AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE

BY PAUL ZINDEL

DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.
AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE

Copyright © Renewed 1999, David Zinidel, as Trustee
Copyright © 1971, David Zinidel, as Trustee

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information storage and retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to William Morris Agency, Inc., 1325 Avenue of the Americas, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10019. Attn: Owen Laster.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE was first presented by Producing Managers Company (James B. McKenzie, Spofford J. Beadle, Seth L. Schapiro, Kenneth Waltz, Maxine Fox) at the Morosco Theatre, in New York City, on February 25, 1971. It was directed by Melvin Bernhardt; the scenery was by Fred Voelpel; lighting was by Martin Aronstein; and the costumes were by Sara Brook. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

CATHERINE REARDON ............................................. Estelle Parsons
MRS. PENTRANO .................................................. Virginia Payne
DELIVERY BOY .................................................... Paul Lieber
CEIL ADAMS ....................................................... Nancy Marchand
ANNA REARDON .................................................. Julie Harris
FLEUR STEIN ...................................................... Rae Allen
BOB STEIN ........................................................ Bill Macy
CHARACTERS

THE SISTERS:
CATHERINE
ANNA
CEIL

MRS. PENTRANO
(The wife of the superintendent of the apartment building in which
Catherine and Anna live)

FLEUR and BOB STEIN
(A couple who live in the building—Fleur teaches at the same
school as Catherine and Anna)

DELIVERY BOY

Act I: An October evening
Act II: Immediately following
Act III: Immediately following

THE SETTING

The living room and dining area of the comfortable apartment of
Catherine and Anna Reardon.

And Miss Reardon
Drinks A Little

ACT I

Catherine enters from the kitchen carrying a tray with
glasses and other items needed to mix drinks.
She puts the tray down on a sideboard and surveys the
half-set dining room table.
The door buzzer sounds.

CATHERINE. (Unlocking the door and swinging it open to reveal
Mrs. Pentran.) What do you want? (Catherine continues back
into the activity of the dining room.)

MRS. PENTRANO. Would you mind if I come in for a moment?
CATHERINE. I'm sorry but I'm in a state of dishabille. Also, my
bitch sister's coming for dinner.

Catherine enters from the kitchen carrying a tray with
glasses and other items needed to mix drinks.
She puts the tray down on a sideboard and surveys the
half-set dining room table.
The door buzzer sounds.

CATHERINE. (Unlocking the door and swinging it open to reveal
Mrs. Pentran.) What do you want? (Catherine continues back
into the activity of the dining room.)

MRS. PENTRANO. Would you mind if I come in for a moment?
CATHERINE. I'm sorry but I'm in a state of dishabille. Also, my
bitch sister's coming for dinner.

MRS. PENTRANO. (Edging in.) My husband wanted me to
take a look at the tree to make sure you're not having any trouble with
it. He was blowing out the furnace but I'm told the Reardons
have always been nice to us so he should go out of his way,
especially the way Anna sounded so frightened on the phone. Does
she like the look? (She closes door.)

CATHERINE. She gentled to the fee bone. Now you'll excuse
me...

MRS. PENTRANO. What I was wondering was would you like to
order some cosmetics? It's the holiday order and most of the things
you like are on sale.
CATHERINE. I don't need anything unless you've got bottled
resurrection.

MRS. PENTRANO. Oh, that's too bad because if I don't get my
order in tonight, I'll lose the commission bonus. The Magnolia
skin softener is on special.
CATHERINE. Magnolia, Mrs. Pentran. Not Magnolia. And I
don't want any. I tried it once and I got out of the bathtub feeling
like I'd just swam the Hudson. (Catherine starts back toward the
bar area as Mrs. Pentrano laughs.)

MRS. PENTRANO. Miss Reardon, you always make me laugh. I
wish I had your sense of humor. I really do. (Having gained
entrance she sets herself down. She takes a catalog and orders all
day's worth of supplies she is carrying.)

CATHERINE. (Continuing with her preparations.) Would you
mind keeping your cradle down? Anna is resting.

MRS. PENTRANO. Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot. She isn't being
very good. Can I put you down for a box of lace pellets? They're on
special.

CATHERINE. Where did you hear Anna wasn't feeling good?

MRS. PENTRANO. Anna? Oh—You mentioned it a couple of
days ago in the lobby. I hadn't seen her . . . and . . . the way
she sounded so scared on the phone this morning . . .

CATHERINE. Oh . . .

MRS. PENTRANO. It's no wonder she's sick with all those
chemistry things she's teaching. And watching all those brats making
test tubes of stinky gases and setting off hydrogen explosions
and injecting rat embryos with dioxynen something or other.

CATHERINE. Dioxynen acid. Dioxynen acid.

MRS. PENTRANO. How about a room deodorant? Kiss of
Heather? Tropical Night?

CATHERINE. Tropical Night—that's the one you gave me last
time and it smelled like Morning in Bayonne.

MRS. PENTRANO. Kiss of Heather. You'll like that. Anna always
takes a jar of bath crystals. (She notes that on her pad.) Mrs.
Adams hasn't been here in such a long time, has she? She was one
of my best customers. Of course, your lovely mother was, too.

(Catherine exits to kitchen as Mrs. Pentrano raises her voice.) A
lovely . . . (She remembers Anna is resting.) . . . lady. Lovely.
(The door buzzer sounds.) I'll get it! (She opens the door to admit
a delivery boy burdened with groceries.)

DELIVERY BOY. Hello, Mrs. P. (Catherine enters from the
kitchen.) Hi, Miss Reardon. How're you doing?

CATHERINE. Shut up, please. Put the stuff on the table.

DELIVERY BOY. I ain't making any noise.

CATHERINE. Am not, not "ain't." Did Mr. Catobin remember to
wrap the chop meat separately?

DELIVERY BOY. Chopped. It's chopped meat, not "chop meat."

CATHERINE. Just answer the question.

MRS. PENTRANO. You're probably due for body powder.

CATHERINE. (To delivery boy as she takes a package out of
grocery bag.) Is this it?

DELIVERY BOY. I think so.

CATHERINE. (Taking the chopped meat out of the bag and
arranging it in an empty Jenny Farmer's candy box.) What do
you mean "you think so"? If you don't start being more precise
you're going to be nothing but a delivery boy all your life. Do you
know how unprofessional it can be to be a sixty-four-year-old
delivery boy?

MRS. PENTRANO. The sachets . . . (She pronounces it so it
rhymes with "batchets") . . . are on special, too.

CATHERINE. (Paying for the groceries.) Sachets, Mrs. Pentrano.
Sachets, not batchets.

DELIVERY BOY. Is your sister still sick, Miss Reardon? I was in
her Applied Chem class. That was one of the classes she acted a
little sick in.

CATHERINE. Haven't I seen you down in the Dean's Office
recently?

DELIVERY BOY. When Mr. Goodman threw me out of Person-
ality Development for sneezing, he said I spit on him.

CATHERINE. You have the face of a boy that would do gruesome
things.

DELIVERY BOY. Tell me, do you always put chopped meat in
candy boxes? Some people might think that was gruesome.

CATHERINE. All right, fat trap. You can get out of here.

MRS. PENTRANO. (To delivery boy.) You've got a fresh mouth
on you, young man.

CATHERINE. I'd tip you, but it's against my profession.

DELIVERY BOY. You can say that again! (He darts out the door,
leaving the door ajar.)

CATHERINE. Don't be disrespectful to someone as dignified as I
or you'll end up with a pair of knuckles in your eyeballs! Mrs.
Pentrano, you've got to beat it, too.

MRS. PENTRANO. With kids like that in her class, it's no wonder
Anna flipped.

CATHERINE. I beg your pardon?—Where did you . . . hear
that Anna . . . flipped?

MRS. PENTRANO. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything . . .
really didn’t. I just heard . . . it was the kids that got her a little . . . I mean . . . (She moves towards the door under Catherine’s glare.) the lock . . . I hope she feels better with the new lock. With all those things happening nowadays, I don’t blame her . . . really. I don’t blame her for . . . anything that’s happened to her. Those Lebanonos fighting in the alley last night scared half the neighborhood. It was awful. Mrs. Cree in 4D called the police, but . . . they were gone by the time they got there. Anna always gets an eye pencil.

Catherine. Lebanonos? What Lebanonos?

Mrs. Pentranzo. Don’t tell me you didn’t hear those two women punching each other like a couple of prize fighters last night? They were screaming at the top of their lungs in the alley. You didn’t hear that?

Catherine. Those were not Lebanonos, Mrs. Pentranzo. Those were Lesbians. (Ceil appears in the doorway. Mrs. Pentranzo sees her and is somewhat apprehensive at the sight of her.)

Mrs. Pentranzo. Hello, Mrs. Adams.

Ceil. Hello, Mrs. Pentranzo.

Mrs. Pentranzo. (Awkwardly.) Welcome home.

Ceil. Thank you, Mrs. Pentranzo. (By the tone of her voice, Ceil dismisses Mrs. Pentranzo. Mrs. Pentranzo slits her by and exits into the hall, closing the door behind her.)

Catherine. Well, well. I never thought you’d show up. Of course, that’s not quite true.

Ceil. I had asked to come.

Catherine. Oh, sure, but it wouldn’t be the first time your busy, busy schedule would cancel out a lovely family dinner. What do they have you supervising down there at the Board of Ed? The Christmas Party? It’s October, so I guess they’re . . . starting to . . . make the tree decorations.

Ceil. I had intended to call before this.

Catherine. Oh yes, I’m sure. Super-intended. Do you realize you haven’t been here to see us since we put Mother in her grave? A couple of lousy phone calls in seven months, you little bitch.

Ceil. (After a suitable pause.) Where’s Anna?

Catherine. She’s “sedated.” Do you want a Manhattan?

Ceil. Yes, please. She hasn’t been teaching since last Thursday.

Catherine. Oh, cut the crap, Ceil.

Ceil. Look, I wouldn’t be here now if Hamilton didn’t call and . . .

Catherine. Sister—that tone of voice of yours butchers me, dear.

Ceil. He suggested . . .

Catherine. Sibling, sweets—your penultimate shortcoming has become the fact that you’ve taken so many graduate education courses you’ve ended up with euphemism of the brain. Nobody does anything at that Board without checking with you first, the overdressed Sheena of the Blackboard Jungle.

Ceil. Jesus Christ, you forget!

Catherine. Forget! Nobody forgets! Every teacher in that demented little school looks at me and silently burps in my face every day of the week. Where would you be if it wasn’t for that powerhouse of a sister of yours? Know what the faculty has nicknamed you this year? Well, it’s “Superman.” You have finally transcended womanhood entirely.

Ceil. Catherine, what’s the matter with Anna?

Catherine. Matter? Who says there’s anything the matter? Just because she started crying now and then—like right in front of her classes? I don’t know where you got the idea something was the matter. Well, maybe she just wanted a little change of routine like Mrs. Miniken, at Oakwood High. Remember Mrs. Miniken? Mrs. Miniken, who leaped from the school roof, and splattered herself all over the handball courts. Now, that was a change of routine. Mrs. Miniken—splat—all because of some marital difficulties, wasn’t it? And she taught Family Living.

Ceil. She hasn’t been the same since Mama died, has she?

Catherine. Now look, Ceil. We might as well be honest about this whole thing. The only thing you’re discontented about is how much misery Anna is going to cause you. How much trouble. How much mortification. How much money. I mean, let’s face it. That’s what’s got you out of your condominium, isn’t it?

Ceil. Actually, Catherine, the only unkind remarks I’ve heard lately have been about you.

Catherine. Oh, is that so? Well, I’m not interested. In fact, you may not even have to worry much longer about my nepotistically endowed assistant principalship because I’m thinking of quitting and becoming a waitress. I could do with a little honest work for a change.
CEIL. They say you’ve started to drink a little.
Catherine. (Involved in making a huge batch of Manhattans.)
What a preposterous and cruel dissection. Who would shoot
such a thing about me? Could it be one of your old friends from
around here? One of our mutual friends before your nuptials?
Was it Mr. Pollack in Apartment 2A who beats his wife because
she’s having sex with the Fuller Brush man? Or was it Mrs.
Pedowitz in 4C who beats her husband because he’s having sex
with the Fuller Brush man?
CEIL. It doesn’t matter who said it.
Catherine. What do you mean, it doesn’t matter? They’ve got
one hell of a nerve.
CEIL. Actually, it was someone from your own school.
Catherine. Someone from that bibliophile looney bin? Who?
Mrs. Drisser, that pygmyess with the face like Toto, the kissless
bride? Or Lipschitz who wears the same suit for six months and
puts around with gorgonzola of the breath? That whole pack of
academically defunct eternally matriculated and fucking overpaid
nerts and what are they saying? Miss Reardon drinks a little, Jesus
Christ! (She pours some Manhattans.)
CEIL. Look, if you’ve already had too much, I’ll come back in the
morning.
Catherine. No! (Beat.) Well, maybe it was Maman’s death that
got her. And maybe it wasn’t. I thought she got over that nicely,
considering... don’t you, Ceil? (She takes the candy box and
nibbles at its contents intermittently.)
CEIL. Was she all right on the trip?
Catherine. Oh, she did fine, just fine, till we got to Rome, that
is; then she picked up this flea-bitten ugly cat. There she was... running
around the whole city picking up cats: black ones, green
ones, yellow ones, three legged ones, one eyed ones picking up any
mangy sad thing she could get her hands on... while I was trying
to get picked up by some of those two legged smooth Italian
Tom cats.—Oh, I’m sorry, Ceil. I must sound crude to a happily
married woman like yourself. Happily married to a big handsome
man like Edward. How’s Edward? Does he ask about me? (Beat.)
Oh, we mustn’t go into that—must not we? Anyway, the night
before we were going to leave for Naples for the tourist barge
back, I finally found the Trevi Fountain and I was tossing my
eighty-third coin when Anna found this huge white cat, a tortured-
looking thing, with a face like Goya’s “St. Sebastian” ...
CEIL. El Greco’s ...
Catherine. Somebody’s St. Sebastian—and she picked it up,
saying right into that hairy, festooned face, “Nice little pussy,
pussykin, Nice little pussy, pussy” and the dear little thing respon-
ded by burying its front fangs into Anna’s wrist. Right down
to the bone. (She takes a huge mouthful of chopped meat.)
CEIL. What the hell are you eating? Chop meat? Raw chop meat?
Catherine. It’s chopped meat, not chop meat. Fanny Farmer
Chopped Meat.
CEIL. Are you crazy? What on earth for?
Catherine. Hold your water—you’re rushing the story. So any-
way, we laughed the cat to death and go to Naples for this Chris-
tofooro Trawler to get back here in time for school which was to
begin on September something or other.
CEIL. School started September 16th.
Catherine. Yes, Ceil, you’re utterly correct. Utterly precise as usual. September 16th. And the afternoon before we docked around
September 3rd... try to pardon me for this temporal equivoca-
tion—docked in New York, Anna took an afternoon nap and had
a nightmare—an afternoon-mare, if you will—and that evening she
fainted in the dining room. To tell the truth, I was ready to pass
out myself from the table-mates we got stuck with. I knew I should
have tipped the Maître d’ on the gangplank—this whole table of
stag matrons who were so desperate they were sprinting after the
busboys like piranha in evening gowns.
CEIL. Why did Anna faint?
Catherine. Well, Anna came to the conclusion she had rables.
But the ship’s doctor told her not to worry because if her symptoms
were those of rables she’d be dead in three days—which was sort
of a fun prognosis. But three days later we were back here and she
was still having nightmares about some pregnant guppy or some-
thing, and we ran from doctor to doctor, each of whom told her
not to take the anti-rables injections because they were dangerous
and anyway the odds were a million to one that she had it. But she
insisted on the shots so for fourteen days we went to this senile
quack down at the Board of Health and he stuck fourteen needles
in her stomach, right here... pow, pow, pow!
CEIL. My God, how painful.
CATHRINE. On the contrary, Anna delighted in them. She looked like Somebody's St. Sebastian smiling.
CEIL. Then she was all right?
CATHRINE. No, she got worse. So I took her to a private senile quack and he put her on tranquilizers so she could get back to school, back to the beloved classroom, and he said everything she was bellyaching about was in her head. Anyway, I thought Anna was all right then or I wouldn't have let her go back to work. So she began once more to face the cheerful loving children. But they began to stalk her.
CEIL. What do you mean stalk her?
CATHRINE. In class. First they did the spit ball routine—wang! Then the airplanes—zzooooom! And the cow sounds . . . moooo! Moooo! And the big thing last week, they were pinning flowers to her skirt without her knowing it and Scotch-taping little notes on her back like: One of my tits is rubber and Please mount me. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it can be to be the assistant principal of a high school and have your own sister arrive at the faculty conferences wearing a One of my tits is rubber sign on her back? I got so I had to check her clothes every period.
CEIL. Why do you think they began to do . . . dirty things to her?
CATHRINE. Well, Jesus Christ, you've got us teaching condoms in kindergarten, positions in the third grade, abortion in the sixth—perverts, nymphs, satyrs, and succub in the eighth—if you ask me it's a wonder our kids aren't balleting in the aisles.
CEIL. Did Anna do anything to encourage the things they did?
CATHRINE. I think she wore lipstick.
CEIL. Catherine—the boy . . .
CATHRINE. Oh, the boy! I was wondering how long it was going to take you to get to that. The cherub.
CEIL. She sent for him.
CATHRINE. The succulent seraphim who was present when Anna broke down—the McCloud boy . . .
CEIL. He's saying . . .
CATHRINE. You want to know about that little shit, I'll tell you. The nicest biographical detail on his grammar school record was that in the third grade he was caught pissing in a doll. During his first year in junior high he's taken dope, sold porno, and drew pictures of rhinoceri forniciating on the cover of his world geography text book. Granted he quieted down this term. He only punched a truant officer in the gut and just winks a lot as he walks around with his fly open. One of the semi-literate teachers in the English department dubbed him the Intermediated Tumescence. (She takes a big mouthful of meat.)
CEIL. Would you stop eating that?
CATHRINE. No. If I don't get some protein into me before Anna un-sedates herself, I'm going to collapse.
CEIL. What the hell does Anna have to do with your eating that disgusting raw meat?
CATHRINE. Well, it's like this—ever since she broke down we're not allowed to eat flesh. You see, she's caressed vegetarianism. She made me throw out every piece of meat we had in the house. Even the bouillon cubes.
CEIL. You're joking.
CATHRINE. Yeah, I'm joking, but you'd better like zucchini because that's what you're getting for supper. Saturday we had sauteed zucchini, Sunday we had boiled zucchini, Monday night for variety we called it squash. I can't even cook a cod fish cake—"You've got no right to kill anything," she says. Monday night she rescued a cockroach out of the toilet bowl. It isn't bad enough we're paying over two hundred bucks a month for a co-op with cockroaches, I have to have a sister who acts as a lifeguard for them.
CEIL. She's afraid of death . . . maybe the way Mama died . . .
CATHRINE. Oh, for Christ's sake, she's always been like that and you know it. Remember when Mama took us to St. Mary's Bazaar and we put her on that little ferris wheel. There was only enough money for one, and Mama said she could go alone . . . remember?
CEIL. Yes.
CATHRINE. Jesus, I'll never forget her face when that motor started and she went up and up and up . . . (Anna appears in the hallway from the bedroom.)
ANNA. And I told them to stop—stop the machine.
CEIL. Anna . . .
ANNA. Oh, Ceil, I didn't know you were coming.
CATHRINE. I told you nineteen times she was coming.
ANNA. I forgot. I must have forgotten. I'm so doped up on tran-
quilizers and all those capsules. (Beat.) I'm sorry, Ceil... I'm so ashamed, so ashamed.

Catherine. If you'll excuse me I'll get dinner ready. I'm unsure of just how to peel a marinated zucchini. (She exits to kitchen.)

Ceil. Anna, stop crying. I want to talk to you.

Anna. What did you come here for? She didn't even tell me you were coming.

Ceil. I was concerned about...

Anna. Oh, my God—what a disgrace I've been to you, breaking down the way I did. I just couldn't give it back any more to all those toots.

Ceil. Anna—get a hold of yourself.

Anna. (Calling to off-stage.) Catherine! Did you ask her about the gun? Catherine, get back in here!

Ceil. What gun?

Catherine. (Entering from the kitchen peeling a squash.) I'll ask her now, and then you write it down so that tomorrow and all next week you don't keep asking me if I asked her. Ceil, when Mother died and you ramshackle this place for every piece of worthless silver, linen, and glassware you could lay your hands on, did you also suck up Mother's pistol? Because if you did suck up Mother's pistol I wish you'd give it back so I can melt it down in front of Anna so she stops driving me crazy! (She exits.)

Ceil. That old gun Mama used to keep in the phonograph?

Anna. Yes. The one that would have frightened burglars and mas hers away if we had ever gotten any.

Ceil. (Yelling to off-stage.) Catherine! I resent the way you said that. I didn't ramshackle or suck up anything. I took a few of Mother's things just to save them. I just wanted to save them! Catherine. (Peeking her head in for just one remark.) Bullshit!

Anna. Well, did you take the gun or didn't you, because I don't want it in this house!

Ceil. (Yelling to Catherine.) You still have that same filthy mouth!

Anna. Why can't you admit whether you have it or not?

Ceil. I don't have it!

Anna. Then it's here. I knew it was still here and I'm afraid to have it in this house.

Ceil. Anna, the gun only had blanks in it.

Anna. Blanks? That's all it had in it, but couldn't someone have gone right down the street to Morrison's Sport Shop and bought some real bullets for it? It could kill someone right this minute so I don't want it around, can't you get that through your skull?

Ceil. But nobody did buy real bullets for it.

Anna. (Searching through a desk and looking behind books in a bookcase.) You tell me you know for sure someone didn't buy size 22 bullets for that gun—it could take size 22 real bullets, you know—you tell me you know for sure that right this minute that gun isn't in this house loaded and ready to kill and I'll call you a goddam liar! (She throws a couple of books.)

Ceil. What the hell are you afraid of?

Anna. What am I afraid of?

Catherine. (Entering with a pineapple on a plate which she sets as a centerpiece.) We were going to have carrot and beet juice for the appetizer because they're supposed to be good for acne, boils, and carbuncles—but I assume none of us have acne, boils, and carbuncles so I thought crushed pineapple would be better. (She exits.)

Anna. (Continuing, to Ceil.) I'm afraid of someone putting a bullet into my brain, that's what I'm afraid of. (She throws another book.)

Ceil. Stop throwing those books, please.

Anna. And last week, just before I became officially debilitated, we were discussing death in the 105 Honors class, the one with all the brains—and I had them write all the ways of dying they could think of on the blackboards—fire, diphtheria, python constrictions, plane crashes, scurvy, decapitation—one kid remembered a little girl at Coney Island being run down by a miniature locomotive and getting a miniature death—and somebody else's uncle fell into a cement mixer in the Bronx and ended up as part of a bridge. By the end of the period we had the blackboards covered, crammed full of things—someone even thought of elephantiasis; we listed napalm and the bomb, and in the few seconds left to the class we all just sat back and wondered how the hell there were enough of us left alive to make up a class! (She throws another book, then retrieves it.)

Ceil. Stop it, Anna! (Beat.) Why did you save that one?

Anna. It's Mother's Bible. She used to read it by proxy, remember? She'd have me read it when she was—atrophy ing— (Her voice breaks.)
CEIL. Anna, I came here tonight—I want you to know it's taken me a while to get used to Mama being gone, too.
ANNA. That's very comforting of you, Ceil. Very comforting. But you've got a husband and that helped you in your grief, I'm sure. I'll bet he's a pain in the ass, though. You must have loved him very much, Ceil—Havre de Grace, Maryland, wasn't it? Havre de Grace! Catherine and I would have loved to have come down for the wedding but I guess it was simply too precipitous. I know what it must have been like being swept away by Edward's impetuosity. (Beat.)
CEIL. Look, Anna . . .
ANNA. Ceil, dear, you didn't get stuck with Mama like I did—watching her dehydrate, bounce up and down while her throat was closing. Did Edward remind you of our father? You know I can't even remember what Papa looked like. I mean, I know his face from pictures in the albums—did you suck those up, too?
CEIL. I didn't suck up anything!
ANNA. (Opening an album.) Oh, here it is. I mean, I was only three years old when he ran off to live with that skinny ostrich lady in Greenwich Village—123 Minetta Lane—but you and Catherine were nine, ten—remember? I couldn't go on the bus to see him at Christmas but you two could . . .
CEIL. (Looking at a page from the album.) I remember . . .
ANNA. Christmas. That was the only time you got to see him. All Mama would let me do is go along down to the bus stop and then you and Catherine would go and get all the gifts and money you could grab—and Mama told you to smile at him, smile at your father, smile big because then he'd give you more money and bigger dolls—and then she'd whisper sweedly—REMEMBER, GIRLS, DON'T MISS THE BUS BACK, AND DON'T GO WITH HIM IF HE TRIES TO TAKE YOU ANYWHERE, AND DON'T LET HIM TOUCH YOU BETWEEN YOUR LEGS, AND THEN AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED SMILING AND AFTER YOU'VE GRUBBED EVERYTHING YOU CAN GET, GET RIGHT BACK ON THE BUS AND ALL THE WAY HOME REMEMBER WHAT A BASTARD YOUR FATHER IS BECAUSE HE RAN AWAY WITH A SKINNY OSTRICH WOMAN FROM GREENWICH VILLAGE!
CEIL. (Crying from a memory.) Oh, Mama . . .
ANNA. (Checking to see what picture Cecil is looking at.) Oh,
I think her nose is too big in that one. (She turns to the last page in the album.) I like this one. I took it three days before she died with a 3.5 lens opening and Tri-X film. I never thought it would come out there was so little light in the bedroom. She wanted me to tell her about the Visions of the Apocalypse that day and I figured by taking her picture I could make her forget because I was ruining my eyes from the little Biblical print. You need teesn eyes for that sort of thing. You know, if I hadn't bought THE HOLY BIBLE IN BRIEF—that pocket edition put out by Mentor Books—Mentor—I swear to God words are weird—if I hadn't bought it I would have gone blind. So I told her about this one vision with the horses, white, red, black, and pale horses coming out of the seals—CEIL! . . . the first four seals, Ceil, and I got tired of reading so I told her the end of Pinocchio—she liked that better than the horses. I don't even know what a pale horse is.
CEIL. (Viewing the pathetic sight of her sister.) Oh, my God . . .
ANNA. I'd cry too . . . but I don't think about it. I just can't make sense out of anything any more. I feel like I'm being wrapped in cellophane, my mind . . . as though it's being coated with something and I can't help myself. (Catherine enters with a shaker of sunflower seeds which she sprinkles on the pineapple appetizers.)
CATHERINE. Anna says these sunflower seeds are marvelous for vitamin C and roughage—but they knock hell out of your molars.
(To Anna.) Did you tell sweetie Ceil all about Rome and the cute little puddy-cat?
ANNA. Do you think Mama was afraid of the world?
CATHERINE. One could suspect that a woman who kept a pistol in her phonograph and who locked the door even when her children went to put the garbage out was somewhat apprehensive. (She exits.)
CEIL. Anna, what was the nightmare you had on the ship?
ANNA. Oh, that thing. It started with an aquarium filled with water—dripping with water—and I was standing outside watching a guppy give birth to a whole batch of babies—and then the mother started devouring the little fish right as soon as they came out—but somehow she was the one who ended up disemboweled.
CATHERINE. (Entering.) Here's the zucchini, girls. Come and get it!
CEIL. What a terrible nightmare.
CATHERINE. If you wanted something else you should've brought it.
CEIL. I was talking to Anna.
CATHERINE. Did she tell you the part in the dream where she’s running perpendicular along a beach?
ANNA. (Already sitting at the table.) There was water all around me and I hated the water. I was afraid of the water. In the dream...
CATHERINE. That’s right, Anna, you in the middle—and we’ll put our lovely sister near the squash pot.
CEIL. I’m not very hungry.
CATHERINE. You’re not hungry now, eh? Wait’ll you get a mouth full of that crap. (She hides the candy box of chopped meat on the seat next to her and sneaks it during the meal.)
CEIL. Why do you think you fainted in the dining room, Anna?
CATHERINE. First she’s gotta tell you the little game the piranha in evening gowns were playing at the table when the hirsute bus-boys were in the kitchen. It was called: WHO AM I? WHO AM I? God, these sunflower seeds are tasty. Anna had told them about her encounter with the pernicious pussy cat at the Trevi Fountain, so this one desperate ruminating piranha who wore dresses so low she looked like she was incessantly passing flesh-colored Idaho potatoes—oh, desperate forty-eight-inch-boobed piranha did a little panoply which went like this: (With weird voice.) WHO AM I? WHO AM I? (She mimics picking up a cat, smooching it in her arms and then getting viciously bitten on the wrist.)
ANNA. Don’t say any more, Catherine—please.
CATHERINE. And so, Anna—with that bubbling brook mouth of hers—insists on telling about her little dream—telling that whole tale of bejeweled unrequited nymphos about all that water...
ANNA. Please, Catherine...
CATHERINE. And the pregnant guppy. Water, water everywhere—and how afraid she’d been of the water—so terrified of the water in her dream—and I’m sitting there trying to digest a poached perch—while she’s raving on about disemboweled guppies and that goddam water—a chemistry teacher afraid of H2O—just absolutely terrified of water—when the piranha with the titanically tuberous boobs says one word—one word—and Anna passed out right at the table.
CEIL. What did she say?
CATHERINE. Hydrophobia!
ANNA. I fainted because I knew I had rabies. Hydrophobia—the fear of water—that’s the first symptom of rabies in a human being. Animals don’t get that symptom, but I had that warning in my dream...
CEIL. Anna, if you had had any symptoms of rabies you would have been dead in three days.
ANNA. (Still eating, but her voice getting angry.) I’m quite certain I had rabies.
CEIL. Anna, the doctors...
ANNA. (Screeching.) TO HELL WITH THE DOCTORS! (Quieter.) They don’t know anything about rabies and one day they’re going to find out that the first stage of rabies is not the one they think it is—... that vision before you die. They’re going to find out the first symptoms of rabies are dreams, dreams of doom before it’s too late to get the shots, those horrible, horrible shots in the stomach!
CEIL. (Taking a mouthful of food—fighting against getting furious at Anna’s tone of voice.) Catherine told me you loved them.
ANNA. Yeah, but they were supposed to be horrible. I loved them because I needed them.
CATHERINE. What vision before you die?
ANNA. Those quacks think the first symptom of rabies is this vision—this vision when you’re wide awake, The Vision of Doom, they call it. Three days before you die. Some day they’re going to find out that the first symptom is a dream of doom, not a vision of doom. A dream when there’s still time to do something about it.
CEIL. You didn’t have rabies, Anna.
ANNA. I had rabies... YOU GODDAM STUPID FOOL! (Ceil moves quickly away from the table.)
CATHERINE. (Coughing gently.) I think there’s a jot too much pepper in the zucchini.
CEIL. Anna—we’ve worked very hard to get where we are. I fought for everything I’ve got... we’ve got. You’re hurting all of us, Anna. (Beat.) I understand what you’re going through. You’re getting older. You realize you’re flesh and blood—and must die. You’ve always known it but one day it’s real—and you wish you were never born. I went through it. It lasts for a while and then you forget and find your own special way to remember living... (Beat.) you had to take care of Mama... you had to clean her—hear her pain.
ANNA. What are you doing here now, Ceil? What are you doing in this friggin room?

CEIL. The boy, Anna . . . the boy . . . you need love . . .

ANNA. Yes, but Catherine doesn't have any more studs to steal. Ceil, does it ever gnaw at that cybernetic soul of yours that Catherine's turned into the old maid you should have been? Take a good look at her. Catherine, how can you sit at the same table with the bitch that stole the only man that ever even liked you?

CATHERINE. Don't say any more, Anna . . .

ANNA. When she was still living here and Edward came to see you, couldn't you smell what she was doing? Her voice daintier than usual, an extra twinkle in her eye. She'd behave herself while you were in the room but if you went out she always had a witty remark ready—some humorous about her pension or salary, how she really needed help in maintaining her great big salary—(Pause.) And you got him, didn't you, Ceil, dear? Even if he was a schmuck! He only married you because you had more loot—and you deserve each other, that lying timouse and his superman. I need love? Tell us, Ceil—in your marriage—in this regeneration of yourself in marriage—in that great distance you've travelled from Mama's table—why is it when I look in your eyes I still see a cripple?

CEIL. Anna, we're going to have to do something with you.

ANNA. No, Ceil—we're going to have to do something with you! (She pulls a pistol from her bathrobe pocket and fires it three times.) BANG! BANG! BANG! (Ceil practically collapses.)

CATHERINE. (After a long pause, then quite calmly.) Well, that was very nice, Anna. (She takes the gun.) We'll just put the gun in the album, see? Right in the album, and then Ceil can just take the album and the gun with her when she goes. She'll take the gun and then you won't have to be so timorous about it being in the house. Ceil can just save them.

ANNA. Someone could have put real bullets in it.

CATHERINE. That noise might have been just what we needed. Nowadays you need nice noises every so often—like Lebanon Indian-wrestling under your window.

CURTAIN ENDING ACT I

ACT II

The action is continuous.

CATHERINE. I think tonight we'll prepare the dessert at the table. It's got to be seen to be believed. (She exits to kitchen.)

ANNA. (Calling to Catherine.) Don't forget the kiwi fruit! (She takes a big mouthful of zucchini, then addresses Ceil.) I really don't know who you think you are coming in here believing you're going to do and say whatever you want like a Queen Rhesus monkey. Catherine and I pay the rent on this apartment now so you're only a visitor, Ceil. A guest in the house, no longer the Queen Rhesus monkey. (She uses a pepper grinder on her food.)

CEIL. The boy's family is going to . . .

ANNA. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR CRAP!

CATHERINE. (Entering with a large electric blender which she sets on a sideboard and plugs in.) Dessert is going to be a culinary treat your taste buds will never forget.

ANNA. You have the kiwi fruit?

CATHERINE. Yes, we have the kiwi fruit. Kiwis and kumquats. Kiwis and kumquats. (She exits.)

ANNA. Ceil, your trouble is that you eat meat. That's why you have this hallucinatory problem—this conviction that you're a Queen Rhesus monkey. Can't you feel what meat does to you—that stinking feeling in your stomach after you've stuffed yourself with centrosomes. The kind of thoughts you have, the nightmares, warning you—are you aware of those things? Ceil, if you wanted roast pork could you just grab an ax and lop off a pig's head? Don't you see any connection between able to slaughter an animal and killing a human being? You barbarian.

CATHERINE. (Entering with half a watermelon on a platter. She sets it down and proceeds to scoop out little balls which she places in the blender.) When prepared and served artfully and with imagination a vegetarian diet can be a gastronomic delight.

ANNA. I didn't mean to scare you, Ceil. I love you, honest.

CEIL. If there was a real bullet in that gun you would've used it just the same.
ANNA. But no one did go out and buy real bullets. What are you so afraid of?

CEIL. You would've killed me.

ANNA. But I love you, Ceil. My own little sister. Don't you remember all the love between us, you and Catherine and me and Mama? All four of us! All that love. Oh, come on, Ceil, smile. Please smile. (She goes to tickle Ceil under the chin.) Kitchy-kitchy-koo! (The front door buzzer sounds.)

CEIL. Don't answer it.

ANNA. You shut the hell up.

CATHERINE. (Heading for the door.) Yes, it might be one of your old friends.

CEIL. Who ever that is, get rid of him. (Ceil, very much upset, exits down a ballway to a bathroom. Catherine opens the door.)

CATHERINE. Oh, Fleur.

FLEUR. Catherine, I tried to call you but the circuits were busy. We've missed you down at school. Really, we have. I mean, what good is a color coordinated phone if you can't use the thing? (Fleur is fortyish, wearing a voluminous white fox stole and a knitted suit that clings to her. The front of the dress is crocheted.) Anna, darling... (She promenades across to Anna.) You poor thing. We've missed you dreadfully. How are you feeling? (She goes to hug her.)

ANNA. (Jerkling away from the oncoming fur.) Get that away from me. Get it away.

FLEUR. (Unable to comprehend.) I'm sorry. I... CATHERINE. She doesn't like fur, Fleur.

FLEUR. I'm terribly sorry. I didn't know that. I'll just take it off, then.

CATHERINE. Let me hang it up for you.

FLEUR. Right here on the chair is fine.

CATHERINE. You certainly pulled out all the stops tonight, didn't you?

FLEUR. Oh, thank you. Bob and I are going to the theater, but I did allow some time to visit with you folks. I suppose you might say I'm on official business as the representative of the teachers' Social Committee, but Mrs. Pentranzo stopped up at the apartment and told me Mrs. Adams was here—I did want to meet her. Bob's gone down to the car to get a little gift for Anna that the Committee allotted the money for. I bought it this afternoon when Bob and I were out shopping but we left it in the car. (Furless.) Now can I give my little Anna a hug? (She promenades back to Anna and gives her a short embrace.)

ANNA. What did you get me?

FLEUR. Gifts are supposed to be surprises, Anna. It's not very much but it's a way to show that the faculty thinks of you when you're... ill. I was very limited in the amount of money the Committee made available...

CATHERINE. Can I make you a drink?

FLEUR. I'm sorry but I don't drink. I gave up smoking in June. (To Anna.) My, what are you eating?

ANNA. Zucchini.

FLEUR. (Taking a saucer and a fork.) I will try a little of this, if you don't mind.

CATHERINE. If you didn't eat let me fix you a plate.

FLEUR. This is just fine. I just want to nibble. (To Anna.) As I was saying, I was very limited in the amount of money the Social Committee made available. As you know, it's twenty-five cents a day if you're out on at least four consecutive days—Catherine, you weren't out four consecutive days so nothing accumulated to get you a gift though you are getting a card in the mail—but, Anna was out four days in a row, which gave me only one dollar to work with ordinarily, but the Committee is allowed to grant up to ten dollars if it looks like the teacher's going to be really sick, so you got the full ten dollars.

CATHERINE. It's nice that it's so exact.

FLEUR. I know it's ridiculously complicated but it's the only way to be fair, is Mrs. Adams here?

CATHERINE. She's in the john. I know she'd be happy if you could stay a while and meet her. She'd feel badly if you just dashed off.

FLEUR. What are you making?

CATHERINE. Dessert.

FLEUR. This zucchini is excellent. You must tell me how to prepare it some time. I've never even thought of preparing zucchini.

CATHERINE. I have a few more ingredients to get and then I'll tell sis you're here. She'll be very excited. (She exits.)

FLEUR. Now I want you to know, Anna, that we're all with you. We all want you to get better and rest and come back to us soon. We all talk about how much we miss you at the lunch-table. You
always had a funny story and so much spirit; we just don't know what to talk about any more. (S he watches Anna chewing.) You just go right on eating. I thought you'd be finished with supper by now. The zucchini is really excellent. (S he puts a little more on her own plate.) Bob and I got in such a fight over whether we should have bought you a religious article or not. I told him in times like these you'd appreciate something of faith and he said I was crazy. He doesn't think anyone believes in religion any more. Of course, I see the fallout of religious conviction in the children during my guidance sessions with them. It isn't that they don't believe in religion, children don't even think about it any more. I thought you'd like a nice gold cross with a chain, but Bob said even if you were religious you'd have plenty of them and I told him I never saw you wear one at school.

ANNA. I don't wear crosses.

FLEUR. That's just what I told Bob. Since I didn't see you wearing any crosses I was fairly sure that you wouldn't appreciate a faith gift which is why we got you what we finally did. It's so difficult to believe in anything, although I did a paper on this called IS GOD DEAD? For a PROBLEMS IN MODERN LIVING course I took with Dr. Nobinsky whose main problem at the time was senility—he's dead now—and I called my study IS GOD DEAD? Now the title wasn't very original but I felt I had translated the complex reasons why nobody believes in religion any more. To put it in a nutshell, the reason everyone is so schizophrenic and paranoid today is because man is finally being able to do what he previously thought only a God could do—so because scientific miracles are all around us, we're searching for more brilliant images to worship. (Fleur takes more zucchini.) You don't believe in religion at all?

ANNA. Not since Mr. Fisher's puppy. (Catherine enters and begins noisily dicing a banana on a cutting board.)

FLEUR. Mr. Fisher's puppy?

ANNA. Oh, yes. Yes, you know Mr. Fisher, that nice old man with the gas station on Bay Street? The Mobil station.

FLEUR. I don't use Mobil. I've been going to the Gulf at the corner of Clove and Victory. They're giving mugs.

ANNA. Anyway, Mr. Fisher with the Mobil station had a puppy two years ago and he doesn't have a puppy any more.

FLEUR. I wonder what could be keeping Bob.

ANNA. I was teaching at Jefferson which was in the other direction from where Catherine was, so I had to depend upon this teacher Faith Farber, a crippled teacher whose father is a Christian Scientist which is the reason Faith Farber is a cripple—well, Faith Farber was driving me to school which used to drive me crazy watching her twisted leg search for the gas pedal. (Catherine exits to the kitchen.)

FLEUR. Oh, my. I should think it would, you poor thing.

ANNA. I had to watch the road closely because her reflexes are so bad sometimes she used to put on the windshield wipers instead of the brakes .

FLEUR. Oh, that could be dangerous .

ANNA. And we were driving by Mr. Fisher's Mobil gas station when this little puppy comes running right out in front of the car, but we stopped in time.

FLEUR. Thank God.

ANNA. And there's this cute little puppy looking at me sitting in Faith Farber's suicide seat, and he's wagging his tail a mile a minute and looking so grateful .

FLEUR. (Nervously eating zucchini.) That is cute .

ANNA. I'm not finished yet! Because then, the puppy decides to go back the way he came, which is right in front of me in the death seat, when this big trailer truck comes zipping along right there, right out my window, and I yelled out: NO, PUPPY! NO, PUPPY! And the truck driver sees what's going on and he jams his brakes but the front wheels come to a stop right on the back half of this little puppy, squishing his guts across the road. (Fleur begins to choke.) I let out a scream, and the little puppy is still alive, his legs rammed out toward me, his eyes looking right at me—and he's saying: EHHHHHHHHHHHHH! EHHHHHHHHHHH! And then the truck moves ahead and the back wheels go right over the puppy's head and paws and the rest of it, and there's only this little wet spot on the road. And Mr. Fisher, old poor Mr. Fisher, whose wife had died the year before—old Mr. Fisher comes running out of his Mobil service station and he took one look and passed out banging his head on the concrete. (Beat.) That was the last day I wore crosses.

FLEUR. Oh, my—yes. I need water. Excuse me. (She rushes to table for glass of water. The front door buzzer sounds.)

ANNA. Come on in! (Rob enters.)

FLEUR. Bob, what took you so long?
ANNA. Do you have my present?

BOB. What do you mean what took me so long? Don't you remember where we had to park this afternoon? (To Anna.) Sure, I got your present.

ANNA. (Grabbing it from him and going back to her seat.) This box is pretty small for ten dollars.

CATHARINE. (Entering.) Oh, Bob.

BOB. Hi-ya, Catherine, how the hell are you.

CATHARINE. We were just going to have dessert. Shall I make enough for you?

FLEUR. Just a nibble for me.

ANNA. You'll have to put four kiwis in it then.

CATHARINE. Yes, Anna. Four kiwis.

BOB. (Looking at the vegetables.) I'll just fix myself a drink. (He helps himself.)

FLEUR. (To Anna.) We got them at Prossacks. I really hope you like them.

BOB. I was double-parked for ten minutes on Richmond Avenue while she was running around like a chicken with her head cut off. And if they think I'm paying thirty-five dollars for that noisy garage downstairs, they're crazy. (Anna has finished opening her package, and she slowly lifts a pair of gloves.)

FLEUR. I thought something warm . . .

ANNA. (Screaming as she throws the gloves and box across the room.) I don't want them. Get them out of here.

FLEUR. Pardon me?

ANNA. Get them out of here.

CEIL. (Entering.) The gloves are leather and they're (She picks them up.) fur-lined. My sister doesn't want anything killed.

CATHARINE. Fleur and Bob, I want you to meet my dear sister, Ceil Adams. Ceil, darling, this is Fleur and Bob Stein.

CEIL. Hello. I'm sorry . . . (She goes to pick up gloves and replace them in their box.) Anna doesn't care for fur apparel.

ANNA. I hate fur.

BOB. My mother hated fur, too. She said it was a waste of money. You can get a good pair of wool gloves for half that and they'd be just as good.

FLEUR. Of course. (She digs in her handbag.) I've got the receipt and you can just go back down and get something you would like.

BOB. I told her to get a gift certificate, but no! She had to go running around like a chicken with its head cut off.

FLEUR. Bob, I wish you wouldn't use that expression.

BOB. But it's true; you run around like a chicken with its head cut off.

FLEUR. I was going to get flowers . . .

CEIL. It was a very kind gesture, Mrs. Stein. We appreciate it.

FLEUR. Thank you, Mrs. Adams, I'm so glad to meet you. I had wanted to meet you for months when I found out Catherine was your sister and we lived in the very same apartment building. I think you're one of the most amazing Board of Education superintendents this city has ever had. Whenever they speak of you down at school it's with supreme admiration, and when Mrs. Penrano told me you were here tonight, I just so much wanted to see you.

Of course, I did want to deliver Anna's present on behalf of the Social Committee—she was a magnificent science teacher, she really is—and Catherine is the finest AA I've worked under.

BOB. Fleur, your hypertension is showing.

FLEUR. I wish you wouldn't use that word, Bob. I really do wish you wouldn't.

CEIL. I didn't get your first name, Mrs. Stein.

FLEUR. It's Fleur. That's French for flower. Think of snow flurries. That's the best way to remember it. I'm in child guidance—down there with Anna and Catherine—she truly is just a marvelous AA, really. I'm not a licensed guidance teacher—I'm an acting guidance teacher—

BOB. But the only difference between being an acting guidance teacher and a licensed guidance teacher is she doesn't get the same salary she deserves.

FLEUR. Bob, please don't talk like that. It's embarrassing.

BOB. Look, I'm on the outside of that kooky profession and I've got a right to express my opinion.

FLEUR. (To Ceil.) He's in glass. In Pawling glass, the medium-priced glass you probably heard of; not too cheap—not too expensive.

BOB. I've got the Virgin Islands and I make a good buck. I get a little fishing in, too.

FLEUR. He certainly does. He's hardly ever home. Actually, Mrs. Adams, you and I should have met a long time ago since Bob knew
your husband at school—they both were at Wagner College together—a special course, didn't you say, Bob?

BOB. That's what I said. Some weird course in real estate which I never went into.

FLEUR. Well, I was going out with Bob, at that time—we were a late marriage, too, and I think it's a credit to school teachers that we don't marry right off the bat—we learn something from all those psych courses. Anyway, Bob was commuting all the way to Newark to date me, and since he was such friends with your husband—Edward—I mean, in the same course and all, wouldn't it seem as if we might have double-dated at least? Bob and me and you and Edward?

BOB. Fleur, I told you I hardly knew Edward Adams. We were in this one course together and we never said one word to each other. I didn't even sit near him.

FLEUR. But still we might have double-dated. The possibility exists.

ANNA. Edward wasn't dating Ceil at that time, so the possibility doesn't exist.

FLEUR. Bob, you said Edward Adams was going out with the Reardon sister when he was in that course with you.

CATH. (Exiting.) Anna, if you want this dessert come out to the kitchen and help me cut up some of this fruit. It's making too much of a mess here. (She holds back tears.)

ANNA. (Exiting. To Fleur.) Don't finish off the zucchini while I'm gone.

CEIL. (After silence has fallen.) Edward was friends with my sister first—and then he married me.

FLEUR. Oh!

BOB. Kept him in the family anyway. Heh. Heh. (He laughs adding to the embarrassment, and nervously opens the fancy farmer candy box which is next to him. His face squirms in disbelief.)

Dear, I think we'd better get going.

FLEUR. We have plenty of time. I deliberately allowed time, Bob, and you know that very well. (To Ceil.) Bob said only the nicest thing about Edward Adams, didn't you, Bob? He was very creative, I understand. Artistic. What did he finally go into?

CEIL. He's with an oil company. He likes it very much.

FLEUR. One of the more creative departments? Advertising? Art?

CEIL. He's in quality control.

BOB. That's a surprise. Everybody used to think he'd end up in some arty-darty thing.

FLEUR. I'm sure his work is creative, Bob. And you wouldn't really know if it was or not since you're all business.

BOB. There's nothing wrong with being able to make a buck in business, is there?

CEIL. Your job must be interesting, Mr. Stein. The Virgin Islands are very lovely.

BOB. I make half my money on being sensible. If there was anything artistic in me, I would have been killed off years ago.

FLEUR. I'm sure being in oil and being in glass are two different things.

BOB. I wish you'd stop saying I'm "in glass." I am not "in glass."

CEIL. It was very nice meeting you. I assume you're going somewhere this evening . . .

ANNA. (Entering, with an egg in hand.) Our guests are staying for dessert, Ceil. (She breaks raw egg into blender.)

FLEUR. If we leave in fifteen minutes or so we'll make it to the theater in plenty of time.

BOB. We're going to an ice show, not "the theater."

FLEUR. I believe it takes place in a theater, Bob. I prefer the mental provocation of Broadway dramas but my husband falls asleep.

BOB. I'm in the room so you could refer to me as Bob and everyone will know who you mean. (Anna exits.)

FLEUR. As I wanted to say, Mrs. Adams, I'm in the middle of the guidance exam right now. I had failed it twice before, not the written part—I always pass the written part—but it's the interview that I have trouble with. Those three administrators just sitting across the room firing questions at me—that's the part I fail.

CEIL. The oral?

FLEUR. Yes, the oral. The written is fine—really excellent—but the oral, I just always fail the oral.

BOB. I'm sure Mrs. Adams don't give a damn about your oral problems or anything to do with that school after hours. That's one thing I put a stop to in our apartment—no school talk. There's something queer about teachers the way they can't turn it off even in bed. (Anna enters with a handful of fruit for the blender.)

FLEUR. Bob, you are embarrassing me.

BOB. Well, it's true. What the hell good are all those goddam
paid vacation days you get when you can't even turn it off on a
tour of Europe?
FLEUR. Some people might call it dedication, dear,
BOB. (To Ceil.) Do you know what my wife had the nerve to say
to me . . . ?
ANNA. Her name is Fleur.
BOB. What?
ANNA. Her name is Fleur. You could just say Fleur and since
she's in the room we'd all know who you were talking about.
BOB. Do you know what Fleur had the nerve to say to me when
we were 12,673 feet up in a cable car over the Alps?
FLEUR. Bob, now you're telling tales yourself out of school.
BOB. 12,673 feet high in the air—three European panoramic coun-
tries laying out in front of us—three thousand bucks invested to
drag our butts over to this vista of beauty—and she leans over and
whispers in my ear: (Mimicking his wife's voice.) DO YOU SEE
FLEUR. Bob, there's no need for you to . . .
BOB. DID YOU SEE THE LITTLE GIRL IN THE CABLE CAR
AHEAD OF US BECAUSE . . . BECAUSE SHE LOOKS JUST
LIKE DOROTHY PEWKAAR, THE GIRL I HAD PROGRAMMED
OUT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE. The Pewkar girl. Dorothy
Pewkar! I mean, that girl—whoever the hell she may be—has got
a lot more problems than whether Fleur Stein programmed her out
of Political Science—not the least of which is having a name like
Dorothy Pewkar. Do you mind if I use your bathroom?
ANNA. It's right through there.
FLEUR. You don't have to use the bathroom, Bob.
BOB. Fleur, what the hell do you mean I don't have to use the
bathroom? You have methodically and expertly taken control of
all choice and behavior in my life except my bladder and bowels.
FLEUR. (Fumbling in her purse.) Look, here's the key to our
apartment. Go back upstairs and use our bathroom.
BOB. I have a key to my own apartment, dear. You may have for-
gotten but I live there, too—and I pass in and out of the door un-
der my own control. I swear to God you're hyper tonight.
ANNA. Oh, go ahead and use our bathroom.
FLEUR. Don't mess up the towels.
BOB. What the hell did you think I was going to do? Hurl them
off the walls? (He exits.)

FLEUR. He has such faulty manners sometimes.
CEIL. He's probably just anxious to get started—to the theater.
FLEUR. He has some kind of problem left over from his mother.
ANNA. The one that hates furs?
FLEUR. Do you know he never uses the bathroom in our apart-
ment? We've been married almost nine years and he's never used
it. I suspect he uses the one at his office. (Anna exits to kitchen.
Continues in a stage whisper.) Mrs. Adams, I want to tell you I
am very sorry about this whole affair, that's why I really stopped
by tonight. You must feel absolutely dreadful your own sister being
accused of doing something sexual with a young adult, but there is
no disgrace to it, no disgrace. Every time we discuss it at school
there is no disgrace, and you mustn't feel there is. The boy's
parents—the McCloud mother and father—were up to school and
the principal and I handled them. They were furious when they
first came in and the mother began to scream at me, and I told her
I was only a guidance teacher and that her behavior was quite out
of line. Anyway, I think I've talked them out of suing. (Anna
enters from the kitchen, mildly sensing the tension in the room, and
makes final preparations at the blender.) So instead of that party
coming down to school, I told them I'd visit them at their home for
our next meeting—it'd be less awkward although it means extra
work for me but I don't mind.
CEIL. I don't think now is the right time to go into this, Mrs.
Stein. It'd be better if you called me at my office on Monday.
FLEUR. I'll be happy to, Mrs. Adams. I just wanted you to know
I was doing everything I can on the matter.
CEIL. Did you understand me, Mrs. Stein?
FLEUR. Oh, yes, Mrs. Adams. Yes, indeed.
CATHERINE. Where's Bob?
ANNA. He's in the john. He doesn't use the john in his own apart-
ment.
CATHERINE. Why not?
FLEUR. That's what I was telling Anna, before. There's some-
thing wrong with all of us, and we're really not to blame for it. The
world just got too complex and all our idols came crashing down—
just like what happened to the Egyptians and the Romans— I was
telling Anna I did a paper on it showing how the collapse of our
modern world is coming about because we've finally reached a
point of scientific consciousness which overreaches our former
religious goals. (Pause of embarrassment.) You know, I used to think I failed the orals because the interviewers were anti-Semitic but I checked up on them and they were all Jewish. (Bob enters puffing on a cigarette.) Did you light that cigarette up in their bathroom?

BOB. No, I saw smoke coming out of the hot water faucet and when I looked, this Kent mentholated filter-tip was rammed up in it.

FLEUR. I just don’t know why men insist on lighting up cigarettes when they go into a bathroom. My father did the same thing and I found it revolting. (Fleur takes a big mouthful of zucchini.)

ANNA. Did you know that eating the right combination of vegetables makes your feces odorless? (Fleur gags and Catherine turns on the blender. Finally, she shuts it off.)

CATHARINE. (Peering into the blender.) I think we’ve got the right combination. (She starts to serve it.)

FLEUR. Excuse me but I have to use the bathroom. (She runs from the room.)

BOB. (Yelling after her.) Don’t mess up the towels! (He laughs.) She’s so sick it isn’t funny. I mean, the Board of Ed is batty but at least they know enough not to give a bewildered schizo a license. Some nights I lay awake trying to picture what on earth she guides down there.

CEIL. Mr. Stein, you may not realize it but it takes many years of experience and maturing to be a guidance teacher.

BOB. If she matures much more she’s going to be dead! I think they don’t give her a regular license ’cause they know she doesn’t know what the hell she’s doing.

ANNA. (Standing Bob his dessert.) Just try a little. It’s good for you.

BOB. (Still focused on Ceil.) They have two other guidance teachers down at that school and they got their licenses and everything—The others get normal maladjusted bastards but they give Fleur the teenage insane. (He takes a sip of his dessert, and opens his mouth as though it’s on fire.) What the hell is this?

ANNA. You don’t like it?

BOB. It’s rotten! What’re you drinking it for?

ANNA. I had rabies and the doctors want me to build up my system.

BOB. You had rabies? Are you nuts?

CEIL. Mr. Stein, if you don’t mind. When Fleur comes back I think you’d better leave.

BOB. Look, Anna . . . Catherine, we’re sort of friends. I’m not the kind of big phoney that can just stand here making believe I don’t know what’s going on. (To Anna.) I frankly was shocked when Fleur told me what you did.

CEIL. We’re not going to discuss the matter, Mr. Stein, and I’m a little shocked your wife was so unprofessional as to discuss it with you.

BOB. That’s probably the reason Anna did what she did, because you never felt like discussing. But I’m not no phoney. When you pretend things don’t exist—that they never happened—it gets worse in the mind, don’t it, Anna? There was a teacher who did something like what Anna did when I went to Davidson High. Even when I was thirteen—I was thirteen—and I knew what was wrong with her. She even had a sick mother and do you know where she kept her mother’s bed? Right in the middle of the living room. It’s no good when all you’ve got is women around.

CATHARINE. Bob, would you be courteous enough to shut your big goddamn mouth?

BOB. Look, Catherine, I didn’t mean to put this on a personal level. What’s done is done. I think the two of you could use a little male influence, that’s all I’m saying—and then maybe Anna wouldn’t have gotten so sick.

CEIL. Anna will be seeing the best doctors, Mr. Stein . . .

BOB. Since when are psychiatrists the best doctors? Every one I ever knew was a pervert. Her sister lives next door to one in Perth Amboy who chokes milk bottles and beats his lettuce. All Anna’s gotta do is get out a little. You’ve got to get out and meet some men.

FLEUR. (Entering.) It’s a very cheerful bathroom. Those angel-fish decals . . .

BOB. (Continuing, to Anna.) You know how dumb men are. You just gotta go where they are. Jesus Christ, I mean, even a neighborhood bar or get the hell out of teaching and work in advertising or something.

FLEUR. Bob, Mrs. Adams said . . .

BOB. (To Fleur.) Shut up. (To Anna.) Sure there’s a lot of pretty boys in that, but if you’re just around the same guys long enough
sooner or later one of ‘em will notice you and think he loves you and before you know it you’ll be married.

FLEUR. Mrs. Adams doesn’t want this matter mentioned.

BOB. (To Anna.) When was the last time you ever went out anywhere except to some free teachers’ luncheon at the French Embassy or some crap like that?

CATHERINE. Bob, get your ass out of here.

FLEUR. (Putting-her fur on.) We’d better be going, Bob. You know how you like the overture.

BOB. (To Anna.) Even an ice show? Don’t you ever go out and have fun? How the hell are you going to meet any men sitting around here?

FLEUR. (Going to Bob who is hovering behind Anna.) Bob, let’s get out of here . . .

BOB. (To Anna.) Why the hell don’t you come along with Fleur and me tonight? Go throw a dress on and I’ll get an extra ticket and we’ll go to some cocktail lounge afterwards and I’ll get a guy for you. Just someone to talk to. The four of us. Get into the swing of things.

CATHERINE. She’s not going anywhere. You’re the one that’s going . . .

FLEUR. Bob, really . . .

BOB. I’ll make Fleur lend you her fur . . . (He takes the stole off Fleur.)

FLEUR. Bob, she doesn’t . . .

BOB. You’re not half bad looking, Anna, no kidding. You’ll look snazzy as hell . . .

FLEUR. Bob . . . the fur gloves . . . she doesn’t care for fur . . .

BOB. (Stretching the stole out behind Anna like the wings of a condor.) You’ll knock ‘em dead! (He drops the stole around Anna’s shoulders. Anna shrieks from the fur, then throws the stole to the floor violently kicks it several times.)

FLEUR. (Finally.) She told you she didn’t like fur, Bob.

CATHERINE. Would anyone like a little more kiwi frame? 

BOB. (Dumbfounded.) My mother never hated fur that much.

CEIL. Anna is a vegetarian, Mr. Stein. She doesn’t like animals being killed.

BOB. (His amazement giving way to fury.) You’ve got one hell of a nerve kicking my wife’s fur around like that. ONE HELL OF A NERVE!

FLEUR. Bob, Mrs. Adams told you she’s a vegetarian . . .

ANNA. (Indicating Fleur.) If she wants to run around with animal corpses hanging all over her, that’s her business. All those beautiful tiny animals raised in little cages that had to get gassed and have the skin ripped off their backs so some loud mouth hyper-slob can squat on her big fat ass at an ice show. (She gets seconds on the dessert.)

FLEUR. She told you she hated fur, Bob . . .

BOB. So you’re a vegetarian, eh?

FLEUR. Mrs. Adams said she was, Bob . . .

BOB. A vegetarian, eh? Well, you’re demented. You’re just one more of those fanatics that pick out one titie thing and march around making believe you’re not trying to cover up some sick twisted problem you’ve got.

FLEUR. Bob!

BOB. What do you think you’re wearing on your feet? Those slippers. They’re leather, you stupid little fool! You’re as inconsistent as the rest of those insane fanatics.

CATHERINE. Don’t call my sister a stupid little fool, you smuck.

ANNA. (Holding one foot up in the air.) They’re leatherette! You dummy! Leatherette! (She roars at him.) Ha!

CEIL. Anna, that’s enough . . .

BOB. Oh, yeah? How about the top of this cigarette box? That’s leather. Leather all over it. I’ll bet you didn’t notice that. (Anna looks at the cigarette box and throws it toward the door.) Inconsistent, that’s what you are. Just like all those revolutionaries. You’ve got animal skins and corpses all over this place, honey, and you’d better learn to live with ‘em. And that’s one hell of a box of Fanny Farmer candy you’ve got over there!

CATHERINE. Bob, your mentality isn’t in glass, it’s in horse-shit.

FLEUR. Let’s go, Bob. We’re going to be late as it is.

BOB. Inconsistency! You can’t even see it, can you? I heard how you went around picking up all those goddam cats in Italy. Picking up all those animals and givin’ ‘em a little love; worrying about those little pussy cats starvin’ to death; just huggin’ and pettin’ ‘em and rubbin’ ‘em . . . Jesus Christ, no wonder you’re afraid of rables. That vegetarian crap is only a cover-up for your real
problem. You've cut out a whole part of living. You might just as
well have sliced off a piece of your body.
FLEUR. Bob, Mrs. Adams is my supervisor and you're embarrassing
me. I'm very embarrassed.
BOB. Oh, embarrass later. She knows what you're here for. (To
Anna.) You could kick that fur all the way down to 42nd Street
and everybody's still going to know you're a cripple. You and
Catherine. Catherine, I never knew you had such a repulsive mouth.
(There is a terrible silence.)
CATHERINE. (With sweetness.) Anna? Isn't there something in
the album you'd like to show Mr. Stein? (Anna remembers the
gun, starts for the album.)

CURTAIN ENDING ACT II

ACT III

The action is continuous.

BOB. If you knew how many nights Fleur and I sat up there in our
apartment talking about you two you'd realize we're the best
friends you've got in the world. I mean it, Catherine.
CATHERINE. Anna has something to show you in our album, Bob.
ANNA. Yes, Bob. Come here.
BOB. (Staying where he is.) We saw this whole thing coming, Fleur
and me. Only I thought it was going to be you first, Catherine.
CATHERINE. Then it's only the juxtaposition that's disturbed
you . . .
BOB. (Moving toward Anna holding the gun and album.) Cell's
the one that had the guts to get away from Mama. She was
the biggest lulu, that mother of yours.
ANNA. Look at this, Mr. Stein.
BOB. The best thing that ever happened to the three of you was
when she kicked the bucket. (Anna lifts the gun out of the album
and fires it point blank at Bob.)
FLEUR. Oh, my God!
BOB. (Cowering from the shock, grabbing the gun and seeing it was
a blank.) You crazy goddam fool. You could have burned my eyes.
(To Catherine.) And you put her up to it. You two are birds of a
feather, you are. Two loony birds.
FLEUR. Bob . . . it was a jest. I'm sure it was just a jest.
BOB. (Recovered from the cowering, exploding at Anna.) Who the
hell do you think you are firing that thing at me, you little sick
bitch? You've got problems, girl, real problems.
ANNA. (Furiously.) I have what?
BOB. Problems. You got real problems.
ANNA. I have problems, eh?
BOB. That's what I said. You don't like to hear that? Problems.
You got big problems.
ANNA. You have a little problem, too, don't you, Mr. Stein? I'm
very interested in your problem—the problem about why you
never use the bathroom in your own house. Your wife was telling
us how you never use your own bathroom—it's been nine years,
didn't you say, Fleur—nine years of not using the bathroom in
your own house, so we were wondering if you had a little problem?
BOB. (Exasperated. He buries his coat, pushes it on and then grabs
Fleur's handbag.) Give me my goddamn ticket. (He finds the tickets
and takes one.) I'm going outside and I'll wait exactly three min-
utes, and if you're not out of this nut house by then I'm leaving
without you.
FLEUR. I'll be right down.
BOB. (To Anna.) You know, when I first heard what you did
down at that school, I didn't believe it, but now I do! (He storms
toward the door, opens it, then pauses, almost trembling, he turns
around and faces them.) Do you want to know why I don't use
the bathroom in our apartment? Do you really want to know?
Well, I'm going to tell you. I don't like using our bathroom be-
cause everything in that bathroom my wife steals from the Board
of Education. That's why!

FLEUR. Bob . . .

BOB. You know that attaché case my wife runs around with like a
chicken with her head cut off? She only drags it around so every
time she goes to the ladies' room at that school she loads up on
paper towels, soap, and toilet paper.
FLEUR. Oh, my God . . .

BOB. She also steals the sugar and salt from the teachers' lunch-
room—as well as so many paper napkins she keeps her mother in
napkins—she packs that attaché case up with so much crap some-
times I have to help her carry the loot out of the goddamn car.
FLEUR. Bob, do you realize what you're saying?
BOB. So, I'll tell you why I don't use the bathroom in our apar-
tment. I don't use our bathroom because I don't like drying my
hands with brown stuff paper towels, I don't like washing my face
with 20 Mule Team Borax, I don't like taking a bath in Fels
Naptha, and I don't like using toilet tissue that has a texture like
sand paper to wipe my ass! (He exits, slamming the door.)
FLEUR. (After a long silence.) I don't know what to say. (Pause.)
Almost nothing of what he said is true. He always did have such a
good imagination that he exaggerates and distorts so much that his
lies seem true. I don't know whether he's just jealous of the fact
that I make more money than he does. He's only an assistant dis-

38

39

should have quit my job when we married—maybe it would have
made him work harder. He's hardly ever home . . . (She is on
the verge of crying.) Mrs. Adams, it's been a pleasure meeting
you . . . (She pauses, begins to find strength.) I really did want
you to know I was doing everything I could with the McCloud
parents. They seem to trust me and I think I can stop them from
suing. I know I could, if you'd agree to put Anna away . . . for
treatment. They're insisting on that . . .
CATH. (Getting stronger.) I'm working extra hard on the case.
I even agreed to those extra sessions at their home. I'll keep it out
of the school. I haven't told anyone except Bob. No one down
there knows the details. And I just thought, Mrs. Adams, if you
could remember me down at the board . . . about my license . . .
(Amount demanding.) It would be wonderful of you, Mrs. Adams.
Very wonderful. (Catherine turns on the blender. Fleur exits and
Catherine hits the blender.)
CEIL. (Rises.) Anna, go to your room and lie down.
ANNA. Go to your own room!
CEIL. (To Catherine.) Tell her to leave us alone.
CATH. (Ittle Catherine.) Now, sis, it is a bit tardy for disciplin-
ary procedures.
CEIL. Catherine . . .

ANNA. Oh, Carl . . . can't you remember all the fun when we
were just getting started as teachers? How we'd all come running
home at three o'clock and Mama'd have the water boiling and some
kind of pie made with Flako pie crust mix? and Mama'd be dying
to know what happened in school all day and we'd be dying to tell
her—and we'd sit around this same table and almost pass out
laughing? We'd tell Mama what was going on in the schools and
she wouldn't believe it. She'd say the whole world was going crazy.
Remember when I told her about little Gracie Rathruk, that nutty
kid with bugs in her hair at Jefferson who used to come into the
cafeteria and sing her lunch order out at the top of her lungs?
(Catherine begins to laugh.) GIVE ME A PEANUT BUTTER
SANDWICH, TRA LA. GIVE ME A PEANUT BUTTER SAND-

WICH, TRA LA. Don't you remember that? Don't you?
CATH. (Laughing harder, joining Anna at the table.) I
remember. I remember, all right. And remember how much Mama
laughed when I told her about Rose Anadale the principal at P.S. 26 who kept the parakeet in her office...

ANNA. She used to talk about it on the P.A. system every morning after the Star Spangled Banner...

CATHARINE. (Howling with Anna.) She'd announce to the whole school, remember — GOOD MORNING, CHILDREN... GOOD MORNING, CHILDREN... LITTLE POLLY AND I HOPE YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY.

ANNA. (To Cel.) Don't you miss telling Mama those stories? Don't you miss it?

CEL. (To Catherine.) Tell her to leave us alone.

CATHARINE. Look, Cel, it's late—you probably have to get up early tomorrow and appoint a committee to study the salient factors of something or other...

CEL. If that's the way you want it. (She goes for her briefcase.) I've made arrangements...

CATHARINE. (Starting to clear the table.) You don't say. They are floral, aren't they?

CEL. She's going to a hospital.

CATHARINE. No kidding. Far away? Tudor or Swiss? Mountains and view of lake?

CEL. (Taking legal papers from the briefcase.) It's only a two hour drive from here.

CATHARINE. No, don't tell me the best feature. It's state supported.

CEL. (Ordering.) All you have to do is get her packed.

ANNA. She's the one who needs a rest, Catherine.

CEL. (Moving in with the papers.) You're going to have to look at these, Catherine.

CATHARINE. (Slamming a tray down on the buffet making a deafening noise. Then calmly.) Don't tell me what I have to do.

(Alarm silence. Finally.)

ANNA. Cell, didn't you ever love us? Mama? Any of us?

CEL. Our lives are not around this table anymore. (She moves away from the table.)

ANNA. Oh—I must have forgotten. This is all dead now, isn't it? Silent. The voices gone. Even the whispering forgotten: "Straighten up... careful your slip isn't showing... skitt down... knees close together. Be careful if someone sits next to you... or across the way... beware of your eyes... he mustn't think you're looking at him. Even when you're... bleeding... he'll know... he'll try to find a way to force you apart... he'll want to hurt you... crush you... cut into you..." (Anna rises—goes towards the bedroom balcony.) And the sounds—you must have forgotten the sounds in the dark of our rooms... the quiets of the wounds by which we could be tracked. (Anna reaches out to touch Cel.)

CEL. Get your hands off me. (Getting away from Anna and taking a seat at the table.)

ANNA. Tell me, Cel, when you're in bed—what does Edward manage to do? Does he actually get on top of you—mount you—and ride you like some blubbering old rag? (In the middle of Anna's verbal assault, Cel reaches for the Tommy Farmer box which falls from her hands. At Anna's last word she picks up the spilled meat and shoves it into Anna's face. Anna falls to her knees, senses the meat, and screams. She exits. Catherine goes after Anna.)

CEL. She can wash herself.

CATHARINE. Get out of my way.

CEL. How the hell much longer did you think you could go on keeping her here?

CATHARINE. As long as I want, that's how long.

CEL. Why? So you won't be alone? After all the filth and wiscracks are scraped off is that what's underneath? How pathetic you are!

CATHARINE. (Ringing buffet bell.) School's over. Everybody's dismissed. (Cell yanks the bell out of Catherine's hand.)

CEL. Don't you think I need anything?

CATHARINE. I thought you always took everything you needed?

CEL. Anything I did make me do from the years of gnawing at me—you and her and Mama. The whole pack of you. For what? What was it you hated so much?

CATHARINE. (Exploding.) I'll tell you what and I'll tell you when! You see, there was this big hole in the ground with you on one side of it and me on the other—and we were watching them stick a coffin in the ground. But as it was going down I had to shut my eyes because I'll tell you all I could see! I saw you with a lawyer making sure the few bucks of a croaking old lady was transferred to your name. And I was admiring a casket you picked out that wouldn't waste a second getting her corpse back to ashes. And I remember when that imperfect gasping woman was dying.
how you made certain you didn’t have to touch a penny in your bank account. (She sits at the desk.)

CEIL. That’s not what you hated me for all your life! Anything you didn’t like you could have done differently. Anything! You’re not going to blame me for that or anything about your sick little life. You didn’t have to follow me—let me do everything. I didn’t bend anybody’s arm. You could have lived your own lives you know. You didn’t have to feed on me all the time!

CATHERINE. Get out of here.

CEIL. What is it deep down in your gut you so detest about me? That I haven’t gone mad or become an obscene nasty witness? That’s what you are, Catherine. (There is a long pause. Then:)

CATHERINE. You know, Ceil—the way you said that—I mean, you’re louder and crueler—but there’s a part of you that’s just like Mama. I think that’s the part of you I’ve always despised.

(Ceil gets her coat from the closet and gathers up the papers, the gun and the album.)

CEIL. I’ll call you in the morning.

CATHERINE. (Pouring a drink.) Not in the morning, if you don’t mind. You see, Miss Reardon drinks a little and she’ll be sleeping off a colossal load.

CEIL. (Throws album, gloves and papers to the floor.) Here! Here’s everything. I’m not going to let you pin the rap on me or Mama or anybody anymore. Now it’s up to you. For once in your life you pick up the pieces however the hell you want. But no matter what you do, let me tell you this—you’re not going to drag me down. Not at this stage of the game, my sweet sisters. Not at this stage of the game. (Ceil exits leaving Catherine sitting at the desk. Anna enters.)

ANNA. You’re worse than all of them. You never do anything to stop the destruction.

CATHERINE. I got rid of her. What else do you want from me?

ANNA. You’re godless and you’re killing all of us. Everything.

CATHERINE. Look, I’m warning you. I’m going shopping tomorrow and I’m buying roast beef, frankfurters, liverwurst, knockwurst, brockwurst, and two pounds of Virginia ham. It may be primitive but it sure as hell’s going to be delicious. (Anna stops, slowly moves back to her place at the table.)

ANNA. Catherine—sometimes . . . sometimes I see my reflection in a window . . . or look down at my hand resting in my lap and

I see her. Mama. She’s inside of me. She frightens me, Catherine. She makes me afraid. I look out the window . . . the telephone poles in the street . . . she makes me see them as dead trees . . . dead crucifixes. I’m losing my mind. I can’t stop myself. She’s at my throat now, Catherine, she’s strangling me. Help me. Oh, God, help me . . . (Anna puts her head on the table. Slowly Catherine rises, turns off the floor lamp, goes to hall, turns off the foyer light. Only the table area is lighted.)

CATHERINE. Everyone’s going crazy, Anna, do you know that? The dentist— I went to the new dentist down the street— I went three weeks ago for my first appointment, and then last week, and then yesterday. He wears three wigs, Anna. On the first visit he was wearing a crew-cut wig. Last week he had a medium length wig. And yesterday he had this fuzzy llama-wool wig and he kept saying—“Dear me, oh, dear me—I’ve got to get a haircut . . .” And next week I know he’ll have the crew-cut job on again.

(Catherine goes to Anna. It is the hardest journey she’s ever traveled—to reach out and touch Anna. Anna raises her head.)

ANNA. Catherine—what world were we waiting for? (Catherine and Anna are alone at the table as)

THE CURTAIN FALLS ENDING THE PLAY
SET DESCRIPTION

The setting is the co-op apartment of the Reardon sisters in the metropolitan New York area. The room is divided into two levels. On the top level is the entrance foyer and a long hallway leading to the bedrooms and bath off s. At the l. is the doorway to the hall and elevators. To the r. of the door is an open bookshelf which divides the hallway from the parlor, which we will henceforth call the l. wall divider. These shelves are stocked with books, a museum reproduction or two and some other decorative items.

The outside door is equipped with a sturdy lock, hopefully burglarproof, an additional chain lock, and the peephole obligatory in all New York apartments. To the r. of the door is a console table which has several shelves of books including the family album. On the wall above is a mirror. At the l. is the door to the closet. Two iron railings, one r. and the other l., separate the top level from the living/dining room, two steps down.

Proceeding down the steps we are on the stage level and find n. l. a desk which is littered with old letters and bills that Catherine has neglected in the past weeks. To the r. of the desk is a comfortable armchair. n. of the desk is a wooden armchair which we refer to in the text as the "desk chair." Under the desk is a woven wastebasket purchased by the sisters on a past trip to Mexico. In fact other souvenirs of other trips may be seen on various shelves and nitches around the apartment.

To the r. of the desk are two windows. The Venetian blinds are nearly closed, but at the beginning of the play the late afternoon sun still filters through. Under the n. window is a small bookcase filled with books. The family Bible is here. At the r. of the windows is a small ornamental wall-hung bookshelf with a few small books approximately the size of the Yale Shakespeare.

Just r. of c. is the family dining room table. It is oval. At the moment there are three chairs around the table—r., n., and l. A fourth chair, which Anna will later move to the r. edge of the table, is just l. of the kitchen door.

Built into the s. wall is a buffet with four shelves above for plates and other objects, and several drawers below for silver, and spare linens. n. of the shelves is a door to the kitchen which is never used, and in front of which is a platform rocker with a small drop leaf end table.

On the r. side of the buffet is a swinging door to the kitchen. As the door opens one catches a glimpse of kitchen cabinets. On the kitchen side of the door is a calender which is turned to October, 1970.