

NEVER MIND THE WIND

By

Ben Josephson

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Cast of Characters

<u>ADAM DUMONT:</u>	Male, (White), 11
<u>STUART LOGAN:</u>	Male (White), mid 50's
<u>NANCY LOGAN DUMONT:</u>	Female (White), early 30's
<u>THERESA SCHUYLER:</u>	Female (White), mid 50's
<u>GERALDINE SCHUYLER:</u>	Female (White), early 30's
<u>ERIC DUMONT:</u>	Male (White), early 30's
<u>BOB SILVERBERG:</u>	Male (White), 30
<u>RITA HARPER:</u>	Female (Black), 17
<u>DENISE HARPER:</u>	Female (Black), 35
<u>AVERY CARMICHAEL:</u>	Male (White), 90

Scene

An old farm house ten miles outside a mid-size Midwestern city. A garden downstage. Upstage, a parlor. The front door of the house opens into the parlor stage left, and there are exits upstage and stage right from the parlor into the rest of the house.

Time

Act I: a Sunday in early May in the late 1970's, mid-morning. Act II: a Saturday in July, mid-afternoon. Act III, Scene 1: a Saturday in October, late afternoon. Act III, Scene 2: the following morning.

ACT ONE

1

A Sunday in early May in the late 1970's, mid-morning. There is a table in the garden, laden with glasses, bottles, eats; and a rocking chair off to the side.

Adam, in jeans and sports shirt, enters the parlor from inside, goes outside, gets a Coke. He takes in the view, then goes back into the parlor and looks around, picking up books and magazines and, after a quick glance at each, putting them aside. Stuart Moore, in suit and tie, with a flower in his lapel, enters the parlor from inside.

ADAM

Why don't you have a television, grandpa?

STU

(Hand on Adam's shoulder.)

Come on. Take a look. You won't need a TV while you're here.

ADAM

Did you get a good deal on the place?

Stuart steers Adam out into the garden with him.

STU

Your father thinks I overpaid. See that barn out there? I grew up looking at the other side of it. Used to sit at my bedroom window and watch over the fields.

ADAM

You should have bought your **old** house back if you liked it so much.

STU

I wish I could have. But a few months after we moved into the city---forty-three years ago, Adam!---the place went up in flames.

Nancy, in a skirt and light sweater, enters the parlor from inside, and proceeds out into the garden, unnoticed.

ADAM

Our carburetor went haywire the other side of Omaha.

(CONTINUED)

STU

So I heard.

ADAM

That's why we got in so late last night.

STU

There's a pond in that clump of trees. The property line runs---

ADAM

This hick mechanic took his sweet old time.

STU

The line runs there, along the creek, and then---

NANCY

Lord of the manor!

(Kisses Stu.)

What do you think, Adam? Pretty stupendous, isn't it?

ADAM

It's okay for a week, I guess.

STU

(To Nancy.)

Are you planning to leave so soon?

NANCY

I'm not planning anything.

ADAM

But you said---

NANCY

I said we **might** move to New York, **if** it looks like I can get a decent job, and I did **not** say how long we would be staying **here!**

STU

Adam, you will love this place. And with your father less than half an hour away, you'll be able to spend more time with him than you ever have.

NANCY

He's not coming today, is he?

STU

(To Adam.)

Go on. Look around before the party starts.

Adam exits downstage right.

(CONTINUED)

STU (cont'd)

Now, Nancy, you know I'm fond of Eric. Theresa and I agreed to invite two friends each, and so---

NANCY

You sure she intends to show up, herself? She's typing away upstairs like crazy, as if she couldn't care less about this..."happy event."

STU

Oh, I think she'll make it. She does tend to get...well, singleminded---

NANCY

Like you.

STU

And, like me, she is reliable.

NANCY

You weren't all that reliable with the wife you had before.

(Pause.)

What's Theresa working on?

STU

Oh...some paper or other. For some journal.

NANCY

Hey, you know: I actually won't mind seeing Eric. It should be...well, kind of a kick, after all these years.

STU

That's what I want to hear! I'm getting married, with my family here to celebrate!

NANCY

(Pouring two bloody marys.)

First toast of the day! From me to you!

STU

It's awfully early.

NANCY

In a spirit of...of---. Of what?

STU

(Taking a glass from her.)

Reconciliation?

NANCY

To reconciliation! To the dissolution of the anger that confounds us, to the resurrection of the love that...that fucked us up to begin with.

(CONTINUED)

Nancy starts chugging her drink.

STU

(Snatching her glass.)

What the hell do you think you're doing?! Nancy, your mother had an excuse. You don't.

NANCY

What excuse?

STU

She was lonely. You were quite right just now: I was not reliable. I was neglectful. Indifferent. Dismissive. That was why she left. I neglected you, too.

NANCY

Nonsense. You inspired me. Or tried to.

STU

But you aren't happy, and it's all because I---.

NANCY

You begged me to go to med school.

Theresa, in a festive dress, and with her hair done up, enters the parlor from inside.

NANCY

Why, oh why, did I not? Instead of running off with that...with Eric.

Theresa proceeds out into the garden.

NANCY

Oh, how lovely! Shall we raise a glass to the lucky lady?

STU

It is inappropriate to congratulate the bride.

THERESA

(Kissing Stu.)

Not in this case. Remember now, Stuart---.

STU

Yes, yes, yes. I am to be excruciatingly polite to your two special guests.

THERESA

Did I call them special?

(CONTINUED)

STU

Actually, I think "different" was the word you used.

THERESA

Just keep in mind that they may be sensitive.

(Remembering.)

Oh! The hospital is on the phone.

Stu sighs, and exits inside. Nancy pointedly drains her drink, and starts fixing two more.

THERESA

No vodka, thank you. Just tomato juice. How did you sleep?

NANCY

Bad as always.

THERESA

Am I glad you're here! Your father so cherishes the company of those he loves, and---

NANCY

"Cherishes?" Ha! What he does is **demand** "the company of those he loves."

A quick knock at the front door. Then Geraldine, in a festive dress, opens it and enters the parlor. Two cameras and a light meter hang from her neck. She carries a bouquet of flowers.

NANCY

Not all the time, of course. No, only on those rare occasions when he isn't immersed in his infernal work.

Geraldine enters the garden.

GERRY

(Throwing her arms around Theresa.)

Oh, I am so happy for you, mama!

THERESA

If you must throw yourself at me, would you please aim those camera snouts elsewhere!

Gerry hands Theresa the flowers.

NANCY

I...I'll go get some water and a vase.

(CONTINUED)

THERESA

No! Wait! Nancy, this is your new stepsister.

GERRY

Ma, that sounds awful!

NANCY

It sure does. Like some nightmare right out of "Cinderella."

GERRY

Well, Nancy, there is no need to fear. I will not make you scrub the floor.

NANCY

Thanks.

GERRY

As long as you let **me** end up getting the prince.

NANCY

You can have him.

GERRY

(Offering Nancy her hand.)

Call me Gerry.

(Shaking Nancy's hand.)

My mother hates that name.

NANCY

Then why did she give it to you?

THERESA

The name I gave her is Geraldine.

GERRY

I am so glad you could make it! Your father has been walking on air ever since he heard you were coming, and even the bride here has been---

THERESA

What do you mean, "even?"

GERRY

I am not used to seeing you pleased about anything mom. Except, of course, your career.

THERESA

You behave today, understand? You are to be---

GERRY

Polite! You have friends coming, and they are liable to be oh-so-very-sensitive!

(CONTINUED)

Theresa turns and exits inside.

GERRY

(Going to fix a drink.)

I need a drink.

NANCY

(Unconsciously formal; preoccupied.)

Certainly, by all means. Please help yourself.

GERRY

(Laughing.)

Theresa is gonna be crazy about **you!**

NANCY

Huh?

GERRY

Did you hear what you just said? It sounded as if you had a stick up your ass! That's how **she** sounds all the time.

NANCY

I wasn't thinking.

GERRY

Yes you were.

NANCY

About...about---

GERRY

Well, whatever is on your mind, it doesn't seem to be the here and now.

(Pause.)

Will you be staying long?

NANCY

I need something to live for, damn it, not **somewhere** to pass the time!

(Apologetic for the outburst, but ever more exasperated.)

I just spent nine years in San Francisco, where I took up cabinet-making, then calligraphy, then the flute. I went through a grab-bagful of therapies, and got myself all activist for this cause and for that. I have studied "Navajo Myths and Legends," "The Social Dynamics of Quattrocento Italy," and "Ecosystems of the Sacramento Delta." I have been drowning in the idiotic concerns that make up people's lives, and...and all anyone here can ask is if I plan to stay!

(Pause. Then, indicating Gerry's cameras.)

May I?

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

(Handing Nancy a camera.)

I've got Kodacolor in the Nikon, and---

NANCY

Black-and-white is much more versatile. I used to shoot a lot of Plus-X, and one day I ran into Imogen Cunningham, and I showed her some prints, and she said---

(Handing back the camera.)

Ah, she was just being nice to me.

Nancy makes herself another drink.

GERRY

If you do stay, I presume you will need to make some money?

(Pause.)

Nancy, I do photography as a business. And lately, I have been getting more work than I can handle. So...come drop by the studio tomorrow, and---

NANCY

But you just said I'm kind of like your mother. You wouldn't want to hire a woman like **her**, would you?

GERRY

I haven't offered to hire you. You will have to convince that me you're good before I do.

NANCY

I get the feeling you expect too much from people.

GERRY

I expect people to be no less than they can be.

NANCY

You expect Theresa to be something she's not.

GERRY

I used to. Ha! Yeah, I expected her to shower me with love! Me, and Tommy, too.

NANCY

Tommy?

GERRY

My brother. I expected her to dote, and to be there for her children every step of the way. In my dealings with you, I swear I will be a trifle more realistic.

NANCY

Is Tommy coming today?

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

He's dead. If he weren't, she would still be with my father. Whom she left because, she says, he as good as killed her son. My father, you see, could not stand my mother's sweetness---there was sweetness in her once---and he stomped on it with such Pavlovian regularity that she finally closed herself down. For attention, then, Tommy turned to dad.

A quick knock at the front door. Then Eric, in jacket and tie, opens it, and enters the parlor with Bob, in a turtleneck.

GERRY

The kid did all he could to please, and so he ended up as just the kind of man my father could be proud of.

Eric and Bob enter the garden.

NANCY

Well, hello there. Old buddy.

ERIC

How are you, Nancy? Oh, this is Bob.

BOB

Good to meet you.

NANCY

Hi.

(Introducing Eric.)

Gerry---

GERRY

Hello, Mr. Dumont.

BOB

She knows you? Hey, don't tell me you two guys---

ERIC

Shut up, Bob. You have a dirty mind. Ms. Schuyler used to rent from me.

GERRY

And **you** are Nancy's ex?!

ERIC

(To Nancy.)

I didn't think your father would be hiring a professional photographer.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

He didn't. This is her mother's wedding.

ERIC

O-o-oh! Where is---

NANCY

Adam? Running around somewhere. I think dad has visions of his grandson as Huckleberry Finn.

ERIC

Well, it looks like bloody marys is the order of the day. Bob, what do you say?

BOB

I'll have a screwdriver.

(To Nancy.)

Eric tells me you've been living in California.

NANCY

Yes, I---

(To Gerry.)

Hey, what's the matter? Eric's not a slumlord, is he?

GERRY

Oh, no.

(To Bob.)

Nancy was just saying how everyone out there sits around in hot tubs all day long, sipping wine and contemplating the harmony of the universe.

Stu, his full and unsipped bloody mary in hand, enters the parlor from inside.

ERIC

(To Nancy, offering her a bloody mary.)

Have another?

NANCY

(Taking the drink.)

Thanks.

Stu proceeds into the garden. Nancy notices.

NANCY (cont'd)

(To Eric, handing back her drink.)

You hold this.

BOB

(To Stu, shaking his hand.)

Well, here he is! The matrimonial recidivist!

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

(Kissing Stu.)

You look great!

ERIC

(Shaking Stu's hand.)

Hey, hey!

Stu puts his arm around Nancy.

BOB

Where is this mysterious woman who figures to benefit by your irrational behavior?

STU

Oh, she's---. Bob, that sigmoid resection is in trouble. Sudden onset of dyspnea.

Nancy breaks from Stu and takes her drink back from Eric. Eric goes to make a screwdriver.

STU (cont'd)

I do wish the preacher would hurry up and get here.

BOB

(To Stu.)

Don't tell me you're going to head back to the hospital **today**?!

STU

But...what else can I do?

BOB

Call in the surgeon and an internist.

STU

I have.

BOB

Good!

(To Nancy.)

Tell me about those hot tubs.

NANCY

Mmmmm.

ERIC

(Handing Bob the screwdriver.)

Tell **me** about those hot tubs.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

(To Bob.)

I take it you are a colleague of my father's.

BOB

Yeah. No. Make it: "sidekick." So, you found the universe is harmonious, did you?

GERRY

Surely **you** don't think it **isn't**?

BOB

It isn't.

GERRY

But it **can** be, can't it?

BOB

Of course! And it **will** be.

STU

You don't believe that.

BOB

I don't?

STU

You are the last person on Earth who could ever believe any such thing. You have no capacity whatsoever for optimism.

BOB

To the contrary: I am looking forward, most hopefully, to the life I get to live after I leave this backwater.

STU

That isn't optimism. It's rejection. You are utterly incapable of making a single positive affirmation.

BOB

The weather today is lovely. There! Anyway, Stuart, the messiah is coming. And when he arrives, the universe will, in fact, become perfectly harmonious.

(To Nancy.)

I most emphatically do not, as your father said before, believe a bit of that.

NANCY

(To Stu.)

I have never known you to have a nihilist for a friend.

BOB

I'm no nihilist. I'm an entertainer.

(CONTINUED)

STU

You are a physician.

BOB

Oh, *that*! C'mon man, admit it: you depend on my wide-ranging and well-articulated stupidity to enliven your otherwise dreary existence.

(Raising his glass.)

L'chaim! Which means---

As Theresa enters the parlor from inside with a vase of flowers, there is a knock on the front door.

STU

"To life."

BOB

Very good.

Placing the vase on a table, Theresa opens the door to Rita and Denise, each in a festive dress.

THERESA

(In the parlor.)

Welcome, welcome, welcome! Do come in!

RITA

(In the parlor.)

Mrs. Schuyler, this is my mother, Mrs. Harper.

BOB

(To Nancy, in the garden.)

Yes! I am going to Ca-a-alifornia! Forty-six days, I wind up this iniquitous "family practice residency," and I am off like a shot!

DENISE

(In the parlor.)

I am so pleased to meet you.

THERESA

(In the parlor.)

And I am so pleased you are here.

STU

(To Bob, in the garden.)

I do wish you would come with me to that New York meeting.

BOB

(To Stu, in the garden.)

Did you not ever wonder how I, of all people, could have endured three years in this flyover wasteland?

(CONTINUED)

In the parlor, Rita presents
Theresa a bouquet of flowers.

THERESA

(In the parlor.)

Oh, Rita! Thank you! My, my...oh, they are lovely! How very
kind and thoughtful!

BOB

(To Stu, in the garden.)

It is because it is the first time I ever lived anywhere
that was **not** New York.

THERESA

(In the parlor.)

Do come outside. The view from the garden is magnificent.

BOB

(To Stu, in the garden.)

No way are you going to drag me back to **that** filthy
hellhole.

THERESA

(In the parlor.)

We have been moving in since only last week, so for me, the
novelty is still fresh and exhilarating.

Theresa, Denise and Rita step into
the garden.

STU

(To Denise. With surprise.)

Well, hello there!

DENISE

How are you, Dr. Logan?

THERESA

Do you know each other?

DENISE

I used to work at the hospital.

STU

"Denise," isn't it?

DENISE

That's right.

THERESA

Well! Then he is not "Dr. Logan!" He is Stuart. And I am
Theresa. This is my daughter, Geraldine; Stuart's daughter,
Nancy; and...Eric.

(CONTINUED)

Each shakes Denise's hand in turn,
with a smile and a "hello" or "hi."

THERESA (cont'd)

(Looking at Bob.)

And...

STU

Oh! Bob Silverberg.

BOB

(Shaking Denise's hand.)

Good to meet you.

THERESA

And everyone, this is Rita!

RITA

How do you do?

THERESA

My prize pupil!

GERRY

Cut it out, mom. You're embarrassing her.

THERESA

In all my years of teaching, and in these recent years while
I have been a principal, I have never had a brighter
student.

GERRY

(To Denise.)

Are you still in...health care?

DENISE

Oh, yes. I'm more involved than I ever was.

STU

Where are you working these days?

DENISE

I've been at the Northeast Clinic since I left the medical
center. It is a wonderful view you have. Don't you think,
Rita?

RITA

Oh, wonderful. Yes.

STU

(To Rita.)

Theresa tells me you're going to be a physicist.

(To Denise.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STU (cont'd)

How would you like your daughter to run a cyclotron?

DENISE

Sounds good me. Not that I have the slightest idea what it's about.

BOB

Particles.

(Pause.)

They build these humongous machines at astronomical cost to generate endless data which are utterly extraneous to the human condition.

THERESA

(To Denise.)

Do have a drink.

DENISE

Well...thank you. Sure.

ERIC

What'll it be?

DENISE

Oh, whatever you all are drinking.

ERIC

(To Rita.)

And for you?

DENISE

(To Rita.)

The same?

RITA

May I?

DENISE

(To Eric.)

Go light on the vodka for her, please.

STU

How did they lure you away from us, anyway? Better pay?

DENISE

Better job. A lot more weekend hours, but---. Not that the hospital was so bad.

STU

I understand it's very community-oriented over there.

(CONTINUED)

DENISE

We take care of the total patient, you know? I mean, sure, as a practical nurse I can't do very much, but I listen to patients, and we talk, and...well, maybe sometimes I can help keep people out of trouble.

Eric hands Denise and Rita each a drink.

DENISE

Oh, thank you.

RITA

Thank you.

THERESA

(To Denise.)

Rita has told me it was you who instilled her with a love of learning.

STU

(To Rita.)

You know, you might do well to give some thought to a career in medicine.

BOB

Hey, Stu! Let her be!

NANCY

(To Bob.)

Why not medicine?!

BOB

Medicine is a drag.

NANCY

But that's what **you** do.

BOB

Don't rub it in.

NANCY

And you disparage physics.

BOB

I dig physics.

NANCY

Well, from that crack you made, it would seem you have about as much use for it as you do for...vaginal deodorant.

(CONTINUED)

STU

Nancy!

BOB

Allow me to address the substance---of what you *said*, that is, not the substance of which you *spoke*. As for the relative merits---or lack thereof---of theoretical physics and the so-called "healing arts---."

RITA

Dr. Logan?!

THERESA

Please, Rita. Call him "Stuart."

RITA

Well, I don't know what I'm going to do---in the future---and for now, well, physics is fun.

BOB

I'll buy *that*!

THERESA

(To Denise.)

Education is my whole life, and---.

(Glancing at Stu.)

Or, it has been up to now.

(Looks at Gerry. An uneasy laugh.)

But isn't that a foolish thing to say?

(Brief pause. Then, resolute.)

Rita is exceptional, and she deserves the best. She will succeed and excel, and would, I quite assure you, had "affirmative action" never been devised. Now, I am not---please understand---suggesting that children who do benefit from current policies are, in any way whatsoever, inadequate or deficient. If anything, many have merely had the misfortune not to be blessed with a parent like yourself. So, with your consent, I will arrange an interview for Rita with someone from Harvard University. I will urge them to give her a full scholarship. I would do no less for anyone else of her caliber.

DENISE

Well...of course. I give you my consent.

GERRY

(To Rita.)

You do have a say in all this, you know.

(To Denise.)

Or am I overstepping myself?

(CONTINUED)

DENISE

When push comes to shove, I have never been able to tell her what to do.

THERESA

Rita?

RITA

Yes. If you set up an interview, I would like that very much. Thank you.

THERESA

(To Denise.)

Parents simply **must** get involved in their children's educations! As for the schools themselves, they are unspeakable! Oh, if ...if only I could get myself into government, into a position that helps make policy, if only---

BOB

(To Rita.)

How can ten to the minus twenty-third seconds have any meaning for you?!

GERRY

Bob, what are you talking about?

BOB

See, recently they discovered "charm" which is the fourth---. But they spun off this meson...whatever the hell a meson is. I think all it is...it's simply a hadron---a hadron being one of the two basic types of particle---it's simply a hadron that's composed of two quarks. So, this meson lasted ten to the minus twenty-third seconds. Or was that "strangeness?" Actually, I think they've got five of them by now. Quarks, I mean.

Eric takes Bob's glass and makes him another screwdriver.

STU

Hey, where's my grandson? Have you seen him yet, Eric?

ERIC

Not yet.

(To Bob, handing him the drink.)

Wish I could help you.

RITA

"Bottom" would be the fifth quark.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Right!

RITA

And the psi meson had a longer lifetime than ten to the minus twenty-third seconds. That was the whole point. It lasted ten to the minus twentieth.

BOB

But that is insane! It is totally and ineluctably outside of the realm of human experience!

Avery Carmichael, enters the garden from downstage left. He wears faded overalls, an old shirt, and muddy shoes. Theresa looks at Stu, who shrugs.

THERESA

(To Avery.)

Can we help you?

AVERY

Carmichael. Avery Carmichael.

THERESA

Yes?

AVERY

Didn' they tell ya I'd be comin'?

THERESA

Who?

AVERY

Dang! They said, "when we sell the place,"---that's what they tol' me--- "when we sell it, we'll lit the new folks know ya'll be a-comin'."

(Pause.)

I was born in this here house! Lived here m' whole life! Leastways up till Phoebe died. So I got a right to be here, unnerstan'?!

STU

Uh...how long is it you were hoping to stay?

AVERY

Ah, three-four hours. Wanna watch 'em plough down 'crost the way. Got a party goin', aincha?

STU

A wedding, as a matter of fact.

(CONTINUED)

AVERY

(Looking out at the fields, shaking his head.)

I tol' 'm that beans is gonna fetch a better price this year, but the boy is plantin' corn.

(Explaining to Stu.)

M' gran'son. Wouldn' have me livin' here all b' m'silf when Phoebe went. Made me move ta that slick new house that he was buyin'.

ERIC

Carmichael! The ranch house half a mile south of here!

AVERY

Yep.

ERIC

That is quite a property your grandson has there, Mr. Carmichael. The contractor who built is a good friend of mine.

AVERY

Real modern, that place.

ERIC

That's right. Cutting edge.

AVERY

Modern, and flimsy...and ain't one square corner in it. Your friend built m' gran'son a piece o' junk. Yep, like ta come up here ivery now an' then an' set an' watch a bit.

STU

(To Avery, as he looks inquisitively at Theresa for her tacit agreement.)

Well...if that's all you came to do, I don't see any reason you shouldn't---

AVERY

Give me m' own room, m' gran'son did. Fancy bathroom, too. All m' own. An' m' own TV. Got the whole worl' right there in m' bedroom. Jis' turn on the set.

(Looking out over the fields.)

Hard-workin' boy. Whole family's hard-workin'.

(To Eric.)

Yep, got the whole worl' right there. Don' even haf ta leave m' room.

(To Stu.)

Got married here m'silf. Me an' Phoebe. Must a been... sivinny-one years ago.

(Looking out.)

Work s' hard, don' hardly iver see 'm.

(Pondering.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

Goin' on sivinny-two. AVERY (cont'd)

(Pause.)
STU
Would you like a drink?

AVERY
(Looking sceptically at Theresa.)
I d' know. Wouldn' wanna be bustin' in on nothin'.

THERESA
You are perfectly welcome, Mr. Carmichael.

AVERY
(To Denise.)
Well, then, honey, you go git me a glass o' bourbon.

Denise does nothing. Theresa gasps.

AVERY (cont'd)
Go on, girl! Go git it! One cube o' ice is all I need.

THERESA
You god damn fool!

Theresa takes Denise by the arm and leads her aside, apologizing profusely.

AVERY
(Realizing.)
Jis' one cube, ya see. So 's it don' git too thinned out.

Nancy fixes her gaze on Avery, who slinks down to the rocking chair, and sits. All the others turn away from him.

GERRY
(To Eric.)
Ticky-tacky!
(To Stu.)
I once lived in this great old building. Then Eric bought it. Now it's a plastic palace.

ERIC
I improved it.

GERRY
You cheesed it up and doubled the rent.

Theresa and Denise return center stage.

(CONTINUED)

THERESA

(To Stu.)

Will you have to go in to town after the ceremony?

STU

Bob thinks not.

BOB

Oh, Mrs. Schuyler...Theresa, I mean. We still haven't met, have we? Officially. There was such a mess of people when you came out here, so---

THERESA

(To Stu.)

You **will** want to be around to entertain the company.

STU

Absolutely.

BOB

Would you prefer that I call you "Mrs. Logan?"

THERESA

(To Stu.)

One of us does have to stay, and I will need to get back to my writing.

BOB

Or should I call you "Ms.?"

THERESA

(Re: the flowers.)

These need water.

Theresa exits inside as Gerry,
rueful, watches.

BOB

(To Eric. Re: Theresa.)

"Herr Professor?"

NANCY

(Eyes on Avery.)

Hey, Gerry, have you ever seen "After Ninety?"

(Pause.)

Gerry?

GERRY

What?

NANCY

It's this collection of pictures Imogen took of some of the oldest people she could find.

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

(To Stu.)

But he **is** a good businessman. He has awful taste, but---

STU

What?

GERRY

He is an excellent businessman.

STU

Who?

GERRY

Your son-in-law.

STU

Oh, yes, he---

(To Eric.)

Say, what's been happening with that shopping mall you were hoping to build?

ERIC

They break ground next week.

GERRY

Denise, pardon me, but...have I seen you somewhere?

DENISE

Probably. This **is** a pretty small community we live in.

STU

(An arm around Bob, leading him inside.)

He had some post-op bleeding. Which stopped. So now...do we dare risk anticoagulating him?

Stu and Bob exit inside.

GERRY

It was at the Civic Auditorium in March! At a dance recital. You were wearing a green dress and you sat on the right side about...eight or nine rows back. I didn't like the choreography.

DENISE

I didn't like the performances.

GERRY

Well, they were better than **I** will ever be. I once---. You know, I keep meaning to make the drive to Chicago to see some real dancing for a change.

(CONTINUED)

DENISE

What happened? You wanted to be dancer once. Isn't that what you were going to say?

GERRY

I never had what it takes.

DENISE

You have to believe in yourself if you want to accomplish something. You don't get sidetracked. You keep at it, you stick to it.

NANCY

(Turning from Avery to Denise.)

That's right.

GERRY

In *my* case, Denise, the problem was not lack of determination.

Adam enters the parlor from inside.

GERRY

It was the body I was born with. Which, when it dances, you would not want to watch.

Adam goes out into the garden.

ERIC

Hey, there's my boy! Wow, you are twice the size you were a year ago!

NANCY

(To Adam.)

I thought you were out jumping around in some haystack.

ADAM

Nah, I've been checking out your road maps.

(To Eric.)

I figured...if you stick to interstate eighty, and if you stop only long enough to get gas and a snack and use the toilet, and if you stretch the speed limit just a little, you can get from the San Francisco Bay Bridge to the George Washington in less than forty-eight hours.

ERIC

Hey, kid, I want you to hang around for a while.

ADAM

The preacher is here. You're all supposed to go inside.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

(Arm around Adam, steers him into the parlor.)

Adam, there are so many things you and I can do---.

Eric and Adam exit inside.

NANCY

You all in the mood for a wedding?

GERRY

I am.

NANCY

I'm not.

GERRY

Then you had better get yourself another drink.

NANCY

(To Denise.)

How 'bout you?

DENISE

One drink is enough, thank you.

NANCY

I was asking if you are in the mood for a wedding.

(Pause, as she cups an ear.)

Speak up.

RITA

(Laughing.)

I think you heard her right.

GERRY

(To Denise.)

Hey, I am sorry about my mother inviting you. I mean, I'm glad you're here, but---. God, I'm getting myself all twisted up. All I'm trying to say---

DENISE

We were talking about that on the way over.

GERRY

Well, she has no real friends, and Rita...is her "prize pupil."

NANCY

(To Denise.)

Whatsa matter? Don't you feel like celebrating?

(CONTINUED)

RITA

(To Denise.)

Hey, yeah. Loosen up a little. After all, it ain't *my* wedding.

DENISE

(To Gerry.)

I hope your mother has the clout she thinks she has.

RITA

(To Denise.)

I must say, though, Kevin *is* hard to resist.

DENISE

(To Rita.)

'Cause anything less than a full scholarship, Harvard is out!

RITA

He has such gorgeous eyes.

DENISE

Yes, he does. But he is not for you. Kevin will be spending the rest of his life selling wrenches and wire in his family's hardware store.

GERRY

Hey, let's all go to Chicago! Next season. There will be loads of good dance companies coming through.

DENISE

Well...

GERRY

Well what?

DENISE

Whatever you like.

GERRY

Nancy?

NANCY

(Pouring another drink.)

Don't bother me. I'm trying to get in the mood for a wedding.

GERRY

You simply blow me away, you two, with your enthusiasm. Like it or not, I am going to get tickets for the four of us.

(Taking Denise's arm and heading into the parlor.)

A friend of mine works in The Loop. And he knows people. He can get us great seats.

(CONTINUED)

Gerry and Denise exit inside.

NANCY

You **were** just kidding her, weren't you? About this...Kevin.

RITA

Of course. Kevin is so...adolescent. It really is nice out here.

NANCY

Don't tease her, Rita. She's trying to protect you.

(Pause.)

I screwed up my own life with marriage when I was barely older than you.

RITA

Eric is nice.

NANCY

Well...he does care about his son.

RITA

Lucky son.

NANCY

And **your** father...?

RITA

What father? That looks like water, through those trees.

NANCY

It's a pond. Hey, come back some time. Come visit when the weather heats up.

RITA

So you can continue to instruct me?

NANCY

No, for fun.

RITA

Are you going to throw a party for all the local children?

NANCY

For **grown-up** fun. You and I can go take us a dip in...in the ol' swimmin' hole.

RITA

Sounds pretty childish to me. It does sound like a good time, though.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Well then, come for a swim, and if I lecture you, you drown me.

RITA

But would Harvard give a scholarship to a murderer?

NANCY

Hmmm. That could pose a problem.

RITA

One less physicist, that's all.

NANCY

But think of poor Theresa!

RITA

Oh, yes. And poor, poor Denise!

NANCY

It *is* important to your mother, isn't it?

RITA

The way she sees things...if she hadn't quit school, she would not be stuck in that stinking job.

NANCY

But she likes her job.

RITA

She says. When she comes home happy, and I ask her why, she tells me about some kid she persuaded to keep plugging away. Some kid she persuaded not to make the mistake she made, is what she means.

NANCY

So...she blames herself, does she?

(Pause.)

Do you think she should?

RITA

I don't know. She just keeps saying "my life is my responsibility. And the responsibility for your life belongs to you alone."

NANCY

(Fixing her gaze on Avery.)

That is...yes, that is so.

RITA

We'd better hurry up inside.

(CONTINUED)

Rita goes into the parlor, as Nancy keeps looking at Avery. Rita exits inside as Eric enters into the parlor and proceeds to the garden.

ERIC

It's time, Nancy. Come on.

Nancy turns from Avery, pours a glass of bourbon, and drops in one cube of ice. She goes over to the old man, and hands him the drink. He thanks her uncertainly with his eyes. She then pours herself another bloody mary.

NANCY

(Drink in hand, kissing Eric.)

Great to see you, Eric.

Nancy takes Eric's arm, and they exit inside. Avery continues watching out over the fields.

###END OF ACT ONE###

ACT TWO

2

A Saturday in July. Mid-afternoon.

In the garden, Nancy, in cut-off jeans and tank-top, photographs Avery from various angles. Seated in the rocking chair, the old man wears what he wore before. Adam, in shorts and tee-shirt, sits on the ground, amusing himself with the contents of his mother's gadget-bag.

AVERY

She got a point, ya know, Adam. Can ricollic' one day... caught nineteen frogs. That was m' ricord. Nineteen in one day.

(To Nancy.)

Aincha got enough **yit**?!

NANCY

(Shooting.)

Am I a bother?

AVERY

Bother?! Hell no, 'course ya ain't! But ya got more pitchers o' me b' now 'n 's been took o' any one man iver lived!

(CONTINUED)

(To Adam.)

Used ta sling mud at the hogs, too. While they was busy eatin'. Which is most all the time, o' course. Used ta---. But m' grampa, ya see, he would set me down right here an' go ta talkin' all day long. I was itchin' ta up an' git, but he kep' goin' on an' on 'bout when he was a boy an'---. Ol' man jis' couldn' shet up!

NANCY

(Shooting.)

Day as hot as this, I bet you couldn't wait to hie yourself on down to the ol' swimmin' hole.

AVERY

The what?! Oh...you mean the pond, doncha?

(To Adam.)

'Course, can't say you ain' got a point, yersilf. Me, I niver been ta N' York, so---

ADAM

(Holding up a medicine container he's taken from the bag.)

Hey, mom, what's "Seconal?"

NANCY

(Shooting.)

Will you please put those away?!

ADAM

I just want to know what they're for.

NANCY

They're sleeping pills. Now put them back.

Adam does.

AVERY

Got trouble sleepin', do ya?

NANCY

(Shooting.)

Ah, they're no help.

AVERY

Don' sleep s' good m'silf n' more. Haf ta git up ivery hour, a'most. Tell me it's m'...m' "prostrate gland." Got m' own bathroom, though, so's it ain' all that bad. Right there attached ta m' bedroom. Day we put bathrooms inta this here place...that was somethin'! I 'spec you ain' got no bathroom o' yer own, on accoun' o' there's only one ta each floor.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

(Shooting.)

Prostate trouble is not my problem, Ave.

AVERY

Guiss not.

(To Adam.)

Day like this, I used ta always swim.

(Reflective.)

Took Phoebe down there when we was courtin'.

(To Nancy.)

Had ta be real sneaky in them days.

NANCY

(Shooting.)

You kiss her?

AVERY

O' course I---! Ah, we would come out o' the water drippin' an'...an' laughin'. The shadows was playin' on the grass, an' Phoebe's hair was blowin' with the daisies. Ah, the grass was soft an' full o' daisies, an'...birds was singin' all aroun'.

Adam opens a camera he's taken out of the bag.

NANCY

(Snatching the camera from Adam.)

God damn you, Adam! You're exposing the film!

ADAM

I was just---!

NANCY

Quit bugging me, will you!

(Pause.)

It was unfair of me, I know, to put you in this situation. Still, you might find something to keep you busy.

ADAM

Will you take me with you when you go?

NANCY

Sure.

ADAM

And will you take me to all the parties and stuff they have for you?

NANCY

I am not aiming to be a celebrity.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Why not?

NANCY

Because I detest frivolity. And trendiness.

(Pause.)

But, hey: we **could** catch a concert or two while we're there.

ADAM

Yeah! "The Sex Pistols!"

NANCY

I would prefer the "Stones," myself.

ADAM

Then Bob Marley! What do you say?!

NANCY

Marley and "The Wailers!"

ADAM

Remember when we saw 'em?!

NANCY

On Fillmore Street!

ADAM

I betcha they're gonna play there! Yeah! At Madison Square Garden! Only, when are we going to go?

NANCY

Soon. Besides, living out here is a unique opportunity.

ADAM

Oh, sure. I'll be able to tell kids about it when I'm old and gray.

NANCY

Listen, your father **is** going to spend time with you. And after school starts in September, and you make some friends---

ADAM

But---

NANCY

Adam, I will bring you on any trips I take. But for the next few years, **this** is **home!**

(CONTINUED)

A knock at the door. Nancy gathers up her paraphernalia, goes into the parlor, and opens the door. Denise enters, in skirt and sleeveless blouse, with Rita, in shorts and tee-shirt. Rita carries a clothes change in a net bag.

NANCY (cont'd)

Oh, hi! I didn't expect---

DENISE

You mean you forgot?

NANCY

No. No, I---

DENISE

Yes you did. And Rita called you just this morning.

NANCY

Yeah...that's right. Theresa gave me the message.

RITA

(To Nancy.)

Look, if you're busy---

NANCY

No, not at all. I'm almost done. Rita, we two will have a super time!

Theresa, in a light dress, enters from inside.

THERESA

Aha! Here you are. Rita, the arrangements have all been made. A Mr. Perkins will interview in this area for Harvard in October, and he has agreed to specially to meet with you.

Nancy has sat down, and is changing film. Rita watches.

AVERY

(To Adam, in the garden.)

The thing about hogs, ya see, they keep on eatin' n' matter if ya sling mud at 'em 'r---

Adam gets up and goes into the parlor.

DENISE

Rita...

(CONTINUED)

RITA

(To Theresa, as she turns from watching Nancy.)

Oh...yes, thank you very much. I was just---. Well, it is so hot today.

THERESA

You need that swim you came for.

(To Adam.)

How does a dip sound to you, young man?

NANCY

Yeah. How 'bout that, Adam? Rita, why don't you take him on down there?

RITA

But I thought---

NANCY

I'm coming. I'll catch up. Won't be a minute.

RITA

Well...all right. I'll go change.

THERESA

(To Adam, as she steers him inside.)

Come on. Into your trunks.

Adam, Theresa, and Rita exit inside.

DENISE

I will be back to pick Rita up about six.

Gerry, in sleeveless blouse and shorts, enters from inside.

NANCY

Stick around. Join the gang.

DENISE

Thanks, but I have shopping to do.

GERRY

Not so fast! I got a pie in the oven and, baby, it's gonna be good!

DENISE

And *I* have a figure to watch, Gerry.

GERRY

Tickets came. Twelfth row center!

(CONTINUED)

DENISE

All right!

GERRY

(To Nancy.)

How does that sound to **you**?

NANCY

(Fussing with her camera.)

Huh? Oh, sure, a swim would be real nice.

GERRY

Nancy! Will you please come down from out of the clouds?!

DENISE

Your mother is making it happen.

GERRY

Huh? Oh, yeah. Rita's interview.

(To Nancy.)

You have a job tonight.

NANCY

Right. On...on Sixth Street. At seven-thirty.

GERRY

(To Denise.)

We got the best seats in the house!

DENISE

Well...don't you lose those tickets.

GERRY

Not me! **I** am not absentminded.

NANCY

Five ninety-four Sixth Street! Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Nesbitt's twentieth wedding anniversary!

DENISE

Has your mother done this for other kids before?

GERRY

Search me.

(To Nancy.)

Is there an end in sight for this project of yours?

NANCY

Another week, and I mail it out.

GERRY

Hoo-ray.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Gerry, if I have been screwing things up---

GERRY

Oh, no! You're doing fine! The "elderly persons" of three counties will live for all time thanks to your indefatigable passion. Nancy, it is an ordeal to work with you.

DENISE

You think your mother's recommendation can swing the decision?

GERRY

I think things will turn out just the way you want them to.

DENISE

(Laughing.)

That'll be a switch!

GERRY

(Looking at one of Nancy's prints,
showing it to Denise.)

This is brilliant.

NANCY

I *must* have a New York show! I have to get a major gallery! Any one of the three I am submitting to would be fine, but if...if I have to choose among them, well... that decision will be tough.

GERRY

Three galleries? That's all?

NANCY

But you said my portraits are brilliant.

GERRY

That one.

NANCY

If you expect me to change my ways after I finish the old folks project, Gerry, you had better dump me right now. Because I am going to continue to be distracted. By something...something far more ambitious.

GERRY

Okay, you're fired. How you intend to support yourself?

NANCY

I'll keep freeloadng off my daddy.

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

Nancy, I know you're paying him for your room and board. And Adam's. At **your** insistence.

NANCY

I'll just...swallow my pride.

GERRY

What is this "something far more ambitious?"

NANCY

The old folks work is just the beginning. What I am hoping to do...I am going to capture the whole region on film. Within a radius of...say, fifty miles. I concentrate on rural shots for a year, then devote another year to the towns. After that, for three, four, five years, I photograph more improvisationally, so I eventually create a timeless body of work with universal resonance.

GERRY

Send your stuff to the galleries I told you to send your stuff to, and you can have your job back.

NANCY

Well...the ones in Chicago, then. **Not** St. Louis.

GERRY

(Helplessly, to Denise.)

What can I do?

Rita, in a swim suit, enters from inside, unnoticed by anyone until Adam's entrance.

DENISE

I know that feeling, Nancy.

GERRY

Do you?

DENISE

It may be that **you** were never meant to dance, Gerry. But **I** was **born** to. I was so-o-o good! Cocksure, determined to take the world by storm. Yeah, I packed up my suitcase, with Lester Horton's Dance Theater in my sights, when...

(Sighs.)

Let's drop it.

GERRY

No. Tell me. What happened?

(CONTINUED)

Rita came along.

DENISE

Denise exits by the front door.
Adam, in swim trunks, enters from inside.

ADAM

Hey, mom! You coming?!

NANCY

Yeah.

ADAM

When?

NANCY

Right away. Now, git!

Adam goes outside and exits downstage right.

GERRY

(To Rita.)
You look like you've just been kicked.

NANCY

Oh, Rita, I'm sorry! Go keep an eye on Adam, would you?

RITA

Sure.

NANCY

I'll join up with you two in a flash.

RITA

(To herself, as she turns and exits to the garden.)
"I was so-o-o good." Then "Rita came along."

Rita exits downstage right as Bob, in shorts and tee-shirt, bursts in by the front door.

BOB

The boy is back!
(Stopping in his tracks.)
Something smells good.

GERRY

Pie. Fresh-baked mulberry.

Bob exits inside.

(CONTINUED)

GERRY (cont'd)

It isn't done yet, Bob.

Bob enters from inside.

BOB

(To Nancy.)

I was right the first time. New York is beyond redemption. How's things?

Nancy, immersed in her photographic work, ignores him.

BOB

(To Gerry.)

She had a chance to scream and yell at Eric yet?

GERRY

Tell me about the meeting.

BOB

Oh, Stuart should have gone! Wall-to-wall doctors. Pompous assholes, every one. That patient of his do all right?

GERRY

Which?

BOB

The latest one he could not tear himself away from. No, **you** wouldn't know, would you? "Fascinating." That was what...

(To Nancy.)

...your father...

(To Gerry.)

...called the poor bastard. "Terrific inflammatory bowel disease! Tremendous diarrhea!"

GERRY

Did you have a good time?

BOB

Oh, swell. Yeah. It could not have been the teensiest bit sweller. There was this enormous ballroom, see, full of gray men and gray women boring each other with drivel about cells and molecules and lots and lots of other make-believe. Diffusion gradients. Sodium pumps. Adenosine triphosphate. Now, an entire kidney...you can get your hands on **that!** Leopold Bloom: fry one up for breakfast; take care you don't burn it. I swear I will throttle the next person who mentions Kimmelstiel-Wilson intercapillary glomerulosclerosis in my presence. Are kidneys truly bean-shaped, I keep asking myself, or is it beans that are kidney-shaped? And in either event, can we safely conclude this delectable organ is destined, like the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BOB (cont'd)

flatulence-inspiring legume, to fetch a better price than corn? Kimmelstiel-Wilson intercapillary glomerulosclerosis being a not uncommon cause of the nephrotic syndrome, you should only know. It is all just piss to me.

NANCY

(To Bob, without looking up from her work.)

You're no doctor.

BOB

I'm afraid I am.

NANCY

What you are is a disgrace.

BOB

Nancy, you do have to understand that, given my background, I had exactly **two** alternatives. And, since I am a shamefully unconvincing liar, the **lawyer** alternative was, for me, no alternative at all.

Stu, in suit and tie, enters from inside.

STU

Bob! How was the trip?

BOB

There is a Yiddish expression---

STU

Hey, tell me what that fellow from Philadelphia had to say.

BOB

You do have to understand, Stuart, that since, if I hadn't filled in for you, the money you put into this...junkt would have gone down the drain anyway, I felt no obligation to bring you back a comprehensive summary of the proceedings.

STU

Just tell me the highlights.

BOB

The food! It is the one thing that justifies that city's existence.

STU

Bob...

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Hey, man: I am not kidding! The eggplant parmesan I had Thursday night...!

STU

You didn't even **go** to the meeting, did you?

BOB

I sat through an entire hour!

STU

Then what did you **do** there for two days?!

BOB

I ate! There is this place on Mott Street! Sensational! Typical Chinese hole-in-the-wall, but they got a guy in that kitchen who **knows** how to **wield** his **wok**!

Stu turns to exit back inside.

BOB (cont'd)

Hey, Stu! Stick around!

STU

You skipped the meeting. How could you?

BOB

I was busy.

STU

Stuffing yourself.

BOB

Yeah, and...and I went to the museum. The Metropolitan.

STU

Oh, how I would love to go there some day!

BOB

When you do, be sure to take in the Museum of Modern Art afterwards.

STU

Art, poetry...there just hasn't been time for culture in my life.

BOB

Go to both places, and you will get a sense of how Western "civilization" has "progressed" from its reverence for pretentiousness to the glorification of brazen triviality. Oh, Robert, Robert! Do cut the crap. You know, I forgot to eat lunch? I spent both days at the Met, and I forgot lunch twice!

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

It **is** a big place, the Met. Takes lots of time. When I was there, I kept walking around for hours and hours.

BOB

I didn't walk. I just sat there. Looking at the Rembrandts.

GERRY

Oh, there is this marvelous portrait by him in London.

BOB

Yeah, yeah.

(To Stu.)

You see, Rembrandt **felt** the passion, and the disappointment, and the confusion of each individual who sat for him. He didn't go after surfaces, he painted what was **inside**. He did not capture **appearance**, he captured **truth**. And truth exists! It does! It is a human thing, and Rembrandt understood!

GERRY

(To Stu.)

There is this portrait in London, in the National Gallery, of Hendrickje, who was Rembrandt's...lover. You can see her love in her eyes.

STU

(To Gerry.)

You think I could learn to appreciate art?

GERRY

Oh, yes.

BOB

(To Stu. Not didactic, but grappling with a problem, trying to understand.)

Truth...and beauty: in life, mutually exclusive. In art...art **can** bring them together, but even so, that is not the **function** of art. It has something to do with...

STU

I'm afraid you're wrong, Gerry. All I know is my work.

GERRY

All a **part** of you knows is your work. Your heart..it knows more. That painting is nothing less than love itself, the love that Rembrandt felt for **her**. If you saw it, it would sweep you away.

BOB

(To Stu.)

It has something to do with...with forgiveness. We are plagued by this sense of how things might be, if we were only all to each other we imagine we could be. By this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BOB (cont'd)

magnificent dream of the way things might be if only...if only we stopped betraying each other, if only we stopped failing to...to love one another. Which leaves us with nothing but disappointment, and frustration, and a growing bitterness and anger toward our betrayers. Even if we don't lash out, even if we hide behind a smile, that bitterness and that anger will not be denied. We become---in spite of our best efforts---we become unable any longer to forgive. It is the function of art to restore to us...simply to restore our ability to forgive.

(Pause.)

I want some pie!

Bob exits inside.

GERRY

Hey, give it a chance to cool!

Gerry follows Bob off.

STU

Eric is planning to talk to you.

(Pause.)

Nancy!

Nancy, absorbed in her work since Bob's entrance, puts it aside and looks at Stu.

STU (cont'd)

I would like you to give some serious thought to what he has to say.

(Pause. As if joking.)

Hey, are you ever going to leave Carmichael alone?

NANCY

He doesn't mind.

STU

Don't overdo it.

Nancy goes back to her work.

STU (cont'd)

Where is Adam?

NANCY

(Doesn't look up.)

Swimming.

(CONTINUED)

STU

By himself?

(Pause.)

Nancy, that is dangerous!

NANCY

(Looks at Stu.)

I didn't hear **you** offer to go with him, and as for his "devoted" father...

Nancy goes back to her work.

STU

He is **your** son!

NANCY

(Doesn't look up.)

Rita Harper is with him.

STU

Just pay attention to what Eric has to say. Keeping in mind how all of this got started.

NANCY

I left him.

STU

And took Adam. He would have fought for custody if he hadn't felt awkward with the boy.

NANCY

"Awkward?!"

STU

He still feels awkward. Because when you miss the first two years of a child's life, you can't make up for that.

NANCY

Two years?! After they let him out, and we were together again, he missed year number three as well. Because Eric's real-life "Monopoly" game is all that ever mattered to him.

STU

Is that so?!

NANCY

(Reconsidering.)

Okay. I'll hear him out.

STU

He is not the way...the way I was when you were young. And you...obviously have none of the weaknesses your mother had.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

I drink too much.

STU

Have you been---?!

NANCY

No, actually. Not a drop since the wedding.

STU

Oh, I don't care if you got a little drunk that day.

NANCY

"A little?!" Daddy, you should have stuck around.

STU

I meant to, but---

NANCY

There was a sick patient you simply had to go see.

STU

Nancy, you know Eric had no choice but to throw himself into starting a business.

NANCY

Yeah, yeah. Nobody would dare to offer him a job.

STU

Look, I can see how excited you are with your picture-taking. But don't let it interfere with more important things.

Nancy goes back to her work.

STU (cont'd)

Gerry says you're quite good.

NANCY

(Putting aside her work.)

I am not "quite good!" I am top-notch! First-rate! Miles ahead of that...that mass of mediocrity out there! I do not share their petty concerns, and as far as talent goes...the list of people I can look up to is...

(Thumb and forefinger barely apart)

...**that** long!

Eric, his tie loose, and without jacket, enters by the front door, carrying a carton.

(CONTINUED)

STU
Hey, what have you got there?!

ERIC
Color TV.

STU
Sit down. I'll get you a drink.

ERIC
No thanks. Fifteen inch Sony. Brand new.

STU
I'm going to have myself a lemonade.

Stu exits inside.

ERIC
May have to get a roof antenna.

NANCY
Okay, Eric. If we're gonna talk, let's do it.

ERIC
What did he tell you?
(Pause.)
I want you to understand that what I'm going to say...well,
take your time. Chew it over. How's the project going?

NANCY
Eric...

ERIC
You led me to believe at your dad's wedding---. Well, ever
since, I have been thinking we could pick up the pieces. I
was going to talk to you before, but you've been
so...preoccupied---

NANCY
I had been hoping to see a lot more of you.

ERIC
I have commitments, Nancy. Business does require---

NANCY
What Adam wants is **you**, not your...
(A gesture toward the carton)
...largesse.

ERIC
I doubt it.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Look, do you want to connect with him, or not?

ERIC

I want very much to connect with him.

NANCY

Well, he wants that even more.

ERIC

I have been rearranging my schedule. There will be time for Adam.

(Ironic.)

Oh, what ever became of my old-fashioned American family?!

NANCY

You think that's what you'll end up with if I marry you again?

ERIC

Why not?

(Pause.)

Nancy, I understand your need for self-fulfillment.

NANCY

For **what**?!

ERIC

I can compromise.

NANCY

I can't!

ERIC

Oh, yeah? Fine! Let's argue, then. Let's talk...theory. No: **ideology**. Because that is what is clogging up your head.

Nancy goes back to her work.

ERIC (cont'd)

I know **what** you think, and I know **how** you think! There is this ridiculous ideal in your mind--an ideological invention--a model of the woman you want to be. You contort your behavior to fit the mold, and it makes you suffer. It makes me suffer, too.

NANCY

(Not looking up from her work.)

Eric, you are a jerk.

ERIC

All right, put ideology aside. We'll talk psychology. You are obsessed with your mother. For fear of ending up like

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERIC (cont'd)

her, you won't allow yourself to live the way you really want to live.

NANCY

(Looking at Eric.)

Is it painful to talk like an imbecile, or are you enjoying yourself?

ERIC

You want to take pictures? I can make it easy. I'll support you.

(Pause.)

What does your mother mean to you? As an archetype?

NANCY

A *what*?!

ERIC

Tell me the last thing she said to you.

(Pause.)

What did your mother say last time you saw her?!

NANCY

Not a word. She just lay her drunken head in my lap, and fell asleep. She was so peaceful. She looked...happy. And then Adam started howling.

Nancy goes back to her work.

ERIC

Okay, put psychology aside. We've each had our circumstances, and our needs. I have adapted to mine, and you to yours. Now, let's work things out.

(Pause.)

Back to ideology, then: hammers don't cut wood, saws don't drive nails. You have a problem, and you are using the wrong tool. You do not need feminism.

NANCY

You do.

ERIC

I?! It so happens that, yes, I do find much of its analysis incisive and compelling, but---

NANCY

You need feminism, and you need every other damn pop "issue" that comes along. You need to proclaim where you stand on this question and that policy, because if you didn't, there would not be any "you" at all. If you ever stopped shouting your own opinions into that vast, vapid cacophony of public discourse, Eric, you would be utterly without identity,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NANCY (cont'd)

without even the kernel of something resembling an actual, coherent self. Well, unlike you, where **I** thrive is in the quiet, knowing---every moment---exactly who I am.

ERIC

Fine. Forget ideology, forget psychology. You are a photographer. I will set you up a darkroom. Your very own. I am with you, Nancy. If you are into self-expression, then---

NANCY

I am not "into self-expression!" If what I do "expresses," as you put it, anything at all, then it is something that is...in every last human being that has ever lived.

ERIC

I will buy you the best equipment.

NANCY

It is in everyone, Eric! Including you! Oh, with your analytic stupidity and petty ideas, you do seem a perfect fit for this vulgar, topical world. Still, deep down, even **you** have **got** to be fed up! Even you must be full to the puking point...with theories, and advocacy, and strident complaint!

ERIC

You're projecting.

NANCY

Oh, go away.

ERIC

That was interesting, what you said. I had misunderstood. Forgive me. The way you think, actually, isn't meaningfully connected to anything at all. But **no one's** thinking, Nancy, must ever **not** connect. You have got to engage, and take a stance.

Nancy goes back to her work.

ERIC

Okay. Adam started howling. Did that wake her?

NANCY

No.

ERIC

Then...did you just keep sitting there?

(Pause.)

I love you.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

In a manner of speaking. But you are without grace. Your feelings are as earthbound as your thoughts. When she did wake up---after an eternity---I went to feed the baby.

ERIC

Let's have more kids.

NANCY

She was gone when I came back.

ERIC

Without a word? You do know what she was saying to you, don't you? Wordlessly?

NANCY

There is no moral to that story.

ERIC

Leaving like that, she said to you that where you belonged was with your child.

(Pause.)

When you were carrying Adam...that must have been a tremendous feeling.

NANCY

Eric, the nerve you are touching is very, very raw.

ERIC

Tell me how that felt.

NANCY

Your timing is bad. How bad, I...am not going to say. Now, be a good boy. Go away.

ERIC

What was it like to be pregnant with Adam?

NANCY

Leave me alone, damn it!

ERIC

Please---!

NANCY

Get out!

ERIC

But---!

NANCY

Go! Go, I said! Take that fucking thing and...plug it in somewhere!

(CONTINUED)

Eric picks up the carton and exits inside. Stu enters from inside.

STU

If you have been so badly damaged, take it out on me. It isn't Eric's fault.

NANCY

Oh, cut it out! Don't go cranking up the pathos.

STU

All right! From now on, when you put chips on your shoulder, I'm going to knock 'em right back off!

Nancy picks up a camera. Stu snatches it from her, and winds up to throw it.

NANCY

Don't you dare!

STU

(Pause. Handing back the camera.)

Theresa and I have it both ways. You can, too. Because you **aren't** like your mother. She had no backbone, she just drained me and gave nothing in return. I would come home late, worn out, and there she was: stinking of alcohol and self-pity. After all those years with her---the woman your mother had become---and all those years without her, I was at the end of my rope. I started doing what you seem to think I had always done: I stupefied myself with work. If I hadn't met Theresa---. Nancy, she cares about me. **Now**, I come home to **her**, and my life is worth living.

Theresa enters from inside.

THERESA

(To Nancy.)

I thought you were going swimming.

NANCY

Yeah. Right.

Nancy takes her gear out to the garden, sits, works.

THERESA

Trouble?

STU

She thinks she's a rock. Even **you** never fooled **yourself**.

(CONTINUED)

THERESA

And thank God I didn't fool you.

(Kissing him.)

Don't you ever doubt I love you.

(Pause.)

She looked upset.

STU

Why should I doubt?

THERESA

No reason. None in all the world. Listen: I just received a call from a woman at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. She is not without influence, and she asked me to fly to Washington next week so that she might introduce me to some people.

STU

Great! Oh, that's marvelous!

THERESA

Won't you miss me?

STU

Sure! But what an opportunity!

THERESA

Yes! It is!

STU

I can last a few days without you, hon.

THERESA

I must warn you. There is a position opening soon. They may ask me to take it.

STU

In Washington?

THERESA

Think of the impact I could make!

(Pause.)

I **would** come home weekends.

STU

Friday night, or Saturday?

THERESA

I'm not sure. Once or twice a month. Oh, I would never be happy as a government bureaucrat.

(CONTINUED)

STU
No. No, if they offer the job, you take it.

THERESA
But---

STU
There is a patient I have to go see.

Stu exits by the front door.
Theresa exits inside. Adam and Rita
enter the garden from the pond.

ADAM
Mom---

NANCY
Go inside, Adam. Your father has a surprise for you.

ADAM
What is it?

NANCY
A **surprise**. Go be surprised.

Adam goes into the parlor and exits
inside. Nancy puts her things into
her bag, closes it, then notices
Rita.

NANCY
Oh, Rita! Rita, I am really, really sorry. I gotta go into
town and develop some film.

Nancy turns to exit to the parlor,
then turns back.

NANCY
I have to say, that outfit your mother works for is great.
Competent, caring employees. Not a one of them is in the
least bit judgmental. They do an abortion the way it should
be done.

RITA
But she works at the Northeast---

NANCY
In "family planning" and...and related areas.

RITA
Oh. Oh, yeah. Sure.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Didn't you know that?

RITA

We...never discussed---

NANCY

Mostly, I think she sticks to contraception. Anyway, I got reckless. Had to have it taken care of yesterday.

Nancy goes into the parlor. Rita follows.

RITA

Did she help?

NANCY

Nope. Didn't even see her. A word of advice, Rita. Advice I hope you will never have to take: do not ever get drunk at a reunion with your ex-husband. Anyway, I spoke to her supervisor. Says your mom counsels pregnant teenagers better than the counselors do.

RITA

I'll bet.

NANCY

I don't know whether...if she does ever help out with...with...

RITA

The actual baby-killing?

NANCY

Rita!

Nancy exits by the front door, and slams it. Rita stands still in the parlor. In the garden, Avery sits, looking out over the fields.

###END OF ACT TWO###

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE

3

A Saturday in October. Late afternoon.

Bob sits outside in the rocking chair. In jeans and jacket, he drinks a glass of whiskey; the bottle stands on the ground beside him. In the parlor, Nancy, in jeans and sweater, looks over an array of photographs she has spread about

(CONTINUED)

the room. Gerry, in jeans, flannel shirt, and coat, and carrying a blouse and skirt, enters by the front door.

NANCY

Did you notice if the flag's down on the mailbox?

GERRY

I passed the mailman a mile back. Should be here in a jiffy. God, that air! That crystal air! The horizon is so close up, it's a wonder you can't touch it! And I hole up in a darkroom all day long.

(Pause.)

You are coming, aren't you?

NANCY

Where?

GERRY

Denise is picking us up in ten minutes.

NANCY

Oh, right.

GERRY

Is your father home?

NANCY

I doubt it.

GERRY

Practically been living at the hospital lately, hasn't he?

(Pause.)

Those two rejections have obviously not discouraged you.

NANCY

I told you Midwestern galleries would never recognize real value.

GERRY

My mother is packing, I suppose?

(Pause.)

You left some film undeveloped for a week.

(Pause.)

Nancy!

Nancy looks up at Gerry.

GERRY (cont'd)

People were calling all day long asking for their passport pictures. I finally found them on the shelf behind a box of stop bath.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Sorry.

GERRY

No, there is no excuse! You are oblivious to...to everything but that god damn project!

NANCY

I am not oblivious.

GERRY

Yes you are! To my feelings, and to everyone else's, too.

NANCY

Oh, please!

GERRY

My mother's callousness is turning your father into a zombie, and you don't even care!

NANCY

Go change your clothes. I want to finish up.

GERRY

You downright admire her!

NANCY

She survived.

GERRY

My brother didn't.

Bob gets up and, glass in one hand, bottle in the other, enters the parlor unseen.

NANCY

It was your father who who messed your brother up. Not **her**.

GERRY

Because she let him! She had no grit. She never even **tried** to stand up to that man. No, she just crumpled, and fixated on work, and left daddy free to shape Tommy exactly as he pleased.

(Noticing Bob.)

Excuse me.

Gerry exits inside.

BOB

(Avery's accent.)

Seems a mite worked up.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

(Going back to her pictures.)

Turn off the twang. You sound ridiculous.

BOB

Jis' cain't figger out what it is ol' Avery **sees** when he sets out thar!

(Pause. Normal speech.)

Who is Tommy?

NANCY

Gerry's brother. Was. Go away.

BOB

I got pickled for a purpose, Nancy. Give me a break. Now that Eric has given up on you, it would no longer be, I think, at all reprehensible were I to express a peculiar and insistent...desire---

(Pause.)

Which is to say: we could have some fun together.

NANCY

Weren't you planning to head west?

BOB

I'm in no hurry.

(Pause.)

Together, yeah. You and me. Just for a week. Definitely no more than two. By **then**, we are a cinch to be totally fed up with each other.

(Pause.)

I do not proposition women every day! Been over a year since I even **had** one.

NANCY

My, but you do flatter me.

BOB

Look: I am not a typical sort of guy. I am not one of those jerks who exploit women. All I want is a rollicking good time. And I could not have a good time if **you** didn't have a good time, too.

NANCY

What a sensitive man you are. I, on the other hand, am cold and inattentive. So I could never give you what you need.

BOB

Oh, yes you can.

(Pause.)

Nancy, my feelings have nothing to do with this.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BOB (cont'd)

All right, then. I admit it. I actually do kind of like you. If you like me, then...hell, yes! So much the better! But all that stuff's just gravy. What I want is the meat!

(Pause.)

Tell me about Tommy.

(Pause.)

Or has he nothing at all to do with this mood you're inflicting on me?

NANCY

(Doesn't look up from her work.)

He was a pilot. They shot him down in Vietnam.

BOB

Hmmm. Had a student deferment, myself. Praise the lord for our institutions of higher learning! But this Tommy...he was a pilot, you say. Pilots didn't get drafted. No. Those guys were gung-ho. Volunteers. My father is a patriot. Says America did a bang-up job on Hitler. Plays a mean game of shuffleboard, too. The terror of Miami. Or West Palm Beach, or wherever the hell he's putting in his "golden years."

(Pause.)

Okay, they shot him down. So what?

(Drinking.)

Jews don't drink. That's what my father says. Proud of it, too. Proud of America.

(Pause.)

You can't say Tommy didn't have it coming.

(Looking at a picture.)

Beautiful face. But impenetrable. Nothing but mask.

(Pause.)

Hey, it is not as if Tommy had been drafted! Gobbled up by a certain organization. An organization out to get the likes of me, while you and all the others of your put-upon gender got a pass.

(Pause.)

What do you care about Tommy? He wasn't **your** brother. And anyway, it's not as if he went off flying around just for the thrill. He did it to kill babies.

NANCY

Shut up!

BOB

I don't know how to shut up.

NANCY

I said---!

BOB

Yes, and then **I** said...

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Go to hell.

BOB

You used to be this hard on Eric? He couldn't have deserved it. Even if money *is* the only thing he ever cared about.

NANCY

Wrong! While you were kicking back with that deferment in your pocket, my husband was doing time for resisting the war.

BOB

No kidding?! What'd he do? Burn his draft card?

NANCY

And he organized.

BOB

Aha! Big mistake! Should have kept to himself. They might have let him be. Damn! Why didn't he tell me?! I guess it wouldn't be good for business if the word got out.

NANCY

Negative...every last word out of that loud mouth of yours is negative!

BOB

All I said was---

NANCY

Eric is greedy! Medicine stinks! Physics is---

BOB

Physics is a kick!

NANCY

---is a joke!

NANCY (cont'd)

Photography is superficial. It has no substance. It is nothing but appearance!

BOB

Did I say that?

A knock on the door.

NANCY

I know what is inside people! I am not oblivious to what they feel! I **reveal** what they feel! Revelation is...is my life's work!

More knocking. Nancy opens the front door. Denise and Rita, in dresses and coats, enter.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY (cont'd)
Hi. How you doin'?

DENISE
Rita is sick.

RITA
I want to lie down.

NANCY
Sure. Go upstairs. To my bedroom.

Rita exits inside.

NANCY (cont'd)
She have a fever?

DENISE
Nah. I'm guessing it's nerves. She has that big interview tomorrow.

NANCY
Be right back.

Nancy exits by the front door.

DENISE
You think she should come with us if she's feeling bad?

BOB
Where you going?

DENISE
Chicago. To see some dancing.

BOB
Nancy too?

DENISE
Yeah. Rita...actually, she's been acting funny for months.

BOB
Maybe that'll loosen her up. Put her in a mood you could deal with.

DENISE
I beg your pardon?

BOB
Ah, I'm out of my element. We both are, you know? I don't belong here, neither do you. Now, take Stu: fantastic fellah. But as much as **I** go on about it, he himself has never **once** brought up the fact that I am Jewish. How can you trust a guy like that?!

(CONTINUED)

(Pause.)

No, you're right. I'm just another white man. Got no business lumping the two of us together. Ah, the way she plays the victim! Not that she doesn't have a case. Hey, if Rita can't make it, I'll take her ticket. Sure she has a case. But **you** remember slave ships, and **I** remember boxcars bound for Buchenwald. Passengers were not selected on the basis of their sex!

DENISE

If you weren't plastered, I would ask you to examine my daughter.

Denise exits inside. Pause, as Bob drinks. Then Gerry, wearing the clothes she carried in earlier, enters from inside.

BOB

Nancy told me about your brother.

(Pause.)

The solution, dear Geraldine, is to outlaw mechanical objects that fly. We might do well, you and I, to collaborate on a scheme for the conversion of every last airplane into an enormous mulberry pie. I had been under the impression mulberries grew on bushes. The result, no doubt, of an exemplary early childhood education. Contend, if you insist, that a tree is nothing more than an overgrown bush; for all that, I was shocked, outraged, positively offended to see the damn things dangling from arboreal configurations of such colossal stature, that you heartland people stick them up for windbreaks!

GERRY

(Laughing.)

You, Robert, may well be our most vital resource. We'll be back pretty late. And Rita...Rita is staying here. Denise just told me she thinks it's nothing more than nervousness.

BOB

Yeah. Stomach butterflies. Gastric lepidopterosus! Ha! How do you like **that** for innovative nomenclature?! Now, c'mon, Gerry, don't you worry about Rita. She's gonna interview like a champ. Go to Harvard, discover all kinds of weird stuff, bring physics to a whole nother level. Betcha she ends up building the best bomb yet. I didn't mean to say that.

GERRY

I know.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

You do, don't you? To everyone else, I am just a clown with attitude.

GERRY

Would you check up on Rita later on?

BOB

Denise wouldn't like that.

GERRY

You **will** check on her.

BOB

I will?

GERRY

Sure. You would have done it without my asking.

BOB

You are a rare woman, Gerry. You care. You care so much, you almost make me think that **I** do.

GERRY

Bob, let's...can we spend some time together? Maybe rent a cabin for a weekend in Wisconsin and...sleep separately, if that's what you'd like.

BOB

I am drunk, Geraldine.

(Pause.)

Gerry, you are rare, and you're special, but...look, I didn't expect this. And...not that there's anything wrong with it, but...you **are** coming on a little strong.

GERRY

You're right. Tell you what: I'll get my mother to keep an eye on Rita, and you join up with us tonight. Just for the company and a good time.

BOB

Unh-unh.

GERRY

Have a little coffee and you'll feel---

BOB

No. You all have a ball.

Bob exits inside with his glass and bottle. Nancy, downcast, enters by the front door, carrying three envelopes.

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

Another rejection?

NANCY

(Throwing the envelopes onto a table,
one by one.)

Three. What are the odds they would all come at once?

(Throwing down miscellaneous other
mail.)

My God, I am tired!

GERRY

You can sack out in the back seat. Denise and I will drive.

(Pause.)

Nancy, you're good! Why should it matter what they think?

NANCY

(Shrugging.)

It matters. I really am sorry about the passport pictures,
Gerry.

GERRY

Forget it.

NANCY

No. There is no excuse. For the way I've treated you, or---.
But there's no going back.

GERRY

To Eric?

NANCY

He isn't the philistine you think he is.

GERRY

You want him, Nancy.

NANCY

What I want is sleep.

GERRY

And you need him.

NANCY

No. I crave him. That's all. Every now and then.

GERRY

Don't fight what's in your heart.

NANCY

My heart can't settle---how can any woman's, any man's---for
the futility of "a life well-lived?!" It needs more! And
more than this "love" thing every last idiot incessantly
babbles about. Your mom...the way she is, you know...?

(CONTINUED)

Bitchy?
GERRY

NANCY
Do you really believe her going away will hurt my father all that much?

GERRY
It will.

NANCY
I have never heard him complain about her.

GERRY
He never complains, period. But **I** do.

NANCY
Yes. I've noticed.

GERRY
And when I complain to **her**, she bristles.

NANCY
Why should he care what she does, or where she goes?

GERRY
It's not that. What he's asking for is...just everyday companionship. Or **would** be asking for, out loud, if he weren't such a tight-lipped stoic.

NANCY
And with this..."companionship," you contend he would be happy?

GERRY
Very.

NANCY
I don't understand.

GERRY
Do you want him hurt?

NANCY
No.

GERRY
Then **you** talk to her. Tell her to change her plans.

NANCY
That won't work.

(CONTINUED)

GERRY

You can't know that. At least, not until you try.

NANCY

What *would* work, do you think? If persuasion won't? Something big. So big that, next to it, ambition gets exposed, even to her, for what it is.

GERRY

Are you renouncing ambition?

NANCY

It is mean.

GERRY

It has its place, Nancy.

NANCY

It is vain.

GERRY

Yet there can be selflessness in it, too.

NANCY

You think? Well, then, when there is, the world is deaf and blind to it.

GERRY

Don't let those rejections discourage you.

NANCY

Monstrous, monstrous, monstrous.

Theresa, in skirt and blouse,
enters from the corridor.

THERESA

My flight is at nine-fifteen A.M. So we will leave here tomorrow at eight. Whose car are you girls taking?

(Pause.)

I asked you a question, Geraldine!

GERRY

Denise's.

THERESA

Excellent. Then I can load luggage into yours this evening. Now, what time did I just tell you to be here?

(Pause.)

I will give you a wake-up call at seven. You answer the phone, you wash, you dress, and then you come for me directly.

(CONTINUED)

Denise enters from inside.

THERESA (cont'd)

(To Denise.)

No need to worry about Rita. I shall give her a bit of a pep-talk.

DENISE

I wish you would.

THERESA

Now go along, ladies. Have a lovely time.

DENISE

Somebody better get Bob. He wants to come.

GERRY

He does?!

DENISE

He told me he wants to take Rita's ticket.

GERRY

Terrific!

Bob enters from the corridor with glass and bottle and a bag of pretzels.

GERRY (cont'd)

Hey, there, Bobby! Let's get it on down the road!

BOB

Huh?

GERRY

We're leaving, man! For Chicago! Come on!

BOB

Damn it, Gerry! Didn't you hear what I said?! I am **not** going to go with you!

Bob goes outside and sits back down in the rocking chair.

DENISE

(Taking Gerry's arm.)

Come on. Don't want to be late. Nancy?

NANCY

Have fun.

(CONTINUED)

DENISE

But---

NANCY

(Opening the front door.)

Out, you two!

Denise and Gerry exit by the front door. Nancy shuts it behind them.

NANCY (cont'd)

Theresa, must you move to Washington?

THERESA

I am not "moving." I will be...commuting.

NANCY

You will be spending most of your time a thousand miles away. My father did not marry you to be alone.

THERESA

With you and Adam here for company, he will be quite content.

NANCY

We're leaving.

THERESA

But this is where your work is!

NANCY

Something has come up. In New York.

THERESA

I see. You are not taking Adam, though.

NANCY

Of course I am.

THERESA

But he will only get in your way.

NANCY

I am not going to leave my son with my father. Or abandon him to his own father. The way you abandoned yours.

THERESA

How dare you!

NANCY

I didn't mean---

(CONTINUED)

THERESA
(Crying.)
What did you mean?

NANCY
I meant---.

THERESA
Whatever you meant, what you said was cruel.

NANCY
It was. Yes. Forgive me. I take it back.

THERESA
Cruel, but so...so very fair.

NANCY
No.

THERESA
Horribly, horribly fair.

NANCY
I...I am not taking Adam.

THERESA
You should take him. You must.

NANCY
I am not...going away at all.

THERESA
But New York...?

NANCY
...doesn't want me. Please: you stay here, too.

THERESA
No.

NANCY
If I **were** going away, though---.

THERESA
Oh, stop it.

NANCY
If I did leave, then you would drop your preening
self-importance, wouldn't you?

THERESA
Enough of this.

NANCY

You would forget about Washington and...and choose companionship.

THERESA

Look: your project is here. And so here is where you will be. Nancy, would you be so courteous, tomorrow morning, as to make a point of wishing me well when I go?

NANCY

Tomorrow morning?

THERESA

I am only asking that you be there to say good-bye.

NANCY

At eight, right?

THERESA

Yes.

NANCY

Gerry picks you up at eight.

THERESA

That is the plan. And I have so much to do between now and then.

NANCY

I will be there.

THERESA

I have been so busy packing and organizing, that I forgot my appointment at the hairdresser's this afternoon.

NANCY

Your hair looks fine.

THERESA

I haven't checked the mail---

NANCY

I have. Yours is on the table.

THERESA

I haven't even opened yesterday's.

NANCY

I will absolutely be there at eight to wish you a proper *bon voyage*.

(CONTINUED)

THERESA

I haven't returned phone calls, I haven't checked the news---.

NANCY

I checked it earlier today. You aren't missing anything. Listen: I will be...in the garden.

THERESA

I can't tell you how excited I---.

NANCY

Theresa!

THERESA

Yes?

NANCY

Look for me tomorrow in the garden.

THERESA

At eight.

NANCY

Right. And if...if I should have dozed off---.

THERESA

Are you planning to be up all night?!

NANCY

Working. I have work to do. So when you come, if you find me dozing, be sure you wake me.

Eric and Adam enter by the door,
the former in slacks and jacket,
the latter in jeans and
windbreaker.

ERIC

Hey, Theresa! I hear you wrecked the school football team singlehandedly last season!

THERESA

I beg your pardon?

ERIC

You sidelined that fullback. Number forty-three.

THERESA

That's right. He was reading at fifth grade level, and didn't even care.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Well, he scored four touchdowns this afternoon!

THERESA

Evidently, then, my successor has gotten the athletic situation back in hand.

Theresa exits inside.

ADAM

(To Eric.)

Why can't I go with Larry and his dad tomorrow?

ERIC

(To Adam.)

Because I said you can't. Come on, now. There's a Big Ten game on the tube. In five minutes. Let's go make some popcorn.

Eric steers Adam off inside.

NANCY

Eric!

Eric comes back in.

NANCY (cont'd)

He's fond of you.

ERIC

You sound surprised.

NANCY

I am pleased.

ERIC

How nice.

NANCY

I am...delighted. So much so that...take him, Eric.

ERIC

"Take him?"

NANCY

Keep him.

ERIC

You're kidding.

NANCY

You have proven yourself.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

Have I? And where do you get off passing judgment on me?

NANCY

He's yours. I don't want him. I...I have work to do and...and I can't do it with him always around.

ERIC

You disgust me.

NANCY

Well, pack some of his things for tonight, and come for the rest when it's convenient.

ERIC

The sofa's got a busted leg! Where is he going to sleep?!

NANCY

Can you fix it by tomorrow?

(Pause.)

Tomorrow, then. I want him out of here early. Come for him at...at seven.

Eric exits inside.

NANCY (cont'd)

Seven A.M. sharp!

###END OF ACT THREE, SCENE ONE###

ACT THREE, SCENE TWO

4

The following morning.

The photographs that had been scattered about in the last scene are gone. Two suitcases stand by the door. Adam, dressed as he was the day before, sits gloomily in the garden. Bob, in yesterday's clothes, sleeps on the parlor sofa. Nancy, also dressed as she was yesterday, sits inside with a coat in her lap. She glances at her watch. Bob stirs, then slowly sits up.

BOB

(Looking at his watch.)

Eight twenty-five, and all is definitely not well.

NANCY

Seven twenty-five.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

(Showing her his watch.)

Eight.

NANCY

We switched back to standard time last night.

BOB

(Adjusting his watch.)

How kind of you to sit and watch over me, Nancy. Very kind, but I don't get it. You see, as bad as my head hurts on mornings after, I still always remember what I said the night before. As for **this** morning after: I remember what **you** said, too. Your hostility was convincing.

NANCY

I don't dislike you, Bob.

BOB

How was Chicago?

NANCY

You're just...what should I say?

BOB

Irresistible.

NANCY

You're...I don't know. Kind of on the outside of what you're actually in. Does that make sense?

(Pause.)

I mean, like, take my father. He can get emotional. You...

BOB

I can get emotional, too.

NANCY

But if he had to work---medically, you know?---on someone near and dear to him---

BOB

He would never do that.

NANCY

Because his judgment might fail. He might panic.

BOB

I wouldn't do that, either.

NANCY

But you and I...we're not near and dear to one another. Which is not to say you don't like me---

(CONTINUED)

BOB

For the wrong reasons.

NANCY

That's okay. You like me, but you certainly don't love me. In a medical emergency, Bob, you...keep your head, don't you?

Eric, in coat and tie, enters by front the door.

NANCY

(Pause. To Eric.)

I'll go get him.

Nancy goes out to the garden.

BOB

Where are you taking the kid today?

NANCY

(To Adam.)

He's here.

ERIC

Today, tomorrow... and for ever more.

Nancy takes Adam by the hand, and he stands.

ERIC (cont'd)

She is kicking Adam out, Bob.

BOB

You're kidding?!

ERIC

She does not want him. He is moving in with me.

BOB

Oy, oy, oy. Such *meshugas*.

Bob exits inside, as Nancy and Adam enter the parlor from the garden.

NANCY

(To Adam.)

See you next week some time, okay?

(Pause.)

Give me a kiss.

Adam doesn't respond.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC
Where is Theresa? I want to say good-bye.

NANCY
She hasn't come down yet.

ERIC
I'll wait.

NANCY
No!

ERIC
Why not?

NANCY
I want Adam out of here!

ERIC
What's the hurry?

NANCY
Now!

ERIC
(Picking up a suitcase.)
Oh...hell!

Nancy grabs Adam, and kisses him
fiercely.

NANCY
We had great times together, didn't we?

No response from Adam. Nancy turns
away.

ADAM
Can I still come to New York with you when you make it?

NANCY
Oh, honey, I swear I will never go there without you!
Now...beat it!

Nancy, coat in hand, rushes outside
and off toward the pond.

ADAM
I want to go squirrel-hunting.

ERIC
Well, you can't.

ADAM

But Larry invited me!

ERIC

No son of mine goes killing for the fun of it.

ADAM

Larry's father is a crack shot, dad!

ERIC

His father is not **your** father. Now, pick that up and come with me.

Eric opens the front door, and exits with a suitcase. Adam doesn't budge. Eric comes back in.

ERIC (cont'd)

I said---

Adam goes out the front door in a huff. Eric picks up the other suitcase, and follows him off. Theresa, with a coat on, enters from inside.

THERESA

(Calling after her.)

Hurry up, Geraldine! It is eight-thirty already!

Theresa looks into the garden, then turns back inside.

THERESA

(Calling inside.)

Nancy! Where are you?

Gerry, wearing a coat, escorts a queasy Rita into the parlor from inside.

THERESA

Remember what I told you, Rita. Mr. Perkins is not an ogre.

Rita slumps on the sofa. Theresa again looks into the garden. Stu, in a coat, enters from the corridor.

THERESA (cont'd)

(Turning back inside.)

Where is your daughter?

(CONTINUED)

I don't know. STU

I thought you had left. THERESA

It's Sunday. STU

But you go make your rounds every day of the week. THERESA

There's no rush. STU

Theresa again looks into the garden, then turns back inside.

Well, let's go. THERESA
(To Gerry.)
(Pecking Stu on the cheek.)
I'll phone tonight.

Theresa turns to go.

Theresa! STU

Theresa turns back, and Stu embraces her.

Come, Geraldine. THERESA
(Pause. Then, breaking from Stu.)

Gerry stands in place.

You must be exhausted, Gerry. That was a long drive last night. Was it worth it? STU

Oh, if only I could dance like that, I would never stop! GERRY

Gerry exits by the front door. Theresa follows her out, as Bob enters from inside with a cup of coffee.

Nice girl, that Geraldine. STU

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Yes. She is a wonderful woman. But a bit too fat.

STU

(To Rita.)

What is this I hear about you throwing up today?

BOB

Hey, Rita, that flunky from Harvard will be a pushover!

(To Stu.)

Won't he?

(To Rita.)

Just tell the guy what he wants to hear.

(To Stu.)

Quit brooding.

(Pause.)

I do guess it's tough, losing what's-'er-name and Adam all at once.

STU

Adam?!

BOB

Ah, he won't be but a few miles away.

STU

What are you talking about?!

BOB

Nancy gave him to Eric.

STU

She what?!

BOB

I thought you knew.

STU

That isn't...it isn't natural.

BOB

She has work to do. The kid distracts her.

STU

She can not do that.

BOB

Like father, like daughter: business comes first.

STU

I am going with Theresa!

(CONTINUED)

BOB
Don't be ridiculous.

STU
Bob, I will expect you to round on my patients while I'm away.

BOB
No.

STU
I **require** that you do.

BOB
But...for how long?

STU
Till I get back.

BOB
When will that be?

STU
When **she** comes back. Tell Nancy to pack me a bag and send it. Now, take me to the airport.

Stu exits by the front door. Bob follows. Nancy, her coat on now, enters the garden from the pond, and sits. She looks at her watch, then takes out the Seconal bottle. Denise enters the parlor by the front door, wearing nurse's scrubs under a coat.

DENISE
(To Rita.)
Where's your coat?

Denise exits inside. Nancy empties the bottle into her hand and swallows three pills, one at a time. She then swallows a mouthful. Denise enters from inside with Rita's coat.

DENISE (cont'd)
No time to waste! The man will be expecting you, and I got to get to work.

Nancy finishes off the bottle of pills.

(CONTINUED)

DENISE (cont'd)

Don't you feel any better at all? Come on! Get some fresh air! It'll settle your tummy just fine!

(Pause.)

Rita, it is normal to be nervous. I am worked up myself, and I don't have half the cause that you do.

(Pause. Denise pulls Rita up to a sitting position.)

Now listen, girl! Get yourself together! 'Cause this is a big day for me, too!

RITA

Really? As big as the day they accepted you for that dancing group?

DENISE

Who told you---

RITA

I heard. And what happened...it was my fault. If I wasn't born, you would be a dancer.

DENISE

Nothing...**nothing** has ever meant as much to me as **you**.

RITA

So you have always said. Mama, you could have been happy. Not stuck in that job.

DENISE

I **am** happy. I like my work. Now, you have an interview to go to.

RITA

I missed my last two periods.

DENISE

But you...you've been on the pill.

RITA

I went off it.

DENISE

O-o-oh. Okay, we'll take care of that later this week. Now, come on.

RITA

I don't want to "take care" of it. Why do you like your work so much?

DENISE

Because...life is tough, Rita. For lots of people, really tough. I like my work because I help them.

(CONTINUED)

RITA

Help them to what? Get rid of their kids?

Rita lies back down.

DENISE

It was Kevin, wasn't it?

(Pause.)

Did he tell you that he loves you?

(Pause.)

And you believe him?!

RITA

I always believed **you**.

Rita curls up with her face in a pillow. A knock on the door. Denise stands dumbstruck for a moment. Another knock. Denise opens the front door. Avery, with a jacket on over his overalls, enters.

AVERY

We-e-ell, hullo there! I---

DENISE

Hello.

Denise exits by the front door.

AVERY

(Calling after Denise.)

Where you goin'? I was fixin' ta tell ya I was sorry, is all!

Avery shuts the door, and proceeds out to the garden, as Nancy looks sleepily at her watch.

AVERY (cont'd)

Well...if it ain't the lady photogerpher!

Nancy smiles at him dreamily.

AVERY (cont'd)

(Sitting in the rocking chair, beside Nancy.)

Nippy mornin'! That coat yer wearin'...ain' hardly thick enough ta pertec' ya from the shade, niver min' the wind.

(Brooding.)

Don' think she likes me, that colored friend o' yers. Ah, she don' wanna talk, sure 's hell don' matter ta **me**! Phoebe got me used ta that, ya see.

(CONTINUED)

(Direct to Nancy.)

Hey, go git out yer camera, Nancy! This mornin' is the best light yit!

(Pause. Looking out over the fields.)

Ya see, soon after we was married, all them good times stopped. No more rolls in the grass, down by the...

(Direct to Nancy. Joking.)

..."the swimmin' hole!"

(Pause. Looking out over the fields.)

Yep, them good times...they all stopped perty quick. On accoun' o'...on accoun' o' she didn' pay n' min' ta me, 's what! Used ta have these fights, ya see. I yill at her, an' she yills back. "**You** don' pay n' min' ta **me**," she says! Fights stopped too, though. Perty quick. Phoebe, she got like...like that friend o' yers: re-e-eal quiet. So all them years, we didn' hardly say a word, an' all the while---. It was **her** fault, I tell ya, an' all the while she was blamin' **me**!

(Pause. Direct to Nancy.)

Hey, let's you and me go take us a walk on down to the pond, Nancy.

(Standing, intent on waking her.)

Come on, girl! Git up!

(About to poke her, he thinks better of it.)

Ah...that is one good deep sleep. Jis' whatcha need!

(Taking off his jacket, laying it on her bosom.)

Oh, the times we had! In the grass an'...an' in the daisies.

(Sitting, looking out over the fields.)

Ya see, Phoebe...oh, all right, then: **she** had **her** troubles, too, I guess. Me blamin' her, an' her blamin' me...all them years.

(Direct to Nancy.)

Gotta git down ta that pond agin.

(Looking out over the fields.)

Be froze over soon. Daisies...wild daisies an' red-wing blackbirds! An' all them years o' blamin'...niver was a damn thing ta fergive!

Avery looks out over the fields.
Nancy sleeps beside him. In the parlor, on the sofa, Rita stretches, rolls over, curls up.

###THE END###