ITALIAN AMERICAN RECONCILIATION was originally presented as a staged reading at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center's National Playwrights Conference. It then opened in New York as a full production on October 30, 1988 at Manhattan Theatre Club's City Center Stage II (Artistic Director, Lynne Meadow; Managing Director, Barry Grove.) It was directed by John Patrick Shanley, with sets by Santo Loquasto, costumes by William Ivey Long, lighting by Peter Kaczorowski, sound by John Gromada and the production stage manager was Ruth Kreshka.

The cast, in order of appearance was:

Aldo Scalicki .................................................. John Turturro  
Huey Maximilian Bonfigliano .............. John Pankow  
Teresa ......................................................... Laura San Giacomo  
Aunt May ................................................. Helen Hanft  
Janice .................................................... Jayne Haynes
ITALIAN AMERICAN RECONCILIATION

“What thou lovest well remains,
the rest is dross
What thou lovest well shall not be reft from thee
What thou lovest well is thy true heritage”
—Ezra Pound
Canto LXXXI*

CHARACTERS

Aldo Scalicki: An intense Italian guy, about thirty years old. All his life he’s lived in Little Italy, in New York.

Huey Maximilian Bonfigliano: Aldo’s best friend since childhood. Huey is more obviously vulnerable.

Aunt May: A handsome Italian woman in her middle years.

Teresa: A big striking Italian girl in her late twenties.

Janice: An angular, patrician Italian woman with strawberry blond hair and austere good looks. She’s in her thirties.

The time is the present.
The place is three locations in Little Italy, represented by a unit set.

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ACT I

SCENE I

A unit set representing three locations in Little Italy, in New York City. The three locations are Pop’s Soup House, Huey’s apartment, and the rear of Janice’s house.

Pop’s Soup House, which is an Italian diner coffee shop, is indicated by a counter, a couple of stools, a cafe table and a chair. The rear wall, which contains a door with a window in it, is decorated with a mural depicting Roman ruins.

Huey’s apartment is represented by an oak table and two chairs. In the rear wall is the front door to the apartment.

Janice’s house is a little two-story number, of which we can only see the back; there’s a bit of a garden with a white metal patio table. The second story of the house has a petite set of French doors that open on to a little cast-iron balcony. The rear wall, in this case, is a garden wall, and it contains a cast-iron garden gate. High overhead are a few stars.

Something like “O Sole Mio”, sung by Pavarotti,* comes on in a big way to open the play.

At rise, Aldo Scalicki enters through the audience. The music sneaks down. He’s an intense guy, about thirty years old. He’s wearing a well broken-in brown corduroy jacket with patch elbows, a black dress shirt with a yellow tie, black levis, red socks and black shoes. He wears a sweetheart rose. He talks to the audience.

Aldo: How you doin? How’s it goin? May I shake your hand? May I shake your hand? Let me know afterwards if everything was alright. I’m not just saying that, I wanna know. (Starts to walk away, comes back.) Here’s a quarter. (To another person.) Where’d

* See Special Note on copyright page
you get that shirt? Where? What's it made of? I only wear a blend, fifty-fifty, cotton and polyester, best of both worlds. (To another guy.) Is she with you, yes or no? Is she your girlfriend or second wife or what? She's very beautiful. (To her.) You're as beautiful as roses. (Unpins and gives her his lapel flower.) Smell this and think of me. (To man.) Watch her. Watch her like a hawk. A word to the wise, man to man. Hey everybody! My mother's here tonight! Comon, can I get a round of applause for my mother? Comon, I swear to you, she's the greatest woman in the world! I don't want to point her out cause she's shy. Listen, I'm glad you're all here tonight. Not just cause I'm a social person... Excuse me. I just saw someone. Just one moment. There's something I have to deal with here. (Goes halfway up the aisle, addresses a Young Woman who is seated.) What are you doing here? Don't look around. There's nobody here gonna help you with your personal doings. Didn't I tell you to leave me alone? You here to shake me up? It's not gonna happen. Okay, let's go. See the guy in the lobby about your money, he'll give it back. (She gets up and leaves. Aldo starts down the aisle toward the stage.) Some people don't understand a man when he says a thing the first time. Remember, that ain't the man's fault. (The Young Woman has quietly reentered the theatre and is on the point of re-taking her seat.) Hey! Hey! What, d'you think I'm stupid? I see you there. Look, I'm trying to work, I got my mother here, you gotta go. (She doesn't retake her seat, but she doesn't leave either.) Listen, I'll meet you. P. J. Clarke. Eleven-fifteen. Alright? We'll have a talk. (The Young Woman nods and leaves.) Can you believe that? I think of myself as an experienced man, but women still amaze me. You know, I'm embarrassed, but I have a slight erection. My own body's a mystery to me sometimes. My mother, God bless her heart, she tried to explain everything to me, but who can explain these little erections? One time I got buried alive at the beach by a bunch of wise guys, they abandoned me there. All I had was my head out. I'm lookin' around. I see this little bird. This little bird looks at me, I look at this little bird. And sonofabitch if I don't get a little erection! How do you figure that? You don't. You don't, that's my answer. There are things that you can figure out and there are things you can't figure out. Now some things I know. In fact, I happen to be very wise. In fact, I am here tonight to teach you something. You wanna think of it that way, you're my class. And what I'm gonna do is, I'm gonna tell you a story. About my friend Huey and me, and what happened to him. And from this story, I'm gonna teach you something. Now my name is Aldo Scalicki, and my best friend... Oh see, who can figure? It's going down now. (To his crotch.) Are you through? (Resuming.) Anyway, as I was saying, my name is Aldo Scalicki, and my best friend my whole life is Huey Maximilian Bonfigliano. Come on out Huey. (Huey enters from the wing. He's dressed in a very poetic white shirt with billowing sleeves, jodhpurs and embroidered royal blue slippers. He has a notebook and a music box. He sits at an oak table. He opens the music box; it plays the theme from "Turandot. " Then he begins writing in the notebook.) One day, about a month ago, I remembered that I had not seen my friend Huey in some time. I had called him on the phone, but nobody would pick up. So I went over to his apartment.

Aldo exits from the stage. In a moment, a knock is heard at Huey's door.

Huey: Who is it?
Aldo: It's Aldo!
Huey: Freakin Scalicki I can't talk to you now.
Aldo: What's the box?
Huey: Music.
Huey closes the box stopping the music.
Aldo: What for?
Huey: Cause I'm workin on somethin.
Aldo: What are you doin?
Huey: I'm writin.
Aldo: Who to?
Huey: I'm not writin nobody. I'm writin.
Aldo: What?
Huey: Somethin.
Aldo: A book?
Huey: No, not a book! I reject that! I reject that book shit!
Aldo: Alright.
Huey: Finished!
If you nail my words they'll die
Then you’ll completely understand what I said
Cause what I said will be completely dead.
A long pause.
Aldo: May I sit down?
Huey: Sure.
Aldo: (Sits.) Refresh me. What does primordial mean?
Huey: Old. Like a caveman kinda...
He drifts away. Another pause.
Aldo: Alright. Can I speak to you, Huey?
Huey: Sure.
Aldo: You ain’t been comin around this last long bit...
Huey: I’ve had a lot on my mind.
Aldo: I’ve been callin you...
Huey: I unplugged the phone.
Aldo: And now when I see you, you’re dressed in ridiculous clothes, and you are writing this primordial shit.
Huey: GET OUT, GET OUT GET OUT!
Aldo is unfazed.
Aldo: Now I can’t help but think that what’s goin on with you is just another expression of your usual problem.
Huey: Why don’t you leave me alone?
Aldo: How long you been divorced now?
Huey: Three years.
Aldo: Three years. Don’t you think it’s about time to get over it?
Huey: You understand nothing.
Aldo: Alright. I’m willing to listen. If I don’t understand, why don’t you take a minute and explain it to me?
Huey: Because I don’t understand.
Aldo: What’s this appearance?
Huey: Don’t talk to me.
Aldo: Tell me about this appearance you’re wearing?
Huey: Listen, don’t tamper with me while I’m in progress with this thing.
Aldo: You look like a frog.
Huey: I do not!
Aldo: You look like a frog in pajama top.
Huey: I have a plan.
Aldo: For what?
Huey: To get her back.
Aldo: Who?
Huey: Janice.
Aldo: You want her back?
Huey: Yeah.
Aldo: It's like you get the Hong Kong Flu, you get rid of it, now you want it back?
Huey: I want her to take me back.
Aldo: She killed your dog.
Huey: I don't care anymore.
Aldo: The woman shot your dog with a zip gun and you want her back?
Huey: Yes.
Aldo: Huey. Huey. Why?
Huey: Love?
Aldo: I'm listening.
Huey: That's all.
Aldo: What are you telling me? Are you telling me you love Janice?
Huey: My life don't mean anything without her.
Aldo: I'm not gonna argue with you there. I don't know whether your life means anything or not. Maybe it doesn't mean anything. Who cares? I mean, why should your life mean anything? My life doesn't mean anything. Maybe that's the good news. Why you want your life to mean something? Okay, with you, your life meant something when you were with Janice. It meant heartache, screaming, bad food, and finally, a dead dog. Is this something to miss? Listen, Huey, a lotta people have an expression of this problem. They had something horrible for a long time, and then they get away from it, and then they miss it. They want the horrible thing back. But only in the very very blindest stupidest way. This is where friends come in. Friends are those people appointed in your life to blow the whistle when you're insane. I didn't see you for awhile. I call you, no answer.

Immediately when I thought about it, I figured you were having some kind of mental episode. So I'm your friend, I'm here to do my job. WAKE UP.
Huey: I gotta good plan to get her back.
Aldo: You know, talking to you is like being alone.
Huey: But I need your help.
Aldo: You want me to help you get Janice back?
Huey: Yes.
Aldo: Janice hates me.
Huey: I know that.
Aldo: Once when I was a little boy, Janice made me play funeral with her. She made me lie down in a flower box and cross my arms on my chest and be dead. Then she put on a happy birthday hat and blew a party horn. I absolutely believe if I died today she'd show up at my coffin with that hat on.
Huey: You're right. She doesn't like you.
Aldo: She hates me.
Huey: But she likes you better than me. Aldo, let me explain what's been goin on with me. For three years now I've been tryin to forget Janice and get on with my life. I moved in by myself, I got a nice girlfriend...
Aldo: Teresa is a wonderful person.
Huey: I know she is.
Aldo: Half the guys in this neighborhood are jealous of you over Teresa.
Huey: I know. I know from out there my life is looking real good. I know that Teresa's great and that she loves me...
Aldo: And she can cook like an angel. She cooks as good as my mother. (To his mother in the audience.) I'm not tellin the truth, Ma. That was just a rhetorical fib to make a point with my friend. (To Huey.) And, on top a all that, Teresa is easy-goin.
Huey: I know.
Aldo: That's no small thing.
Huey: I know.
Aldo: If I could find an easy-goin girl, I might tie the knot myself.
Huey: You? You're never gonna get married.
Aldo: That's true. But that's not cause there's anything wrong with me. That's because the state of this country has ruined all
the girls.

Huey: Aldo, I'm gonna break it off with Teresa and I'm gonna go after Janice.

Aldo: You're doomed. You're like Oedipus. I'm talking to Oedipus.

Huey: I'm doin' what a man should do. I've spent a lot of time thinking. Years. Weighing this and this and this. I haven't wanted to be rash. To tell you the truth, the thing that's scared me the most in this whole time in my life is that I would be rash. I haven't been. Nobody could think more about anything than I've thought about this. A man's heart is difficult to know. His own heart. I've spent a lot of time listening to my heart. I've taken out my pictures of Janice and looked at them, and I've put them away again. When I wake up in the morning, I write my dreams down on a piece of paper. I read them over and over and try to understand what they mean. I save them. I have all my dreams in a drawer. I've spent time with Teresa. I love her, I eat with her, I talk to her about what she thinks life is. In my secret mind, I compare her to Janice. In many ways, she's better than Janice. I mean, like, if you were to put them both on television, I think Teresa would get much better ratings than Janice. You know what happened to me one time when I was a kid? I got a crush on this girl. I thought she was great. I followed her all over the place, trying to work myself up to talk to her. I was gonna ask her to this party. Then I told one of the guys from the block what I was thinking. And he laughed at me. He told me I was a fool. Because she wasn't good-lookin'. And you know what I did? I dropped my interest in that girl. I never asked her to that party. She was outta my life picture. I dropped her because her ratings were too low. And that was okay. Cause I was a boy. Which means that was the time to be stupid. I'm a man now. I can't worry what my life looks like to other people. You know that guy who told me that girl wasn't good-lookin'? I can't even remember his name. I'm gonna break it off with Teresa, and I'm gonna go after Janice.

Aldo: You think Janice is gonna like you better dressed that way than in normal clothes?

Huey: I'm trying to give myself some confidence. I got no confidence that I can straighten out my life.

Aldo: Hey, you alright?

Huey: No.

Aldo: Hey.

Huey: I know I'm a fool, Aldo. Maybe I've always been a fool. I've screwed up every single thing in my life. I feel this pain that makes me weak. The pain is my place in me where I'm hurt from the divorce. I'm a big freakin' failure. I gotta find a way to make things right. I tried to go into the future an be new, but it don't work for me. All the ghosts of my old happiness come after me when I stop an be still a minute. I didn't think I could ever be so regretful. I'm a young man, but I feel like everything is over for me unless I go back an fix this broken place. I gotta get back with Janice before I start thinkin' about like killin' myself.

Aldo: Hey, hey. Listen. Whatever you need. You hear me? I'm your friend whatever you wanna do. You're gonna be alright.

Huey: Aldo, look at me. What happened to me? I was a young man. I never worried about nothin'. Now I can't taste my food. The furniture just sits on my floor here. I got no feelin' of home. I tried to claim Teresa. I tried to feel my rights with her. She wanted me to. But I don't feel I got that power in me to claim a woman. That strength of knowin' what I want. I can't take. I want my power to stand up and be a man and take. I want it back. I think Janice has it. I think she took that power from me, or it's sittin' with her. Somethin' like that. I'm like Samson and Janice is the woman who cut my hair an broke my strength. I want my strength of being a man back, an I've got to go to Janice for that.

Aldo: It don't sound to me like you love her.

Huey: I don't know whether I love her. I don't care whether I love her or not. Love don't matter to me anymore. I've lost my strength and freedom of being a man, and without that there's a lot more than love I can't do. Without that much longer, I ain't gonna be able to draw breath.

Aldo: Alright then. We'll get that strength back for you. You're my friend, Huey. Listen to me! Life is stupid. I know that, too. You're gonna have these situations which are stupid to live through and yet it has to be done. You need to look like this, go ahead. You need to go back to Janice, go back. We're here now, and we'll be here then. I'm not lettin' you go. You let go of a
friend a minute, he starts to fly away from you a hundred miles an hour. It's a miracle you ever see him again. I'll hold on to you.

Huey: So you'll help me?
Aldo: Whatever you need.
Huey: I have a good plan.
Aldo: Tell it to me.
Huey: These things gotta be done in a certain order.
Aldo: I'm listenin.
Huey: I gotta break up with Teresa before I can reconcile with Janice.
Aldo: That seems right.
Huey: Teresa should be working the Soup House this afternoon and I must go there and tell her it's over between us.
Aldo: You want me to go with you?
Huey: No. Teresa doesn't like you very much.
Aldo: Why do all the women you like hate me?
Huey: Maybe cause they know you're my friend and they're jealous.
Aldo: I think it's cause they know I won't marry.
Huey: I think women only like the friends you make after you're with them because then they know those friends accept the situation. Old friends wanna take you back to the old days.
Aldo: I think it's cause they know I don't wanna marry. They hate my sanity.
Huey: Anyway, I'm pretty scared to tell Teresa that I don't wanna see her anymore. Just yesterday I told her that I loved her and that I had really gotten over all my mental problems.
Aldo: You told her that yesterday?
Huey: Yeah.
Aldo: How'd you have such a quick change of heart?
Huey: I don't know. Maybe I was lying? I don't know what I was doing. I can't remember yesterday. It really seems like a long time ago.
Aldo: Huey. Maybe you should just hold tight for a few days and wait and see how you're feeling then?
Huey: No. Even though I don't always feel the same way, the way I'm feeling now is the biggest thing. It comes back and back. I never solve it. I think I just get tired of it, and then when I rest it comes back. I really know the solution is in going this way. I don't wanna go, you know. Why you think I ain't done this before this? I was too scared. I don't like to make a move like this. It's too big. I think if I could live the way I wanted, everything would be smaller happenings. But things are big: Love. Marriage. Divorce. Death. Babies. Things are too big for a little guy like me not to be scared. But whether I'm scared or not, I got stuff to do. Things ain't right. I gotta try to make 'em right. And I might as well get on with tryin.
Aldo: I gotta tell you one thing from my side.
Huey: What?
Aldo: I feel this is the moment to say somethin.
Huey: What about?
Aldo: You should know that I don't always know exactly what I'm doing either. I'm gonna tell you somethin it's hard for me to say. I get scared cause a life, too. When my father died and I didn't know him cause he never talked to me seriously, I got hit with the tragic side of being a man. My own father was a stranger to me, Huey. Can you imagine? I can't even imagine that, and it happened to me. My own father never took me to the side and made me feel like his son. And I never grabbed him and made him do that with me. It just didn't happen. Some things just don't happen. The moment goes by. The man is dead now. I can't go back an change that. I got no father. When I had a father, I didn't have a father. And now I never will, no matter how I wish on a wish. This is what I'm sayin: It's easy for me never to show the truth to another man. Just like I was taught. That's why sometimes I think I ache for the company of a woman. I know the other reasons, too. But I think it's also because it's harder for me not to show the truth to a woman, sooner or later, if I spend time with them. And then that's why I hate them and love them and need them to the point where I scare at the ones I don't even know.
Huey: Then why don't you get married?
Aldo: Cause it's a sickness that makes me need a woman that way. It's the sickness of bein a man, the stupid son of a stupid father. I got things in me I gotta fix between me an men, before I even get to the women. Huey, we gotta be friends for each other! Or at least I wish an hope we could be friends like me an my
father never could be. This is the moment that's gonna tell the tale. I can feel it. We always been close, but we stomp around each other like all the other hotshots. But just now, just now you told me how you felt for real about something, in a way that I thought you only coulda told a woman, an' that touches me. That moves me, Maron, I sound like a faggot! No! I just sound like my father never did. And that's how I wanna sound.

Huey: What are you sayin', Aldo?
Aldo: That I love you. And I'm petrified to say that. You're my best friend, and all I ever do is mock and march around and try to look good. Just like my stupid father. And that's dead. I love you, man to man, and I'm here for you. Alright?
Huey: Alright.
Aldo: Tell me what you need from me in this plan.
Huey: I feel like I should say now that I love you, too.
Aldo: You don't haveta say nothin'.
Huey: Would you mind if I didn't? I just don't feel up to that.
Aldo: No, I don't mind. Forget it. Tell me the plan and let's get goin'.
Huey: Alright. I go to the Soup House and tell Teresa it's over.
Aldo: Right.
Huey: And then once that's done, or undone...
Aldo: Whatever.
Huey: You go, and you pave the way for me with Janice.
Aldo: I have several questions.
Huey: Okay.
Aldo: Why do I get Janice?
Huey: Because if I go without having her prepared, I think she'll just flip out an' start yellin', and we'll never really have the conversation. If you talk to her first...
Aldo: She can tear my head off.
Huey: Right. I mean, exactly. I need my head for this one, Aldo, and you don't. If she screams at me too hard, I think I'll get too nervous to talk as good as I could.
Aldo: But why me?
Huey: Because she respects you. She don't like you, but she respects you. And you're a good talker, a good arguer. You're better than me at talkin'. And you're not afraid of her. You can take the heat better than me. But most of all, who else but you?
Aldo: What if she shoots me?
Huey: She ain't gonna shoot you.
Aldo: She shot your dog.
Huey: That was a dog. You're a human being.
Aldo: But does she know that?
Huey: She doesn't even have the gun anymore. It blew up after that.
Aldo: After that?
Huey: It was just a crappy zip gun.
Aldo: When was she usin it after that? What was she shootin' at?
Huey: Me.
Aldo: She tried to shoot you.
Huey: That was back when she was drinking. She's dry now.
Aldo: She shot your dog. She tried to shoot you. And now you're sending me to her. Alright. I'll go. I'm paving the way, huh? Son of a bitch.
Huey: Aldo.
Aldo: You know what I think, Huey? I think you should definitely tell me that you love me. If I am doing this, you should say it, you should carve it into a freakin' tree.
Huey: I love you.
Aldo: Don't lie to me.
Huey: I do love you, Aldo.
Aldo: I don't know. You're gonna bust up with Teresa, this terrific girl. I'm gonna prepare Janice for you to stage the disaster of your life. All a this in the name of friendship.
Huey: You know what I think of it as?
Aldo: What?
Huey: Like music. (Music begins to play under and continues to play under rest of scene. Prerecorded concertina music. Aldo and Huey stroll and talk.) Like a musical movement. I feel this'll be my first music in a long time.
Aldo: Like music, huh? So now you're a composer.
Alright, I'm game. I'll be in your first movement. But I'm tellin' you. At some point, I'm gonna sit back with my popcorn, Puccini.
This is your show.
Huey: I know that.
Aldo: Just so long as you know that.
Huey: Janice should be home by nine o'clock tonight. She don't work the dinner on Saturday. And I should be all broken up with Teresa by then, so it won't be wrong that way. After you talk Janice to a place where you think I can talk to her, tell her I'll be there at midnight.
Aldo: Ain't that kinda late?
Huey: She'll be tired and maybe it won't be as bad.
Aldo: Right. She'll be tired from takin' the pot shots at me.
Huey: The gun blew up.
Aldo: As if that were the only gun to be had.
Huey: If you don't wanna do it, Aldo, just say the word.
Aldo: No, I'll do it.
Huey: Thanks.
Aldo: That's alright.
Huey: We should get goin'. I'll go to the Soup House and talk to Teresa.
Aldo: You don't want me to come with you?
Huey: No, I gotta do this.
Aldo: Alright. Huey?
Huey: Yeah?
Aldo: Go easy on Teresa. She's a nice girl and don't deserve your grief.
Huey: I know. I'm scared to tell her.
Aldo: You should be. But don't worry about it.
They exit. Crossfade to Scene 2.

SCENE 2

Lights up on Pop's Soup House. Teresa, dressed in a faded waitress outfit, is discovered on one of the stools. She looks glum.
She's a big, striking Italian girl. Enter Aunt May, an Italian woman of middle years.

May: Hi, Teresa.
Teresa: Hi, Aunt May.

May: Why are your eyes red?
Teresa: What are you talkin' about?
May: Alright, don't tell me. I'm a widow. I got nothin' to do with my life if the people I love shut me out, but that's my problem and I'll get by. Got some soup?
Teresa: Sure.
May: Got that minestrone?
Teresa: Every day.

Teresa sets about serving the soup.

May: I like that minestrone.
Teresa: I used to like minestrone. I used to like walking in the rain. I used to like looking in the mirror. Now all I see there is a moron.
May: You're not a moron, you're a beautiful girl. Why are your eyes red?
Teresa: I've made up my mind. I'm gonna call it quits with Huey.
May: So. That's it. I thought you loved Huey?
Teresa: He's very distracted, Aunt May. I feel this constant thing with him where he's comparing me to his old wife.
May: That's no good. That's bad.
Teresa: Yesterday he told me that he loved me and that he had put all his mental problems behind him.
May: But you didn't believe him. You saw.
Teresa: I could see that he was insane.
May: What's the matter with that boy?
Teresa: He can't get over his divorce.
May: Uh-huh. That's bad.
Teresa: I have been so nice to that man. But that's over. He don't know the difference. His old wife...
May: Janice.
Teresa: Yeah, Janice. She treated him like a dog. Now he looks at all women like they're her. He can't feel when somebody treats him good.
May: I heard she killed his dog.
Teresa: She did that, too.
May: Takes a woman with big feelings to kill a man's dog. A real Bloody Mary.
Teresa: Janice is very terrible. She scares the livin' shit outta me. She's like a scourge. She should live on a black mountain and drink out of a skull. The one thing I could never understand was how Huey came to marry her.
May: Maybe she wasn't that way back then. Not that people change. But sometimes somethin' small can get emphasized through a bad experience.
Teresa: Like what?
May: I don't know. Maybe like marrying Huey. Who knows? Maybe if you'd married Huey, you wouldn't gotten to be like Janice.
Teresa: Huh. No way.
May: I don't know.
Teresa: I'm tellin' you. No way.
May: And I'm tellin' you, I don't know.
Teresa: Well, we're never gonna find out who's right 'cause I'm gonna break up with him.
May: How you gonna do it?
Teresa: What do you mean?
May: This is important. You gonna point in his face, or are you gonna take the whole blame on yourself?
Teresa: I ain't thought about it.
May: Think about it. You should.
Teresa: What's the difference?
May: If you point the finger at him while he's in front of you, you may not be pointin' the finger at him in your sleep.
Teresa: Point the finger in my sleep?
May: That's right.
Teresa: You mean, if I'm not careful, I could get obsessed.
May: That's right. You could get that bug-eyed look.
Teresa: I don't want that. So I'll point in his face and I'll put the whole thing on him. Then he can remember my finger pointing like a knife, and I'll go and sleep good.
May: Yeah. You'll still feel pain.

A pause.

Teresa: Aunt May?
May: Yeah?
Teresa: I feel too weak to break up with Huey. I don't feel I got the strength to just push him away.

May: You're only weak when you try to do somethin' you don't wanna.
Teresa: I wanna break up with him.
May: When you do what you want, you're as strong as an ox.
Teresa: I've lost my reasons for us to be together.
May: You're tormented.
Teresa: I am.
May: You wanna break up with him and you don't wanna break up with him.
Teresa: No. I wanna break up with him.
May: You do?
Teresa: Yeah.
May: You're sure?
Teresa: Yeah.
May: Why?
Teresa: I don't like how he's treatin' me.
May: You feel bad?
Teresa: Yes.
May: It used to be better?
Teresa: Much better.
May: Then I guess you're right to do somethin' to get things movin'.
Teresa: In the beginning, he was like this guy who loved me, and he had no past with anybody. It was like he was just starting out to live. Then the past came and got him, threw a bag over him. The man was kidnapped by his own past. He's supposed to come by.
May: Where?
Teresa: Here. He said he'd be by.
May: Then I'd best be on my way.
Teresa: No! I want you to be here.
May: No, you don't. What d'you want me for?
Teresa: I want your moral support.
May: I don't have no morals.
Teresa: I want you here so you can hear what I say and what he says, and tell me afterwards that I don't remember it wrong.
May: I make a bad witness. I don't retain.
Teresa: Just stay, okay? I'm gonna be sad. I don't wanna be
alone.
May: Alright. I'll stay. God, you're pretty. I'll never understand why pretty girls always seem to get treated so bad. Or ugly girls either.

_Huey appears at the door._
Teresa: Here he comes.
May: Remember. Point the finger. Save your peace of mind.

_Enter Huey._
Huey: Hi.
Teresa: Hi.
Huey: Hi, May.
May: You look like the Count of Monte Cristo.
Huey: Thanks.
Teresa: So, how are you today, Huey?
Huey: Good. How are you today?
Teresa: Good.
May: I'm gonna wash my bowl.
Teresa: You look awful.
Huey: You look beautiful.
Teresa: Thank you. (A pause.) Huey .
Huey: (Simultaneously.) Janice.
Teresa: What did you call me?
Huey: Ja ... Teresa?
Teresa: You called me Janice.
May: Oh, boy.
Huey: No, I didn't.
Teresa: You called me Janice. You piece of shit.
Huey: I didn't say that.
Teresa: I knew this was the way your mind was working. I am not your old wife.
Huey: I know that.
Teresa: I feel sick.
Huey: I know who you are. You're Teresa.
Teresa: Oh, very good. Aunt May, ain't that great? He knows my name.
May: I shoulda left when I had the chance.
Teresa: Janice was one person and I'm another person.
May: I'm going to the bathroom.  
May exits.
Huey: There's no point in making this harder than it has to be.
Teresa: You're numb.
Huey: What do you mean?
Teresa: You can't feel your own face. That woman made you numb. You're like somebody's thumb that got cut off. You're like a cut-off thumb inna glass a water.
Huey: I am not.
Teresa: Huey. Are you talkin about going back to Janice?
Huey: Yeah.
Teresa: Huey. That woman hates you. Why would you break up with a woman who loves you to go to a woman who hates you? It just don't make any sense.
Huey: She doesn't really hate me.
Teresa: Yes, she does.
Huey: She's just mad at me.
Teresa: It's worse than that. I swear to you.
Huey: How could I be with a woman as long as I was with Janice if she hated me?
Teresa: I don't know.
Huey: If that were true, how could I ever trust any woman again?
Teresa: Cause all women ain't her.
Huey: I can't believe Janice hated me. If that were true, then I don't know anything at all and there's no hope for me. I pray to God you're wrong, Teresa.
Teresa: I'm not wrong.
Huey: Cause if she really didn't love me ever then I feel so ugly like I could never never be loved by anyone. If she really didn't love me at all, I think I'll kill myself.
Teresa: No.
Huey: I'll have to. Who am I if I give my love to a woman who hates me?
Teresa: No. Comere.
Huey: No.
Teresa: Why not?
Huey: Cause if you hug me I may get confused and think that I love you, when I already know what I have to do.
Teresa: Okay.
Huey: I've got to go back to Janice. That's the only way outta this trap I'm in.
Teresa: You're not in no trap.
Huey: Yes, I am.
Teresa: You're gonna be alright.
Huey: I don't know.
Teresa: You're just goin through this bad time in your life.
Huey: I hope so.
Teresa: Sure. But be quiet a minute and listen to somethin from me, okay? I need you. I'm not nuts like you are now. I'm in my right mind and I love you and I need you. And I don't want you to leave me.
Huey: Don't.
Teresa: I can't only be watchin out for your feelings, sweetheart. I've got my own feelings to speak. I love you and I need you and I don't want you to leave me. If you get back with Janice, you'll be so sorry as a man can be. She don't love you an she don't mean you good like I do.
Huey: I love you.
Teresa: I know you do.
Huey: But I've got to go back to her.
Teresa: You don't, you know.
Huey: I'm sayin I love you, but I'm like this little crippled man with stumps that can't grab nothin. I gotta go back where I left my hands.
Teresa: Do you love Janice?
Huey: I've got to get her back.
Teresa: Then get outta here.
Huey: Teresa.
Teresa: No! Get out, I said. You can't have it all ways.

    Huey goes to the door.

Huey: Let's see what happens next.
Teresa: I ain't gonna wait for you while you're being stupid, you know.
Huey: I know.
Teresa: You don't know nothin. Go on. Go.
Huey exits. Teresa cries. May reenters.

May: All clear?
Teresa: Oh, shut up.
May: I know. It's bad. He is crazy.
Teresa: He is, isn't he?
May: He is very crazy.
Teresa: Why can't he see when he's been stupid?
May: There's probably somewhere in him where he can.
Men are different than women. Men can get wrapped up in the past. Women are more that way about the future.
Teresa: Oh God, I feel bad!
May: Yeah. Yes.
Teresa: Do you think Janice will take him back?
May: I don't know. I hope not. Why didn't you break up with him like you were gonna?
Teresa: I started to.
May: But you backed off.
Teresa: So what?
May: Do you really love him?
Teresa: Yeah. To the best of my knowledge.
May: (May takes out hand cream and applies it during next.) I loved a man like that once. Three years. Precious times. I'll never have the courage to be that stupid again.
Teresa: What happened?
May: I dropped him.
Teresa: Just like that?
May: I dropped him so hard he was outta sight and gone before I could wash my hands.
Teresa: How'd you bring yourself to do it?
May: I didn't have to do nothin. The hand on my watch did it all. Time. I got older by a day. One certain day. I got one day older than him.
Teresa: I feel older than Huey right now, but that don't make me let him go.
May: Well, you are not me, as I said. What happened to me is not gonna be what happens to you. But I do wonder why I've been through the things I've been through. If all this stuff I remember is wisdom or just lint. Anything you want me to do for you?
Aldo: Huey is planning to go back to Janice.
Teresa: He told me.
Aldo: I'm supposed to go and set her up for him.
May: What? What's that mean?
Aldo: He wants me to soften her up for him, you know, take the initial heat, so he can reason with her.
May: Well, you know how to make yourself useful. I should probably take lessons from you.
Aldo: What do you mean?
May: I was just saying to Teresa that I never know how to make myself of use in these situations.
Aldo: You wanna be of use? Lemme tell you something. You can be used. Or you can be of use. To be of use may actually mean not allowing yourself to be used.
May: I don't get you.
Aldo: Don't feel bad. I'm deep. Teresa, listen to me.
Teresa: He wants you to talk to Janice?
Aldo: Yes. Huey is my best friend and he's not himself and he's in a bad way. He's planning the most disastrous thing he could do with his life, and he's got me helping him to do it. I think he should be with you, not Janice. What do you think?
Teresa: I agree.
May: Me too. I think.
Aldo: So I intend to make sure that Huey and Janice do not reconcile.
May: How you gonna do that?
Aldo: I am gonna go to Janice tonight, and I am gonna seduce her.

May laughs.
May: Ah, I like you! You're crazy!
Aldo: I am crazy!
Teresa: You're gonna put the make on Janice?
Aldo: Yes! I'm gonna make her mine. I'm gonna drive any image of Huey from her thoughts. In this way, I'm going to save my friend.
May: And then what?
Aldo: What do you mean?
May: I mean, if you make Janice yours, then she's yours, right?

Aldo: I can't deal with that problem now.
Teresa: You know, even if you prevent him from going back with Janice, don't think things are gonna be alright between him and me. I have feelings, you know. I've got pride, an a shitload of other stuff, too.
Aldo: I can't deal with that now either. All that will become clear. But one step at a time. What I have tonight is almost like a military objective. Janice is like a hill I gotta take. And I got till twelve midnight to do it.
May: Whatever happens, Aldo, you're a good friend. You're a real good friend. I admire you. When the smoke clears, we're gonna have to have a talk.
Aldo: I'll tell you something. I'm terrified. My stomach is against this. Janice is a very frightening woman and if it wasn't for Huey I would never consider this, not even if I was very drunk. This is a black rendezvous. All I ask of you, Teresa, is that you keep an open mind. Will you promise me that?
Teresa: That's all I promise.
Aldo: That's all I ask. And if you never see me again, and they ask you where I went, tell them I went to a tough place for the sake of a friend.

Exit Aldo.

Teresa: You know, that guy is another example of why I should become a nun.
May: Aw, he's sweet! (She laughs.) But him and Janice tonight? What I wouldn't give to be a fly on the wall!

Something like "Papa Loves To Mambo",* sung by Perry Como, begins to play as the lights go down.

*See Special Note on copyright page
ACT II

SCENE I

Menacing music from “Turandot” plays as the lights come up.*

The rear of Janice’s house; it’s night. A lone cricket chirps. A couple of stars twinkle high over head.

Janice is discovered on her balcony. She is an angular, patrician Roman with strawberry blond hair and austere good looks. She’s wearing a soft white nightgown which makes her look like a young girl. In her arms she cradles six fat roses. She looks at the sky, full of emotion. Then she tosses the flowers to the ground below. She looks down at the flowers, and bleakly says, “What for?” Then she goes back inside.

Aldo, in a sharp jacket and tie, appears at the garden gate. He tries to open it, fails, and climbs over. He sees the flowers lying on the ground. He calls up in a loud whisper.


Janice reemerges. She’s tying a black velvet robe with padded shoulders. The effect is striking, but more adult and severe.

Janice: Who’s that?
Aldo: It’s Aldo. Scalicki.

Janice: What are you doing in my backyard?
Aldo: I rang the bell about fifty times, but nobody answered.

Janice: It’s broken.
Aldo: You should have it fixed.

Janice: Why?

Aldo: So it rings.
Janice: What do I care if it rings? I don’t see anybody.
Aldo: Well, you still might get a delivery or something. Flowers or something. Somebody send you flowers?

Janice: Yes.
Aldo: Very nice.
Janice: They’re from Huey.

*Asee special note on copyright page

Aldo: How you know that?

Janice: I know.
Aldo: Well, then, you shouldn’t be so confident. You’re wrong. I sent the flowers.

Janice: You? Why would you send me flowers?
Aldo: I sent them for Huey.

Janice: Can’t even manage to send his own flowers.
Aldo: What d’you mean?

Janice: He’s hapless. He’s a buffoon.
Aldo: He’s my best friend.

Janice: That’s your problem.
Aldo: Anyway, it’s a shame you destroyed them like this.

Janice: They were dead anyway.
Aldo: Maybe they were dead, but they were expensive. (He starts to gather them.) They’re not really destroyed. (He lays them on the table.)

Janice: Why are you here?
Aldo: Beautiful night.

Janice: I wish it would rain.
Aldo: Beautiful stars.

Janice: Stars make me think of death.
Aldo: I can smell the greenness of the leaves.

Janice: It smells like a cemetery. What are you doing here?
Aldo: Huey asked me to come.

Janice: Why?

Aldo: He wants to patch it up with you.

Janice: Patch up what?

Aldo: What d’you think? The marriage. (Janice chuckles dryly.) What’s so funny?

Janice: Think about it.

Aldo: You wanna come down?

Janice: No.

A pause.

Aldo: Janice, Janice, Janice.

Janice: What?
Aldo: We’ve seen some stuff, huh?

Janice: What are you talking about?

Aldo: Member when we were kids? I’d play Julius Caesar and
you’d stab me with the rubber knife and yell Die! Die!
Janice: I remember.
Aldo: You were some nutty little girl.
Janice: You were a jerk.
Aldo: I was very innocent.
Janice: You were a jerk.
Aldo: I was a little kid. I was supposed to be a jerk.
Janice: You did it perfectly.

A pause.

Aldo: Janice, Janice, Janice.
Janice: Why do you keep saying that?
Aldo: We’ve been around the block a few times.
Janice: Aldo. You are still the same hammerheaded clown you
always were. Are you trying to be smooth? You come here outta
no place. You send flowers. You say, Janice, Janice, Janice. Am I
supposed to be getting the idea? How ’bout just spitit it out?
Aldo: Huey wants to make it up with you.
Janice: Why are you saying this? Where’s Huey?
Aldo: He sent me first.
Janice: Oh, I get it. He always was a coward.
Aldo: Huey is not a coward.
Janice: Huey always was a coward, and you always were a
stooge. If he wasn’t a coward he’d be standing here in his own
shoes speaking his own words. If you weren’t a stooge, you
wouldn’t be a standin in somebody else’s love scene. Ain’t you
got no girl of your own?
Aldo: I got girls comin out my ears.
Janice: What a picture.
Aldo: I didn’t come here to talk about me.
Janice: That’s cause you’re a stooge.
Aldo: Stop callin me that! You can be a very difficult woman to
talk to, Janice.
Janice: Really?
Aldo: Yes, I mean, if I was here on my own... I mean, if I was
the specific guy who was tryin to romance you, I gotta tell you I
wouldn’t even know where to begin. You are so... nasty.
Janice: I am?
Aldo: Yeah, you’re like a fiend. Your eyes look like vampire

vulture monster fiend eyes.
Janice: They do?
Aldo: Yes, they do. And you always smile only for the wrong,
the most horridlest reason. Sometimes when you smile I expect to
see like fangs fall down over your lower lip. I’ve had the experi-
ence when you smile where I wanted to run away down the
street cause I was afraid you were gonna bite me.
Janice: Really?
Aldo: You’re not angry?
Janice: Why would I be?
Aldo: I thought cause I was telling you the truth that I might be
insulting.
Janice: I’m not insulted.
Aldo: Well, good. Cause it feels much more relaxing for me to
tell the truth. I expected to have to do a lot of lying tonight.
Janice: Why?
Aldo: You know.
Janice: No, I don’t.
Janice: I like the truth.
Aldo: So do I. You know, sometimes when I catch sight a you
unexpected, my balls jump up in a bunch like I dropped ’em inna
glass a ice water. (Janice laughs heartily.) You think that’s funny?
Janice: Yeah. Don’t you?
Aldo: Yeah, but I thought you’d be like the last person in the
world to get the joke.
Janice: You don’t know me, Aldo.
Aldo: I guess not.
Janice: You always amazed me. Why’d you let me stab you and
bury you and treat you like a dog?
Aldo: I don’t know.
Janice: You oughta think about these things.
Aldo: I have thought about ’em, and I still don’t know.
Janice: I did all that stuff to you to see how much you’d take. I
thought, Maybe if I kick him one more time, he’ll stand up and
take my shoes away.
Aldo: Take your shoes? Why would I take your shoes?
Janice: To take charge of me like a man.
Aldo: What are you saying?
Janice: You still don't get it, do you? I was flirting with you.
Aldo: That was flirting?
Janice: Sure.
Aldo: No, that wasn't flirting. You may have felt flirting, but you weren't doing flirting. You were treating me like I was the snake in the apple tree.
Janice: You just didn't get it.
Aldo: I woulda gotten it if you did it right.
Janice: You would have gotten it if you weren't so stupid.
Aldo: Alright. Anyway, thanks.
Janice: For what?
Aldo: I don't know. For feeling like flirting with me, even if I didn't get it. Listen, I wanna apologize for what I said before. I don't think you're nasty.
Janice: I am, though.
Aldo: No. It's like this what we were just talking about. I've just misunderstood you, so I was afraid of you.
Janice: You've understood me well enough. I've never asked to be understood any better.
Aldo: But you're not this monster I made you out. You don't have evil eyes. You don't have big teeth and you're not gonna bite me.
Janice: I might.
Aldo: Listen, Janice, I think you're okay. You've had your problems just like the rest of us and who am I to pass judgement on you? No matter what I said, you ain't gonna back to the beginning and under everything I'm always gonna have a warm spot for you. The final ultimate drift is I know you're a nice person and I'm gonna make a real effort to remember that from now on.
Janice: Don't bother on my account.
Aldo: I am, though. I'll tell you something. I'm very titillated that you was flirting with me, even in those ancient days. Have you ever... felt like that... since?
Janice: Never.
Aldo: You must have your romantic fantasies here, livin' by yourself. Like you're that princess trapped in that castle surrounded by thorny bushes. Waiting for Prince Valiant to happen...
ITALIAN AMERICAN RECONCILIATION

Aldo: Don't shoot me!
Janice: I can't. My gun broke.
Aldo: (Comes out from under the table.) You shot a gun at me.
Janice: Don't be obvious.
Aldo: You tried to kill me!
Next time it's Smith and Wesson.
Aldo: Janice, do you understand what you did? You committed attempted murder on me.
Janice: I was aiming at your kneecaps.
Aldo: I should come up here and give you a spank.
Janice: Oh yeah? Try it. I'll cut your heart out.
Aldo: Never mind, Janice, I gotta ask you an honest question. Why have you always shown this desire to want me to be dead?
Janice: Because you have never taken me seriously.
Aldo: I take you dead serious.
Janice: No. Why are you here tonight? You came here to talk to me about my marriage? You don't wanna talk to me. You just want me to do what you want. You have always been this way. It has always been this way. Do you what you want. Lie down. Pull up your dress. Go to sleep. Love me. Don't love me. Marry me. Divorce me. TAKE ME BACK! I have no patience with this stupid arrogant man pride. You come here. When you want something from me. You make your faces and noises and you think I am what? A fool with a heart of soap?
Aldo: Listen, Janice. I don't understand you. I don't understand what you're talking about. Now I'm gonna make you understand why I don't understand you. When I was a little boy, you was always playing at murdering me and watching me be dead. Is that right or not?
Janice: Yes.
Aldo: Now, at that time, Janice, I had not started to do anything to you. We're talking very young here. At that time, no matter what happened later, no matter how I mighta screwed up tonight, at that time, I was perfectly willing to talk with you. I was not a man yet. I was a little boy.
Janice: You were always a man.

Aldo: No, I was not. I started out as a little little boy who didn't know a thing an meant no harm. And this little boy you were already stabbing with a rubber knife. So what I have to say to you Janice is this: You have always been violent and had dark thoughts, and you have always wanted to kill and maim men, and that is not the mens' fault. Do you understand? That is not the mens' fault. That is not my fault. When I was a little boy and we had nothin' to do, I wanted to play house. I did not want to play dead. I did not want to lie down in a flowerbox and make believe I was dead so you could wear your party hat an be happy. But you know why I went ahead and played that game with you? I played it with you because I wanted to give you pleasure. That's right. Now you may call that weakness or being a stooge or a fool, and I don't care, cause I know exactly what that is. I was being a human being for you, Janice. On day one, I cared about you, an I showed it by being a human being with you.
Janice: You never cared about me.
Aldo: I cared about you, and I acted like I cared about you. And you, whether you think you were flirtin' or what, you had this hatred or violence to me from day one, an you never let up. Not from that day to this. An we're talkin' a long time. Our whole lives. Can you blame me, if after years a bein' treated like a germ by you, that I stand back, an just deal with you when I have to, an try to get what I want an scam? I am not a fool. I am not a stooge. I am not gonna be affected by your mad attitude towards men into thinkin' that I owe you somethin', or I wronged you, or I should be some other way causa your ancient pain. What was it, Janice? Comon, we both know what it hadda be. I didn't know the man, but it was your father, right? Or your grandfather. Or your uncle. Was it your father?
Janice: Yes.
Aldo: Well, I can sympathize, but it's not my fault, alright? What did he do to you?
Janice: Nothing.
Aldo: What did he do?
Janice: He didn't love me.
Aldo: I'm sorry. Honest ta God, I'm sorry. That's terrible. BUT GET OVER IT! I got troubles with my father, too. We never really
had love either. He's dead now...

_He thinks._

**Janice:** Mine too.

**Aldo:** So our fathers are dead. We can't go on tryin' ta make our fathers love us or fightin' our fathers or tryin' ta kill our fathers. What's the point in killin' a dead man cause he won't love you? A dead man don't need killin' and a dead man can't love you at all. I know you're crazy an just me talkin' ain't gonna make you sane. But comon! We're all crazy, that ain't no excuse. You been treatin' me bad all my life and enough already. I been nuts, too. I'm tryin' to be well, too. Let's drop this shitload, this weight a sorrow, these sandbags on our necks from a million years ago, and try to talk to each other about now. You can't kill me, Janice. You been tryin' your whole life, an I just won't die. Even when you fire a gun at me, it explodes in your hand. Even if I die, I'll still be jumpin' around inside your head. You know, this distance you are from me, this distance now, if we talk to each other, this could be the least distance there ever has been between us.

**Janice:** You seem very far away to me.

**Aldo:** There's somethin' I've wanted to say to you for a long time, but I never did. I'm sorry your marriage broke up.

**Janice:** Thanks. I'm sorry I tried to shoot you.

**Aldo:** Forget it.

**Janice:** I think I'm losin' my mind in this house.

**Aldo:** Maybe you should move?

**Janice:** No.

**Aldo:** I can feel this sadness between us. Almost like a rope.

**Janice:** Man, I don't know if I can dog this out.

**Aldo:** What d'you mean?

**Janice:** Nothin' nothin' nothin'.

**Aldo:** Say it. What's the difference?

**Janice:** Do you suffer from being single?

**Aldo:** Sometimes. Yeah. It makes me feel like I'm dyin'.

**Janice:** Go on! Get outta here! I don't need this! What for? Flowers! Sending me flowers, flowers! I threw them down. They hurt. Do you think they didn't feel like flames in my arms? God! I feel like I'm tied hand and foot. Why you bein' nice and openin' the door just for your own intention? Why did you hit on me? It's not me you want but somethin'. What? What?

**Aldo:** I'm ashamed to say, I just wanted to neutralize you. So you wouldn't take Huey back.

**Janice:** I see.

**Aldo:** I'm sorry.

**Janice:** I like the truth. And I recognize that as the truth. And it don't matter anyway. I can't be different than the way I am. I am my castle of thorns.

**Aldo:** Hey, come down here a minute.

**Janice:** No. If I get close to you, I'll hate you again.

**Aldo:** Listen, Janice. I've changed my mind about you. I'm not just talkin' to get you to do what I want. I want to be your friend.

**Janice:** Forget it.

**Aldo:** Why?

**Janice:** I got no attachment to connect.

**Aldo:** Look. Huey wants to get back with you.

**Janice:** No, he doesn't. He's just goin' through a crazy time.

**Aldo:** Maybe.

**Janice:** I should never have married Huey.

**Aldo:** Why'd you do it?

**Janice:** I don't remember.

**Aldo:** Comon, don't gimme that.

**Janice:** Ain't that weird? I really don't remember. I remember walkin' up the aisle. I remember lookin' over and seein' him there and thinkin' that he looked like a waiter.

**Aldo:** Very romantic.

**Janice:** I remember goin' on the honeymoon an' bein' in this bed in the Catskills, and him takein' me over and over again, and I didn't know why he kept doin' it. I remember him lookin' at me, an' knowin' he wasn't seein' me. Cause if he really saw me, why would he go on?

**Aldo:** You're a good-lookin' woman.

**Janice:** That was the biggest trouble with the marriage. After a while. It started to make me mad he wasn't seein' me. So I started to do things to make him see. Like you pinch somebody to wake them up. I yelled at him. I gave him bad food to eat. I slapped his face. Sometimes I locked him out of the bedroom. But still, he wouldn't open his eyes. He wouldn't see me the way I really was.
It drove me crazy. You can’t understand. So, I shot his dog. He loved his dog and I knew that and I killed the dog. Huey came home. He saw what I had done. He looked at me. And there it was. His eyes. He saw me. He saw me. It was a bad time, but I was relieved that at last this lie had been taken away. He looked at me like this for three days. It was a bad time, not like before what other people would’ve called happy, but a truthful time and I like the truth. But it didn’t last. On the fourth day, he began to look at me in the old way again. That was the day I shot the gun at him. So I shot at him with the gun, but it blew up. He left me, though. That at least made him wake up enough to leave me.

**Aldo:** He’s gonna be here soon.

**Janice:** You mean, tonight?

**Aldo:** He’s coming to reconcile with you.

**Janice:** I don’t wanna see him tonight.

**Aldo:** Well. He’s comin.

**Janice:** Stop him. Tell him to come tomorrow.

**Aldo:** He’s comin tonight. That’s the story. Do you want him back?

**Janice:** No.

**Aldo:** Why not?

**Janice:** We never shoulda been together.

**Aldo:** I wouldn’t know about that. I only saw things from the outside.

**Janice:** I only married him because he asked me.

**Aldo:** Why’d he ask you?

**Janice:** I don’t know. I think he just said some things to me, and then he couldn’t think of anything else to say, so he asked me to marry him.

**Aldo:** I don’t know. Maybe I’m livin in a fool’s paradise, but if there’s nothin left to say, this don’t strike me as the perfect moment to pop the question.

**Janice:** We were young.

**Aldo:** Yeah. It’s amazing how much that covers. But if there was nothin, if there was never nothin between you that made sense, how could you a stayed together so long?

**Janice:** I didn’t say there was nothin.

*Huey has appeared at the gate.*

**Huey:** I’m glad you said that.

**Aldo:** Huey, Huey.

_Huey opens the gate. Aldo takes this in._

**Huey:** (Whispers.) She did try to kill me, like I predicted, but everythin’s okay now.

**Aldo:** (Whispers.) She did?

**Janice:** What are you whispering?

**Huey:** I was thanking Aldo and sending him home.

**Aldo:** You sure?

**Huey:** Yeah. It’s like you said, in the end this is my show, right?

**Janice:** Right?

**Aldo:** Right. I had a whole plan a how this night was gonna go, but it’s turnin out to be a different thing. Goodnight, Janice.

**Janice:** You can stay if you want.

**Aldo:** No, this is between you an Huey. I mean, ultimately. You gotta do what you think is right. I shouldn’t be here. But I wanna say one thing to you, Janice, an I don’t usually say this kinda thing, an I say it outta a place a goodness. You should see a therapist. And fa Chrissakes, let the dead bury the dead. (Whispers.) Huey, be careful. (Aldo goes to the gate and tries the handle. It opens.)

This place is like a lotta things. It’s a lot easier to get out than it was to get in.

_Aldo is gone._

**Huey:** Well, here we are.

**Janice:** Yeah.

**Huey:** Remember this?

_Open Music box._

**Janice:** No.

**Huey:** You gave me this. Our first Christmas.

**Janice:** I don’t remember.

**Huey:** O.K. (Closes music box.) You look good.
Janice: You're dressed funny.
Huey: Yeah, what are these clothes? These are like a failed thing I did. To buck myself up. I got all these items about myself like these clothes. Ideas I had that never came to nothing, lyin' in my head like balls a dust. A lotta ways I started to go that I never went cause I didn't have enough of a base. It's like you haveta have a certain amount a power worked up to go all the way down one road, and I have never gotten together that much power. I mean lately. I mean, since we got divorced. I've been feelin' real bad since the divorce. Have you felt bad?
Janice: Yes.
Huey: I'm sorry. It's amazing to me how weak I am since the divorce.
Janice: You always were weak.
Huey: Was I? I don't even remember. How was I weak?
Janice: You let me abuse you.
Huey: You couldn't help yourself.
Janice: So what?
Huey: Maybe you're right. But my feelin' about that is I loved you and so I put up with stuff.
Janice: You didn't love me.
Huey: Oh, now wait a minute. Now I'm on firm ground. Yes, I did too love you.
Janice: You were deluded.
Huey: I loved you.
Janice: You needed me. There's a difference.
Huey: I loved you. I didn't need the abuse, I swear to God. I didn't need your lousy meals, I didn't need your cold looks, I didn't need your screaming fits, I didn't need sleepin' on the couch, I didn't need any of that on my mother's grave! I loved you and I felt for you, so I put up with that. And I want you back. I don't want all that nonsense back. I want you back.
Janice: What for? (A long pause. Huey can't speak.) What for?
Huey: I only wanna say the truth, and I can't think a nothin'. I'm a little upset.
Janice: What do you want?
Huey: I want you back.
Janice: No.

Huey: I wanna get remarried, maybe have a baby.
Janice: You don't know what you're sayin'.
Huey: I made mistakes in the way I treated you. I know that. We could get new furniture. Go on a vacation someplace warm. I could love you more than I did. Be nicer to you than I was. I could cook the meals. I gotta lotta love in me. I could love you even more than I did, Janice! I'm tellin' you the truth. I could just turn it on like bright bright sunlight and it could keep you warm even when you're an old grandmother. You have got to believe me. You gotta listen to me an hear what I'm sayin' to you now! All the time we spent together I tried to say this one thing to you a thousand different ways and no matter how I said it, you didn't understand. We broke up. But I don't think you ever really heard me. I'm offerin' you my heart an my faith for life! I was, I am. I feel like even now you're not hearing me and you've just got to! Finally. Janice, I could love you!
Janice: No!
Huey: Yes!
Janice: I don't want it!
Huey: What?
Janice: I don't want your love.
Huey: You still don't believe me.
Janice: I believe you. But I don't want it.
Huey: What?
Janice: You've never understood me.
Huey: Then tell me!
Janice: You're so wrapped up in your ideas about how things should be, you've never really looked at me.
Huey: I have too!
Janice: Go home.
Huey: No! Shut up!
Janice: What?
Huey: You heard me. I have too really looked at you. How dare you! I reject that! I mean, really. You know what's the matter with you, Janice? You have never respected meekness as a virtue. And it is a virtue. I just said shut up to you, I don't even like to do that. That's not me. I've looked right at you. I've seen you for what you really are. And I've loved you. Like the dawn comes up and
loves the earth, the whole earth. Now you may not like to hear
that. You may have your own ideas about things. But I've got a
point of view, too. You're not so smart that your life's like it is.
You're alone and people don't like you. When a man comes to
you because he does like you, you treat him like a stupid bum.
Janice: We have nothing to talk about.
Huey: I reject that! We do too have things to talk about Miss
High and Mighty. You shot my dog!
Janice: I'm not sorry.
Huey: It was a rotten thing to do.
Janice: It was a warning.
Huey: You killed a stupid loveable animal. All he wanted was
love. To be patted on the head. Taken for a walk. Sit next to you
and do nothing. What did he know? When he looked up at you
with those eyes, how, how could you hurt him?
Janice: I tried to kill you. Why ain't you mad about that?
Huey: That's a good question. I don't know. Cause I was flattered.
Janice: You took it as a compliment?
Huey: At least you made a fuss over me. I was pretty starved
for anything by that time.
Janice: That's pathetic.
Huey: Yeah, it is. It was. It was pathetic. I was pathetic. But
what you need to hear, baby, is that you were pathetic, too.
Janice: I know about me.
Huey: You don't know the first thing about it. Every time I've
ever tried to tell you somethin about yourself, you snap shut like
a clam. You are beautiful! Do you hear me? You are intelligent.
Capisce? You are a classy sensitive sexy woman, and I loved you
and I married you cause I was smart. NOT CAUSE I WAS
STUPID! Get it?
Janice: No.
Huey: I did not marry a nasty bitch who hated me.
Janice: Oh yes you did!
Huey: Oh no I didn't. Come down here.
Janice: No.
Huey: Whatever things mighta become, however things mighta
gone wrong or not worked out, please don't take away from me
that I loved you, that I married you, that to look at you and to be
with you was the pleasure of my life. If I have to go back to the
beginning, right or wrong, and win you again, an marry you
again, and love you deeply, deeply, all over again, to dig up what
is stolen an mine and true, I am willing. I'm telling you to come
down here.
Janice: If I come down there, you'll kiss me.
Huey: Maybe.
Janice: I don't want you to.
Huey: If you don't come down, I'll stand here forever. Till I'm
dead. You come down here. Leave your knives and guns up
there, and come down here to me.

Janice leaves the balcony, and disappears within. The climactic
music from “Turandot” begins to play. Huey is planted into the
ground, the axis on which the world turns. Janice enters the gar-
den through the garden gate.

Janice: Huey. Why did you come here?
Huey: I don't know everything.

He kisses her. The music swells. They break apart and look at
each other. He picks her up. The music! The music! The music!
Blackout. The music continues and resolves.

SCENE 2

Pop's Soup House. Daytime. May, dressed in a fresh apron, is
behind the counter reading National Geographic. Something like
Frank Sinatra singing “The Summer Wind” opens the scene.
May puts a tablecloth on the table. Enter Aldo in a white dress
shirt open at the collar, blue jeans with a red web belt, white socks
and black shoes. Over his shoulder he carries a sports jacket.

Aldo: Hi.
May: Hi.
Aldo: Where's Teresa?
May: Gone.
Aldo: Gone? Where’s she gone?
May: Canada.
Aldo: What are you talkin’ about?
May: She had a bad night and she got up and went to Canada.
Aldo: She promised me she’d keep an open mind.
May: She has an open mind, and she took her open mind to Canada. She’s got a cousin there she’s gonna stay with.
Aldo: How long?
May: She didn’t say.
Aldo: Did she leave any word?
May: You mean like a note or somethin’?
Aldo: Yeah.
May: No.
Aldo: Astonishing. I feel like I jump through hoops a fire and for what? Nobody has any sense a place but me.
May: You think Teresa shoulda done somethin’ different?
Aldo: Yeah, I think she shoulda done somethin’ different! Don’t she have any sense of timing? Don’t she have any hunger of curiosity about how last night went?
May: How did it go?
Aldo: I don’t know. That is, I know my part of it, but I had to leave before the end. Then what you’re tellin’ me is Teresa left Huey.
May: Teresa didn’t leave Huey. Huey left Teresa.
Aldo: That’s it! Stick together! You women always stick together. There was a time in our society when the woman stuck by the man till the ship went down and there was no more bubbles.
May: But this man wouldn’t let her stick.
Aldo: She should’ve ignored him.
May: He made her listen. She begged him not to go. But he went.
Aldo: And he explained to her that he was in mental trouble and had to go, and that was her signal to hold tight.
Aldo: For today! For the clear light a day. For the conclusion to a drama that Huey needed to act out for his sanity. She shoulda held out for the punchline, and then made her move, good or bad.

May: You make Janice yours last night?
Aldo: No. Things went another way.
May: Uh-huh.
Aldo: Janice is this certain kinda woman who is very difficult to predict in advance.
May: But Teresa you knew, huh?
Aldo: I thought she was more reliable. Canada. Why you wearin’ the apron?
May: I’m fillin’ in. Not the worst job I’ve ever had. All the minestrone I can eat.
Aldo: I should eat minestrone.
May: You wanna bowl?
Aldo: No. I should eat minestrone and work in a garden. I should wear a straw hat, like my grandfather, and never speak another English word again.
May: What are you talkin’ about?
Aldo: I am sick from being a man.
May: You seem upset.
Aldo: I seem upset? I am upset. I talked to this woman last night. What a case! Could I help her? Maybe. I couldn’t tell. I don’t think so. I tried to strike up a little romance with her, and her reaction was she tried to kill me.
May: She didn’t.
Aldo: You see, this is what you do not realize, May. (During next, Aldo vaguely indicates the audience.) There are women out there, wild troubled women, and they are trying to kill or damage the shit out of men. Men, me, men. And then when someone like you talks with the men, you think these men are overreacting because they are immature and can’t handle love problems! I’m tellin’ you it’s the Wild West out there!
May: I know.
Aldo: You gotta be freakin’ Wild Bill Hickok to function out there!
May: I know.
Aldo: I know. You know everything and I’m talkin’ to myself.
May: I didn’t say that.
Aldo: Jesus. You know, I really am havin’ a nervous attack.
May: What’s the matter?
Aldo: I wonder if I'm ever gonna get married?
May: Aw, sure you are.
Aldo: I don't know. The state of the women in this country! They're like bombs.
May: The men are like bombs, too.
Aldo: You're right. The men are like bombs and the women are like bombs and everybody's negotiating like it was the atomic talks. Little kids look like lawyers to me. I feel like we're all doing some kinda politics here, an love ain't politics an shouldn't be. Politics is make-believe an lies and love shouldn't be. I'm traumatized! These women have got me traumatized! There's no honor between the men an women anymore, no trust of the words they say, no courage and strength of vows. The vows! You make a pact with a woman these days, you're promising yourself into a country without a constitution!
May: Aldo, you are talkin too much.
Aldo: Maybe you're right.
May: You're shook up by gettin involved of this problem with Huey.
Aldo: That's true.
May: This whole thing has reminded you that you wanna get married and that you're afraid to get married.
Aldo: How did you know that?
May: I'm a witch.
Aldo: I am afraid. Can you blame me?
May: No.
Aldo: These women are crazy. They've gone crazy.
May: Well, the men have gone crazy, too.
Aldo: I ain't gone crazy. I'm nervous, but I haven't gone crazy.
May: Sit down a minute, let me talk with you. It's time to talk.
Aldo: My hands are sweating.
May: You poor thing. You mean well.
Aldo: I do.
May: Listen. Women ain't tryin to kill you.
Aldo: Janice took a gun an pointed at me and pulled the trigger. It's only stupid luck I wasn't killed.
May: Then Janice tried to kill you. It wasn't the race of women that tried to kill you.

Aldo: That's what it felt like.
May: I'm not tryin to kill you.
Aldo: No.
May: Does your mother wanna kill you?
Aldo: No. My mother loves me. My mother happens to be the greatest woman in the world. (To the audience.) And I'm not just sayin that cause you're here.
May: So I don't wanna kill you and your mamma don't wanna kill you, and Teresa didn't wanna kill you, either.
Aldo: No.
May: It was Janice who wanted to kill you. Do you wanna marry Janice?
Aldo: WHAT?
May: I'm just askin.
Aldo: No!
May: Then you don't have to be afraid that that woman who hates you and wants to kill you will be your wife.
Aldo: It could happen. It could be somebody like her I don't recognize. Huey made the mistake. I could too.
May: But Huey got married. You held out. There ain't no reason under the sun why you should marry such a woman.
Aldo: Oedipus didn't mean to marry his mother, but he did.
May: That's true. But Oedipus really did have exceptionally bad luck.
Aldo: What's all this trouble, trouble, trouble.
May: What d'you mean?
Aldo: Life. Don't it seem just unnecessarily dangerous? Why can't I just like get married, play with the kids, suck on my teeth and look out the window?
May: Because marriage is trouble. But trouble ain't the worst thing. I married the man I loved and went through hell for it. And when things got better, he almost immediately died. Now I'm alone. What d'you make a that? A mistake, a tragedy? No! It was the most excitement! I can feel my heart right behind my eyes when I say it! For the best in this life you've gotta pay Big Dollars! What are you afraid of anyway, Aldo? You're gonna get old and things are gonna go wrong and right and wrong, and then you're gonna keel over and die. Anybody you really want in
the meanwhile is gonna be expensive in some way. There ain't no
to the currency is
bargains in people. You get what you pay for and the currency is
Trouble. You ain't no bargain. Any woman ends up with you's
gotta man who's gonna compare her to his mother. And that's
always a bitch.
Aldo: But don't you believe people just are a certain way?
May: Yes, and you do your best to choose somebody who ain't
gonna bring you to a dead end. But what I'm sayin is wrong and
not my advice. My advice is give up your fear of women as a
crace. If some women has done bad to you, see it is them that did
it. Write their names down in a book if you want. Glue their pic-
tures next to their names, and cross X's on their faces, and don't
mistake them for all the other girls. But even then I don't think
that's my advice. I think you're gonna have to forgive those spe-
cific women and throw away your book of fear. You're gonna
have to open your heart and leave it open. Like it's your apartment
and you just don't lock the door no matter how many times you
get robbed. You're gonna have to open your heart and forget your
fear, and then what will happen is you'll fall in love. And marry.
And your mama will become your second best girl. And it will
become whatever it will become because of the trouble you take
between you. But this minute, you are upset because you are in a
situation. You wanna get married, but you are not ready to get
married.
Aldo: I can't find the right girl.
May: The right girl? There ain't no right girl! Or every fifth girl
is the right girl. That ain't the issue. It's you. You ain't ready
to get married cause you ain't ready to fall in love.
Aldo: So what do I do?
May: You don't have to do nothing. The clock'll take care of it.
Time. But stop this scaredness of women. It's silly. You can hold
your own.
Aldo: I'll try.
Huey enters in an old blue button down dress shirt and black
jeans. He looks more relaxed.
May: There he is.
Aldo: Huey, how you doin?
Huey: Pretty good. Can I get a glass of water?
May: Sure. (She gives him the water. He drops two Alka-Seltzers in
it.) Stomach botherin you?
Huey: No. (Offers glass to Aldo.) Here, drink this. You look terri-
ble.
Aldo: Thanks. (Drinks.) So, what happened? Did you reconcile
with Janice?
Huey: Yeah.
Aldo: You did?
Huey: Yeah.
May: You an Janice gettin remarried?
Huey: No, no. We just, you know, made peace.
Aldo: I thought you wanted her back?
May: What'd you get?
Huey: I guess it was ... this idea ... of what was. Last night, she
gave me back ... what was. I feel strong again.
May: Good.
Huey: Thanks for helping me out, Aldo.
Aldo: That's okay. It was very interesting.
Huey: I do love you, you know.
Aldo: Don't lie to me.
Huey: I'm not lying. Where's Teresa?
May: She's gone.
Huey: Where'd she go?
May: Canada.
Huey: How long?
May: Indefinitely.
Huey: She wouldn't wait, huh?
May: No.
Aldo: I think she shoulda waited.
Huey: I don't know. She took a lotta shit from me. Well,
I'm gonna go home.
Aldo: Ain't you upset Teresa's gone?
Huey: She's not gone. She just went somewhere.
Aldo: But ain't you upset?
Huey: No. I guess it ain't hit me yet.
May: It will.
Aldo: I meant, I mean, I thought, since Janice is out, it
italian american reconciliation

might be teresa.

huey: it is teresa. and i'll get her, wherever she is, whatever she's doin. i'll get her and i'll make her mine.

may: maybe you will.

huey: i will. you see, i got back my strength as a man to take. see you later.

aldo: you goin to canada?

huey: not yet. i'm gonna go home an be quiet for a few days. i've been in a nervous state for a long time. i deserve a rest.

exit huey. the concertina music begins to play.

aldo: well, what do you make a that? he seemed so relaxed.

may: yeah.

aldo: do you think he's right? do you think he'll get teresa back?

may: i don't know.

aldo: maybe he's still crazy and he's gonna change his mind again?

may: i don't know.

aldo: he seemed better.

may: yes, he did. he seemed like a man who'd gotten his life back in the proper order.

the lights fade on may. the music ends. aldo comes down to talk to the audience. he puts on his jacket.

aldo: so huey went home. come on out, huey. (huey enters from the wings. he has the music box. he sits at the table.) he's sitting there now. i guess like collecting himself. when he's through collecting himself, he's gonna go and claim teresa. now whether or not teresa is gonna go along with being claimed like a package from the post office, i don't know. stranger things have happened, but... that'll probably be another whole big thing, and not the story i set out to tell. the story i set out to tell was about huey maximilian bonfigliano an me, and what happened to him. and i've told it. and i'll probably tell it again and again, other nights, other places. till it's done with being told. till i'm done with tellin it. which may never be. but i also said i told it to you with the purpose of teaching you something, so here's the lesson. in the end, you are dead. in the middle, you can love. in the beginning you are taken care of. when a man goes to reconcile with his ex-wife, he goes to die because he is failing to live. he goes to love because she is where he left the ability. he goes to be taken care of because he is sick from being, a little too soon, a man. if he succeeds in his quest, he comes away able to love again. and this is the lesson i have to teach: the greatest, the only success, is to be able to love. so there he is. sitting at the same table he was at the start of the story. only now, at least i would like to believe, no, i need to believe, he is reconciled with himself. so. i got this girl waitin for me at p.j. clarke's. she and i have a certain history. very stupid, fulla trouble. i'm gonna try not to worry that she might kill me, but we'll see. we will see. always the prince, never the king. right, ma? so far. (pulls a carnation out of his pocket and sticks it in his buttonhole. he whispers to an audience member.) wish me luck.

then he turns and casts a spell on huey. huey's light comes up brighter. huey opens the music box. aldo slips away.

huey: janice janice janice.

janice comes d. into her own circle of light. she has gentle mischief in her eye, and a smile.

janice: huey.

huey closes the box. janice turns away as her light fades.

huey: god, i'm going to miss you.

he makes the slightest gesture of farewell. the opening of "come back to sorrento" * plays. huey buries his face in his hands. the lights go down and the music goes out.

the end

*see special note on copyright page