LEMON SKY
BY LANFORD WILSON

A scene from the British (N.Y.) Studio Arena Theatre production of "Lemon Sky." Set designed by Stephen.

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LEMON SKY was first presented on March 26, 1970 by Neal DuBrock at the Buffalo Studio Arena Theatre, Buffalo, New York, with the following cast:

**ALAN** ........................................... Christopher Walken
**DOUGLAS** ....................................... Charles Durning
**RONNIE** .......................................... Bonnie Bartlett
**PENNY** ........................................... Kathryn Baumann
**CAROL** ........................................... Lee McCain
**JERRY** ............................................ Shawn McGill
**JACK** ............................................. Frank Martinez III

The production was directed by Warren Enters, and designed by Stephen J. Hendrickson. Lighting was designed by David Zierk.

The Buffalo Studio Arena Theatre production (with Steven Paul and Willie Rook as Jerry and Jack) was subsequently presented at the Playhouse Theatre, New York City, on May 17, 1970, produced by Haila Stroddard, Mark Wright, Duane Wilder and Neal DuBrock. A staged reading of a working version of the play was given in the summer of 1968 at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Foundation, Waterford, Connecticut.
CHARACTERS

Alan, twenty-nine now, seventeen when he went to California.
Douglas, his father.
Ronnie, his father's wife.
Penny \{ both seventeen, wards of the state living with Douglas'
Carol \} family.
Jerry \{ Douglas' and Ronnie's children, Alan's paternal brothers,
Jack \} twelve and eight.

Time—Now and the late 1950's.

The Scene:

One of the thousands of homes in the suburbs of San Diego, California. This one is in El Cajon, a city surrounded by low mountains. The home is more indicated than represented realistically; there is a back yard with redwood fences separating it from the neighbors, a low sloping roofline against a broad expanse of sky (which is never yellow); there are no walls, but indicated division of rooms: A kitchen with a breakfast nook, refrigerator, stove, cabinets, etc.; the living room, carpeted, need only have a sofa and TV for furnishings; Alan's bedroom, Upstage, and a garage with photographic printing equipment. There is furniture in an area of the yard and a garden against the redwood fence. The kitchen and an area indicating the bathroom may have tiled floors, a patio can be surfaced in redwood or concrete or flagstone. The stage area should be very open and free. Sometimes the characters move down "halls" and into "rooms" and sometimes they cut across the entire stage paying no attention to the room divisions.

There is no green in set or costume; celadon, sage, anything else, but nothing green.

The lights move from area to area, defining our focus as well as the time of day and condition, and as many scenes as possible are bathed in a bright cloudless sunlight.
LEMON SKY

ACT I

The stage is dark and undefined. All the characters are on stage—standing far upstage just barely lighted—we should "feel" they are there without actually seeing them.

ALAN. (Comes forward from the darkness. He is twenty-nine now. Thin and light, though not blond. Enthusiastic and pensive. He speaks rapidly and at times—when talking with the other characters—with a marked Midwestern accent. A little too pre-occupied to begin a play, he enters a pool of light D. and speaks to the audience.) I've been trying to tell this story, to get it down, for a long time, for a number of years, seven years at least—closer to ten. I've had the title, I've had some of the scenes a dozen times, a dozen different ways, different starts. The times I've told it to friends as something I wanted to do I've come home and tried to get it down—get to work on it—but the characters, the people ignored the damn story and talked about whatever they darn well pleased and wouldn't have any part of what I wanted them to say. They sat down to coffee or some damn thing. The trouble was I wanted not to be the big deal, the hero, because I wasn't. No one was. Or how do I know who was? If it happened this way or that, who knows? But dad—my dad—(Quickly.) If it's all autobiographical, so, I'm sorry, there it is; what can I tell you—But how can I write about dad? Tell him. I knew him, lived with him, that I can remember, for six months. (Quickly.) I always say I lived in California for two years because it sounds more romantic. Bumming around the beach a couple of years, on the coast, it sounds great. Six months is like you didn't fit in. Like why bother. Like restlessness. The title because—I don't know—it had something to do with the state. California. I mean, the nut fringe; first Brown, then Reagan and—who knows what they'll come up—(Breaking off, returning to the thought above.) But finally I said, so if you're a hero; if you can't admit that you weren't, if you've got to make
—if you can't admit that you were really as big a bastard as everybody else—if you can't admit that, then for God's sake let it stay! And the fact that you can't will say more about you than if you could. Leave it be! My father, what do I know about him. If he's nothing, I mean But nothing! Then the fact that he comes off the short end of the stick shows something. From that you know that there's more there. You know? Leave it! Do it. Straight. Get it down, let it get down and let it tell itself and Mirror, by what you couldn't say—what was really there.

DOUGLAS. (Still in the shadows, I can see him clearly. With great emotion.) Hugged me! Hugged me by God! By God you can't! No matter what anybody anywhere says—

ALAN. (Finishing the sentence, as if recalling a quote.) —You can't separate a kid from his father.

DOUGLAS. (Just a bit more visible.) Even after—after this long a time. Even after this—time!

ALAN. Oh, God—

RONNIE. (Finally answering Doug, they begin to be visible.) I know, I know, Doug.

ALAN. (Over.) —What could I do? I got off the bus. I have a splitting headache from the altitude; from going over the Rockies. And then down to sea-level—like a drop of ten thousand feet. Two and a half days on a scenic-cruising Greyhound with faulty air-conditioning.

RONNIE. A migraine, he said, tension—

DOUGLAS. Well, yes, tension. . . .

ALAN. (Overlapping.) Finally I had to go to a doctor after three days. I could hardly talk. He said it was tension, the change in environment, just needed acclimatization and aspirin. Maybe it was—all I know is it started while I was in the Rockies or in Arizona: I woke up and my head was splitting. Like I wanted to die, there, forget it. And with this headache—the bus pulled in and I—there's only one guy standing there. A very distinguished looking man, I think, my God, he's so handsome, he's so good looking, so young. In this clude suit. White dinner jacket—sport jacket, but white. Wool. Sun shining. (Sunlight beams around them.) And I said. . . . Dad? (Douglas reaches out, Alan flies into his arms, quickly, then retreats.) I mean what could I do? Shake his hand? But it was right. I felt it was right. (Then with immediate irritation.) No, mother hadn't said anything against him—or at least

what she said I was willing to forget. All the way back in the gold-dammed car—

DOUGLAS. (Douglas is a strong, grey-templed man forty-five. Oddly romantic, childish and dogmatic with great energy. Though considerably heavier than Alan he is no taller and there is a marked physical resemblance between the two. Douglas wears a white wool sport jacket and grey slacks, after he goes to work and comes back we never see him dressed in any but work or sport shirts again.) Now, I know, she must have told you things about me and she's a good woman—

ALAN. (To the audience. Cutting in.) I just wanted him not to feel bad—and not to think mother had said anything. (To Douglas.) Really.

DOUGLAS. Hell, I wanted you out here years ago.

ALAN. Sure, you don't have to think about it, dad. Really. I don't hold anything against you. (To the audience.) I almost wished it hadn't come. For a minute. It was painful! His explanations! That was over, years ago—finished.

DOUGLAS. I know, but I had to say it.

ALAN. You don't have to think about it, dad. Really, I don't.

DOUGLAS. (Loosening up.) She's a good woman. But with a man like me—Ai, she was at me day and night with suspicions and limitations; I couldn't breathe. All that—she didn't let a guy breathe.

ALAN. (Distantly.) I understand, really.

DOUGLAS. Ronnie is different, a different kind of woman. She lives. You'll love her.

ALAN. I'm anxious to meet her. (To the audience, half to Douglas.) And I have two brothers—half-brothers—I've only seen once, I hardly know them. Not at all.

DOUGLAS. You'll see them asleep—or tomorrow. I've got to go back for the second half of the day.

ALAN. (To the audience.) He worked at an aircraft factory. Nights. The swing shift.

DOUGLAS. It pays better, not much, but it helps. You have the daytime to yourself, you work six hours instead of seven. I like to get out. You have some decent time to yourself. I just want you to understand.

RONNIE. (Coming forward a step, extending her hand. She is
small, attractive, blond and perhaps 38 with a good deal of taste and poise.) I was working in the garden—

ALAN. (To the audience suddenly.) If it was staged . . . I mean she knew dad was coming to get me. He called to see if the bus was on time. He said he had waited only eight minutes—

DOUGLAS. —Bobo—

ALAN. —so she—

DOUGLAS. —Never wrong.

ALAN. —Knew I'd be in at that time. What do you do? You meet a kid. Seventeen. Just out of high school, your step-son, you've never seen before . . . What are you going to be doing? Whatever it is will make some kind of impression. You borrow a white sport coat to meet the kid, and you put on a pair of those thick big white gloves, with dirt—from the ground dirt—on them, those white work gloves with blue elastic wrists, big thick things—

for men, and— (Framing it.) You are discovered in a garden hat so the California sun doesn't burn you and so you won't frown.

RONNIE. (Coming forward a step.) I was working in the garden, pruning.

ALAN. (To the audience.) Rose garden. The roses.

RONNIE. (Showing him around the yard.) There's the Bird of Paradise, it's never going to bloom. I got it because it's Jack's favorite. The only flower he likes.

ALAN. (Suddenly, wanting to bug them.) Jack! Jack! Little Jack!

RONNIE. Probably because it's very futuristic. "Space man" or "Jungle man."

ALAN. (Back to framing the scene.) —Pruning the roses; I hear the car drive into the driveway and the gate open at the side of the house; I turn around; I come across the back yard smiling.

RONNIE. (Coming to him, taking off a glove, extending her hand.) Welcome, Alan. Welcome. Hello.

ALAN. I take off a glove and extend my soft hand . . .

RONNIE. I was working in the garden. Pruning.

ALAN. The roses. And a hand shake; (To the audience.) and dad looks on beaming. Beaming. "You'll"—

DOUGLAS. —You'll—

ALAN. —"Love"—

DOUGLAS. —love—

ALAN. —"her."

DOUGLAS. her.

ALAN. Blond hair. She looks like Blondie in the funnies; but she—you do love her. She's worried and planned and—

RONNIE. (Getting in.) Do you smoke? You want a cigarette?

ALAN. (To the audience.) And of course you smoke but you didn't know if you should and—

DOUGLAS. —A beer.

ALAN. Yes, thanks, I didn't know—

DOUGLAS. Sure, take it, drink up. Hell! Carol drinks and worse I think. You don't have to go on binges.

ALAN. I don't; no . . .

DOUGLAS. Ronnie smokes sometimes. About one a month.

RONNIE. Not that much even.

ALAN. (To Ronnie and Douglas, with a marked Midwestern accent.) I've got this incredible headache, it's just the altitude. How high are we?

DOUGLAS. I don't know.

ALAN. Coming through the mountains . . .

RONNIE. You want some coffee?

DOUGLAS. Ronnie makes the best damn coffee in— (They move into the breakfast area—Alan sitting, Douglas leaning against the stove.)

ALAN. Good. (Laughs, overwhelmed, nervous.) Good, yes . . . (To the audience, happy—without accent.) What do I say? Because I didn't plan. Because I didn't have a setting—it wasn't my home I was coming into—it would be mine, but I couldn't sit at the breakfast nook and pull up the ashtray and serve coffee out of the good cups like it was every day and lean against the stove and talk about work . . .

RONNIE. You look as I expected.

ALAN. (When speaking with them, with the accent.) You look—

do too, look like what I expected.

DOUGLAS. I've got to get along.

ALAN. How come?

RONNIE. Doug's on the night shift, so he has days off.

DOUGLAS. I still have to get in half a day.

ALAN. Good.

DOUGLAS. I told them if the bus was on time I'd make it in; if you'd have been late I'd have taken off.

ALAN. (He has stood. Very joyously, throwing out his arms. Wildly.) Where are they all? Where is it? (Looking around, as
though at the surrounding landscape.) A breakfast nook and out
the kitchen window all the back yards are private with redwood
fences around them. Higher than your head. And mountains all
around. Out the living room window—Mt. Capitan .

DOUGLAS. The big one—with the bald head, that's Mt. Capitan.
RONNIE. (Suddenly, quietly but urgently.) Alan, Mt. McGinty
is on fire, the whole sky, wake up, it's incredible .

DOUGLAS. (Overlapping.) —With the brush, Mt. McGinty.
And the blue one in the distance,—
ALAN. —Mt. Oway—

DOUGLAS. Behind that, Jerry would—

ALAN. (Quickly to the audience.) —My other brother.

DOUGLAS. —Know that one, he knows them all. (Turning to
look out the kitchen window.) El Cajon Mountain, Cowles
Mountain and Mount Helix.

ALAN. . . . Out the kitchen window, with a spotlighted cross
on top and expensive homes, but very expensive homes—built
along the road that helixes up to the cross.

RONNIE. They turn the lights off at midnight.

ALAN. And the whole mountain disappears.

DOUGLAS. You can see it for miles.

RONNIE. We're surrounded.

DOUGLAS. Behind Mount Helix is La Mesa, the city of La
Mesa, over on the other side, we can drive over there; Lemon
Grove, they're all about the same. La Mesa, Grossmont may be a
little more exclusive—a little more expensive.

ALAN. On the way here from downtown.

RONNIE. How do you like the traffic? Is that some drive?

ALAN. Yeah, that's something else, isn't it? I've never seen traffic
like you've got here. I don't know if I'll want to drive or not.

DOUGLAS. Sure you will; you get used to it.

ALAN. But on the way out we must have passed a hundred houses
that were going up. Half-constructed.

DOUGLAS. Across from the college they're building three hun-
dred houses. Ranch types. A whole suburb, one guy. (Almost to
the audience.) A whole city: shopping centers, two theaters, one
regular and a drive-in, three hundred houses. Big, ranch-type
houses.

RONNIE. There's supposed to be four hundred new residents in
California every day.

ALAN. Every day.

DOUGLAS. It's a big state, Al; it really is. Four hundred.

RONNIE. Every day.

DOUGLAS. Don't let anybody tell you the gold rush is over out
here, boy.

ALAN. I guess not.

DOUGLAS. Guys are making a killing out here.

ALAN. And the climate I suppose—

DOUGLAS. (A brief concession.) —March is a mess. Late March
into April—it rains, but that's about it for the whole year. And it's
a little cooler, but outside of that—

ALAN. I don't suppose you get any—

RONNIE. (Both are shaking their heads, seriously not ironically.)
No, no snow—

DOUGLAS. —Very little; up in the mountains—

RONNIE. —It seldom even freezes. Up in the mountains. The
Lagunas and higher. We drive up or else the boys would never
have seen snow. Of course you don't see it falling which is half
the treat. It falls during the night. It'll snow a foot and then thaw
within two days.

ALAN. A foot? Over night?

RONNIE. A lot more, sometimes.

ALAN. That's going-to-hell snowin'.

DOUGLAS. Alan, you'll love it. It's heaven. I mean it's really
heaven. You'll love it here.

RONNIE. We hope you do.

DOUGLAS. You will! Hell! By God, anybody who wouldn't,
sumpin's wrong with 'em er sumpin', huh?

ALAN. I think there'd have to be. I do already. We were coming
through New Mexico and I didn't believe it . . . the air-
conditioning wasn't working. Of course who needs it in Nebraska.
But by the time we get to El Centro—it's burning hot. Your first
stop in California: El Centro. What do you do your first stop in
California? You buy a glass of orange juice. Never. Whatever you
do buy orange juice at the Greyhound bus station in El Centro,
California. Yeahhh! God awful. The worst. The worst single paper
cup of orange juice I've ever had in my life. (To the audience by
now, as well as them.) It's not native to El Centro. Oranges can't
grow there. Gila monsters you could buy. Navajo blankets, moccasins—turquoise ear rings, Apache tears you can buy. That's it.
Of course even getting to El Centro is a nightmare. You know California, you've seen the pictures: palm trees, sunsets, swimming pools, oceans and mountain springs? The first five hours—five and a half—you are treated to the world's most barren desolation. The Mojave Desert. Telephone poles are stuck in big hunks of asphalt to hold them upright. The asphalt is boiling. You think: this is California! Oh, wow, who does the public relations on this place! (Back to them, exaggerating.) It's a hundred and five degrees! It's March! I want you to know March and it's a hundred and five. In Nebraska it's forty-seven and it's a warm day when I left.

RONNIE. I know, I remember.

DOUGLAS. She worked there.

ALAN. (To the audience, rather a different mood, straight, low, no accent.) What I've heard about Ronnie is that her dad met her and dated her—he was still married, sometime during that time, he was still married to mother.

DOUGLAS. In Lincoln. Private secretary to the attorney of the state. State Attorney, same difference, huh?

ALAN. (Continuing.) And maybe they came out here together, maybe not. He said he'd send for us—mother and me. He ran off, out to here. O.K. She never blamed him.

RONNIE. A wonderful man, and an interesting job.

ALAN. You take shorthand and all that then?

RONNIE. Oh, yes. I want to forget it; it's like riding a bicycle, you can't. They let the secretaries run the country I think. From my experience.

ALAN. Probably they do.

DOUGLAS. I've got to get along.

ALAN. How come?

RONNIE. Doug's on the night shift, so he has days off.

DOUGLAS. So I can get in half a day yet.

ALAN. Good.

DOUGLAS. You darn-betcha.

ALAN. Yeah. (Laughs.)

DOUGLAS. (Very sober, embarrassingly straight and serious.) I can't tell you how much I've wanted you here.

RONNIE. (Sober.) He has, Alan.

DOUGLAS. I've tried. I wrote once or twice, but your mother thought I was trying to kidnap you or some damn thing. She wouldn't let you come.

RONNIE. He cried. It's the only time I've ever seen—

ALAN. (To the audience—cutting it off.)—He said he had to go; he worked on the night shift, he could get in half a day yet. That it was great having me here. Finally. He'd dreamed about it.

RONNIE. (They have moved from the kitchen. Showing him around.) That's going to be your room—

ALAN. Great.

DOUGLAS. (Returning to previous. Sober.) So bad. I can't tell you.

ALAN. (Sober.) I'm glad to be here, I am.

RONNIE. —The patio, it will go here; you've seen the garden. The living room, the TV—it's in the cabinet, I can't stand a naked eye staring at me. We almost never watch it. Doug watches the fights and the ball games in the afternoons.

ALAN. That's right, I can watch the games.

DOUGLAS. (Showing him around.) That's the dark room.

ALAN. Wow. I didn't know that.

DOUGLAS. The mounted picture there, the second one, I won an award on last year. It's taken actually with a red filter looking straight into the sun like that—it's called "Sun Spot"—that's the sun here and the reflection here; the way the sun hits the water. It's a bitch of a shot to make because of the glare. The reflection; you have to use a filter, have to know what you're doing. (Sleeping the table.) That's a professional enlarger; that's as good as they make them.

RONNIE. Doug went through a woodworking phase about five years ago so we have a table saw and a lathe and all of that. He'll build the patio this summer.

DOUGLAS. Not by myself I won't. Not now that I have help.

ALAN. Right. I'd love to.

RONNIE. Dad's workroom you've seen.

ALAN. Do you develop your own film?

DOUGLAS. Develop, print, enlarge to any size, all in the same room . . . the whole works. It's not difficult, it's goddamned exacting, everything's timed pretty close; you have to know what the hell you're doing.

RONNIE. (Pointing out.) Mount Helix with the cross; and Mount Otao, isn't that god-awful? Over there—nearly in Mexico.

ALAN. All around. It's beautiful.

DOUGLAS. You'll love it.
ALAN. (Enraged.) I do, I do. I do.
DOUGLAS. (Suddenly serious. Man-to-man.) Carol... Now, I want you to know, don't be embarrassed. We have these two girls living here. (The girls can be seen dimly in the distance.) ALAN. You wrote me; I know.
DOUGLAS. Well, Alan, they're wards of the state. They've had terrible lives, you don't know—
ALAN. —maybe I—
DOUGLAS. —Just terrible, you don't know. Penny's father left her, her mother died, she's lived with one bad foster home after another. They're happy here. The woman said we were one of the best homes in San Diego County. They live here like it's their home.
RONNIE. They really do.
DOUGLAS. They've been here—Penny a year, Carol a year now and a half. It's their home and we all get along like a family.
RONNIE. You'll have Carol's room and she can sleep with—
DOUGLAS. And Carol... Her mother and father both died when she was too young to remember it—
RONNIE. She does though.
DOUGLAS. She says she doesn't. Penny's good. She gets along fine. Carol. I want to talk to you man to man. Alan, Carol is a whore. She's promiscuous. She came here bragging she'd slept with six sailors in one night once.
RONNIE. Seven, but one more or less. (Alan laughs.)
DOUGLAS. She has a boyfriend now, she's trying to straighten out. Hell, she was on pills, she was on God knows what. Things I hadn't even heard of.
RONNIE. But she dates this guy regularly now; he's a darn nice guy. You'll meet him.
DOUGLAS. You have to treat her like, think of her like a sister. We can't have you—
ALAN. O.K., I won't.
DOUGLAS. It's important.
ALAN. How can you keep them? They must cost... 
DOUGLAS. Well, the state sends us sixty dollars a month toward their board—
RONNIE. It's not as much as they cost even. But we make a home for them.
ALAN. (Joyously.) Where are they? Penny! Carol! Jerry! Jack! Jerry's twelve and is a little me. A little blonde me only fatter. A little. Jack's a brush ape. A—a—renegade. Jerry and I look a little alike, Jack takes after Ronnie, except for his eyes. Penny's a dope. She's great. But she's a dope. Carol's gorgeous!
RONNIE. Not really, she's attractive. Striking. She could be a model. She has that kind of figure. Beautiful skin.
DOUGLAS. Not really, though, she knows how to fix herself up is all. She's a come-on. She's not got a personality. She's neurotic. She's had a terrible life, Alan, you don't know. (Suddenly messing his hair.) Fella! devil! (To the audience, hugging Alan's head against him. Proudly.) I mean he was my kid. He looked like me. More than Jerry ever thought about. When I was his age I was skinny like that. I had to work out— (To Alan.) I could never gain weight. But God... !
RONNIE. —When we were married—
DOUGLAS. I put on weight the first week. It's the air. You will too. And Ronnie's a good cook.
ALAN. Good.
RONNIE. Which reminds me are you hungry?
DOUGLAS. (Seriously.) They've gone out, we wanted them to, so we could meet you. Get to know each other a little first. We told them they'd see you in the morning. One more day won't matter—you'll be here a while. Penny'll be in. She went to the movie with Rose, I imagine.
RONNIE. Rose you've got to meet. She's unbelievable. Are you sure you can't eat?
ALAN. Really. (To the audience.) I've got this incredible headache; a migraine, only I don't know it and I've not had one since—three days it lasted—all through that first day and night. It can't go on like this of course, there'll be a scene soon. Dad had to go to work, he could get in half a day—night—yet. He always called it day... the working day.
DOUGLAS. I want you to go down there. You can get a job; if you're going to be going to school. It costs, you know.
ALAN. I wanted to work somewhere, to pay my way—
DOUGLAS. I wish to God we could—
RONNIE. Afford to pay your way—
DOUGLAS. Alan, we can't; we just can't. I want to, but we can't that much. We'll help, sure, all we can. . .
ALAN. No, I want to. I said I would.
DOLIGLAS. Hell, it's healthy. Everybody out at State is working part-time anyway. Earn their keep. We'll have to get you a car, won't we? You drive?
ALAN. Yeah, fairly well.
DOLIGLAS. Get you a little Austin or one of those. What'd you think?
ALAN. (To audience and them.) What can I say, I think it's great...
DOLIGLAS. We'll go over and look; you gotta have it to get you to school, doncha? I'm not going to squire you in, you don't want to have to take a bus every morning. Huh?
ALAN. (To audience.) There'll be a scene. Those who are confused will say thank God, something to watch, maybe everyone will stop flying around. (Douglass stands a moment watching, then turns with a proud smile and exits.)
RONNIE. I guess you'll want to get some sleep soon.
ALAN. Before too long. I couldn't sleep on the bus. I almost broke my neck.
RONNIE. You want to go right now?
ALAN. No, no.
RONNIE. Whenever you're ready.
ALAN. Could I have another coffee?
RONNIE. (She pours another coffee.) He’s talked about you so much. I didn't know about you at all when we were married. He told me the first night; it was quite a shock. I didn’t even know he had been married. He cried. He said he wanted to bring you out here and I wanted you too. But your mother—and she was right, don't you think?
ALAN. Yes. (To audience.) What could...?
RONNIE. It's better this way. You're not torn apart, half in one place and half in another. He missed you so much. That's why he wanted to have another kid right away. You're not shocked or embarrassed or anything, me speaking with you frankly?
ALAN. No, God, no; it’s a relief...
RONNIE. Good. I've looked forward so to knowing you. Doug's mother gives us pretty regular reports about you.
ALAN. She does?
RONNIE. Oh, sure. That's why we asked you out. She said you were out of high school; she thought it was about time you saw some of the country—and that you and Doug got reacquainted.

ALAN. She knew I wanted to go on to school.
RONNIE. What are you going to study?
ALAN. You know, I don't have any idea. Liberal Arts— I don't know.
RONNIE. There's time. We'll take you up to San Diego State so you can get registered; it's a beautiful campus. Don't decide for a while... Jack has a birthday party coming up—his eighth. Two dozen local hellions; you'll want to escape from that, I imagine. Maybe you can take Jerry to a movie or something. He considers himself much too adult for that crowd.
ALAN. Of course—he's eleven.
RONNIE. No, please. Twelve. And a half: he stretches it a little; he was born Christmas Day. You knew that.
ALAN. Yes, but that's all. (To the audience, a marked contrast as he drops the accent.) I'd seen them; just once, five years ago, Jack was three, Jerry seven. Dad and the kids came to town and it was arranged that if a friend of Mother's went along we'd all go to the zoo in Omaha, and we had a picnic which I remember as the most horrible experience of my younger life. Everyone worried about how I was going to react and me not knowing what was happening. Just I didn't want any of it and I couldn't get it through my head how any of these people could be related to me. And I was freezing to death, which is all I can remember; it was November and all the animals had their winter coats and were ugly anyway.
RONNIE. (Standing, whispering—stage whisper.) You want to see them? (They walk to between the boys' beds.)
ALAN. (Same whisper.) Don't wake...
RONNIE. No, you'll meet them in the morning. Jerry. He has asthma and snores like a tank. Of course Jack could sleep through anything.
ALAN. (Whisper.) He's cute.
RONNIE. (Whisper.) Well, of course he's cute. He looks like me. He's the hairy one. He takes that from my brother; look at those arms. He has hair like that all over him.
ALAN. (Whisper—to the audience.) Blonde, like a white, a little white orangutan or something. (Penny comes in the front entrance, walks to the refrigerator door, opens it, and stands in front of it. Penny is nearly eighteen, she is slow and dull moving and almost heartbreakingly unattractive.)
RONNIE. *Hearing the noise.* That's Penny.

ALAN. *Beginning in whisper and changing into regular voice as they move out of the boys' area.* Penny, on whom the plot will pivot, such as it is. On Penny and a photograph taken my first day in California and my first day at the ocean. First ocean, the Pacific. Real salt, I almost hadn't believed it. I had to taste it to be sure. Jerry on one side, me in the middle, Jack on the other. A picture of the three grandchildren to send to my grandmother.

RONNIE. Doug's mother wrote back, she said she couldn't believe it. That wasn't Alan between those two kids that was Doug when he was seventeen.

ALAN. Really?

RONNIE. Oh, now he's very distinguished, very proud of the mustache and the greying temples.

ALAN. *To the audience.* He had borrowed the jacket from a friend, but he liked it; it suited him. And it did. So he bought it from the guy.

PENNY. *They come to her. Still with the refrigerator door open.* Pleased to meet you. I've heard a lot about you.

ALAN. *To the audience.* And I feel like I should bow. *To Penny.* They didn't know a thing. It was all conjecture.

RONNIE. Penny's a science major and very serious about it.

PENNY. Well, I'm not that serious about—

ALAN. What do you want to do with—

PENNY. Oh, well, I'll probably teach. *Dead pause.* I like kids. I guess.

ALAN. I couldn't be a teacher if they paid me and I understand they don't.

PENNY. California's not bad. They pay well here.

ALAN. I guess I've heard that.

RONNIE. Do you want something to eat?

PENNY. *Closing the refrigerator door.* No, I've got to go to bed.

RONNIE. Did you see Rose?

PENNY. Uhm. She's given up politics, she's learning to play the guitar. *Alan laughs.*

RONNIE. Penny dates the best looking boy at the college.

PENNY. *Pause.* He really is. *Shrug.*

RONNIE. He's a tennis pro.

PENNY. Not pro.

RONNIE. Well, not pro, but he will be.

PENNY. *Indifferently.* He was in the Olympics.

ALAN. They play tennis in the Olympics?

PENNY. Oh, sure. Or maybe it was skiing, because he skis. His dad's got a lodge in Colorado. Carol and I are—Carol and I are both going with millionaires—not really but they do have a lot of money. Phil drives a Pontiac convertible—it's so beautiful I feel stupid driving around in it—especially the way he drives.

RONNIE. Why, how does he drive?

PENNY. I don't know. Conspicuously. I mean the top's never up unless it's raining. Even in the middle of winter. I've had a cold since I've known him. Do you mind if I go on to bed?

ALAN. No, if you're sleepy.

PENNY. 'Cause I am.

ALAN. I can see you tomorrow.

PENNY. Goodnight, Alan. Ronnie. Is Carol in yet?

RONNIE. No. God knows, she's out with Sonny.

PENNY. Goodnight. *Exits to bedroom.*

ALAN. And that's all of Penny that night. That first night. That was it. But more, there's more.

RONNIE. I want to tell you about Carol. It's terrible.

ALAN. *To audience.* Now this is funny . . . I sat there sober faced and believed every word.

RONNIE. *To the audience.* Well, I had to tell him something, right? I mean the girl is a whore. Let's face it, she's a nice kid but she's sick. With Sonny, Sonny is religious—that much is true.

ALAN. *He leans against the counter and watches, smiling, listening to a favorite family joke.* Go on, go on . . .

RONNIE. *To audience.* Well, I didn't know if he'd believe it or not, what do I know? He's seventeen, my boys are twelve and eight. But if I didn't say something that first night then Carol would have him seduced by the next afternoon. So I told him she had this incurable "disease." That wasn't painful. But it was an impossible disgrace. I said they were trying to cure it but it was only fifty-fifty.

ALAN. Trichinosis.

RONNIE. Well, I couldn't think of a medical-sounding name that I thought I could remember. When did you know?

ALAN. Not for years. You can lie to me, I'll believe anything.

RONNIE. Of course I didn't know if he'd buy it or not.
I thought about it, but I didn't say anything. That was all I did.

ALAN. That's what I was thinking. But I didn't say anything.

RONNIE. (to audience) I didn't say it. I just didn't. It was a little late for that.

ALAN. (to audience) That's what I was thinking. But I didn't say anything.

RONNIE. (to audience) I didn't say it. I just didn't. It was a little late for that.
ALAN. And I liked you very much. Which is no mean trick for a stepmother.
RONNIE. And you told me about Doug being in jail.
ALAN. How did I—
RONNIE. We were just talking about anything, and you asked—
ALAN. (With an accent.) Is dad still interested in drawing and painting? Grandma's attic is full of stuff he did.
RONNIE. The paintings of boats and all the airplanes? I think he's always been crazy about airplanes—no, he doesn't do that anymore.
ALAN. I used to go up and look at them every time I went there.
RONNIE. Well... he builds things... and you saw all the photographic equipment. I think he must have stopped painting when he was a teenager.
ALAN. Yes, I think mother said he did them when he was in jail.
RONNIE. (Beat.) When he was where?
ALAN. Didn't you know that? I wouldn't want to...
RONNIE. No, it's ok; what?
ALAN. Well, he was in on a—not a robbery, but a burglary of a house with some guys when he was sixteen—and went not actually to a jail, but to a reform school for a year—And that's when he did those—It was a long time ago, I guess it isn't anything necessarily that he should have told you.
RONNIE. Or that you should have been told for that matter—
ALAN. I'm sorry, I wouldn't have—
RONNIE. No, it doesn't matter. I asked you—(To the audience.)
ALAN. (To the audience.) I was. I was.
RONNIE. You want to go to bed, don't you?
ALAN. I think so.
RONNIE. It's after two.
ALAN. I'm falling on my face.
RONNIE. Go on to bed, it's all right.
ALAN. Are you going to wait up for dad?
RONNIE. No, no, he doesn't expect you to wait up. You won't need more covers than that.
ALAN. No, not here. (He laughs, sits on the bed and tucks under.)
RONNIE. Goodnight, Alan.
ALAN. I'll see you tomorrow.
RONNIE. I won't wake you; Doug gets up early; he never sleeps more than four or five hours.
ALAN. Good Lord.
RONNIE. I know, don't worry, we'll let you sleep. Tomorrow anyway. Everyone keeps their own hours. (Carol approaches the front door.)
ALAN. Right.
RONNIE. (Turning to the front, leaving him.) Speaking of which.
CAROL. (Entering. Carol is nearly 16, tall, very thin and smugly attractive and quite a wreck.) I know, it's late, I wasn't watching. Where's Alan, did he come?
RONNIE. Yes, he came.
CAROL. Doug here?
RONNIE. He went on to work.
CAROL. Went to work? Well, of course, he went to work, Carol, what'd you think, he stayed here with his son? How's Alan?
RONNIE. Very nice. But that isn't the subject.
CAROL. Oh, Christ, Ronnie, don't start!
RONNIE. It's two o'clock.
CAROL. (Looks at her watch, puts it to her ear, shakes her arm during speech.) It isn't any—well, my watch's stopped. Damn.
RONNIE. You know I don't care, but they ask.
CAROL. We've been sitting out in front for over an hour, didn't you hear us drive up, I thought I saw you at the window.
RONNIE. Carol, I don't care.
CAROL. Well, neither do I. He was so sweet.
RONNIE. I like Sonny.
CAROL. We talked—(Partly to audience) Sonny's dad has a ranch in Texas—over twenty thousand acres, which he says is small—That's probably larger than Rhode Island. And they raise Herefords and houses and oil and have about half the money in the country and investments everywhere. His mom and dad are paralyzed over what's going on in Cuba, apparently they own it.
RONNIE. Anyway, be that as it may, I've a vivid imagination but it fails me when I try to conjure up what you do until—
CAROL. (Cutting in violently.) Oh, Ronnie, would you stop it! Just stop it, already! No he doesn't lay me, no, never, not once, look at my hands for God's sake! You think I can stand it? (Exposing her hands, which are bloody on the palms.)
RONNIE. Good god, what's wrong with—
CAROL. —Well, it isn't stigmata; you can count on that. Sonny is Catholic with a vengeance and I've never thought I could be in love with anyone. There it is! (Rather to the audience.) Carol's problem, never thought she could cut it and I am—very much in love with a Rich Texan Catholic and he has land, lots of land and principles that I never even knew were principles. And I used to take "downs," but pills are wrong, of course, so I promised him I wouldn't take them any more. No, we no longer live in a yellow submarine, we live on a Red Perch. And he makes us so damn beautifully and I can't ask him and I can't be "bad," his word, not mine, and I can't calm down with the pills and I claw my hands, the palms of my hands apart. (Totally breaking off—disgusted with herself.) Well, shit, Carol, there's no sense in causing a war about it, I cut them down yesterday, I'll cut them off tonight. But that won't help, because I'll bite my lip or something else if I can't get a hold of something to take to calm my damned, frazzled—

RONNIE. Carol, I'm very lenient and I know you can wrap me around your little finger; I know you've had to do that in order to get anything—

CAROL. —Don't make excuses for me for God's—

RONNIE. —Carol, I want to say something. I know you want to stay here for the next eight or whatever months until you're eighteen, and I want you here, but if I see one pill, one of your tranquillizers, I'll report it. It's something I can't tolerate. I have two young sons here and I can't risk them taking something by mistake . . .

CAROL. (Overlapping.) You don't have to tell me that. Do you think Sonny would stand for it? He's a lot better police dog than—a LOT better police dog than you, believe me—

RONNIE. There've been two different cases in the last year of kids being poisoned by taking their mother's barbiturates or someone's who had left them around the house. If I know you're taking them I'll feel obliged to tell Sonny as well as the welfare . . .

CAROL. (Screaming.) You don't have to tell anybody any god-damned thing! Because I PROMISED him, you know what that MEANS? (Regains her control, holding her hands.) That I didn't need them.

RONNIE. Does your hand hurt?

CAROL. Yes, they hurt like fire.

RONNIE. Let me put something—

CAROL. Oh, I'll do it; you're supposed to be bawling me out. You can't, Ronnie. I can get out of anything, I'm a master.

RONNIE. You're also a mess.

CAROL. You're telling me.

RONNIE. Let me put something on them.

CAROL. (Hotly.) No, dammit; you're not going to stain me up with iodine, thanks.

RONNIE. I'll put some salve on them, not iodine.

CAROL. They're not that bad, really. I'll do it. Are you waiting up for Doug?

RONNIE. No. He'll be in.

CAROL. Alan's in my room?

RONNIE. For tonight. We'll arrange something.

CAROL. Just let me flop somewhere.

RONNIE. Put something on your hands, that salve.

CAROL. Okay. Goodnight.

RONNIE. Carol. Don't. (Pause.) Don't stay out this late. They want you in by twelve.

CAROL. I won't, Ronnie. You're great. I'm sorry, I won't. (Kisses her on the cheek.)

RONNIE. (To the audience.) She will, and I can't blame her, of course. He's the only thing she's got—Sonny. She's on probation with the state and us and Sonny too.

CAROL. So, I'm used to it. Don't make me out a martyr. I hate it. Besides I can do it better. I haven't even got started on my mom and dad and poor upbringing and what a rotten life I've had. Besides I'm a nymphomaniac—coupled with a for-all-practical-purposes—enuff—in the shape of a Greek God.

RONNIE. Which isn't necessary with you but it doesn't hurt anything.

CAROL. It hurts. It hurts. Everything. All over. Goodnight. (She goes off to the girls' bedroom. Ronnie stands a moment, then goes off to her bedroom. The stage is empty a few seconds then Douglas enters, goes to the kitchen, opens a can of beer—takes a hunk of cheese, looks into the girls' bedroom, then Alan's and exits into his bedroom as the lights fade to a deep midnight blue. All is quiet for a beat then a very slow down. At a nice bright sunshine the lights bold. Jerry stirs in his bed and sits up suddenly. Jumps
up and sneaks down to Alan's room. Creeps in and shakes him gently.)
JERRY. Alan? (Sits on the side of the bed, waits.) Alan? Are you awake?
ALAN. (Stirring.) Huh? (The scene is whispered.)
JERRY. Good morning.
ALAN. Good morning. Is it morning?
JERRY. Almost.
ALAN. Do you always get up this early?
JERRY. I woke up.
ALAN. It isn't daylight yet, is it?
JERRY. Oh, yeah—(Starts to window to pull the shades up.) It's Sunday, it's real bright out...
ALAN.-NO! I believe you—that's OK. Are you (Smiling, focusing on him now.) Jerry or Jack?
JERRY. Don't you know?
ALAN. Yes, You're Jerry.
JERRY. Jack's asleep.
ALAN. And let's see, you would be twelve and a half, right?
JERRY. Right. I'll be thirteen.
ALAN. Christmas Day.
JERRY. Right. What's the matter with your head?
ALAN. I don't know; only it's splitting wide open. It has been all night—even since we crossed New Mexico. I think it has something to do with the altitude. Are we at sea level?
JERRY. No, one thousand three hundred eighty feet. That's Mount Helix.
ALAN. How do you know, are you studying geography?
JERRY. No, there's a sign on the highway. Do you want some aspirin?
ALAN. Where's the highway?
JERRY. About two blocks from here.
ALAN. Oh. Do you have any, do you think?
JERRY. What?
ALAN. Aspirin?
JERRY. Oh, I thought you meant highways, did I have any highways—
ALAN. —No, aspirin—
JERRY. —I'll get one.
ALAN. Could you? Bring me three if you have plenty.

JERRY. (Has run out—returns.) You shouldn't take more than one.
ALAN. Huh? Oh, it's OK, honey, I always take three. Two doesn't do any good and four makes me sick.
JERRY. OK. (As water runs.)
ALAN. (Calling.) What time is it, Jerry?
JERRY. It's seven o'clock already.
ALAN. (Hops down in bed.) Oh, God. Jerry, I didn't get to bed till three or something.
JERRY. (Re-entering.) Do adults need eight hours sleep?
ALAN. (Between aspirations.) Eight or ten.
JERRY. Dad says he can't sleep but four hours. He says you shouldn't.
ALAN. Then why do I feel like this?
JERRY. Did you ride the Greyhound?
ALAN. Yeah.
JERRY. You know, I like you! (Hugs him enthusiastically.) I didn't know if I would or not, but you're nice. How come you didn't come to live with us a long time ago?
ALAN. You don't remember visiting me and the zoo? In Omaha?
JERRY. No. Mom's told me though. It seems weird having a new brother and already he's as big as dad. You should have been living with us when we had the farm.
ALAN. Did you have a farm?
JERRY. Your head still hurt?
ALAN. Yeah.
JERRY. (After a pause.) Jack and me called it a farm, but we just had a big open lot with a bunch of trees.
ALAN. An orchard?
JERRY. Kinna—we had some orange trees and a plum tree and a fig tree...
ALAN. You had orange trees?
JERRY. Oh, sure.
ALAN. I've never seen them growing before.
JERRY. We used to have oranges all the time. Me and Jack used to make orangeade and sell it only nobody ever bought it because they had more oranges than we did. Dad bought it and we drank it.
ALAN. (After a pause.) Oh, God. I like you too. (Squeezes him. To audience.) So I didn't sleep, I guess. Not much, that first night. And the last thing I wanted to do, or thought of doing...

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DOUGLAS. (Entering.) We'll just drive in, you make your application, it'll take about ten minutes and we can drive over and take a peek at the ocean you haven't seen.
ALAN. (To audience and them, following Douglas into the kitchen for coffee.) The personnel manager at Ryan Aeronautical hated me on sight with no love lost.
DOUGLAS. Aw, that son of a bitch, all that brass, ball-breaking office flunkies. That's all they are, Alan, ignore him, don't give him the time of day.
ALAN. Do we have to go today? I can hardly see.
DOUGLAS. He's going on a month's vacation tomorrow. They can process you while he's gone, you won't start working for a month.
CAROL. Buy now pay later.
ALAN. Maybe I should do something else; grocery clerk or something.
DOUGLAS. Well, what do you want, boy, it's up to you, do you want to make enough to go to school or do you want to go to the movies? We'll all go, we'll go on to the beach later.
ALAN. No, it didn't take long, he said we'd have two divisions of engineering personnel; temporary and full-time. Said I would much prefer the former and he said there was a greater possibility of being hired in the latter, and that was that. So providing I'm not lying about never having joined the communist party or something I'll be set. I'll start in a month or so.
DOUGLAS. As soon as he's back.
ALAN. At the Aeronautical Engineering Training Center—riveting school.
PENNY. How can you manage full-time work and full-time school?
DOUGLAS. So he'll go part-time to school until he can get on temporary at the plant.
ALAN. No, no.
DOUGLAS. Well, I say if you can cut both full-time, why not? Now if you're serious about working down there, they have a scholarship program. You can go into electrodynamics or something like that and they'll pay the bill, all the way—
ALAN. It's my second term, I don't know what I want yet.
DOUGLAS. Well, don't be negative, give it a fair shake. Just objectively what's happening in the world—they're putting rockets into space—they got hydrogen bombs and cobalt bombs, atomic submarines—they bounce signals off Mars and Venus and every other goddamned thing.
ALAN. I know.
DOUGLAS. Physicists are looking at the sunspots and predicting the weather—Every field. All of them, what you need—
ALAN. I don't know anything—
DOUGLAS. —is physics, by God.
CAROL. That sounds like a good book. (Alan laughs.)
DOUGLAS. Well you can joke around—I just want you to think about it. All I'm saying is if I was a kid now it wouldn't take me three minutes—three seconds to make up my mind—Engineering, Electrodynamics, you just have to open your eyes.
ALAN. And of course the head is worse—But the ocean! I've lived 800 miles from it all my life!
RONNIE. (Coming into the kitchen with Jack.) I wish you would, but only if you want to.
ALAN. No, I like you very—(To audience.) I'm embarrassed and I've no idea how to tell her. (To Ronnie.) I'll call you Ronnie, like dad does. I couldn't! I like you very much! You know! (Grabbing Jack and wooling his hair.) And you! Brush aye! Nut! Huh? This is the other one. Jack. Can you see his arms? He's covered all over with white hair. He's our little white orangutan.
He's had straight A's since the day he was born.
JACK. Yes.
ALAN. And he's a smart ass—I mean alleck.
JACK. Yes.
ALAN. Yes.
JACK. What's an alleck?
ALAN. I don't know, but you're one—(To audience.) Don't you wish you had a smart answer for all those simplenminded great questions he asks? Like an alleck is a Something or Other Without its Whatchamacallit and you're going to be one if you keep asking—Oh, Jack! Jack! He's so bright the teachers think it's unhealthy. Go go go. (Jack and Jerry go, running off.) I won't! I promise I won't (To Ronnie.) and you can't either—
RONNIE. Ok, Ok, I won't—
ALAN. —I won't tell you a lot of juvenile anecdotes but I want—I want to bronze the little bastards and sit them up on the mantelpiece. One! Just one I'll tell while they're gone, one quick one—I want to get badly, badly drunk and distribute a wallet-full
of slobbered-on and bent-up photographs all along the bar—and say notice his hair notice that one's toes, look at those teeth. Just one little anecdote that Ronnie told me—when Jerry was five they all went up in an airplane—big thrill for Jerry who used to watch airplanes take off by the hour when they lived by the airport. So they're all in the plane, Jerry's on Ronnie's lap and after they've been off the ground for a few minutes he squirms around and whispers excitedly in Ronnie's ear: "when do we start getting small?"

DOUGLAS. (in the darkroom. Red light on. Projector light on.) That's on now. Two three four five. (Projector off.)

ALAN. (Walking to the darkroom.) How can you tell when to turn it off?

DOUGLAS. You have to know what you want—the less you expose it the lighter it is, the more you expose it the darker. You burn it in.

ALAN. When did you take this?

DOUGLAS. Couple a month ago.

ALAN. And you're just now getting around to printing them?

DOUGLAS. Aw, I got no time. Wow! look at that, I tell you, boy, mmm. Don't crowd, now, just don't crowd. (Alan laughs.) Is she a piece? Huh? Look at those boobs, humm: I tell you.

ALAN. She isn't the least bit over-doing it, you don't think?

DOUGLAS. What do you talk, with a butt like that?

ALAN. That's what I was looking at.

DOUGLAS. Can't miss that, huh? That's too broad for you—Hell, you got a lot to get a hold on there. Oh, yeah.

RONNIE. (to audience. The lights brighten.) Well, Mrs. Collins said she wouldn't let her husband out to take pictures of bare-assed girls in the woods over her dead body and I made the mistake of saying it kept Doug off the streets.

CAROL. (to Alan.) So she hasn't spoken to Ronnie since.

RONNIE. Really, Well, how was I to know her husband spent half his time on Delmarco Street . . .

ALAN. I take it that's the . . .

CAROL. Right.

ALAN. And now she's not speaking to you. (Half to the audience, then fully.) San Diego is just like all other towns just under a thousand population. And California. Californians. They're insane—well you've seen the movies they make out here, they have no idea at all what people are like—well, it's not their fault; they've got nothing to go on—they're working in the dark. They're mad. They are. The shoes they wear, when they wear shoes, the clothes they wear when they wear clothes. This place is impossible. Nobody walks. Nobody walks. Anywhere. Two blocks—if the old man has the car you don't go. You drive to a movie and they're all drive-ins, the food is all drive-ins; mini-hamburgers and cherry malts. The traffic is seventy miles an hour bumper-to-bumper going into town, six lanes abreast. The supermarkets. They're mad. They take up blocks. They're open 24 hours and they're packed jammed full with—four in the morning, they're buying watermelon and lettuce and a ham and a gallon of Collo port and they've got the kids and the babies and the shopping cart and the portable radio and the whole family—the sandals flopping. They're nuts! They live on the beach. They all cook outside and eat outside and sleep outside—and of course it's a beautiful outside to do it in. The downtown San Diego is white day and night with sailors and those big fluffy moths and seagulls and pigeons and sand and I've finally seen the ocean. All of us, we had to beg dad to take a picture of us. He's not taken a picture of the kids, Ronnie said, in almost two years.

RONNIE. He's got a hundred tons of cheesecake.

ALAN. All lined up, the three of us.

RONNIE. Doug's mother wrote today and said that that wasn't Alan, that was Doug when he was seventeen.

DOUGLAS. I told you! What'd I say!

RONNIE. That was Douglas when he was seventeen.

DOUGLAS. I said it was! By God! You can't—No matter what anybody anywhere says! . . . Wait till we get you flying by in a flashy MC. I tell you, sir-e-bob!

ALAN. MG?

DOUGLAS. Or Porsche or Austin, one of those babies.

ALAN. Blue.

DOUGLAS. Red, hell, red. Man, what do you talk?

ALAN. Purple. Compromise.

DOUGLAS. Huh? (Ronnie and Alan laugh.)

ALAN. It's beautiful. It is. I always wanted a big old family like this, it's just great. And it's not going to last . . .

CAROL. (Holding a bottle of pills, takes one, with a glass of water.) Well, that ought to take the hair off!
ALAN. (To the audience.) Of course we’re immediately in a
conspiracy.

PENNY. What are they, dope?

CAROL. Oh, yell it out, Penny, and get us all kicked outta here—
Dope. Good God. You know that paint that little boys spray on
little model airplanes?

PENNY. Yes. O.K., I know.

CAROL. —smells like ether, it could kill you if you breathe too
deeply?

PENNY. —I said yes—

CAROL. —Well, that’s dope. (Beat.) They’re a very innocent
sound, p-i-l-i called Mellaril. One of the seven wonder drugs,
and you’re going to ask what it does; well, it does wonders.

PENNY. Are they strong?

CAROL. They’re stronger than I am. (Messing with Alan’s hair.)
What do you think, Douglas?

PENNY. It’s called a duck’s tail.

DOUGLAS. What, you want a duck’s ass on the back of your
head? (With humor.) You want it all swirled around like that
you look like—I don’t know what—like some of those high-school
punks, or Penny’s—what’s—

CAROL. You don’t like it? Doug, you’re square, you can’t get
around it.

DOUGLAS. What the hell are you talking? He looks like a drug-
store cowboy.

CAROL. Doug, you don’t know your ass.

DOUGLAS. (Too sharply.) Who you telling about ass?

PENNY. Phil even wears his hair like—

DOUGLAS. (Enormous.) Miss innocence, we just won’t talk
about the way your boyfriends—Do anything, huh? Huh?

ALAN. (A long embarrassed pause, then quickly.) Dad combs
his hair straight back and has since the day he was born and that’s
the only way to comb your hair. It’s been just twenty-four hours.
And the head’s still beating and it’s all too fast. In six months I’ll
be sleeping in a park in Chicago with a letter in my pocket from
Ronnie telling me that Carol is dead. But who would know that
now? We’re sitting down to eat. Outside. That’s California.
We’re—

RONNIE. Shhhh! (He stops. They listen a split second.) No;
not, thunder, you feel it?
ACT II

Alan, Penny, and Carol outside. Bright sunlight. Carol is in a vivid orange robe over a bathing suit.

ALAN. (To the audience.) Same song, second verse, as the poet said, couldn't be better but it's gonna be worse. March. April. May. June or July or August. About. Everything goes well enough but it's complicated. It's difficult to leave well enough alone.

CAROL. Because "well enough" is an intolerable state to be in. Take it from me.

ALAN. I'm home today for a—home. Oh, wow. And it is now. Really is. For a short time. A very short time longer. My last class is at three usually and I go to work from school. Today is Saturday—No school, work, no school, so I can spend some time home before we leave for work at five. Penny and Carol are on vacation . . . it's summer.

PENNY. I still don't know why you started school summer term.

ALAN. Because I was very suspicious that if I didn't I wouldn't start at all. Two momentous events have elapsed! Dad has developed an absolute passion for folk. And he's teaching Penny photography.

PENNY. Well, not photography. There isn't anything to learn except point and snap. I'm learning developing and printing.

ALAN. You like it?

PENNY. Sure, it's fascinating. I'm a little sick of seeing that red white and blue bikini in every picture we print.

ALAN. Ha!

ALAN. Dad's got this bikini he takes along to his sessions with the girls—

CAROL. It's pathetic.

ALAN. —And the whole session is taken up—apparently, we only see the pictures—with first coaxing her into it and then nearly out of it. She unités it here and pushes it down there—or else she doesn't. Which is even funnier.

PENNY. It's awful—it's cotton and tacky and just ugly as it can be.

ALAN. (To Carol.) I'm surprised he hasn't got you posing for him by now.

CAROL. Oh, honey, I'm on to that crap. He squires around those dames down to the beach with that stupid car—

ALAN. Chrysler convertible.

CAROL. Nothing but big cars in this play—

ALAN. Right, which isn't typical—some of the guys build their own so they drive these sorta car-collages.

CAROL. But Doug squeals around in this big fat Chrysler, which is perfect, but he doesn't know it. He took a million pictures of me; I'm not photogenic— He didn't even notice it—it's all in his head—he never notices. Slobbering around "you got nice eyes, you got nice legs, you got nice tits." Hell, I haven't even got tits, the creep.

ALAN. Probably he wanted you to—

CAROL. He wanted in my pants. It was humiliating. When a girl seventeen has to tell a man forty-five to grow up something's wrong. I just found it repellent and I told him.

ALAN. Not in those words, I hope.

CAROL. Yes, in those words: Doug, grow up, you're repellent.

ALAN. Listen, half the foster fathers I've had have tried to make me. Since I was six. It's not my scene. Men are asses. If they knew what they looked like they'd all march into the sea in a line like lemmings.

PENNY. It isn't lemmicks, it's lemmings.

CAROL. You're terrific. I think you're my favorite sister. (To Alan who laughs.) You can go to hell too.

ALAN. I went to one outing with dad and whatever you do you have got—you have got to go to an amateur photographers' meeting with cheese cake models. We went up to Redwood—out in this cactus park with about four hundred photographers and about forty girls. Ten to one. And they're draped over every fence and adobe wall and bench in the park. I've got this 35mm Leica that dad's lent me. Barely explaining how to work the damn thing and all the guys are frisking around this gal—she's on a Mexican serape—and the guys are practically having heart attacks: "Clickadyclickadyclickadyclickadyclickadyclickadyclick" all around like a plague of locusts and they're all jockeying for the best angle to shoot straight down her breasts, which are pumpkins, and they're giving her: "That's it, honey. Wet your lips, baby. Wet 'em again. Now slack. Just let everything go to hell. Toss your hair. Pout. Pout. Indignant. Hate. More. Hate. Kill. Kill . . .”
CAROL. That’s insane.
ALAN. And I’m standing there with this damn dumb Leica saying—Oh, I don’t know could you just sorta, maybe—smile?
CAROL. I know that whole scene.
DOUGLAS. (Entering.) Hey, Alan, how come you didn’t show?
ALAN. Huh? Where?
DOUGLAS. This guy is impossible, isn’t he? Where? I mean this wasn’t important but he’d forget it if it was. (Giving his head a wrench.) Is your head on tight? We wouldn’t want you losing that.
ALAN. Yeah, yeah, I think. What did I forget.
DOUGLAS. Club meeting yesterday afternoon. Nothing happened, you can go to them or not, suit yourself;
ALAN. (To the Audience.) The few times I have gone you couldn’t—
DOUGLAS. (Interrupting. Serious afterthought.) Al—hey!
ALAN. Huh?
DOUGLAS. Stanley tells me you’re not coming to work. Something like three days last week you missed? A while back? What was that?
ALAN. Three days? No. Maybe two once but not three.
DOUGLAS. What the hell’s so important? The days I don’t drive you in you’re just not showing up? I have to square you in?
ALAN. I have been.
DOUGLAS. He says you’re a good worker—(Half to the audience.) He’s a good worker, he picks things up, but you can’t—
ALAN. Listen, I still do more in three days than the other guys—
DOUGLAS. They’re getting their five days’ pay and you’re—
ALAN. You should watch the shop steward sometime. Oh, wow, I thought your department sat around on their retired duffs—there were guys—
DOUGLAS. Retired duffs? (Mock indignation.) I’ll have you know—I mean a few “Government Jobs” that’s very important stuff—
ALAN. Right, right—(To the audience.) “Government Jobs” is slang for doing something of your own—I went in . . . (Back to Douglas.) . . . the other day and two different guys were making mailboxes and one guy was repairing his wife’s mixer—
DOUGLAS. Well, they’re paying you to come to work five days a week, man, that’s what—

ALAN. They’re paying me by the hour. Maybe one week I missed two days because of tests at school I had to cram—
DOUGLAS. Well, learn to study—crap—organize yourself, man, you take a job you go, it’s a simple thing.
ALAN. Dad spoke for me down there and he thinks I’m giving him a bad name taking off—I’m a beatnik.
DOUGLAS. They want you there five days a week—they don’t give a damn if you sit on your fanny or stand on your head, man they don’t care as long as you show up—
ALAN. You know that’s true, they really don’t. You should see those guys—Nobody works. Nobody works, It’s amazing! (Including the audience.) I could tell you the name of the transportation jets we’re building down there and how we’re doing it—the entire aircraft industry would collapse tomorrow morning. Would you believe chewing gum? I’m not kidding—there’s a little hole, no one’s looking, what the hell. I don’t miss that much, really.
DOUGLAS. You just see that you get whatever it is you have to do done today so we can leave on time. I’m not going to wait around for you . . .
ALAN. (To the audience.) So what do you do when you hear that? You decide right there that you’re not going, right?
DOUGLAS. (Instantly furious.) You think it’s funny—you want to do it now? Huh?
ALAN. Later.
DOUGLAS. You want to do it now? We’ll do it now. Come on, we’ll do it now.
ALAN. We’ll get to it. Later.
DOUGLAS. (Looks at him a moment then to Penny casually.) Penny, we’re gonna work right after lunch, Okay?
PENNY. Whenever. (Douglas exits.) I keep asking him to print up some of his pictures of Grand Canyon or something but it’s always those darn girls—girls are so stupid to do that. Oh, I guess they think of a career but, wow, that’s so stupid. It’s no worse though, I’m always imagining my wedding. Do you do that?
CAROL. Do what?
PENNY. I can’t pass a church some days without going through my whole wedding in it. You know, I’m running out of the door in my wedding dress with my hands over my head, keeping off the rice and trying to wave to everybody at the same time. Sometimes
I'm sitting perfectly still and I catch myself tossing my bouquet at someone.
CAROL. Who are you thinking about marrying?
PENNY. Well—I'm not. I don't want to get married. I'd like to be a scientist just as much. I picture that too.
CAROL. Penny has a very rich fantasy life.
PENNY. Well, I do. I think it's healthy. I see myself in one of those white lab coats with a bunch of those bubbly test tubes and coils all around—analyzing blood and making notations—
CAROL. Blood? Good god, you have the most morbid goddamn sense of duty.
PENNY. Do you like being away from Sonny as much as being with him?
CAROL. What?
PENNY. Really, it's funny but I think sometimes when I'm with Phil I'd really rather not be, so I could be away from him—wanting to be with him. You like Phil, don't you? He's nice, isn't he?
CAROL. Do I—I don't know him.
PENNY. You went to school with him before he graduated, I didn't. I'll bet he was popular at Grossmont, wasn't he?
CAROL. (Spirited.) I didn't know him. We didn't run in the same crowd. I thought he was a stuck-up jerk. He's all right. He's nice. He's beautiful. Yes, he was popular. My God, I guess he was.
Aren't there any boys at your school?
PENNY. I don't go with any of them—
ALAN. (Overlapping some.) Carol goes to Grossmont, Penny goes to El Cajon.
PENNY. My gosh, why don't you like Phil? Good grief. All we can ever talk about is Sonny . . . I don't even like Texas. I don't know what a Hereford looks like. I'll bet you don't either.
(To Alan.) She used to talk about all Sonny's beautiful Black Angus—She didn't know if they were horses or automobiles.
(Beat to Carol.) Are you going to marry Sonny?
CAROL. I hope to hell. I'm not going to come this far at such unimaginable expense and wind up—and I'm going to invite all my scores and wear white. I can't wait. (Digging in her purse.) Goddamnit I brought a bottle of baby oil out here—I'll bet I spend a fortune just from losing— (Penny hands her the bottle of oil from beside the chaise.) Penny, why don't you put on your swim suit? You're going to just bake.

PENNY. No, I'm not staying.
CAROL. Well, you're driving me nuts out here dressed up like an Eskimo. (To Alan, handing him the oil.) Get my back, will you?
ALAN. You don't need that stuff.
CAROL. I have delicate skin.
ALAN. What is that you put over your eyes? Plastic spoons? You knew I knew a girl once who went blind from sunbathing with plastic spoons over her eyes? They melted. You're going to be sold brown with white eyelids.
CAROL. Would you shut up?
ALAN. (As he rubs Carol's back. To the audience.) Ronnie about a month ago—I came in moaning that I was failing what? Math, probably—I'm failing math every other day. And she said the term isn't over yet, you've got to have faith. You have to understand she was serious as hell about it. It scared us to death. I really believed it. She said if you have faith the size of a mustard seed you—
CAROL. Turn it down, why don't you?
ALAN. (Stopping rubbing her back.) I'm going to stop because I think you're enjoying this in all the wrong ways. (To the audience.) You have to understand I thought I'd probably exposed myself to trichinosis.
CAROL. You went in and washed your hands.
ALAN. I did not. How many pills today?
CAROL. Who counts anymore? Three or four so far and that's pretty far.
PENNY. You shouldn't take those and lie in the sun.
CAROL. God, the things you're opposed to. You're worse than Sonny sometimes.
PENNY. I'm not opposed to them, you just shouldn't. Maybe I should go with Sonny and you go with Phil.
CAROL. (Rapidly strung together.) That does it! I'm going to take a shower. Penny do you have any bobbinins something has to happen to—don't answer, you don't use them, right? What kind of sister are you anyway? I swear to God. You don't know any two-part harmony songs . . . you don't buy cheap perfumes I can steal, you don't use a brush, you're immoral—always suggesting we swap husbands. What the hell good are you outside of making peanut
butter divinity? Jesus H. Christopher I wish I were on the moon. I nearly am.

PENNY. Well, why do you take them? You know Ronnie will kick you out if she finds out and Sonny made it a condition.

ALAN. He didn't make it a condition, he just said he'd never speak to her again.

CAROL. It turns me off. It turns me way, way off.

ALAN. It's a kind of Norwegian Fly.

CAROL. Icelandic.

ALAN. (Singing.) "Try Icelandic Fly, gets you there on time . . . ."

CAROL. You couldn't possibly have said that, that song didn't come out for ages.

ALAN. That's all right, you aren't even alive. You've been dead ten years. (They laugh.)

CAROL. I would like to thank the theatre for rescuing me from that dreary cupboard in that dreary condition.

PENNY. Dank.

ALAN. Drear.

CAROL. (Overlapping them.) I want to—right—thank the drear management for the magic of the theatre which enables me to be continually young and alive and beautiful and current—

PENNY. And here.

ALAN. Topical.

PENNY. God yes, topical.

ALAN. We hope.

CAROL. (Biting her lip, sitting down, almost in tears.) Shit.

ALAN. Hey, Carol—come on, it's all right.

CAROL. A lot you know, buddy, a lot you know.

ALAN. Really—remember those Red Skelton radio programs, and he played the mean widdle kid?

PENNY. Yeah, right—

ALAN. And he would describe something dreadful that happened to him and start crying I scared me widdle self?

CAROL. I don't remember.

ALAN. I think you scared you widdle self.

PENNY. Sure you remember. On the radio. I remember it.

ALAN. Maybe she listened to a different program. Fibber and Molly McGee. (Beat.) Don't get maudlin, Carol.

CAROL. Locked in your goddamned side show; dragged out to

play second fiddle in a three ring— (Singing a cigarette all the way off, out the wings, walking away a few steps, furious.) Fuck!

ALAN. (Calling.) Come on, come off it, mung head.

PENNY. Mung? Wow.

CAROL. I hope it burns down the theatre.

PENNY. That's the worst kind of head, mung head.

CAROL. I'm hip. (After a deep breath, she regains composure, waves it away.) OK, I'm back.

ALAN. She's back. (Singing.)

She's back and she's better than ever before.

Campbell's Pork and Beans.

ALAN, PENNY, AND CAROL. (Three part harmony. Quite on the patio, not for the audience.)

Back and they're better than ever before
Back and they're better than ever before
Back and they're better than ever before

Campbell's Pork and Beans. Hey!

(Jerry and Jack come running in.)

ALAN. (To the audience immediately.) Most of the radio stations out here are incredible. They're three times as powerful as allowed by the FCC or whoever but the broadcasting towers are all in Mexico so they can get away with anything. They play rock and roll all day and 'night and commercials commercials, more than you'd ever believe and about half of them are in Spanish so— (To Jerry and Jack) come on. So they go like this:

JERRY. Para refrescarle Coca Cola frío.

ALAN. Isn't that great? Well, what's that got to do with the story? Well . . . nothing, actually, only we feel we should throw in a little local color from time to time.

CAROL. (Announcement.) Local Color!

PENNY. It takes a while for the untutored eye to recognize it but—

CAROL. —The color green does not occur in California naturally.

ALAN. (To the audience. Readjustment. Straight.) Southern California is in the colors of perpetually early autumn: Umber, amber, olive, sienna, ochre, orange; acres and acres of mustard and sage. The colors.

PENNY. (Straight.) The herbs too.

ALAN. And grass dies. It has a season of winter and the weather
does not. So instead of grass they plant—a lot of the lawns are
planted in dichondra. A little clover-like thing that grows about
two inches high and doesn't require mowing and it's very cute
but it isn't grass, is it? And it's green the year round.
CAROL. Only not green.
ALAN. Right. And that bright eye-breaking, bright-sun-shining-
through-oak-and-maple-and-aln onto-bright-green-ferns-and-grass-
green does not occur. Of course you could care less. It's something
you rather gladly or at least unknowingly forfeit for nearly con-
tinual sunshine.
PENNY. Weren't we doing a play a while back?
ALAN. Right! (Everyone listening to Ronnie who has entered
during the last sentence. Ronnie in mid-sentence. Another time,
earlier.)
RONNIE. —the size of a mustard seed can move mountains ... ?
PENNY. Can you work math?
ALAN. Well, I don't seem—
RONNIE. (Very seriously—mock religiously.) No, now, I'm not
kidding. The Bible says you can move mountains and you can.
And I have that faith.
PENNY. And you can move mountains?
RONNIE. It doesn't matter what you three feel, it's my faith
that's important. Now, do you see Mount Helix out there?—
ALAN. (As they look.) Are you kidding?
PENNY. Come on—
RONNIE. —No, now, we're all going to look away, go on—
PENNY. That's sacré—
RONNIE. —Look away now, it's a simple demonstration of my
faith— (They turn away from the mountain.)
ALAN. Right. Now what?
RONNIE. Now. When we turn around again, Mount Helix will
be gone. Because I have that faith. Because I know it will be gone.
In my heart. Now turn around slowly, and Mount Helix will be
gone. Now.
ALAN. You. (They don't believe, but they are a little uncertain.)
RONNIE. (Turns slowly and gazes off.) Well ... ?
CAROL. What?
RONNIE. Just like I thought, there it is. Damn.
ALAN. What?
PENNY. Don't scare me. (They laugh.)

RONNIE. I must have miscalculated. Look at it.
CAROL. Yeah, I think so.
RONNIE. I think it's even grown. My faith isn't the size of a
mustard seed, it's the size of a poppy seed. And poppy seed don't
move nothing.
CAROL. Poppy seed moves the world.
RONNIE. That's a different poppy seed.
CAROL. (In staring to get up, drops the bottle of pills, picks it
up, nearly falls over. Holding her head and trying to put the
bottle into a pocket of the robe.) Oh, wow.
RONNIE. Are you O.K.? You look like hell.
CAROL. (Nearly floating away, trying to come down a little.)
Hmmm? I'm sorry, I washed my brain and I can't do a thing with
it. Where are you? (She gets the bottle into the pocket, will not
look at Ronnie directly.)
RONNIE. What's wrong? Look at me.
CAROL. (Handing the robe to Penny.) Penny, sweetheart, could
you take this in?
RONNIE. What's wrong? (Penny takes the robe in.)
CAROL. No, I'm O.K. I ate something, it didn't agree with me.
RONNIE. Look up. Is that all?
CAROL. Well, it's my time as the Victorians would have it. I'm
dizzy a little is all. (She exits. Penny has taken the robe away and
is back now. Ronnie looks at Alan and Penny a moment. Some
tension.)
RONNIE. (Rather to the audience, breaking away.) Well, once
in a while you have to admit you don't understand a thing about
what kids are doing with their lives nowadays. (All the others
enter for lunch.)
PENNY. —Because they went all the way to the top of Mount
Helix and dragged down this poor palm tree.
RONNIE. I told you it wouldn't grow.
ALAN. Well how would Jerry and I know that? This poor baby
palm was thriving in the garbage heap, we transplanted it into the
back yard next to Jack's bird of paradise and the poor little palm
died before sundown. With its boots on.
CAROL. Boots off, I think.
ALAN. Well, whichever is the nobler.
RONNIE. I think it's two separate schools of thought.
JERRY. Off! "I ain't gonna die, partner with those damn boots on!"
DOUGLAS. Jerry, don't say damn in front of your brother, he won't be old enough to say that for fifteen years yet.
JERRY. Why not?
RONNIE. And you've got a few years to go yourself.
JERRY. What should I say?
JACK. Say "Hockie."
DOUGLAS. That's enough out of you too, no hints from the gallery, peanut.
CAROL. He's ladykiller.
JERRY. What can I say if I can't say that?
CAROL. How racy should it be?
JERRY. Pretty racy.
CAROL. Well, you should try—
JACK. "Hanged."
JERRY. Yes! That hanged thing ain't worth the powder it'd take to blow it . . .
RONNIE. No, no.
JACK. Danged. Danged.
JERRY. All-fired.
RONNIE. No—say—I can't think of one—Well, don't use any of them, good grief, there's at least—
JACK. Good grief!
RONNIE. No, don't say good grief either. There's two hundred thousand acceptable words in the language, you don't have to wallow around in the vernacular at your age.
JERRY. I don't know two hundred thousand—
DOUGLAS. Well, you better be for learning them.
JERRY. How do I know if they're acceptable?
RONNIE. O.K. You come to me and whisper them in my ear and if they happen not to be acceptable I'll wash your mouth out with soap.
JERRY. No.
RONNIE. See? I thought not. (They are leaving.) What do you say?
JACK. May we be excused?
RONNIE. Yes, you may; don't tear the house down. (Jack and Jerry exit.) The kids on the block have a bucket brigade of profanity. I think they have a collective mind. One of them learns a new word and everyone on the block knows it in an hour. We had an entire month of "shittin'" last year. I can't imagine where they got that one but they loved it.
CAROL. Probably from Douglas.
RONNIE. (To Carol.) You aren't supposed to say that.
DOUGLAS. They aren't supposed to listen. Hell, I wouldn't want them to be like Alan's college buddies up at State, all potatoes and no meat. They all look like they're made out of unbaked dough. They even talk like it.
ALAN. My friends? Whatta you talk? My friends swear like sailors, it's part of the emancipated young adult jargon.
DOUGLAS. Well, I'd be surprised if they knew what it meant. We dropped him off the other morning—
ALAN. Yeah, yeah, last month sometime you dropped me off.
DOUGLAS. Two weeks ago Friday.
ALAN. Compromise purple. (To audience, aside.) Now, you see, I think that's the funniest line in the play.
DOUGLAS. And he introduced Ronnie and me to a few of them. Sasha and Joan and Owen and—don't they ever get out into the sun?
ALAN. Into the sun? Are you kidding? Oh, my God—into the sun! I've discovered there's this whole beautiful poetical intellectual coterie that wouldn't be caught dead in the sun. They're nuts but they're great. Kinda like the Castilian Spanish—the whiter you are the brighter you are. They're nuts but you love them for it—a lot of the young kids out at State—
DOUGLAS. Young? Young? Young? Them? Oh, man, they're on their pensions. Who are you trying to kid? They're cadavers. Ronnie, you read—Carol, did you see that magazine thing they put out at State?
CAROL. No . . .
ALAN. I brought that home, I haven't seen it yet—
DOUGLAS. (Overlapping.) Well, that's what I'm talking, Ronnie. Right there. I want you to look at it some right and see if it can turn you on.
CAROL. What he's saying, Alan, is it doesn't stack up to the garage collection of the complete Earl Stanley Gardner—
DOUGLAS. —Listen, twit. Unless you've read those books just don't knock them. People are a darn sight more interested in life than in those plants and those creepy ferns and creepy shadows
and creepy creeps. Nobody reads that magazine except your creepy college would-be poets. Oh, man, I didn’t graduate from high school and I’ll bet I can take any of them on in anything except arithmetic, huh?

ALAN. Dad and I are both rotten with figures.

DOUGLAS. Some kinds of figures.

ALAN. Probably you could.

DOUGLAS. Yeah, you damn betcha. What do they retain? Huh? History; I’ll bet you don’t even know the Presidents of the country, your own goddamned country, do you?

ALAN. God no. I only know the capitals of the states because I had a jigsaw puzzle.

DOUGLAS. And the vice-presidents.

ALAN. I don’t know any of the vice-presidents except Truman.

DOUGLAS. Well, I don’t imagine ten out of the eight thousand of them know them either. Who was Washington’s Vice-President?

ALAN. I don’t know.

DOUGLAS. The first Vice-President of the United States?

ALAN. I said no. I’m stupid.

PENNY. Adams.

DOUGLAS. Right.

PENNY. Only that’s it.


ALAN. Hey, that’s great. And many more, huh? Tyler of Tippecanoe and Tyler too fame?

DOUGLAS. Right.

ALAN. Who was Teddy Roosevelt’s first Vice-President?


JERRY. (Entering with a small postage stamp-sized piece of photograph.) Look at me, that’s terrible. Right across my ear.

RONNIE. What?

JERRY. My picture. The picture Dad took of us.

RONNIE. Doug, you didn’t tear that up, did you?

DOUGLAS. What? Tear what up?

ALAN. I wanted a print of that.

DOUGLAS. What? It isn’t any good.

RONNIE. Your mother loved it; I told you what she said.

DOUGLAS. Well, mother, bless her heart, doesn’t know much about photography.

ALAN. Well, I don’t either, but I wanted one.

DOUGLAS. No, I tore it up; it was a bad print anyway; it’s too light; I’ll print it up again.

ALAN. You never even intended to.

DOUGLAS. (Quite directly) Well, now, how do you know what I intended to do and what the hell I didn’t intend to do? Huh?

RONNIE. It’s the only picture we had of them; you haven’t taken a picture of the boys in two years.

DOUGLAS. It was a lousy picture, I’ll take another one; the light was bad. It was a snapshot for God’s sake. Penny, are you going to help me or not, huh?

PENNY. Yeah, I will.

JERRY. He tore it right across my ear.

ALAN. I really wanted it.

DOUGLAS. (Much too loud for the occasion.) All right now, will you just shut up about the goddammed picture now! Now I’ve had it! With you! (He exits with Penny.)

RONNIE. (Tepically.) Doug and I had a terrible argument about you last night.

ALAN. What? Wait a sec—I’m not getting the drift of—

RONNIE. (Going on.) Actually he argued. He said you should excuse the expression, you hadn’t had a “piece of ass” since you’d been here.

ALAN. I hadn’t what?

DOUGLAS. (To Ronnie as the two are suddenly isolated in the living room.) You saw that gang of dough-balls he was hanging out with at school.

RONNIE. I don’t know if he’s quite “hanging out” with them.

DOUGLAS. Well, I’m not saying what he’s doing with them, I know what he’s not doing. When has he been on a date? Squirting Cookie to the local movie in El Cajon and back twice, what’s that supposed to mean?

RONNIE. Well you could hardly expect him to go for Cookie—
Cookie’s hardly the freshest thing on the block—And it’s a small block.

DOUGLAS. When’s he gone out?
RONNIE. I don’t know, when’s he had time? Full-time work,
full-time school.

DOUGLAS. Oh, time’s ass. Summer term, everyone else on vaca-
tion, goddamn it, he hangs around the house, he hangs around
school, he hasn’t had a piece of ass since he’s been here.

RONNIE. Well, he’s been here four or five months, I don’t know.

DOUGLAS. Well, nothing. He’s not getting anything from that
gang of dishwasher dames at school and if he is he ought to be
ashamed of himself. I can tell you that. What’s the hell’s the matter,
hasn’t he got a libido?

RONNIE. Don’t know if you’re proud of him for—

DOUGLAS. Proud of what?

RONNIE. Well, he doesn’t drink, he doesn’t scoot around on a
motorcycle, he’s no—

DOUGLAS. Well, maybe he should! I told him he could have the
car anytime he wanted it, he hasn’t asked for it once.

RONNIE. Well, whenever are you not using it?

DOUGLAS. Plenty is the answer to that, plenty.

RONNIE. You also told him you’d get him a new Austin; he hasn’t
seen that.

DOUGLAS. Not on your damn life until he shows some interest.

What, am I going to get a car to rust in the driveway? (Somewhat
to the audience.) Took him out to the damn lot, looked around
mildly, came back saying he liked them all and started taking a
bus to school, what the hell?

RONNIE. Well, I don’t want to argue.

ALAN. When would I have time?

RONNIE. That’s what I said, Alan. Still.

ALAN. I can’t see it’s any of his business anyway, good God.

RONNIE. I told him he didn’t have a detective on your tail, how
did he know?

ALAN. Tail is funny, Oh, well.

DOUGLAS. (Continuing with Ronnie.) When I was his age I
knew the score all around. I’m not going to break him in like a
hunting dog, stick a quail in his mouth and have him spit it out till
I can teach him what it is. He isn’t stupid. What kind of man
doesn’t know where the hunt is? Huh? I don’t want to tell you!

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It just isn’t living. Life is for living, Ronnie. The Best Is None Too
Good.

ALAN. (Rather rapidly.) I’ll bet a hundred times Mom’s told me
that—Your dad always said the best is none too good, the best is
none too good. She used to say I was like him a lot—you’re like
him a lot—and she was right, damnit, more right every day I live—

DOUGLAS. No, by God he isn’t—I like me! Not on your life he
isn’t. Maybe I got into trouble and maybe I got with some kids
that were a bad influence I don’t say I was an angel but I knew
where the food was and where my hands were and my mouth
and my cock and my belly and if I knew what I had I knew where
to put it too. And I had women. I mean real women. Hell, the first
woman I had was thirty-five years old and I was a kid fifteen and
don’t think she didn’t teach fast. Hell, I’m younger now than he is.
And I grew up in the same goddamned two-bit Nebraskan town he
did so don’t pull that.

RONNIE. Don’t think it’s at all unusual for a boy seventeen to
be more—

DOUGLAS. I don’t want to hear it. I’m younger now than he is
now. You squeal around a corner with the girl’s hair flying out,
by God and she’s all over you. Wigging her behind in your lap, by
God you pull over to the curb and let ‘em have it right there. You
pull into a garage. Or a lot, a parking lot. What’s he’s going to do,
take a cheap bottle of booze up to some wet hotel room? What
does he know? I never went to one cheap hotel room with a bottle
of cheap booze in my life. You think I’m going to sit on those
sway-backed mattresses, burn-holes all over the furniture vanish.
Glass circles. God knows what laid what there. Out in the damn
grass alongside the road under Nature’s clean sky with the wind
blowing and stars! All that smell of lipstick. Hell, the beaches at
night are lined up, where’s he? Huh? Goddammit, he’s eighteen
years old, what’s he doing; jerkin’ off?

RONNIE. Well, tell him, honey, don’t tell me—I’m not interested
in seducing young girls.

DOUGLAS. His mother stunted him. Neutered him. He’s humili-
ating. Just looking at his damned—all right, he’s a damn all right
looking guy, or could be. There’s nothing wrong with him. He’s let
those two damn phoney girls twist his hair up like a pretzel—all
curled up like some kind of rock and roll singer.

RONNIE. That’s what the girls are going for nowadays, I guess.

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DOUGLAS. Oh, shit, Ronnie. Nowadays. Hair that long, curled up like that, I can hardly sit at the table with him without throwing up! I'd like to snatch him bald—nowadays; women go for men and that's all! Women go for vitality, vigor, exuberance, strength. Balls for God's sake. What are you talking? Huh?

ALAN. You know—

DOUGLAS. Huh?

ALAN. —dad asked me—

DOUGLAS. Aw, hell, go on! (Exits.)

ALAN. —last night to contribute twenty-five dollars each week to the family fund. To pay my way around here... for room and board. For twelve years he didn't pay a red cent to my welfare and suddenly I'm a drain on the budget. Another mouth to feed. God damn. I found out what the mortgage on the house is—

RONNIE. Well, I told you that. It isn't a secret surely.

ALAN. A hundred and three dollars a month.

RONNIE. For twenty years though.

ALAN. Unless you pay it off sooner and you're paying a hundred twenty—which is what the two girls bring in—they just sign over the checks to the mortgage—actually!

RONNIE. That isn't even what they eat.

ALAN. (To the audience and Ronnie.) I didn't believe it... And he wants a hundred-plus a month from me as my contribution to the gas and food. I don't feel I should be working for you. Down there for you... All I bargained for was part-time work and full-time college. I'm full-time working and I can't save the money to quit work because you people can't afford to keep me here unless I pay my own way!

RONNIE. Don't you think you should pay toward it? Because we can't. We'd like you to know that.

ALAN. I didn't think I should pay. I quite frankly didn't think I should pay. I worked down there with noise that would bring down mountains seven hours a day when I could pull myself together after school to go and I didn't really mind if it was doing something. All right we're all of us selfish. If I was using it for tuition and books and school but paying the rent on dad's house!

RONNIE. (Suddenly. Quietly and seriously.) You're an equal member of the family, Alan. The inheritance will be divided three ways equally between Doug's three kids; you'll get just as much as the kids do.

ALAN. (Tourown.) What? Well, that's a long time off—what kind of talk. Anyway—

RONNIE. I just want you to feel—I want you to know that, Alan. Truly.

DOUGLAS. (From the other side. Quite beatedly and suddenly joining them. He has taken up a lunch pail and a pocket holder for pencils with a red and green badge on it which he carries in his shirt pocket.) Stny where? By God when I say come on to work, I mean it. What the hell have—where are you sick?

ALAN. All over. I'm not sick—I don't feel like working. I don't feel well. I don't want to go. I have things to do, I don't feel good—well.

DOUGLAS. Stanley tells me you're never there five days a week at least when you're home frisking around all day like today, by God you can go to work. Since when didn't you feel well?

ALAN. Since now. What's wrong? What difference does it make?

DOUGLAS. Listen here, mister, if school gets in the way then you can quit school. I don't see work getting in the way of school. Are you missing there too? Huh?

ALAN. No, not yet.

DOUGLAS. You moke around like a sick calf, now it's about time someone put a firecracker under your tail. See if there's any life in you. You and Penny the whole lot of you. Maybe you should take liver tablets or something.

ALAN. (With some humor.) Perhaps I should. What's wrong, can't I be sick?

DOUGLAS. If I believe it. There's no goddamned reason why you can't go in except you don't want to... By God now, Alan, and I'm serious, I just want to know one thing—

ALAN. Why should I? Of what importance is the job down...

DOUGLAS. Because I told you to. I said so... I told you to get ready. I wasn't having you make the whole damn carload of us late again. Now are you coming or not?

ALAN. No. goddamn! I'm not. That's what I said. I don't feel well. I've got three chapters to read on—

DOUGLAS. Listen here! Now, once and for all. I'm not going to say this twice now, this has been coming. Do you want to stay here? Answer me?
ALAN. (Letting down, relaxing.) Yes, that's what I've been saying. I told you. It's as simple—

DOUGLAS. I mean do you want to stay here. Live here. In this house?

ALAN. (Quite thrown.) What? I guess so. Yes, what, yes, of course I do.

DOUGLAS. (Very strongly.) Then by God if you do you better know this is my home. And I say here. I call the shots here. And what I say goes, mister. And those that don't like it can find a roof over their heads somewhere else. And you better be for learning that fast. Because I don't take any shit. None.

ALAN. I know—that—

DOUGLAS. None! Mister! Not from you or anybody else, huh? And you better be for learning that fast! (Exits.)

ALAN. (Standing where he was. Tries to speak to the audience. Very upset, trying to be rational.) I—my whole body—hell, I can't do—was pounding. Well, I hadn't— He left. I—I—Ronnie went down the hall. (She does.) And into—I went out—blindly, turned around and went out into the back yard (He does.) and fell down on the ground and bawled like I never remember bawling before or since. Sobbing. I. I. (Fighting for objectivity.) Now, what was going through my—what was I thinking? Well, of course all the times I had wanted a father and not had one. The times I had wanted to live with dad. The struggle mother had had during the war, working in a garment factory. And before that the little I could remember—of—remember of dad, before. And what I had been told, mum's stories. And my sister who had been born dead while he was out with—whomever it was he was out with. That had always been my picture of him—mom walking the floor, him coming in and her crying— Ronnie was in the house. I was very aware of that. I expected her to come out and talk to me. Something. Ronnie and I were close—friends. If I had left. Then. Where would I have gone? I couldn't consider it. This is where I had come to—right to the edge of the continent. I didn't think about going. I couldn't leave. I didn't know what we had been fighting about. I honestly didn't; not then. Well, neither here nor there. Finally I got up. Aching. And went inside.

RONNIE. I knew you went out. I knew you were crying. I didn't look out. I assumed you wanted your privacy. I wasn't going to embarrass you.

ALAN. (A kind of laugh.) Humf.

RONNIE. I just sat. Tried to sort the wash, not to listen, cleaned up the bedroom.—Penny had vanished, very unlike her, nobody had seen her all afternoon. Rose finally called at eleven and said she was over there, which was all right, I suppose, at least we knew where she was.

ALAN. I went to bed about twelve. Dad came home after work, I heard him in the kitchen making scrambled eggs I suppose or French toast. I almost expected him to come in and apologize. All right, I did expect him to. I don't know for what. I couldn't sleep. I got up and dressed after he'd gone to bed. Actually went to a bar. Deserted bar.

RONNIE. And came home drunk as a lord.

ALAN. You shouldn't have stayed up.

RONNIE. I woke up and wondered where you'd gone.

ALAN. The next morning—bright and early Dad's photography club went off to the mountains. And I woke up with a hangover—so we begin and end both with a splitting headache—and Penny came home to leave.

PENNY. (Ending a very long cross during the above to Ronnie.) Ronnie? Ronnie?

RONNIE. What, Pen?

PENNY. Could I talk to you alone?

RONNIE. How come you stayed with Rose, Penny, you should call when you decide to leave like that, we were worried about—

PENNY. I can't stay here, I love you very much but I'll go live with Rose, I've already asked them and they said it was all right, I didn't tell them why, I wouldn't tell them that— I—

RONNIE. What's wrong, Penny? You know you can't live with Rose. Penny, that's stupid?

PENNY. With her mother, I can live with her mother. She can take me. Ronnie, yesterday afternoon—with Doug—we were in the darkroom—we were just standing there and—like always, working—and he put his arm around me, and he started talking to me about—talking to me about how I liked to help him and about how good a foster father he'd been to me and what a good relationship we had and he kissed my cheek. I didn't know what to do. I thought of once when I was about fourteen a man tried to put his hand in my lap in a movie once. I felt the same way, and he put his hand up under my shirt on my stomach and tried to turn
me around and kiss my mouth—with his moustache on my cheek
and—I just pulled away and got out—went out. (Beat. Then she
catches her breath.)
RONNIE. Well, don’t cry, you’re O.K., aren’t you?
PENNY. I want to leave here.
RONNIE. Well, I don’t blame you, honey—but you don’t have to
do that, my God, the sky didn’t fall in, Henny Penny.
PENNY. What will he do? I can’t look him in the face, Ronnie.
I’m going to pack now because I don’t want to sleep here. You can
tell the authorities that I’m still here if you want to and they won’t
know the difference, they never care anyway. I don’t want to tell
them why.
RONNIE. Oh, Penny, stop being so much. It’s all too pathetic. I
mean, damn. It’s just stupid. (To the audience.) I mean, Penny,
for God’s sake. Look at her. She hasn’t a single quality anyone
would go for unless you happen to really desire pure virginity in
the abstract. I mean, I know her qualities but you couldn’t expect
Doug to see them.
PENNY. Ronnie, I don’t want to leave.
RONNIE. I said you didn’t have to—
PENNY. I hate Rose! She’s fat and stupid and she talks too much
and I hate her boyfriends—they all have beards and . . . (Now
she does cry, and quite loudly, openly.)
RONNIE. All right do cry if you want to. Go on. It’s absurd.
Don’t be silly.
JACK. (Entering. Carol just behind.) What’s wrong with Penny?
CAROL. (Entering.) Come on, buster.
JACK. What’s wrong?
CAROL. Where do you want me to start?
RONNIE. Jack, honey, go on outside.
CAROL. (Exits with Jack.) Come on, loverboy . . .
PENNY. Why did he do that?
RONNIE. I don’t know. You’re not going to leave now. Penny.
You don’t have to see him if you don’t want to. It’s only six
months, Penny, don’t be silly.
PENNY. Why did you tell him? You knew what he’d say . . .
You’re very bright—Why the hell did you tell him, Ronnie?
RONNIE. Penny, I’d always known pretty much what to expect
from Doug. I wasn’t worried about him being brought up for rape
charges by those girls he ogles over, sublimation is a wonderful
thing. As long as it works. (To the audience.) But to make a
creepy pass at Penny. It hadn’t entered my mind. What was he
trying to prove? (Back to Penny.) And you wanted to crawl away
and do you think he wouldn’t know why? Doug—if the heat gets
too hot will just pick up and leave as you—Alan—well know. And
I have two kids to think about . . . I’m sorry, Alan, are you OK?
ALAN. It’s OK.
RONNIE. Now I mean, I wonder.
ALAN. It’s just as well, really.
DOUGLAS. (Entering.) Well, we went up into the mountains this
morning—you’ve never seen anything like it. Some of those—
RONNIE. If you aren’t the most ridiculous, childish oaf I’ve ever
seen . . . !
DOUGLAS. Why’s that?
RONNIE. Penny’s in there hysterical; she tells me you made a
dumb sloppy pass at her in the garage yesterday afternoon. If you
aren’t an ass—to begin with for thinking she wouldn’t come im-
imediately like a shocked virgin and tell me. Confess to me. Doug-
las stands shocked and silent.) I can’t believe you did something
like that. I hope you don’t delude yourself into thinking she liked
it. She wants to leave is what she’s thinking—she wants to go live
with Rose— I told her it was stupid. If you don’t know better than
to upset a girl like that. I swear to God if it’s true—you ought to be
ashamed of yourself. I know I am for you if you’re not. Or I
would be, Doug, if it weren’t all so laughable. (Beat. Beat. Douglas
continues to look at her. No one moves except Carol and Alan.)
CAROL. Well, that ought to be it then.
ALAN. I’d think.
CAROL. He says no, right?
ALAN. As best I recall.

CURTAIN
ACT III

Alan comes forward. The stage is rather dark at the beginning, growing slowly and steadily tighter.

RONNIE. (From the darkness, faintly.) Alan, honey, get up, Mr. McGinty is on fire, the whole sky's . . .

ALAN. The greatest sight while I stayed in California was something that the Californians do fear. Their homes—many of them—and many of the nicer ones—range up into the brush and forests in the mountains. In the fall when it's dry—even for here, Bone dry, Dead. Fires light the sky, Mr. McGinty and Otay in the distance burned. The sky was red. The mountains were ochre with dried grass and brush one day and that night streaked with red fire and the next morning black. Houses were destroyed, timber and game and the view. Along about this time a poet—of local fame at school—who had left State a few years earlier—came back for a day or so. I have tried to remember what he wrote, but outside of a firm conviction that he was the most brilliant person I'd ever met, and wrote more perfectly than—Oh, skip it. I can't remember a word, in any case, and that's odd. It was probably more lines about creepy ferns and creepy shadows for creepy creeps. I do know we spoke, that we walked up into the mountains that had burned—around a landscape that looked like the moon. Charred mesquite and ashes six inches deep. The brush some of it—the fire had gone through it so quickly some of the brush stood—like ashes on a cigarette—stood three feet high—the white negative of the brush exactly intact and you touched it and it disintegrated. And into the woods that were saved to commune with what was left of nature. And after three afternoons of walking I skipped two days of school to stay mostly in my room and when I went back the poet had left—he wasn't around. It is of pertinence only as a very ironic coincidence. Ronnie said about Mt. Helix—just like I thought there it is. Who knows what a person is made of? I promise not to tell you if you promise not to tell me. I left Nebraska to come to the promised land because I had to. I left because I had to. This is the state I'm in. California. So much is true here, so much is open; so much is honest and so much is impossible to admit. Even of what I know is there, what I realize is there. In this state.

CAROL. It's a good enough state to be in.

ALAN. "I want to thank the theatre?" Poor bitch.

CAROL. Right. Where else am I? Nowhere.

ALAN. You're always here, in my state. With all those possibilities, if only . . .

CAROL. Yes, I knew. If only is a good state.

ALAN. (Ironically) California.

CAROL. Not that it matters—when you look at it from this distance, but that week—the week of the fire—I got engaged to Sonny. We will say briefly that the marriage didn't come off and the following year quite without me giving a damn I became a highway statistic and about as violently as one would have expected. My date for that particular night got rather too drunk and like the idiot he was drove us off—it's funny—it was funny then—shot like a rocket off Inspiration Point.

ALAN. And landed in the valley below.

CAROL. Hours . . . Actual hours later.

ALAN. And burst into flames.

CAROL. (Pause.) If you say so.

ALAN. Ronnie wrote me—her second and last letter, some time back.

CAROL. There should be something enormous I should say—what an opportunity. I was very good that last year. No one knows, I know it doesn't seem like it. But I was so damn good. I'm not saying I'm sorry. Goddamn I hate people who say they're sorry.

ALAN. Right.

CAROL. Once we were engaged we didn't get along—suffice it to say without running the story that something came up with which Sonny violently disagreed and we told each other to fuck off.

ALAN. And your date for that particular evening, who drove you over the cliff—

CAROL. Was a clod, forget it. I was aware that we were nowhere—I mean nowhere about to make the corner ahead. Mountain road. And I stiffened, like I was looking for the brake on my side of the car and not a word, not a scream, saw it all—thought: my God, some car is going to come along and see the barrier torn
up on this curve and be scared to death. Saw it all. In slow motion if you please.
ALAN. And Sonny wasn't with you?
CAROL. How do you mean? "Wasn't with me?" (Rather bitter for just a second.) Well, that shows what you know, doesn't it?
No, Sonny was in downtown San Diego, right?
RONNIE. Right, or so he said.
CAROL. At the time. There, Sonny was somewhere in San Diego or so he said getting drunk and listening to records. At the time.
(Beat.) Which shows what he knows, doesn't it? You didn't know right away, did you?
ALAN. No, some time. Ronnie wrote me. A reply to a request for a loan of money.
CAROL. You don't tell me your dreams, Alan, and I won't tell you mine.
ALAN. Deal.
CAROL. Deal.
RONNIE. Doug is an excellent provider, Alan; you can't see it, I know, but he is. And I'm an excellent manager, all considered. And I have Jerry and Jack and they are more important to me than anything in the world. (Proudly.) The boys are quite grown, of course, and quite normal and I'm very proud of them. You would be too. Jerry bowls.
DOUGLAS. To each his own, I guess.
ALAN. Deal.
DOUGLAS. Not at all eccentric. Not at all. Just ordinary.
RONNIE. In an extraordinary sort of way.
ALAN. Deal.
RONNIE. You were so drunk that night, I thought you'd faint right on the floor.
PENNY. I. (Everyone turns to her, a pause.)
DOUGLAS. Yeah?
PENNY. I don't care, one way or the other.
RONNIE. You always wanted to be a teacher.

PENNY. Not civics. I don't think. I teach civics. I'm not good with them really, you have to be more of a disciplinarian than anything.
ALAN. Married, right?
PENNY. Oh, yeah. Kids.
CAROL. No white coat?
PENNY. No rice, really, either.
DOUGLAS. So, all those deals, some of 'em get good cards, some of 'em—
CAROL. (Cutting in.) And some of them get a lousy hand and haven't the nerve to bluff or the sense to fold. Thanks, anyway, Alan. I appreciate it. You know you hardly entered my mind. I had quite a world going for me there.
ALAN. People are always entering people's minds at inopportune times. The least I could do—
CAROL. (Singing gently.) Walk right in, sit right down, daddie, let your hair hang down . . .
ALAN. What are you on?
CAROL. I don't even know.
PENNY. (To Ronnie.) I liked Doug really. I'd never had a father that I remembered.
RONNIE. I know, Penny.
PENNY. I didn't want to leave.
RONNIE. You didn't have to leave, my God, the sky didn't fall in. Henny Penny . . .
PENNY. What will he do? I can't look him in the face, Ronnie.
CAROL. God bless us every one.
RONNIE. Yes, indeed, Carol.
ALAN. Deal. God bless us every one. I must have drunk about—(Drunk) about—about—
RONNIE. Come on.
ALAN. About a keg of stale beer. I'll bet I really did. You know California beer tastes like slop.
RONNIE. Right, no good at all; you shouldn't drink it.
ALAN. Now you tell me.
RONNIE. Why don't you go off to bed and get some sleep now before you wake up the whole house. Even Carol's in bed already.
ALAN. You go on to bed. The bartender kept sitting beers in front of me and he knew I wasn't of age. I should report him for selling beer to a minor. I don't think he even charged me for the last couple,
though. Just as soon as I finished there'd be another one there like the Sermon on the Mount. Bread and fishes. He says we have a couple of girls and I said no, thank you, I just want to get very stoned. I haven't been stoned since I left Nebraska—I haven't you know.

RONNIE. I know.

ALAN. And he said, "Don't get sick it's gonna be a scorcher tomorrow." He was from Kansas. There's no such thing as a Native Californian.

RONNIE. I thought you wanted me to go on and now you're talking.

ALAN. Did I make any sense?

RONNIE. Very little sense.

ALAN. I was so dizzy I couldn't even see the room. And—go on.

RONNIE. O.K. "Go on to bed, it'll be a good day tomorrow." 

ALAN. And tomorrow came and the Kansas was closer.

PENNY. You can tell the authorities that I'm still here if you want to. They never care anyway.

CAROL. They never gave a wild flying damn about any of us really. Who cares about anyone?

RONNIE. It's impossible to take seriously. Penny? It's an insult to me for one thing which of course Penny couldn't know, but I'd expect you to see that. I swear to God you ought to be ashamed of yourself; I know I am for you if you're not; or I would be if . . .

DOUGLAS. (Cutting in.) It's a goddamn!

RONNIE. Oh, come on, Doug, so you tried to sneak a quick—

DOUGLAS. (Over her.) That lying bitch—is what I'm saying. I might want her to feel at home. Can't I put my arm around her and give her a squeeze; goddamn it she's never had a father! Her life—the bitch. Not another night under my house, that bitch if she thinks she can accuse me of—Alain I want to talk with you.

Now this isn't something that I want passed around and I don't think you'll—I don't want to see her face here again. No, by God, she can go to Rose, she can go to hell for all I care. She's not spending another night under my roof.

RONNIE. Doug, it doesn't matter—of course she can—

DOUGLAS. Like hell it doesn't matter. Doesn't matter! You try to show some affection for someone—I didn't touch the tight bitch, I didn't go near her, what's she trying to pull? And by God if you believe it you can go to hell too. I won't have it. I won't have it, by God.

PENNY. I didn't want to cause anything—why did you tell him—

RONNIE. Why didn't you tell him?

DOUGLAS. The whole goddamn bunch of them can clear out for all I care. They can get out now.

ALAN. Why did you tell him?

RONNIE. I didn't say you did, I said Penny said you did. I think it's funny; there's nothing to get upset about, Good God, Doug.

ALAN. Why did you tell him?

DOUGLAS. No, by God I never touched her.

RONNIE. She says you kissed her on the cheek. She didn't say any more than that.

DOUGLAS. Well what the hell's wrong with that, a father kissing a daughter. If I had! I'm supposed to be her father, she's never had a family; what the hell would be wrong with that? If I had! Which I didn't by God.

RONNIE. It just isn't important.

DOUGLAS. Well, something is—Alain!

ALAN. What?

DOUGLAS. (Very tense—more intense than shouting.) This is important—more than that girl—as far as I'm concerned.

ALAN. What's wrong? I've not missed work, any if—

DOUGLAS. Just let me talk if you will, please now.

RONNIE. Nothing is of such importance, Doug . . .

DOUGLAS. (Overlapping.) I said goddamn it I'm going to talk now. Doug is gonna talk for a change now—I might know something!

ALAN. (To the audience.) He—I don't know, If I had known then what he was thinking perhaps—

DOUGLAS. (Whirling him around, cutting in, Overlapping.) LOOK AT ME WHEN I'M TRYING TO—Now you've been avoiding, conniving and lying the whole goddamn time, now I'm going to talk.

RONNIE. Doug, it isn't necessary to—

DOUGLAS. All right now! Penny, you stay goddamn right there, I'll deal with your lies— (To Alain.) Jerry tells me that you and Phil have been sitting out at the cliffs in his sparkling Pontiac. Last night and night before that and night before that.
ALAN. With Penny and Phil, yeah. I went into work the following day, I don’t know—
DOUGLAS. That doesn’t interest me! It’s your job, brother, you can get fired from it if you goddamn well like—I just want to know if it’s true?
ALAN. What? Is what true? I don’t know what you’re getting at, Dad, I haven’t any idea what—
DOUGLAS. You goddammed bastard, stall for time. You know, don’t you?
ALAN. Well, I don’t see any point in—
DOUGLAS. Yes, you are, goddammit, it all fits—everything fits, suddenly it dawns. Suddenly it dawns. Yeah, and everyone—all your friends at State know it. Well, he has to have—I’m talking about Phil, you know goddammed well what I’m saying—he has to have someone to cover for him, he can’t spend all his time with the sailors from the queer bars downtown. Everybody else is too wise to fool. Penny wouldn’t ask questions—she has to take what she can get and she deserves just what she takes. If she’s the coverup of some rich queer she’s too stupid to ask questions . . .
I feel sorry for the lying bitch if she’s that stupid. But you’re not dumb. I thought you had some physical problem maybe, I should have been wise, man! It’s sure easy for you—going out with Penny and him, what are you—holding hands behind her back?
ALAN. Lie! That’s no . . .
DOUGLAS. Then what are you doing?
ALAN. What are you saying?
DOUGLAS. I’m saying you’re through around this house. Not with my kids—not—you’re not going to make sissies out of my two boys and you’re not going to breathe in my house—not my air anymore!
ALAN. That’s a lie—how can you say that with Penny here—she knows better—and Jerry . . .
DOUGLAS. Penny knows goddam it’s true. Look at her. Ask her if he’s once tried to lay her or even thought about it. Hell, ask Carol, Carol knows it and Ronnie knows it and every other goddamned person in the county knows it and you do too. He’s famous. Everybody’s so goddamned afraid to hurt, disillusion little Penny’s feelings—so they let her live in a dream world. He must be laughing himself silly. Hell, he must spit on her. He knows a good thing when he sees it.

ALAN. Ask Carol— (But Carol is already shaking her head, better not ask me.) Well, is it’s true, what do you mean saying it?
What do you mean by saying that?
DOUGLAS. (This intense, not loud.) Not in my house.
ALAN. He never touched me. I don’t know why you can’t leave my sex interests alone or to myself.
DOUGLAS. I intend to protect my own. I’m not having it. Now, I can’t take this.
ALAN. What do you mean? What are you doing?
DOUGLAS. I’m telling you to go back to where you came from—we don’t need you here. It’s been disturbance since you came. Now, you take your little imitation leather suitcase in there and your record player and everything you’ve touched in this goddammed house and pack them back up into a little—
ALAN. No! By God. Damn you! I’m going to say one thing! You’re lying and I don’t know why! But you are and you know you are! I’m no good at this—
DOUGLAS. Well, if you think I am . . .
ALAN. You see! That’s all I know. What you are not! You’re Not! You’re nothing! You think the best is none too good and you don’t have any idea at all about the best! You’ll never see it! And all your lies prove it!
DOUGLAS. Get out. That’s all I want from you, mister, that’s all. That’s all. That’s all—just go on. Out. That’s all.
ALAN. Mur-der-er! (Sobbing.) MURDERER! I had a sister and you killed her. Killed your own daughter trying to be a man—Whoring and if that’s what you want me to be like and Jerry to be like and all of us, then I may have the satisfaction.
DOUGLAS. (Slaps him sharply across the face.) That’s a lie! That’s a Lie!
ALAN. NO! You killed her! As well as if you had beat her to death . . . Jerry’s sister and Jack’s sister and my sister! You drove my mother insane with your whores and you’re so proud of it! And you’ve come out here with her. And you’re never going to forget it!
DOUGLAS. That’s a goddam lie. She never.
ALAN. She was born a bloody dead mass! Not even human—thrown to the trash to burn and you did it! You know it!
DOUGLAS. (Injured—quietly.) How can . . . you have no idea. What that did to me. No idea. You’ll never know as long as you
live—you couldn’t—you'll never—by God—have a kid to know what it's like— Now you get your things in there—and you get out of here—in half an hour, I don't care where you go. You just get out of my sight now! (Penny has left just before Alan's line “Murderer.” She goes down the hall. She walks to the door of the bedroom and takes Carol's orange robe, under her arm and to the bathroom. At the door of the bathroom Carol reaches her. She tries to close the door but Carol blocks it. They struggle with the bottle of pills. Carol’s line comes now.)

CAROL. No, Penny!

PENNY. No, let me stop—stop—stop!

CAROL. (At the same time.) The hell do you think you're doing goddamnit— Give THEM TO ME! (Penny screams. Carol is still struggling with her. The pills fly from the bottle across the floor scattering all around them. Some are in Penny's hand. Penny and Carol both go to their knees, Carol trying to stuff Penny's hands away from her mouth—Penny trying to stuff the pills into her mouth. Struggling.) Stop it, Penny. Stop it . . . Stop it—give them to me, what are you trying to do?

PENNY. (At the same time.) No, don't—get away, CAROL, get away— No, Let me! Carol, don’t.

RONNIE. (Reaches them.) Penny— Stop it—Did she take any?

CAROL. I don't think so. (Jack enters.)

PENNY. Please, please, let me! (Ronnie gets a strong hold on Penny—Jack picks up several of the pills.)

CAROL. Jack, stay away, go out! Don't touch those!

RONNIE. Jack, put those back—throw them down. Every one. Now! (He does.) What are they?

CAROL. I don’t know.

RONNIE. What are they?

CAROL. Just never mind—it isn’t important—they’re aspirin.

RONNIE. What are they, Carol?

CAROL. I said never mind, it doesn’t matter. Penny, baby, come on, honey—

RONNIE. I said goddammnit you tell me what they are!

CAROL. (Screaming.) They're Mellari, Mellari, dope! What the goddamn hell do you think they are—and I don’t give a shit what . . . (Ronnie slaps her across the face— Carol immediately slaps her back. Douglas arrives, slugs Carol halfway across the stage.)

DOUGLAS. Take them! Take them! All! Take them every god-darn one!

RONNIE. It's all right. Carol, take care of her.

CAROL. I'm sorry. Let her take care of herself.

PENNY. I'm O.K. (She turns to go.) Leave me alone. All of you just don't touch me! (Ronnie reaches toward her.) Don't touch me! (Ronnie turns, Alan follows her. Douglas begins to pick up the pills.)

ALAN. Ronnie. Ronnie.

RONNIE. (Interrupting.) I didn’t know you had had a sister who had been born dead, Alan. I’m very sorry. I don’t know what to say.

ALAN. All—I shouldn’t have said anything. I have—I don’t know what to do, Ron, he’s—nothing he said is true—I can’t leave you and Jack and—what am I supposed to do? What am I?—?

RONNIE. I think you’d better go. (She walks away, toward her room.)

DOUGLAS. (Finishing picking up the pills. Going to her as she leaves Alan.) Ron—Ronnie.

RONNIE. Doug, I don’t want to talk to you—I want to lie down. Where's Jerry?

DOUGLAS. He's outside.

RONNIE. I just want to lie down.

DOUGLAS. Ron—Ronnie, baby—what could I do?

RONNIE. Nothing, Doug. It’s all right.

DOUGLAS. Everything’s going to be all right.

JACK. (Going to Alan.) Do you have to go?

ALAN. Yeah, I will.

DOUGLAS. Really. Forget it. It'll all be over. We're better off, Ronnie.

RONNIE. I'm sure, Doug, I don’t want to think about it.

DOUGLAS. (Turning, looking to him.) Alan? Alan, I want you to know—All those years . . .

ALAN. I know, dad. (Douglas and Alan are very far apart. Jack beside Alan. Douglas by Ronrie, Jerry alone outside. Penny and Carol together near their room.)

PENNY. Oh, God, Carol.

CAROL. It's all right, baby. Nothing matters.

JACK. I don't want you to leave; you just got here.

ALAN. It's O.K., baby . . .

JACK. Really, don't. (It begins to grow dark again.)
ALAN. Baby, it's good to remember that someone said that...
DOUGLAS. (Calling as though across time.) All those years. I wanted to help. What was I supposed to do? Alan? (It continues to grow dark.)
JACK. Please. Take me with you then.
ALAN. Baby, I will. Really, don't worry. You're eight years old and a little white orangutan.
JACK. Really, though, let me go with you, Alan, can I?
ALAN. You will, Jack, I promise. (Only the faintest light remains on Alan and Jack—Jack turns to go in, leaving Alan alone in the spot.)
DOUGLAS. Hugged me, by God. By God you can't—
PENNY. Pleased to meet you, I've heard a lot about you.
DOUGLAS. No matter what anybody anywhere says, you can't separate a kid from his father.
JERRY. Alan? Are you awake?
PENNY. Good night.
JERRY. Good morning.
CAROL. (Their voices tumble over each other.) Thanks anyway, Alan; I had quite a little world going for me. Walk right in, sit right down— (Continues to end.)
JERRY. (Cued by Carol's "Alan.") We had orange trees and plum trees and a fig tree.
RONNIE. (Cued by "orange trees." ) If you have the faith the size of a mustard seed you can move mountains. (On "Faith," Alan laughs to himself.)
DOUGLAS. (Cued by "size.") I know she must have told you things about me.
PENNY. (Cued by "told.") I'll probably teach, I like kids.
RONNIE. (Cued by "teach.") Welcome, Alan. Welcome, Hello!
ALAN. (Crying out.) LIGHTS! (The stage lights bounce up bright and full, everyone is still. Alan turns and walks out. They follow, urgently whispering. Douglas is the only voice we hear clearly.)
DOUGLAS. I just want you to understand. Alan.
Alan.
Alan.
Alan.
(The stage has returned to darkness before Alan can escape them.)