly button! *(Vince pulls his shirt out of his belt and holds it tucked under his chin with his stomach exposed. He grabs the flesh on either side of his belly button and pushes it in and out to make it look like a mouth talking. He watches his belly button and makes a deep-sounding cartoon voice to synchronize with the movement. He demonstrates it to Dodge then crosses down to Tilden doing it. Both Dodge and Tilden take short, uninterested glances then ignore him. Deep cartoon voice.)* "Hello. How are you? I'm fine. Thank you very much. It's so good to see you looking well this fine Sunday morning." It's the same old me. Same old dependable me. Never change. Never alter one iota. *(Vince stops. Tucks his shirt back in.)*

SHELLY

Vince, don't be pathetic will ya! They're not gonna play. Can't you see that? **(SHELLY KEEPS CUTTING CARROTS.** *Vince slowly moves toward Tilden. Tilden keeps watching Shelly.)*

VINCE

*(To Shelly.)* I don't get it. I really don't get it. Maybe it's me. Maybe I forgot something.

DODGE

*(From sofa.)* You forgot to get me a bottle! That's what you forgot. Anybody in this house could get me a bottle. Anybody! But nobody will. Nobody understands the urgency! Peelin' carrots is more important. Playin' piano on your teeth! Well I hope you all remember this when you get up in years. When you find yourself immobilized. Dependent on the whims of others. *(Vince moves up toward Dodge. Pause as Vince looks at him. Shelly continues cutting carrots. Pause. Vince moves around, stroking his hair, staring at Dodge and Tilden. Vince and Shelly exchange glances. Dodge watches TV.)*

VINCE

Boy! This is amazing. This is truly amazing. *(Keeps moving around.)* What is this anyway? Am I being punished here or what? Is that it? Some kind of banishment? Some kind of wicked warped exile? Just tell me. I can take it. Lay it on me. What was it? Did I betray some secret ancient family taboo way back when? Did I cross the line somehow when I wasn't looking? What exactly was it?

SHELLY

Vince, what are you doing that for? They don't care about any of that. They just don't recognize you, that's all. They don't have a clue.

VINCE

How could they not recognize me! How in the hell could they not recognize me! I'm their son! I'm their flesh and blood. Anybody can see we're related.

DODGE

*(Watching TV.)* You're no son of mine. I've had sons in my time—plenty of sons but you're not one of 'em. I know them by their scent. *(Long pause. Vince stares at Dodge.)*

VINCE

All right. All right look—I'll get you a bottle. I'll get you a goddamn bottle.

DODGE

You will?

VINCE

Yeah, sure, you bet. If that's what it takes, I'll get you a bottle. Then maybe you can tell me what's going on here.

SHELLY

You're not going to leave me here alone are you?

VINCE

*(Moving to her.)* You suggested it! You said, "Why don't I go get him a bottle." So I'll go get him a bottle! That's what I'll do. Maybe it'll help jar things loose.

SHELLY

But I can't stay here by myself.

DODGE

Don't let her talk you out of it! She's a bad influence. I could see it the minute she stepped in here.

VINCE

Shelly, I gotta go out for a while. I just gotta get outta here. Think things through by myself. I'll get a bottle and I'll come right back.

SHELLY

I don't know if I can handle this Vince.

VINCE

You'll be okay. Nothing's going to happen. They're not dangerous or anything.

SHELLY

Can't we just go?

VINCE

No! I gotta find out what's going on here. Something has fallen apart. This isn't how it used to be. Believe me. This is nothing like how it used to be...

SHELLY

Look, you think you're bad off, what about me? Not only don't they recognize me but I've never seen them before in my life. I don't know who these guys are. They could be anybody!

VINCE

They're not anybody!

SHELLY

That's what you say.

VINCE

They're my family for Christ's sake! I should know who my own family is! Now give me a break. It won't take that long. I'll just go out and I'll come right back. Nothing'll happen. I promise. (*Shelly stares at him. Pause.*)

SHELLY

Unbelievable.

VINCE

Nothing'll happen. (*He crosses up to Dodge.*) I'm gonna go out now, Grandpa, and I'll pick you up a bottle. Okay?

DODGE

Persistence see? That's what it takes. Persistence. Persistence, fortitude and determination. Those are the three virtues. That's how the country was *founded*. You stick with those three and you can't go wrong. (*Pointing off L.*) Money's on the table. In the kitchen. (*Vince moves toward Shelly.*)

VINCE

*(To Shelly.)* You'll be all right, Shelly. I won't be too long.

SHELLY

*(Cutting carrots.)* I'll just keep real busy while you're gone. I love vegetables. *(Vince exits. Tilden keeps staring down and Shelly's hands.)*

VINCE

*(Re-entering, to Tilden.)* You want anything, Dad?

TILDEN

*(Looks up at Vince.)* Me?

VINCE

Yeah, you. "Dad." That's you. From the store I'm gonna get Grandpa a bottle. Do you want anything from the store?

TILDEN

He's not supposed to drink. Halie wouldn't like it. She'd be disappointed.

VINCE

He wants a bottle.

TILDEN

He's not supposed to drink.

DODGE

*(To Vince)* Don't negotiate with him! He's the one who stole my bottle! Don't make any transactions until you've spoken to me first! He'll steal you blind!

VINCE

*(To Dodge.)* Tilden says you're not supposed to drink.

DODGE

Tilden's lost his marbles! Look at him! He's around the twist. Take a look at him. He's come unwound. (*Vince stares at Tilden. Tilden watches Shelly's hands as she keeps cutting carrots.*) Now look at me. Look here at me! (*Vince looks back to Dodge.*) Now, between the two of us, who do you think is more trustworthy? Him or me? Can you trust a man who keeps bringing vegetables from out of nowhere? Take a look at him. (*Vince looks back at Tilden.*)

SHELLY

Go get the bottle Vince. Just go get the bottle.

VINCE

I'll be right back. (*Vince crosses L.*)

DODGE

Where are you going?

VINCE

I'm going to get the money.

DODGE

Then where are you goin'?

VINCE

Liquor store.

DODGE

Don't go off anyplace else. Don't go off some place and drink by yourself. Come right back here.

VINCE

I will. (*Vince exits L.*)

DODGE

(*Calling after Vince.*) You've got responsibility now! And don't go out the back way either! Come out through this way! I wanna see you when you leave! Don't go out the back.

VINCE

(*Off L.*) I won't! (*Dodge turns and looks at Tilden and Shelly.*)



DODGE

Untrustworthy. Probably drown himself if he went out the back. Fall right in a hole. I'd never get my bottle.

SHELLY

I wouldn't worry about Vince. He can take care of himself.

DODGE

Oh he can, huh? Independent. (*Vince comes on again from L. with two dollars in his hand. He crosses R. past Dodge.*)

VINCE

Okay, I'm goin'.

DODGE

(*To Vince.*) You got the money?

VINCE

Yeah. Two bucks.

DODGE

Two bucks. Two bucks is two bucks. Don't sneer.

VINCE

What kind do you want for two bucks.

DODGE

Whiskey! Gold Star Sour Mash. Use your own discretion.

VINCE

Okay.

DODGE

Nothin' fancy! (*Vince crosses to R. door. Opens it. Stops when he hears Tilden.*)

TILDEN

(*To Vince.*) You drove all the way from New Mexico?

VINCE

No, I—look—while I’m gone, try to remember who I am. Try real hard to remember. Use your imagination. It might suddenly come back to you. In a flash. (*Vince turns and looks at Tilden. They stare at each other. Vince shakes his head, goes out the door and CLOSES IT. Tilden watches him go. Pause.*)

TILDEN

That’s a long, lonely stretch of road. I’ve driven that stretch before and there’s no end to it. You feel like you’re going to fall right off into blackness.

**MUSIC CUE: SOLO DOBRO OR STEEL GUITAR.**

**LIVE SHOW BREAK – INTERMISSION**

ACT TWO, CON'T.

SHELLY

You really don't recognize him? Either one of you? (*Tilden turns again and stares at Shelly's hands as she CUTS CARROTS.*)

DODGE

(*Watching TV.*) Recognize who?

SHELLY

Vince.

DODGE

What's to recognize? (*Dodge lights a cigarette, coughs slightly and stares at TV.*)

SHELLY

It'd be cruel if you recognized him and didn't tell him. Wouldn't be fair.

DODGE

Cruel.

SHELLY

Well it would be. I mean it's not really possible, is it, that he's not related to you at all? Just a stranger? He seems so sure about it. (*Dodge just stares at TV, smoking.*)

TILDEN

I thought I recognized him. I thought I recognized something about him.

SHELLY

You did?

TILDEN

I thought I saw a face inside his face.

SHELLY

Well it was probably that you saw what he used to look like. You haven't seen him for six years.

TILDEN

I haven't?

SHELLY

That's what he says. *(Tilden moves around in front of her as she continues with carrots.)*

TILDEN

Where was it I saw him last?

SHELLY

I have no idea. I've only known him for a few months, myself. He doesn't tell me everything.

TILDEN

He doesn't?

SHELLY

Not stuff like that.

TILDEN

What does he tell you?

SHELLY

You mean in general?

TILDEN

Yeah. *(Tilden moves around behind her.)*

SHELLY

Well he tells me all kinds of things.

TILDEN

Like what?

SHELLY

I don't know! I mean I can't just come out and tell you how he feels.

TILDEN

How come? (*Tilden keeps moving around her slowly in a circle.*)

SHELLY

Because it's stuff he told me privately!

TILDEN

And you can't tell me?

SHELLY

I don't even know you! I'm not even sure *he* knows you.

DODGE

Tilden, go out in the kitchen and make me some coffee! Leave the girl alone. She's nervous. She's ready to jump ship any second.

SHELLY

(*To Dodge.*) He's all right. (*Tilden ignores Dodge, keeps moving around Shelly. He stares at her hair and coat. Dodge stares at TV.*)

TILDEN

You mean you can't tell me anything?

SHELLY

I can tell you some things. I mean we can have a conversation.

TILDEN

We can?

SHELLY

Sure. We're having a conversation right now.

TILDEN

We are?

SHELLY

Yes. That's what we're doing. It's easy.

TILDEN

But there's certain things you can't tell me, right?

SHELLY

Right.

TILDEN

There's certain things I can't tell you either.

SHELLY

How come?

TILDEN

I don't know. Nobody's supposed to hear it.

SHELLY

Well, you can tell me anything you want to.

TILDEN

I can?

SHELLY

Sure.

TILDEN

It might not be very nice.

SHELLY

That's all right. I've been around.

TILDEN

It might be awful.

SHELLY

Well, can't you tell me anything nice? *(Tilden stops in front of her and stares at her coat. Shelly looks back at him. Long pause.)*

TILDEN

*(After pause.)* Can I touch your coat?

SHELLY

My coat? *(She looks at her coat then back to Tilden.)* Sure.

TILDEN

You don't mind?

SHELLY

No. Go ahead. Touch the sleeve. It's soft. *(Shelly holds her arm out for Tilden to touch. Dodge stays fixed on TV. Tilden moves in slowly toward Shelly, staring at her arm. He reaches out very slowly and **TOUCHES HER ARM, FEELS THE FUR GENTLY** then draws his hand back. Shelly keeps her arm out.)* It's rabbit.

TILDEN

Rabbit. *(He reaches out again very slowly and touches the fur on her arm then pulls back his hand again.)*

TILDEN

Can I hold it? *(Pause.)*

SHELLY

The coat? Sure. I guess. *(Shelly takes off her coat and hands it to Tilden. Tilden takes it slowly, feels the fur then puts it on. Shelly watches as Tilden strokes the fur slowly. He smiles at her. **SHE GOES BACK TO CUTTING CARROTS.**)* You can have it if you want.

TILDEN

I can?

SHELLY

Yeah? I've got a raincoat in the car. That's all I need.

TILDEN

You've got a car?

SHELLY

Vince does. (*Tilden walks around stroking the fur and smiling at the coat. Shelly watches him when he's not looking. Dodge sticks with TV, stretches out on sofa wrapped in blanket.*)

TILDEN

(*As he walks around.*) I had a car once! I had a white car! I drove. I went everywhere. I went to the mountains. I drove in the snow.

SHELLY

That must've been fun.

TILDEN

(*Still moving, feeling coat.*) I drove all day long sometimes. Across the desert. Way out across the desert. I drove past tiny towns. Anywhere. Past palm trees. Lightning. Anything. I would drive through it. I would drive through it and I would stop and I would look around and I would see things sometimes. I would see things I wasn't supposed to see. Like deer. Hawks. Owls. I would look them in the eye and they would look back and I could tell I wasn't supposed to be there by the way they looked at me. So I'd drive on. I would get back in and drive! I loved to drive. There was nothing I loved more. Nothing I dreamed of was better than driving. I was independent.

DODGE

(*Eyes on TV.*) Pipe down would ya! Stop running off at the mouth. (*Tilden stops. Stares at Shelly.*)

SHELLY

Do you do much driving now?

TILDEN

Now? Now? I don't drive now.

SHELLY

How come?

TILDEN

I'm older.



SHELLY  
You're not that old.

TILDEN  
I'm not a kid.

SHELLY  
You don't have to be a kid to drive.

TILDEN  
It wasn't driving then.

SHELLY  
What was it?

TILDEN  
Adventure. I went everywhere. I had a sensation of myself.

SHELLY  
Well you can still do that.

TILDEN  
Not now.

SHELLY  
Why not?

TILDEN  
I just told you. You don't understand. If I told you something you wouldn't understand it.

SHELLY  
Told me what?

TILDEN  
Told you something that's true.

SHELLY  
Like what?

TILDEN

Like a baby. Like a little tiny baby.

SHELLY

Like when you were little?

TILDEN

If I told you you'd make me give your coat back.

SHELLY

I won't. I promise. Tell me. Please.

TILDEN

I can't. Dodge won't let me.

SHELLY

He won't hear you. It's okay. He's watching TV. *(Pause. Tilden stares at her. Moves slightly toward her.)*

TILDEN

We had a baby. Little baby. Could pick it up with one hand. Put it in the other. *(Tilden moves closer to her. Dodge takes more interest.)* So small that nobody could find it. Just disappeared. We had no service. No hymn. Nobody came.

DODGE

Tilden!

TILDEN

Cops looked for it. Neighbors. Nobody could find it. **(DODGE STRUGGLES TO GET UP FROM THE SOFA.)**

DODGE

Tilden? You leave that girl alone! She's completely innocent. **(DODGE KEEPS STRUGGLING UNTIL HE'S STANDING.)**

TILDEN

Finally everybody just gave up. Just stopped looking. Everybody had a different answer.

DODGE

Tilden! What are you telling her? (**DODGE STARTS COUGHING AND FALLS TO THE FLOOR.** *Shelly watches him from the stool.*)

TILDEN

Little tiny baby just disappeared. It's not hard. It's so small. Almost invisible. Hold it in one hand. (*Shelly makes a move to help Dodge.*)

SHELLY

Shouldn't we help him?

TILDEN

(*Firmly pushing her back down on the stool.*) Don't touch him.

DODGE

(*Coughing.*) Tilden! Don't tell her anything! She's an outsider!

TILDEN

He's the only one who knows where it is. The only one. Like a secret buried treasure. Won't tell any of us. (*Dodge's coughing subsides. Shelly stays on stool staring at Dodge. Long pause.*) You probably want your coat back now. I would if I was you. (*Shelly stares at coat but doesn't move to take it.* **THE SOUND OF BRADLEY'S LEG SQUEAKING IS HEARD OFF L.** *The others onstage remain still. Bradley appears U.L. outside the screen door wearing a yellow rain slicker. HE ENTERS THROUGH SCREEN DOOR, crosses porch to R. door and enters stage. Takes off rain slicker and shakes it out. He sees all the others and stops. Tilden turns to him. Bradley stares at Shelly. Dodge remains on floor.*)

BRADLEY

What's going on here? (*Motioning to Shelly.*) Who's that? Who's she supposed to be?

TILDEN

She's driving to New Mexico. She has a car.

BRADLEY

(*To Shelly, after a pause.*) Vacation? (*Shelly shakes her head "no," trembling. TO shelly, motioning to Tilden.*) You taking Tilden with you?

SHELLY

No.

BRADLEY

*(Crossing back to Tilden.)* You oughta. No use leaving him here. Doesn't do a lick of work. Doesn't raise a finger. *(Stopping, to Tilden.)* Do ya? *(To Shelly.)* Course he used to be a All-American. Quarterback or fullback or somethin'.

TILDEN

Halfback.

BRADLEY

He tell you about that? Brag on himself?

SHELLY

No.

BRADLEY

Yeah, he used to be a big deal. Wore letterman's sweaters. Had medals hanging all around his neck. Real purty. Big damn deal. *(He laughs to himself, notices Dodge on floor, crosses to him, stops.)* This one too. Ol' Grandad here. *(To Shelly.)* You'd never think it to look at him, would ya? All paunchy and bloated, lying on the floor. *(Bradley stares at her, crosses back to her, clenching the coat in his fist. He stops in front of Shelly.)* Women like that kinda thing don't they?

SHELLY

What?

BRADLEY

Importance. Importance in a man.

SHELLY

I don't know.

BRADLEY

Yeah. Ya know, ya know. Don't give me that. *(Moves closer to Shelly.)* You're with Tilden?

SHELLY

No.

BRADLEY

*(Turning to Tilden.)* Tilden! She with you? *(Tilden doesn't answer. Stares at floor.)* Tilden! You're gonna run now. Run like a scalded dog! *(Tilden suddenly bolts and runs off U.L. Bradley laughs. Talks to Shelly. Dodge starts moving his lips silently as though talking to someone invisible on the floor. Laughing.)* Scared to death! He was always scared. Scared of his own shadow. *(Bradley stops laughing. Stares at Shelly.)* Some things are like that. They just tremble for no reason. Ever noticed that? They just shake? *(Shelly looks at Dodge on the floor.)*

SHELLY

Can't we do something for your grandpa?

BRADLEY

*(Looking at Dodge.)* We could shoot him. *(Laughs.)* Put him out of his misery.

SHELLY

Shut up! *(Bradley stops laughing. Moves in closer to Shelly. She freezes. Bradley speaks slowly and deliberately.)*

BRADLEY

Hey! Missus. Don't talk to me like that. Don't talk to me in that tone a voice. There was a time when I had to take that tone a voice from pretty near everyone. *(Motioning to Dodge.)* Him, for one! When he was a whole man. Full of himself. Him and that half-brain that just ran outa here. They don't talk to me like that now. Not anymore. Everything's turned around now. Full circle. Isn't that funny?

SHELLY

I'm sorry.

BRADLEY

Open your mouth.

SHELLY

What?

BRADLEY

*(Motioning for her to open her mouth.) Open up. (She opens her mouth slightly.) Wider. (She opens her mouth wider.) Keep it like that. (She does. Stares at Bradley. With his free hand he puts his fingers into her mouth.) One ... two ... three fingers ... Just like that, on your tongue. (She tries to pull away.) Stay put! (She freezes. He keeps his fingers in her mouth. Stares at her.) Don't bite. (Pause. He pulls his hand out.) All done. (She closes her mouth, keeps her eyes on him. Bradley smiles. He looks at Dodge on the floor and crosses over to him. Shelly watches him closely. Bradley stands over Dodge and smiles at Shelly. He holds her coat up in both hands over Dodge, keeps smiling at Shelly. He looks down at Dodge then drops the coat so that it lands on Dodge and covers his head. Bradley keeps his hands up in the position of holding the coat, looks over at Shelly and smiles. The lights black out.)*

**MUSIC TRANSITION: SOLO DOBRO OR STEEL GUITAR.**

### ACT THREE

*Scene: same set. Morning. Bright sun. No sound of rain. Everything has been cleared up again. No sign of carrots. No pail. No stool. Vince's saxophone case and overcoat are still at the foot of the staircase. Bradley is asleep on the sofa under Dodge's blanket, his head toward stage left. Bradley's wooden leg is leaning against the sofa right by his head. The shoe is left on. The harness hangs down. Dodge is sitting on the floor, propped up against the TV set facing stage left, wearing his baseball cap. Shelly's rabbit fur coat covers his chest and shoulders. He stares toward stage left. He seems weaker and more disoriented. The lights rise slowly to the sound of birds. The two men remain for a while in silence. Bradley sleeps very soundly. Dodge hardly moves. Shelly appears from stage left with a big smile, slowly crossing toward Dodge balancing a steaming cup of broth in a saucer. Dodge just stares at her as she gets close to him.*

#### SHELLY

*(As she crosses – SAUCER/CUP FOLEY.)* A nice hot cup of broth. This is going to make all the difference in the world, Grandpa. You don't mind me calling you Grandpa do you? I mean I know you minded when Vince called you that but you don't even know him.

#### DODGE

I'm nobody's Grandpa. He skipped town with my money you know. I'm gonna hold you as collateral.

#### SHELLY

He'll be back. Don't worry. He always comes back.

#### DODGE

The faithful type.

#### SHELLY

No. Determined. *(She kneels down next to Dodge and PUTS THE CUP AND SAUCER IN HIS LAP.)*

#### DODGE

It's morning already! When did it get to be morning? Not only didn't I get my bottle but he's got my two bucks. I'm surrounded by thieves. What am I doing on the floor?

SHELLY

Try to drink this, okay? Don't spill it.

DODGE

What is it?

SHELLY

Beef bouillon. It'll warm you up.

DODGE

Bouillon! I don't want any goddamm bouillon! Get that stuff away from me!

SHELLY

I just got through making it.

DODGE

I don't care if you just spent all week making it! I ain't drinking it!

SHELLY

Well, what am I supposed to do with it? I'm trying to help you out. Besides, it's good for you.

DODGE

Get it away from me! (*Shelly stands up with cup and saucer.*) What do you know what's good for me anyway?

*(She looks at Dodge then turns away from him, crosses to the staircase, sits on bottom step and drinks the bouillon.)*

SHELLY

Fine. I'll drink it.

DODGE

*(Staring at her.)* You know what'd be good for me?

SHELLY

What?



DODGE

A little backrub. A little contact.

SHELLY

Oh no. I've had enough contact for a while. Thanks anyway. *(She keeps sipping the bouillon, stays sitting. Pause as Dodge stares at her.)*

DODGE

Why not? You got nothing better to do. That fella's not gonna be back here. You're not expecting him to show up again are you?

SHELLY

Sure. He'll show up. He left his horn here.

DODGE

His horn? *(Laughs)* You're his horn?

SHELLY

Very funny. His saxophone.

DODGE

He's run off with my money! That's what he did. He's not coming back here.

SHELLY

He'll be back. This is where he's from. He knows that. He's convinced. And so am I.

DODGE

You're a funny chicken, you know that?

SHELLY

Funny?

DODGE

Full of hope. Faith. Faith and hope. You're all alike you hopers. If it's not God then it's a man. If it's not a man then it's a woman. If it's not a woman then it's politics or bee pollen or the future of some kind. Some kind of future.

SHELLY

Bee pollen?

DODGE

Yeah, bee pollen. *(Pause.)*

SHELLY

*(Looking toward porch.)* I'm glad it stopped raining. *(Dodge looks toward porch then back to Shelly.)*

DODGE

That's what I mean. See, you're glad it stopped raining. Now you think everything's gonna be different. Just 'cause the sun comes out.

SHELLY

It's already different. Last night I was scared.

DODGE

Scared a what?

SHELLY

Just scared.

DODGE

Yeah, well we've all got an instinct for disaster. We can smell it coming.

SHELLY

It was your son, Bradley. He scared me.

DODGE

Bradley? *(Looks at Bradley.)* He's a push-over. 'Specially now. All ya gotta do is take his wooden leg and throw it out the back door. Helpless. Totally helpless. *(Shelly turns and stares at Bradley's wooden leg then looks at Dodge. She sips bouillon.)*

SHELLY

You'd do that?

DODGE

Me? I've hardly got the strength to breathe.

SHELLY

But you'd actually do it if you could?

DODGE

Don't be so easily shocked, girly. There's nothing a man can't do. You dream it up and he can do it. Anything. It boggles the imagination.

SHELLY

You've tried I guess.

DODGE

Don't sit there sippin' your bouillon and judging me! This is my house!

SHELLY

I forgot.

DODGE

You forgot? Whose house did you think it was?

SHELLY

Mine. *(Dodge just stares at her. Long pause. She sips from cup.)* I know it's not mine but I had that feeling.

DODGE

What feeling?

SHELLY

The feeling that nobody lives here but me. I mean everybody's gone. You're here, but it doesn't seem like you're supposed to be. *(Pointing to Bradley.)* Bradley doesn't seem like he's supposed to be here either. I don't know what it is. It's the house or something. Something familiar. Like I know my way around here. Did you ever get that feeling? *(Dodge stares at her in silence. Pause.)*

DODGE

No. No, I never did. I get lost in the hallway sometimes. *(Shelly gets up. Moves around space holding cup.)*

SHELLY

Last night I went to sleep up there in that room.

DODGE

What room?

SHELLY

That room up there with all the pictures. All the crosses on the wall.

DODGE

Halie's room?

SHELLY

Yeah. Whoever "Halie" is.

DODGE

She's my wife

SHELLY

So you remember her?

DODGE

Whadya mean! 'Course I remember her. She's only been gone a day—half a day. However long it's been.

SHELLY

Do you remember her when her hair was bright red? Standing in front of an apple tree?

DODGE

What is that, the third degree or something! Who're you to be askin' me personal questions about my wife!

SHELLY

You never look at those pictures up there?

DODGE

What pictures!

SHELLY

Your whole life's up there hanging on the wall. Somebody who looks just like you. Somebody who looks just like you used to look.

DODGE

That isn't me! That never was me! This is me. Right here. This is it. The whole shootin' match, sittin' right here in front of you. That other stuff was a sham.

SHELLY

So the past never happened as far as you're concerned?

DODGE

The past? Jesus Christ. The past is passed. What do you know about the past?

SHELLY

Not much. I know there was a farm. (*Pause.*)

DODGE

A farm?

SHELLY

There's a picture of a farm. A big farm. A bull. Wheat. Corn.

DODGE

Corn?

SHELLY

All the kids are standing out in the corn. They're all waving these big straw hats. One of them doesn't have a hat.

DODGE

Which one was that?

SHELLY

There's a baby. A baby in a woman's arms. The same woman with the red hair. She looks lost standing out there. Like she doesn't know how she got there.

DODGE

She knows! I told her a hundred times it wasn't gonna be the city! I gave her plenty a warning.

SHELLY

She's looking down at the baby like it was somebody else's. Like it didn't even belong to her.

DODGE

That's about enough outta you! You got some funny ideas, sister. Some damn funny ideas. You think just because people propagate they have to love their offspring? You never seen a bitch eat her puppies? Where are you from anyway?

SHELLY

LA. We already went through that.

DODGE

That's right, LA I remember.

SHELLY

Stupid country.

DODGE

That's right! No wonder. Dumber than dirt. (*Pause.*)

SHELLY

What's happened to this family anyway?

DODGE

You're in no position to ask! What do you care? You some kinda social worker?

SHELLY

I'm Vince's friend.

DODGE

Vince's friend! That's rich. That's real rich. "Vince"! "Mr. Vince!"! "Mr. Thief! Is more like it! His name doesn't mean a hoot in hell to me. Not a tinkle in the well. You know how many kids I've spawned? Not to mention grandkids and great-grandkids and great-great-grandkids after them?

SHELLY

And you don't remember any of them?

DODGE

What's to remember? Halie's the one with the family album. She's the one you should talk to. She'll set you straight on the heritage if that's what you're interested in. She's traced it all the way back to the grave.

SHELLY

What do you mean?

DODGE

What do you think I mean? How far back can you go? A long line of corpses! There's not a living soul behind me. Not a one. Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?

SHELLY

What was Tilden trying to tell me last night? *(Dodge stops short. Stares at Shelly. Shakes his head. He looks off L. Dodge's tone changes drastically.)*

DODGE

Tilden? *(Turns to Shelly, calmly.)* Where is Tilden?

SHELLY

What was he trying to say about the baby? *(Pause. Dodge turns toward L.)*

DODGE

What's happened to Tilden? Why isn't Tilden here?

SHELLY

Bradley chased him out.

DODGE

*(Looking at Bradley asleep.)* Bradley? Why is he on my sofa? *(Turns back to Shelly.)* Have I been here all night? On the floor?

SHELLY

He wouldn't leave. I hid outside until he fell asleep.



DODGE

Outside? Is Tilden outside? He shouldn't be out there in the rain. He'll get himself into trouble. He doesn't know his way around here anymore. Not like he used to. He went out West and got himself into trouble. Deep trouble. We don't want any of that around here.

SHELLY

What did he do? *(Pause.)*

DODGE

*(Quietly stares at Shelly.)* Tilden? He got mixed up. That's what he did. We can't afford to leave him alone. Not now. *(Sound of Halie laughing comes from off L. Shelly stands, looking in direction of voice, holding cup and saucer, doesn't know whether to stay or run. Motioning to Shelly.)* Sit down! Sit back down! *(Shelly sits. Sound of Halie's laughter again. To Shelly in a heavy whisper, pulling coat up around him.)* Don't leave me alone now! Promise me? Don't go off and leave me alone. I need somebody here with me. Tilden's gone now and I need someone. Don't leave me! Promise!

SHELLY

*(Sitting.)* I won't. *(Halie appears outside the screen porch door U.L. with Father Dewis. She is wearing a bright yellow dress, no hat, white gloves and her arms are full of yellow roses. Father Dewis is dressed in traditional black suit, white clerical collar and shirt. He is a very distinguished gray-haired man in his sixties. They are both slightly drunk and feeling giddy. As they ENTER THE PORCH THROUGH THE SCREEN DOOR, Dodge pulls the rabbit fur coat over his head and hides. Shelly stands again. Dodge drops the coat and whispers intently to Shelly. Neither Halie nor Father Dewis are aware of the people inside the house.)*

DODGE

*(To Shelly in a strong whisper.)* You promised! *(Shelly sits on the stairs again. Dodge pulls coat back over head. Halie and Father Dewis talk on the porch as they cross toward R. interior door.)*

HALIE

Oh Father! That's terrible! That's absolutely terrible! Aren't you afraid of being punished? *(She giggles.)*

DEWIS

Not by the Italians. They're too busy punishing each other. *(They both break out in giggles.)*

HALIE

What about God?

DEWIS

Well, prayerfully, God only hears what he wants to. That's just between you and me of course. In our heart of hearts we know we're every bit as wicked as the Catholics. *(They giggle again and reach the R. door.)*

HALIE

Father, I never heard you talk like this in Sunday sermon.

DEWIS

Well, I save all my best jokes for private company. Pearls before swine you know. **(INNER DOOR OPENS.** *They enter the room laughing and stop when they see Shelly. Shelly stands. Halie CLOSSES THE DOOR behind Father Dewis. Dodge's voice is heard under the coat talking to Shelly.)*

DODGE

*(Under coat, to Shelly.)* Sit down, Shelly, sit down! Don't let 'em buffalo you. *(Shelly sits on the stair again. Halie looks at Dodge on the floor, then looks at Bradley asleep on the sofa and sees his wooden leg. She lets out a shriek of embarrassment for Father Dewis.)*

HALIE

Oh my gracious! What in the name of Judas Priest is going on in this house! *(She hands over the roses to Father Dewis.)* Excuse me Father, hold these roses. Dodge, what are you doing on the floor? What's Bradley's leg hanging on the chair for? *(to Dewis)* You can't leave this house for a second without the devil blowing in the front door! *(to Dodge)* Gimme that!

DODGE

Gimme back that coat! Gimme back that goddamn coat before I freeze to death!

HALIE

You're not going to freeze! The sun's out in case you hadn't noticed!

DODGE

Gimme back that coat! You don't need to cover his leg! That coat's for live flesh not dead wood. *(Halie whips the blanket off Bradley and throws it on Dodge. Dodge covers his head again with blanket. Bradley's amputated leg can be faked by having it under a cushion on the sofa. Bradley's fully clothed. He sits up with a jerk when the blanket comes off him.)*

HALIE

*(As she tosses blanket.)* Here! Use this blanket! It's yours anyway! Can't you take care of yourself for once!

BRADLEY

*(Yelling at Halie.)* Gimme that blanket! Gimme back that blanket! That's my blanket! *(Halie crosses back toward Father Dewis who just stands there with the roses. Bradley thrashes helplessly on the sofa trying to reach the blanket. Dodge hides himself deeper in the blanket. Shelly looks on from staircase, still holding cup and saucer.)*

HALIE

Believe me, Father, this is not what I had in mind when I invited you in. I keep forgetting how easily things fall to pieces when I'm not here to hold them together.

DEWIS

Oh, no apologies please. I wouldn't be in the ministry if I couldn't face real life. *(Father Dewis laughs self-consciously. Halie notices Shelly again and crosses over to her. Shelly stays sitting. Halie stops and stares at her.)*

BRADLEY

I want my blanket back! Gimme my blanket! *(Halie turns toward Bradley and silences him.)*

HALIE

Shut up Bradley! Right this minute. I've had enough! It's shameful the way you carry on. *(Bradley slowly recoils, lies back down on sofa, turns his back toward Halie and whimpers softly. Halie directs her attention to Shelly again. Pause.)*

BRADLEY

You gave me that blanket.

HALIE

Enough. *(To Shelly.)* What are you doing with my cup and saucer?

SHELLY

*(Looking at cup, back to Halie.)* I made some bouillon for Dodge.

HALIE

For Dodge?

SHELLY

Yeah.

HALIE

My husband, Dodge.

SHELLY

Yes.

HALIE

You're here in my house making bouillon for my husband.

SHELLY

Yes.

HALIE

Well, did he drink it?

SHELLY

No.

HALIE

Did you drink it?

SHELLY

Yes. *(Halie stares at her. Long pause. She turns abruptly away from Shelly and crosses back to Father Dewis.)*

HALIE

Father, there's a stranger in my house. What would you advise? What would be the Christian thing?

DEWIS

*(Squirming.)* Oh, well...I...I really—is she a trespasser?

HALIE

We still have some whiskey, don't we? A drop or two? *(Dodge slowly pulls the blanket down and looks toward Father Dewis. Shelly stands.)*

SHELLY

Listen, I don't drink or anything. I just—*(Halie turns toward Shelly viciously.)*

HALIE

You sit back down! *(Shelly sits again on stair. Halie turns again to Dewis.)* I think we still have plenty of whiskey left! Don't we Father?

DEWIS

Well, yes. I think so. You'll have to dig into my pockets. My hands are full. *(Halie giggles. Reaches into Dewis's pockets, searching for bottle. She smells the roses as she searches. Dewis stands stiffly. Dodge watches Halie closely as she looks for bottle.)*

HALIE

Roses. The most incredible things, roses! Aren't they incredible, Father?

DEWIS

Yes. Yes they are.

HALIE

They almost cover the stench of sin in this house. Hanky-panky. Just magnificent! The smell. We'll have to put some at the foot of Ansel's statue. On the day of the unveiling. **(HALIE FINDS A SILVER FLASK OF WHISKEY IN DEWIS'S VEST POCKET. SHE PULLS IT OUT.)** Here's your little flask! *(Dodge looks on eagerly. Halie crosses to Dodge, UNSCREWS THE FLASK, AND TAKES A SIP. To Dodge.)* Ansel's getting a statue, Dodge. Did you know that? Not a plaque but a real live statue. A full bronze. Tip to toe. A basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other.

BRADLEY

*(His back to Halie.)* He never played basketball!

HALIE

You better shut up, Bradley! You shut up about Ansel! Ansel played basketball better than anyone! And you know it! He was an All-American! There's no reason to take the glory away from others. Especially when one's own short-comings are so apparent. *(Halie turns away from Bradley, crosses back toward Dewis sipping on the flask and smiling. To Dewis.)* Ansel was a great basketball player. Make no mistake. One of the greatest.

DEWIS

I remember Ansel. Handsome lad. Tall and strapping.

HALIE

Of course! You remember. You remember how he could play. *(She turns toward Shelly.)* Of course, nowadays they play a different brand of basketball. More vicious. Isn't that right, dear?

SHELLY

I don't know. *(Halie crosses to Shelly, sipping on flask. She stops in front of Shelly.)*

HALIE

Much, much more vicious. They smash into each other. They knock each other's teeth out. There's blood all over the court. Savages. Barbaric, don't you think? Here, honey, have some whiskey. **(HALIE TAKES THE CUP FROM SHELLY AND POURS WHISKEY INTO IT.)** They don't train like they used to. Not at all. They allow themselves to run amuck. Drugs and women. Women mostly. *(Halie hands the cup of whiskey back to Shelly slowly. Shelly takes it.)* Mostly women. Girls. Sad, pathetic little skinny girls. *(She crosses back to Father Dewis.)* It's just a reflection of the times, don't you think Father? An indication of where we stand?

DEWIS

I suppose so, yes. I've been so busy with the choir—

HALIE

Yes. A sort of bad omen. Our youth becoming monsters.

DEWIS

Well, I uh—wouldn't go quite that far.

HALIE

Oh you can disagree with me if you want to, Father. I'm open to debate. *(She moves toward Dodge.)* I suppose in the long run, it doesn't matter. When you see the way things deteriorate before your very eyes. Everything running down the hill. It's kind of silly to even think about youth.

DEWIS

No, I don't think so. I think it's important to believe in certain things. Certain basic truths. I mean—

HALIE

Yes. Yes, I know what you mean. I think that's right. I think that's true. *(She looks at Dodge.)* Certain basic things. We can't shake the fundamentals. We might end up crazy. Like my husband. You can see it in his eyes. You can see the madness almost oozing out. *(Dodge covers his head with the blanket again. Halie takes a single rose from Dewis and moves slowly over to Dodge.)* We can't not believe in something. We can't stop believing. We just end up dying if we stop. Just end up dead. *(Halie throws the rose gently onto Dodge's blanket. It lands between his knees and stays there. Long pause as Halie stares at the rose.)*

BRADLEY

Ansel never played basketball.

HALIE

Bradley, I'm warning you. *(Shelly stands suddenly. Halie doesn't turn to her but keeps staring at the rose.)*

SHELLY

*(To Halie.)* Don't you wanna know who I am? Don't you wanna know what I'm doing here! Standing in the middle of your house. I'm not dead! *(Shelly crosses toward Halie. Halie turns slowly to her.)*

HALIE

Did you drink your whiskey?

SHELLY

No! And I'm not going to either!

HALIE

Well that's a firm stand. It's good to have a firm stand.

SHELLY

I don't have any stands at all. I'm just trying to put all this together. (*Halie laughs and crosses back to Dewis.*)

HALIE

(*To Dewis.*) Surprises, surprises! Did you have any idea we'd be returning to this?

DEWIS

Well, actually—

SHELLY

I came here with your grandson for a little visit! A little innocent friendly visit.

HALIE

My grandson?

SHELLY

Yes! That's right. The one no one seems to remember.

HALIE

(*To Dewis.*) This is getting a little far-fetched.

SHELLY

I told him it was stupid to come back here. To try to pick up from where he left off.

HALIE

Where was that?



SHELLY

Wherever he was when he left here! Six years ago! Ten years ago!  
Whenever it was! I told him nobody cares. I told him nobody cares anymore.  
Nobody's going to care.

HALIE

Didn't he listen?

SHELLY

No! No he didn't. We had to stop off at every tiny little meatball town that  
he remembered from his boyhood!

HALIE

My grandson?

SHELLY

Every dumb little donut shop he ever kissed a girl in. Every drive-in. Every  
drag strip. Every football field he ever broke a bone on.

HALIE

*(Suddenly alarmed.)* Dodge, where's Tilden?

SHELLY

Don't ignore me! I'm telling you something!

HALIE

Where's Tilden gone? *(Shelly moves violently toward Halie.)*

SHELLY

*(To Halie.)* I'm talking to you! I'm standing here talking to you. *(Bradley  
sits up fast on the sofa, Shelly backs away.)*

BRADLEY

*(To Shelly.)* Don't you yell at my mother!

HALIE

Dodge! *(She kicks Dodge.)* I told you not to let Tilden out of your sight!  
Where's he gone to?

DODGE

Gimme a drink and I'll tell ya.

DEWIS

Halie, maybe this isn't the right time for a visit. (*Halie crosses back to Dewis.*)

HALIE

(*To Dewis.*) I never should've left! I never, never should've left! Tilden could be anywhere now! Anywhere! He's not in control of his faculties. He wanders. You know how he wanders. Dodge knew that. I told him when I left here. I told him specifically to watch out for Tilden.

BRADLEY

Gimme that!

DODGE

He's got my blanket again! He's got my blanket!

HALIE

(*Turning to Bradley.*) Bradley! Bradley, put that blanket back! (*Halie moves toward Bradley. Shelly suddenly throws the cup and saucer against the R. Door. Dewis ducks. THE CUP AND SAUCER SMASH INTO PIECES. Halie stops, turns toward Shelly. Everyone freezes. Bradley slowly pulls his head out from under blanket, looks toward R. door, then to Shelly. Shelly stares at Halie. Dewis cowers with roses. Shelly moves slowly toward Halie. Long pause. Shelly speaks softly.*)

SHELLY

(*To Halie.*) I am here! I am standing right here in front of you. I am breathing. I am speaking. I am alive! I exist. *DO YOU SEE ME?*

BRADLEY

(*Sitting up on sofa.*) We don't have to tell you anything, girl. Not a thing. You're not the police are you? You're not the government. You're just some prostitute that Tilden brought in here.

HALIE

Language! I won't have that language in my house! Father I'm—

SHELLY

(*To Bradley.*) You stuck your hand in my mouth and you call me a prostitute! What kind of a weird fucked-up yo-yo are you?

HALIE

Bradley! Did you put your hand in this girl's mouth? You have no idea what kind of diseases she might be carrying.

BRADLY

I never did. She's lying. She's lying through her teeth.

DEWIS

Halie, I think I'll be running along now. I'll just put the roses in the kitchen. Keep them fresh. A little sugar sometimes helps. (*Dewis moves toward L. Halie stops him.*)

HALIE

Don't go now, father! Not now. Please—I'm not sure I can stay afloat.

BRADLEY

I never did anything, Mom! I never touched her! She propositioned me! And I turned her down. I turned her down flat! She's not my type. You know that Mom. (*Shelly suddenly grabs her coat off the wooden leg and takes both the leg and coat D., away from Bradley.*) Mom! Mom! She's got my leg! She's taken my leg! I never did anything to her! She's stolen my leg! She's a devil Mom. How did she get in our house? (*Bradley reaches pathetically in the air for his leg. Shelly sets it down for a second, puts on her coat fast and picks up the leg again. Dodge starts coughing again softly.*)

HALIE

(*To Shelly.*) I think we've had about enough of you young lady. Just about enough. I don't know where you came from or what you're doing here but you're no longer welcome in this house.

SHELLY

(*Laughs, holds leg.*) No longer welcome!

BRADLEY

Mom! That's my leg! Get my leg back! I can't do anything without my leg! She's trying to torture me. *(Bradley keeps on making whimpering sounds and reaching for his leg.)*

HALIE

Give my son back his leg. Right this very minute! Dodge, where did this girl come from? *(Dodge starts laughing softly to himself in between coughs.)*

DODGE

She's a pistol, isn't she?

HALIE

*(To Dewis.)* Father, do something about this would you! I'm not about to be terrorized in my own house!

DEWIS

This is out of my domain.

BRADLEY

Gimme back my leg!

HALIE

Oh, shut up Bradley! Just shut up! You don't need your leg now!! Just lay down and shut up! I've never heard such whining. *(Bradley whimpers, lies down and pulls blanket around him. He keeps one arm outside blanket, reaching out toward his wooden leg. Dewis cautiously approaches Shelly with the roses in his arms. Shelly clutches the wooden leg to her chest as though she's kidnapped it.)*

DEWIS

*(To Shelly.)* Now, honestly, dear, wouldn't it be better to talk things out? To try to use some reason? No point in going off the deep end. Nothing to be gained in that.

SHELLY

There isn't any reason here! I can't find a reason for anything.

DEWIS

There's nothing to be afraid of. There are all good people. All righteous souls.

SHELLY

I'm not afraid!

DEWIS

But this is not your house. You have to have some respect.

SHELLY

You're the strangers here, not me.

HALIE

This has gone on far enough!

DEWIS

Halie, please. Let me handle this. I've had some experience.

SHELLY

Don't come near me! Don't anyone come near me. I don't need any words from you. I'm not threatening anybody. I don't even know what I'm doing here. You all say you don't remember Vince, okay, maybe you don't. Maybe it's Vince that's crazy. Maybe he's made this whole family thing up. I don't even care anymore. I was just coming along for the ride. I thought it'd be a nice gesture. Besides, I was curious. He made all of you sound familiar to me. Every one of you. For every name, I had an image. Every time he'd tell me a name, I'd see the person. In fact, each of you was so clear in my mind that I actually believed it was you. I really believed that when I walked through that door that the people who lived here would turn out to be the same people in my imagination. Real people. People with faces. But I don't recognize any of you. Not one. Not even the slightest resemblance.

DEWIS

Well you can hardly blame others for not fulfilling your hallucination.

SHELLY

It was no hallucination! It was more like a prophecy. You believe in prophecy, don't you, Father?

HALIE

Father, there's no point in talking to her any further. We're just going to have to call the police.

BRADLEY

No! Don't get the police in here. We don't want the police in here. This is our home.

SHELLY

That's right, Bradley's right. Don't you usually settle your affairs in private? Don't you usually take them out in the dark? Out in the back?

BRADLEY

You stay out of our lives! You have no business interfering!

SHELLY

I don't have any business period. I got nothing to lose. I'm a free agent. (*She moves around, staring at each of them.*)

BRADLEY

You don't know what we've been through. You don't know anything about us!

SHELLY

I know you've got a secret. You've all got a secret. It's so secret, in fact, you're all convinced it never happened. (*Halie moves to Dewis.*)

HALIE

Oh my God, Father! Who is this person?

DODGE

(*Laughing to himself.*) She thinks she's going to get it out of us. She thinks she's going to uncover the truth of the matter. Like a detective or something.

BRADLEY

I'm not telling her anything! Nothing's wrong here! Nothing's ever been wrong! Everything's the way it's supposed to be! Nothing ever happened that's bad. Everything is all right here! We're all good people! We've always been good people. Right from the very start.

DODGE

She thinks she's gonna suddenly bring everything out into the open after all these years.

DEWIS

*(To Shelly.)* Can't you see that these people want to be left in peace? Don't you have any mercy? They haven't done anything to you.

DODGE

She wants to get to the bottom of it. *(To Shelly)* That's it, isn't it? You'd like to get right down to bedrock? Look the beast right dead in the eye. You want me to tell ya? You want me to tell ya what happened? I'll tell ya. I might as well. I wouldn't mind hearing it hit the air after all these years of silence.

BRADLEY

No! Don't listen to him. He doesn't remember anything!

DODGE

I remember the whole thing from start to finish. I remember the day he was born. *(Pause.)*

HALIE

Dodge, if you tell this thing—if you tell this, you'll be dead to me. You'll be just as good as dead.

DODGE

That won't be such a big change, Halie. See this girl, this little girl here, she wants to know. She wants to know something more. And I got this feeling that it doesn't make a bit a difference. I'd sooner tell it to a stranger than anybody else. I'd sooner tell it to the four winds.

BRADLEY

*(To Dodge.)* We made a pact! We made a pact between us! You can't break that now!

DODGE

I don't remember any pact. (*Silence.*) See, we were a well-established family once. Well-established. All the boys were grown. The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over. Me and Halie here were pointed toward what looked like the middle part of our life. Everything was settled with us. All we had to do was ride it out. Then Halie got pregnant again. Out the middle a nowhere, she got pregnant. We weren't planning on havin' any more boys. We had enough boys already. In fact, we hadn't been sleepin' in the same bed for about six years.

HALIE

(*Moving toward stairs.*) I'm not listening to this! I don't have to listen to this!

DODGE

(*Stops Halie.*) Where are you going! Upstairs! You'll just be listenin' to it upstairs. You go outside, you'll be listenin' to it outside. Might as well stay here and listen to it. (*Halie stays by stairs. Pause.*) Halie had this kid see. This baby boy. She had it. I let her have it on her own. All the other boys I had had the best doctors, the best nurses, everything. This one I let her have by herself. This one hurt real bad. Almost killed her, but she had it anyway. It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be just like us. It wanted to be part of us. It wanted to pretend that I was its father. She wanted me to believe in it. Even when everyone around us knew. Everyone. All our boys knew. Tilden knew.

HALIE

You shut up! Bradley, make him stop!

BRADLEY

I can't.



DODGE

Tilden was the one who knew. Better than any of us. He'd walk for miles with the kid in his arms. Halie let him take it. All night sometimes. He'd walk all night out there in the pasture with it. Talkin' to it. Singin' to it. Used to hear him singing to it. He'd make up stories. He'd tell that kid all kinds a stories. Even when he knew it couldn't understand him. We couldn't let a thing like that continue. We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was canceled out by this one mistake. This one weakness.

SHELLY

So you...

DODGE

I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of a litter. Just drowned it. There was no struggle. No noise. Life just left it. (*Halie moves toward Bradley.*)

HALIE

(*To Bradley.*) Ansel would've stopped him! Ansel wouldn't have stopped him from telling these lies! He was a hero! A man! A whole man! What's happened to the men in this family! Where are the men! **(SUDDENLY VINCE COMES CRASHING THROUGH THE SCREEN PORCH DOOR U.L., TEARING IT OFF ITS HINGES.** *Everyone but Dodge and Bradley back away from the porch and stare at Vince, who has landed on his stomach on the porch in a drunken stupor. He is singing loudly to himself and hauls himself slowly to his feet. He has a paper shopping bag full of empty booze bottles. HE TAKES THEM OUT ONE AT A TIME AS HE SINGS AND SMASHES THEM AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE PORCH, behind the solid interior door, R. Shelly moves slowly toward R., holding wooden leg and watching Vince.*)

VINCE

(*Singing loudly as he hurls bottles.*) "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli. We will fight our country's battles in the air on land and sea." **(HE PUNCTUATES THE WORDS "MONTEZUMA," "TRIPOLI," "BATTLES," AND "SEA" WITH A SMASHED BOTTLE EACH.** *He stops throwing for a second, stares toward R. of the porch, shades his eyes with his hand as though looking across to a battlefield, then cups his hands around his mouth and yells across the space of the porch to an imaginary army. The others watch in terror and expectation. To imagined army.*) Have you had enough

over there! ‘Cause there’s a lot more here where that came from! (**JOSTLING THE PAPER BAG FULL OF BOTTLES.**) A helluva lot more! We got enough over here to blow ya from here to Kingdom come! (*He takes another bottle, makes high whistling sound of a bomb and throws it toward R. porch.*

**SOUND OF BOTTLE SMASHING AGAINST WALL.**

**HE KEEPS YELLING AND HEAVING BOTTLES ONE AFTER ANOTHER.** *Vince stops for a while, breathing heavily from exhaustion. Long silence as the others watch him. Shelly approaches tentatively in Vince’s direction, still holding Bradley’s wooden leg.)*

SHELLY

*(After a silence.)* Vince? *(Vince turns toward her. Peers through screen.)*  
What are you doing out on the porch?

VINCE

Who? What? Vince who? Who’s that in there? Is someone in there? I can’t see you through the screen. *(Vince pushes his face against the screen from the porch and stares in at everyone.)*

DODGE

Where’s my goddamn bottle!

VINCE

*(Looking in at Dodge.)* What? Who is that? Who’s speaking. Whose voice is that?

DODGE

It’s me! Your grandfather! Don’t play stupid with me! Where’s my two bucks!

VINCE

Grandfather? Grandfather? You mean the father of my father? The son of my great-grandfather? That one? When did this start?

DODGE

Where’s my bottle! *(Halie moves away from Dewis, U., peers out at Vince, trying to recognize him.)*

HALIE

Vincent? Is that you, Vincent? (*Shelly stares at Halie then looks out at Vince.*)

VINCE

(*From porch.*) Vincent who? What is this! Who are you people?

SHELLY

(*To Halie.*) Hey, wait a minute. Wait a minute!

HALIE

(*Moving closer to porch screen.*) We thought you were a murderer or something. Barging in through the door like that.

VINCE

A murderer? No, no, no! How could I be a murderer when I don't exist? A murderer is a living breathing person who takes the life and breath away from another living breathing person. That's a murderer. You've got me mixed up with someone else.

BRADLEY

(*Sitting up on sofa.*) You get off our front porch you creep! What're you doing out there breaking bottles? Who are these foreigners anyway! Where did they all come from?

HALIE

(*Moving toward porch.*) Vincent, what's got into you! Why are you acting like this?

VINCE

Who's that? Who's that speaking?

SHELLY

(*Approaching Halie.*) You mean you know who he is?

HALIE

Of course I know who he is! That's more than I can say for you missie.

DODGE

Where's my goddamn bottle? (*Halie turns back toward Dewis and crosses to him. Vince sings.*)

VINCE

"From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli. We will fight our country's battles in the air on land and sea..."

HALIE

(*To Dewis.*) Father, why are you just standing around here when everything's falling apart? Can't you rectify this situation? (*Dodge laughs, coughs.*)

DEWIS

I'm just a guest here, Halie. I don't know what my position is exactly. This is outside my parish anyway. I'm in the quiet part of town.

SHELLY

Vince! Knock it off will ya! I want to get out of here! This is enough.

VINCE

(*To Shelly.*) Have they got you prisoner in there, dear? (*Vince starts to sing again, throwing more bottles as things continue.*)

SHELLY

I'm coming out there, Vince! I'm coming out there and I want us to get in the car and drive away from here. Anywhere. Just away from here. Far, far away. (*Shelly moves to R. door and opens it.*)

VINCE

We'd never make it. We'd drive and we'd drive and we'd drive and we'd never make it. We'd think we were getting farther and farther away. That's what we'd think.

SHELLY

I'm coming out there now, Vince.

VINCE

Don't come out. Don't you dare come out here. It's off limits. Taboo territory. But I'm coming in. Right through this goddamn screen. (*Vince pulls out a big folding hunting knife and pulls open the blade. He jabs the*

*blade into the screen and starts cutting a hole big enough to climb through. Bradley cowers in a corner of the sofa as Vince rips open the screen. Dewis takes Halie by the arm and pulls her toward staircase.)*

DEWIS

Halie, maybe we should go upstairs until this blows over. I'm completely at a loss.

HALIE

I don't understand it. I just don't understand it. He was the sweetest little boy! There was no indication. *(Dewis drops the roses beside the wooden leg at the foot of the staircase then escorts Halie quickly up the stairs. Halie keeps looking back at Vince as they climb the stairs.)* There wasn't a mean bone in his body. Everybody loved Vincent. Everyone. He was the perfect baby. So pink and perfect.

DEWIS

He'll be all right after a while. He's just had a few too many that's all.

HALIE

He used to sing in his sleep. He'd sing. In the middle of the night. The sweetest voice. Like an angel. *(She stops for a moment.)* I used to lie awake listening to it. I used to lie awake thinking it was all right if I died. Because Vincent was an angel. A guardian angel. He'd watch over us. He'd watch over all of us. He would see to it that no harm would come. *(Dewis takes her all the way up the stairs. They disappear above. Vince is now climbing through the porch screen onto the sofa. Bradley crashes off the sofa, holding tight to his blanket, keeping it wrapped around him. Shelly is outside on the porch. Vince holds the knife in his teeth once he gets the hole wide enough to climb through. Bradley starts crawling slowly toward his wooden leg, reaching out for it.)*

BRADLEY

My leg! Gotta get to my leg!

*(VINCE and BRADLEY ad lib about the leg as the scene continues.)*

DODGE

*(To Vince.)* Go ahead! Take over the house! Take over the whole goddamn house! You can have it! It's yours! It's been a pain in the neck ever since the very first mortgage. I'm gonna die any second now. Any second. You won't even notice. So I'll settle my affairs once and for all. *(As Dodge proclaims his last will and testament, Vince climbs into the room, knife in mouth and strides slowly around the space, inspecting his inheritance. He casually notices Bradley as he crawls toward his leg. Vince moves to the leg and keeps pushing it with his foot so that it's out of Bradley's reach then goes on with his inspection. He picks up the roses and carries them around smelling them. Shelly can be seen outside on the porch, moving slowly C. and staring in at Vince. Vince ignores her.)* The house goes to my grandson, Vincent. That's fair and square. All the furnishings, accoutrements, and paraphernalia therein. Everything tacked to the walls or otherwise resting under this roof. My tools—namely my band saw, my skill saw, my drill press, my chain saw, my lathe, my electric sander all go to my eldest son, Tilden. That is, if he ever shows up again. My Benny Goodman records, my harnesses, my bits, my halters, my brace, my rough rasp, my forge, my welding equipment, my shoeing nails, my levels and bevels, my milking stool—no, not my milking stool—my hammers and chisels and all related materials are to be pushed into a gigantic heap and set ablaze in the very center of my fields. When the blaze is at its highest, preferably on a cold, windless night, my body is to be pitched into the middle of it and burned 'til nothing remains but ash. *(Pause. Vince takes the knife out of his mouth and smells the roses. He's facing toward audience and doesn't turn around to Shelly. He folds up knife and pockets it.)*

SHELLY

*(From porch.)* I'm leaving, Vince. Whether you come or not, I'm leaving. I can't stay here.

VINCE

*(Smelling roses.)* You'll never make it. You'll see.

SHELLY

*(Moving toward hole in screen.)* You're not coming? *(Vince stays D., turns and looks at her.)*

VINCE

I just inherited a house. I've finally been recognized. Didn't you hear?

SHELLY

*(Through hole, from porch.)* You want to stay here?

VINCE

*(As he pushes Bradley's leg out of reach.)* I've gotta carry on the line. It's in the blood. I've gotta see to it that things keep rolling. *(Bradley looks up at him from floor, keeps pulling himself toward his leg. Vince keeps moving it.)*

SHELLY

What happened to you, Vince? You just disappeared. *(Pause. Vince delivers the following speech front.)*

VINCE

I was gonna run last night. I was gonna run and keep right on running. Clear to the Iowa border. I drove all night with the windows open. The old man's two bucks flapping right on the seat beside me. It never stopped raining the whole time. Never stopped once. I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it as though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield I watched him breathe as though he was frozen in time and every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changes to his grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clear on back to faces I'd never seen before but still recognized. Still recognized the bones underneath. Same eyes. Same mouth. Same breath. I followed my family clear into Iowa. Every last one. Straight into the corn belt and further. Straight back as far as they'd take me. Then it all dissolved. Everything dissolved. Just like that. And that two bucks kept right on flapping on the seat beside me.

*(Shelly stares at him for a while.)*

SHELLY

Bye Vince. I can't hang around for this. I'm not even related. *(She exits L. off the porch. Vince watches her go. Bradley tries to make a lunge for his wooden leg. Vince quickly picks it up and dangles it over Bradley's head like a carrot. Bradley keeps making desperate grabs at the leg. [ACTORS AD LIB.] Dewis comes down the staircase and stops halfway, staring at Vince and Bradley. Vince looks up at Dewis and smiles. He keeps moving backwards with the leg toward U.L. as Bradley crawls after him.)*

VINCE

*(To Dewis as he continues torturing Bradley.)* Oh, excuse me, Father. Just getting rid of some of the vermin in the house. This is my house now, ya know? All mine. Everything. Except for the power tools and stuff. I'm gonna get all new equipment anyway. New plows, new tractor, everything. All brand-new. Start right off on the ground floor.

VINCE

*(Teasing Bradley closer to the U.L. corner of the stage.)* Come on, Bradley. You can get it. You want your leg? **(HE THROWS BRADLEY'S WOODEN LEG FAR OFFSTAGE L.)** Crawl for it.

*(Bradley follows his leg offstage, pulling himself along on the ground, whimpering. As Bradley exits, Vince pulls the blanket off him and throws it over his own shoulder. He crosses toward Dewis with the blanket and smells the roses. Dewis comes to the bottom of the stairs.)*

DEWIS

You'd better go up and see your grandmother. I think you should. It would be the Christian thing.

VINCE

*(Looking upstairs, back to Dewis.)* My grandmother? There's nobody else in this house. Except for you. And you're leaving aren't you? *(Dewis crosses toward R. door. He turns back to Vince.)*



DEWIS

She's going to need someone. I can't help her. I don't know what to do. I don't know what my position is here. I'm quite out of my depths. I'll be the first to admit it. I thought, by now, the Lord would have given me some sign, some guidepost, but I haven't seen it. No sign at all. Just—(*Vince just stares at him. Dewis goes out the door, crosses porch and exits L. Vince listens to him leaving. He smells roses, looks up the staircase then smells roses again. He turns and looks U. at Dodge. He crosses up to him and bends over, looking at Dodge's open eyes. Dodge is dead. His death should have come completely unnoticed.*)

VINCE

Grandpa? Grandpa? When did you die?

(*After a while, Halie is heard coming from above the staircase. The lights start to dim imperceptibly as Halie speaks. Vince keeps staring at the ceiling.*)

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge? Is that you Dodge? Tilden was right about the corn you know. I've never seen such corn. Have you taken a look at it lately? Dazzling. Tall as a man already. This early in the year. Carrots too. Potatoes. Peas. It's like a paradise out there, Dodge. You oughta take a look. A miracle. I've never seen it like this. Maybe the rain did something. Maybe it was the rain. (*As Halie keeps talking offstage, Tilden appears from L., dripping with mud from the knees down. His arms and hands are covered with mud. In his hands he carries the corpse of a small child at chest level, staring down at it. The corpse mainly consists of bones wrapped in muddy, rotten cloth.*)

VINCE

Dad? You're all muddy ... where you been?

TILDEN

Out back.

VINCE

What you got in your hands?

TILDEN

A baby ... A tiny little baby.

*(As Halie continues, Tilden slowly makes his way up the stairs. His eyes never leave the corpse of the child. The lights keep fading.)*

HALIE

Good hard rain. Takes everything straight down deep to the roots. The rest takes care of itself. You can't force a thing to grow. You can't interfere with it. It's all hidden. Unseen. You just gotta wait 'til it pops up out of the ground. Tiny little shoot. Tiny little white shoot. All hairy and fragile. Strong though. Strong enough to crack the earth even. It's a miracle, Dodge. I've never seen a crop like this in my whole life. Maybe it's the sun. Maybe that's it. Maybe it's the sun. *(Tilden disappears above. Silence. Lights go to black.)*

**MUSIC CUE: SOLO DOBRO OR STEEL GUITAR.**

**END**