THE PLAYERS

MARTHA
A large, boisterous woman, 52, looking somewhat younger.
Ample, but not jumpy.

GEORGE
Her husband, 48. Thin, hair going gray.

HONEY
20, a petite blond girl, rather plain.

NICK
30, her husband. Blond, well put-together, good looking.

THE SCENE
The living room of a house on the campus of a small New England college.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
October 13, 1962, New York City, Billy Rose Theatre

UTA HAGEN as MARTHA
ARTHUR HILL as GEORGE
GEORGE CRUIZLAND as NICK
MELINDA DILLON as HONEY

Directed by ALAN SCHNEIDER
(Set in darkness. Crash against front door. Martha's laughter heard. Front door opens, lights are switched on. Martha enters, followed by George)

Jesus...

George

... Shhhhhhh...

Martha

... H. Christ...

George

For God's sake, Martha, it's two o'clock in the...

Martha

Oh, George!

George

Well, I'm sorry, but...

Martha

What a cluck! What a cluck you are.

George

It's late, you know? Late.

Martha

(Looks about the room. Imitates Bette Davis) What a dump. Hey, what's that from? "What a dump!"
Act One

GEORGE
How would I know what...

MARTHA
Aw, come on! What's it from? You know...

GEORGE
... Martha...

MARTHA
What's it from, for Christ's sake?

GEORGE (Wearily)
What's what from?

MARTHA
I just told you; I just did it. "What a dump!" Hunh?

GEORGE
I haven't the faintest idea what...

MARTHA
Dumbbell! It's from some goddamn Bette Davis picture
... some goddamn Warner Brothers epic...

GEORGE
I can't remember all the pictures that...

MARTHA
Nobody's asking you to remember every single goddamn
Warner Brothers epic... just one! One single little epic!
Bette Davis gets peritonitis in the end... she's got this
big black fright wig she wears all through the picture and
she gets peritonitis, and she's married to Joseph Cotten
or something...
**ACT ONE**

**MARTHA**
Can it! Just cut that out! This picture... Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store...

**GEORGE**
She works in a grocery store?

**MARTHA**
She's a housewife; she buys things... and she comes home with the groceries, and she walks into the modest living room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotten has set her up in...

**GEORGE**
Are they married?

**MARTHA (Impatiently)**
Yes. They're married. To each other. Cluck! And she comes in, and she looks around, and she puts her groceries down, and she says, "What a dump!"

**(Pause) Oh.**

**MARTHA (Pause) She's discontent.**

**(Pause) Oh.**

**MARTHA (Pause) Well, what's the name of the picture?**

**GEORGE**
I really don't know, Martha...

Well, think!

**GEORGE**
I'm tired, dear... it's late... and besides...

**MARTHA**
I don't know what you're so tired about... you haven't done anything all day; you didn't have any classes, or anything...

**GEORGE**
Well, I'm tired... If your father didn't set up these goddamn Saturday night orgies all the time...

**MARTHA**
Well, that's too bad about you, George...

**GEORGE (Grumbling)**
Well, that's how it is, anyway.

**MARTHA**
You didn't do anything; you never do anything; you never mix. You just sit around and talk.

**GEORGE**
What do you want me to do? Do you want me to act like you? Do you want me to go around all night braying at everybody, the way you do?

**MARTHA (Braying)**
I don't bray!

**GEORGE (Softly)**
All right... you don't bray.

**MARTHA (Hurt)**
I do not bray.

**GEORGE**
All right. I said you didn't bray.
ACT ONE

Make me a drink.

GEORGE

What?

MARTHA (Still softly)
I said, make me a drink.

GEORGE
(Moving to the portable bar)
Well, I don't suppose a nightcap'd kill either one of us . . .

MARTHA
A nightcap! Are you kidding? We've got guests.

GEORGE (Disbelieving)
We've got what?

MARTHA
Guests. Guests.

GEORGE
Guests!

MARTHA
Yes . . . guests . . . people . . . We've got guests coming over.

GEORGE
When?

MARTHA
Now!

GEORGE
Good Lord, Martha . . . do you know what time it . . .
Who's coming over?
GEORGE

It figures.

MARTHA

... and his wife's a mousey little type, without any hips, or anything.

Oh.

GEORGE (Vaguely)

MARTHA

You remember them now?

GEORGE

Yes, I guess so, Martha... But why in God's name are they coming over here now?

MARTHA

(In a so-there voice)

Because Daddy said we should be nice to them, that's why.

GEORGE (Defeated)

Oh, Lord.

MARTHA

May I have my drink, please? Daddy said we should be nice to them. Thank you.

GEORGE

But why now? It's after two o'clock in the morning, and...

MARTHA

Because Daddy said we should be nice to them!

GEORGE

Yes. But I'm sure your father didn't mean we were supposed to stay up all night with these people. I mean, we could have them over some Sunday or something...

MARTHA

Well, never mind... Besides, it is Sunday. Very early Sunday.

GEORGE

I mean... it's ridiculous...

MARTHA

Well, it's done!

GEORGE

(Resigned and exasperated)

All right. Well... where are they? If we've got guests, where are they?

MARTHA

They'll be here soon.

GEORGE

What did they do... go home and get some sleep first, or something?

MARTHA

They'll be here!

GEORGE

I wish you'd tell me about something sometime... I wish you'd stop springing things on me all the time.

MARTHA

I don't spring things on you all the time.

GEORGE

Yes, you do... you really do... you're always springing things on me.
Act One

**MARTHA (Friendly-patronizing)**

Oh, George!

**GEORGE**

Always.

**MARTHA**

Poor Georgie-Porgie, put-upon pie (As he sulks)

Awwwwwww... what are you doing? Are you sulking?

Hunh? Let me see... are you sulking? Is that what you're doing?

**GEORGE (Very quietly)**

Never mind, Martha. . .

**MARTHA**

Awwwwwww

**GEORGE**

Just don't bother yourself. . .

**MARTHA**

Awwwwwww (No reaction) Hey! (No reaction) Hey!

(George looks at her, put-upon)

Hey. (She sings) Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf. . .

Ha, ha, ha, ha! (No reaction) What's the matter . . .

didn't you think that was funny? Hunh? (Defiantly) I

thought it was a scream... a real scream. You didn't like it, hunh?

**GEORGE**

It was all right, Martha. . .

**MARTHA**

You laughed your head off when you heard it at the party.

Fun and Games

**GEORGE**

I smiled. I didn't laugh my head off... I smiled, you know? . . . it was all right.

**MARTHA**

(Gazing into her drink)

You laughed your goddamn head off.

**GEORGE**

It was all right. . .

**MARTHA (Ugly)**

It was a scream!

**GEORGE (Patiently)**

It was very funny; yes.

**MARTHA**

(After a moment's consideration)

You make me puke!

**GEORGE**

What?

**MARTHA**

Uh... you make me puke!

**GEORGE**

(Thinks about it... then. . .)

That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha.

**MARTHA**

That wasn't what?

**GEORGE**

. . . a very nice thing to say.

**MARTHA**

I like your anger. I think that's what I like about you most
... your anger. You're such a... such a simp! You don't even have the... the what...?

GEORGE

... guts?...

MARTHA

PHRASEMAKER (Pause... then they both laugh) Hey, put some more ice in my drink, will you? You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that, hunh?

GEORGE (Takes her drink)

I always put ice in your drink. You eat it, that's all. It's that habit you have... chewing your ice cubes... like a cocker spaniel. You'll crack your big teeth.

MARTHA

THEY'RE MY BIG TEETH!

GEORGE

Some of them... some of them.

MARTHA

I've got more teeth than you've got.

GEORGE

Two more.

MARTHA

Well, two more's a lot more.

GEORGE

I suppose it is. I suppose it's pretty remarkable... considering how old you are.

MARTHA

YOU CUT THAT OUT! (Pause) You're not so young yourself.

GEORGE (With boyish pleasure... a chant)

I'm six years younger than you are... I always have been and I always will be.

MARTHA (Glumly)

Well... you're going bald.

GEORGE

So are you. (Pause... they both laugh) Hello, honey.

MARTHA

Hello. C'mon over here and give your Mommy a big sloppy kiss.

GEORGE

... oh, now...

MARTHA

I WANT A BIG SLOPPY KISS!

GEORGE (Preoccupied)

I don't want to kiss you, Martha. Where are these people? Where are these people you invited over?

MARTHA

They stayed on to talk to Daddy... They'll be here... Why don't you want to kiss me?

GEORGE (Too matter-of-fact)

Well, dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited... I'd get beside myself, and I'd take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and then our little guests would walk in, and... well, just think what your father would say about that.
You pig!

George (Haughtily)

Oink! Oink!

Martha

Ha, ha, ha, hal Make me another drink ... lover.

George (Taking her glass)

My God, you can swill it down, can't you?

Martha

(Imitating a tiny child)

I'm thirsty.

George

Jesus!

Martha (Swinging around)

Look, sweetheart, I can drink you under any goddamn table you want ... so don't worry about me!

George

Martha, I gave you the prize years ago.... There isn't an abomination award going that you....

Martha

I swear ... if you existed I'd divorce you....

George

Well, just stay on your feet, that's all.... These people are your guests, you know, and....

Martha

I can't even see you ... I haven't been able to see you for years....

George

... if you pass out, or throw up, or something....

Martha

... I mean, you're a blank, a cipher....

George

... and try to keep your clothes on, too. There aren't many more sickening sights than you with a couple of drinks in you and your skirt up over your head, you know....

Martha

... a zero....

George

... your heads, I should say....

(The front doorbell chimes)

Martha

Party! Party!

George (Murderously)

I'm really looking forward to this, Martha....

Martha (Same)

Go answer the door.

George (Not moving)

You answer it.

Martha

Get to that door, you.

(He does not move)

I'll fix you, you....

George (Fake-spits)

... to you....
ACT ONE

(Door chime again)

MARTHA
(Shouting ... to the door)
C'MON IN! (To GEORGE, between her teeth) I said, get over there!

GEORGE
(Moves a little toward the door, smiling slightly)
All right, love ... whatever love wants. (Stops) Just don't start on the bit, that's all.

MARTHA
The bit? The bit? What kind of language is that? What are you talking about?

GEORGE
The bit. Just don't start in on the bit.

MARTHA
You imitating one of your students, for God's sake? What are you trying to do? WHAT BIT?

GEORGE
Just don't start in on the bit about the kid, that's all.

MARTHA
What do you take me for?

GEORGE
Much too much.

MARTHA (Really angered)
Yeah? Well, I'll start in on the kid if I want to.

GEORGE
Just leave the kid out of this.

Fun and Games

MARTHA (Threatening)
He's mine as much as he is yours. I'll talk about him if I want to.

GEORGE
I'd advise against it, Martha.

MARTHA
Well, good for you. (Knock) C'mon in. Get over there and open the door!

GEORGE
You've been advised.

MARTHA
Yeah ... sure. Get over there!

GEORGE
(Moving toward the door)
All right, love ... whatever love wants. Isn't it nice the way some people have manners, though, even in this day and age? Isn't it nice that some people won't just come breaking into other people's houses even if they do hear some sub-human monster yowling at 'em from inside ... ?

MARTHA
SCREW YOU!
(Simultaneously with MARTHA's last remark, GEORGE fings open the front door. HONEY and NICK are framed in the entrance. There is a brief silence, then . . .)

GEORGE
(Ostensibly a pleased recognition of HONEY and NICK, but really satisfaction at having MARTHA'S explosion overheard)
Ahhhhhhhhhh
MARTHA
(A little too loud ... to cover)
Hi! Hi, there ... c'mon in!

HONEY and NICK (ad lib)
Hello, here we are ... hi ... etc.

GEORGE
(Very matter-of-factly)
You must be our little guests.

MARTHA
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Just ignore old sour-puss over there. C'mon in, kids ... give your coats and stuff to sour-puss.

NICK (Without expression)
Well, now, perhaps we shouldn't have come ...

HONEY
Yes ... it is late, and ...

MARTHA
Late! Are you kidding? Throw your stuff down anywhere and c'mon in.

GEORGE
(Vaguely ... walking away)
Anywhere ... furniture, floor ... doesn't make any difference around this place.

NICK (To HONEY)
I told you we shouldn't have come.

MARTHA (Stentorian)
I said c'mon in! Now c'mon!

HONEY
(Giggle a little as she and NICK advance)
Oh, dear.

GEORGE
(Imitating HONEY'S giggle)
Hee, hee, hee, hee.

MARTHA (Swinging on GEORGE)
Look, muckmouth ... you cut that out!

GEORGE
(Innocence and hurt)
Martha! (To HONEY and NICK) Martha's a devil with language; she really is.

MARTHA
Hey, kids ... sit down.

HONEY (As she sits)
Oh, isn't this lovely!

NICK (Perfunctorily)
Yes indeed ... very handsome.

MARTHA
Well, thanks.

NICK
(Indicating the abstract painting)
Who ... who did the ...?

MARTHA
That? Oh, that's by ...

GEORGE
... some Greek with a mustache Martha attacked one night in ...
HONEY

(To save the situation)
Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho.

NICK

It's got a a a a a

GEORGE

A quiet intensity?

NICK

Well, no a a a ...

GEORGE

Oh. (Pause) Well, then, a certain noisy relaxed quality, maybe?

NICK

(Knows what GEORGE is doing, but stays grimly, coolly polite)
No. What I meant was ...

GEORGE

How about ... uh ... a quietly noisy relaxed intensity.

HONEY

Dear! You're being joshed.

NICK (Cold)

I'm aware of that.

(A brief, awkward silence)

GEORGE (Truly)

I am sorry.

(NICK nods condescending forgiveness)

GEORGE

What it is, actually, is it's a pictorial representation of the order of Martha's mind.

MARTHA

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Make the kids a drink, George. What do you want, kids? What do you want to drink, hunh?

NICK

Honey? What would you like?

HONEY

I don't know, dear ... A little brandy, maybe. "Never mix—never worry." (She giggles)

GEORGE

Brandy? Just brandy? Simple; simple. (Moves to the portable bar) What about you ... uh ... 

NICK

Bourbon on the rocks, if you don't mind.

GEORGE (As he makes drinks)

Mind? No, I don't mind. I don't think I mind. Martha? Rubbing alcohol for you?

MARTHA

Sure. "Never mix—never worry."

GEORGE

Martha's tastes in liquor have come down ... simplified over the years ... crystallized. Back when I was courting Martha—well, I don't know if that's exactly the right word for it—but back when I was courting Martha ...

MARTHA (Cheerfully)

Screw, sweetie!

GEORGE

(Returning with HONEY and NICK's drinks)
At any rate, back when I was courting Martha, she’d order the damnedest things! You wouldn’t believe it! We’d go into a bar ... you know, a bar ... a whiskey, beer, and bourbon bar ... and what she’d do would be, she’d screw up her face, think real hard, and come up with ... brandy Alexanders, crème de cacao frappés, ginlets, flaming punch bowls ... seven-layer liqueur things.

**Martha**
They were good ... I liked them.

**George**
Real lady-like little drinkies.

**Martha**
Hey, where’s my rubbing alcohol?

**George**
(Returning to the portable bar)
But the years have brought to Martha a sense of essentials ... the knowledge that cream is for coffee, lime juice for pies ... and alcohol (Brings Martha her drink) pure and simple ... here you are, angel ... for the pure and simple. (Raisies his glass) For the mind’s blind eye, the heart’s ease, and the liver’s wane. Down the hatch, all.

**Martha** (To them all)
Cheers, dears. (They all drink) You have a poetic nature, George ... a Dylan Thomas-y quality that gets me right where I live.

**George**
Vulgar girl! With guests here!

**Martha**
Ha, ha, ha, ha! (To Honey and Nick) Hey; hey! (Sings, conducts with her drink in her hand.)

**Honey**
Oh, wasn’t that funny? That was so funny....

**Nick** (Snapping to)
Yes ... yes, it was.

**Martha**
I thought I’d bust a gut; I really did ... I really thought I’d bust a gut laughing. George didn’t like it ... George didn’t think it was funny at all.

**George**
Lord, Martha, do we have to go through this again?

**Martha**
I’m trying to shame you into a sense of humor, angel, that’s all.

**George**
(Over-patiently, to Honey and Nick)
Martha didn’t think I laughed loud enough. Martha thinks that unless ... as she demurely puts it ... that unless you “bust a gut” you aren’t amused. You know? Unless you carry on like a hyena you aren’t having any fun.

**Honey**
Well, I certainly had fun ... it was a wonderful party.

**Nick**
(Attempting enthusiasm)
ACT ONE

Yes... it certainly was.

Honey (To Martha)
And your father! Oh! He is so marvelous!

Nick (As above)
Yes...yes, he is.

Honey
Oh, I tell you.

Martha (Genuinely proud)
He's quite a guy, isn't he? Quite a guy.

George (At Nick)
And you'd better believe it!

Honey (Admonishing George)
Ohhhhhhhhh! He's a wonderful man.

George
I'm not trying to tear him down. He's a God, we all know that.

Martha
You lay off my father!

George
Yes, love. (To Nick) All I mean is... when you've had as many of these faculty parties as I have... 

Nick
(Killing the attempted rapport)
I rather appreciated it. I mean, aside from enjoying it, I appreciated it. You know, when you're new at a place... 

(George eyes him suspiciously)
Meeting everyone, getting introduced around... getting

to know some of the men... When I was teaching in Kansas...

Honey
You won't believe it, but we had to make our way all by ourselves... isn't that right, dear?

Nick
Yes, it is... We...

Honey
... We had to make our own way... I had to go up to wives... in the library, or at the supermarket... and say, "Hello, I'm new here... you must be Mrs. So-and-so, Doctor So-and-so's wife." It really wasn't very nice at all.

Martha
Well, Daddy knows how to run things.

Nick
(Not enough enthusiasm)
He's a remarkable man.

Martha
You bet your sweet life.

George
(To Nick... a confidence, but not whispered)
Let me tell you a secret, baby. There are easier things in the world, if you happen to be teaching at a university, there are easier things than being married to the daughter of the president of that university. There are easier things in this world.

Martha
(Loud... to no one in particular)
It should be an extraordinary opportunity... for some men it would be the chance of a lifetime!
Act One

George

(To Nick... a solemn wink)

There are, believe me, easier things in this world.

Nick

Well, I can understand how it might make for some... awkwardness, perhaps... conceivably, but...

Martha

Some men would give their right arm for the chance!

George (Quietly)

Alas, Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat more private portion of the anatomy.

Martha

(A snarl of dismissal and contempt)

NYYYYAAAHHHHH!

Honey (Rising quickly)

I wonder if you could show me where the... (Her voice trails off)

George

(To Martha, indicating Honey)

Martha... 

Nick (To Honey)

Are you all right?

Honey

Of course, dear. I want to... put some powder on my nose.

George

(As Martha is not getting up)

Fun and Games

Martha, won't you show her where we keep the... euphemism?

Martha

Hm? What? Oh! Sure! (Rises) I'm sorry, c'mon. I want to show you the house.

Honey

I think I'd like to...

Martha

... wash up? Sure... c'mon with me. (Takes Honey by the arm. To the men) You two do some men talk for a while.

Honey (To Nick)

We'll be back, dear.

Martha (To George)

Honestly, George, you burn me up!

George (Happily)

All right.

Martha

You really do, George.

George

O.K. Martha... O.K. Just... trot along.

Martha

You really do.

George

Just don't shoot your mouth off... about... you-know-what.

Martha

(Surprisingly vehement)

I'll talk about any goddamn thing I want to, George!
O.K. O.K. Vanish.

GEORGE

MARTHA

Any goddamn thing I want to (Practically dragging honey out with her) C'mon ... 

GEORGE

Vanish. (The women have gone) So? What'll it be?

NICK

Oh, I don't know ... I'll stick to bourbon, I guess.

GEORGE

(Takes NICK's glass, goes to portable bar)

That what you were drinking over at Parnassus?

NICK

Over at ... ?

GEORGE

Parnassus.

NICK

I don't understand ... 

GEORGE

Skip it. (Hands him his drink) One bourbon.

NICK

Thanks.

GEORGE

It's just a private joke between li'l ol' Martha and me. (They sit) So? (Pause) So ... you're in the math department, eh?

NICK

No ... uh, no.

GEORGE

Martha said you were. I think that's what she said. (Not too friendly) What made you decide to be a teacher?

NICK

Oh ... well, the same things that ... uh ... motivated you, I imagine.

GEORGE

What were they?

NICK (Formal)

Pardon?

GEORGE

I said, what were they? What were the things that motivated me?

NICK (Laughing uneasily)

Well ... I'm sure I don't know.

GEORGE

You just finished saying that the things that motivated you you were the same things that motivated me.

NICK (With a little pique)

I said I imagined they were.

GEORGE

Oh. (Off-hand) Did you? (Pause) Well ... (Pause) You like it here?

NICK (Looking about the room)

Yes ... it's ... it's fine.

GEORGE

I mean the University.
NICK
Oh... I thought you meant...

GEORGE
Yes... I can see you did. (Pause) I meant the University.

NICK
Well, I... I like it... fine (As George just stares at him) Just fine. (Same) You... you've been here quite a long time, haven't you?

GEORGE
(Absently, as if he had not heard)
What? Oh... yes. Ever since I married... uh, What's-her-name... uh, Martha. Even before that. (Pause) Forever. (To himself) Dashed hopes, and good intentions. Good, better, best, bested. (Back to NICK) How do you like that for a declension, young man? Eh?

NICK
Sir, I'm sorry if we...

GEORGE
(With an edge in his voice)
You didn't answer my question.

NICK
Sir?

GEORGE
Don't you condescend to me! (Toying with him) I asked you how you liked that for a declension: Good; better; best; bested. Him? Well?

NICK (With some distaste)
I really don't know what to say.

GEORGE (Feigned incredulosity)
You really don't know what to say?

NICK (Snapping it out)
All right... what do you want me to say? Do you want me to say it's funny, so you can contradict me and say it's sad? or do you want me to say it's sad so you can turn around and say no, it's funny. You can play that damn little game any way you want to, you know.

GEORGE (Feigned awe)
Very good! Very good!

NICK (Even angrier than before)
And when my wife comes back, I think we'll just...

GEORGE (Sincere)
Now, now... calm down, my boy. Just... calm... down. (Pause) All right? (Pause) You want another drink? Here, give me your glass.

NICK
I still have one. I do think that when my wife comes downstairs...

GEORGE
Here... I'll freshen it. Give me your glass. (Takes it)

NICK
What I mean is... you two... you and your wife... seem to be having some sort of a...

GEORGE
Martha and I are having... nothing. Martha and I are merely... exercising... that's all... we're merely
Act One

walking what’s left of our wits. Don’t pay any attention to it.

Nick (Undecided)

Still...

George

(An abrupt change of pace)

Well, now... let’s sit down and talk, hunh?

Nick (Cool again)

It’s just that I don’t like to... become involved... (An afterthought) uh... in other people’s affairs.

George (Comforting a child)

Well, you’ll get over that... small college and all. Musical beds is the faculty sport around here.

Nick

Sir?

George

I said, musical beds is the faculty... Never mind. I wish you wouldn’t go “Sir” like that... not with the question mark at the end of it. You know? Sir? I know it’s meant to be a sign of respect for your (Wincey) elders... but... uh... the way you do it... Uh... Sir?... Madam?

Nick

(With a small, noncommittal smile)

No disrespect intended.

George

How old are you?

Nick

Twenty-eight.
Martha is a remarkable woman. I would imagine she weighs around a hundred and ten.

NICK
Your ... wife ... weighs ... ?

GEORGE
No, no, my boy. Yours! Your wife. My wife is Martha.

NICK
Yes ... I know.

GEORGE
If you were married to Martha you would know what it means. (Pause) But then, if I were married to your wife I would know what that means, too ... wouldn't I?

NICK (After a pause)
Yes.

GEORGE
Martha says you're in the Math Department, or something.

NICK (As if for the hundredth time)
No ... I'm not.

GEORGE
Martha is seldom mistaken ... maybe you should be in the Math Department, or something.

NICK
I'm a biologist. I'm in the Biology Department.

GEORGE (After a pause)
Oh. (Then, as if remembering something) Oh!

NICK
Sir?

GEORGE
You're the one! You're the one's going to make all that trouble ... making everyone the same, rearranging the chromosomes, or whatever it is. Isn't that right?

NICK (With that small smile)
Not exactly: chromosomes.

GEORGE
I'm very mistrustful. Do you believe ... (Shifting in his chair) ... do you believe that people learn nothing from history? Not that there is nothing to learn, mind you, but that people learn nothing? I am in the History Department.

NICK
Well ...

GEORGE
I am a Doctor. A.B. ... M.A. ... PH.D. ... ABMAPHID! Abmaphid has been variously described as a wasting disease of the frontal lobes, and as a wonder drug. It is actually both. I'm really very mistrustful. Biology, huh?

(NICK does not answer ... nods ... looks)
I read somewhere that science fiction is really not fiction at all ... that you people are rearranging my genes, so that everyone will be like everyone else. Now, I won't have that! It would be a ... shame. I mean ... look at me! Is it really such a good idea ... if everyone was forty something and looked fifty-five? You didn't answer my question about history.

NICK
This genetic business you're talking about ...
GEORGE
Oh, that. *(Dismisses it with a wave of his hand)* That's very upsetting . . . very . . . disappointing. But history is a great deal more . . . disappointing. I am in the History Department.

NICK
Yes . . . you told me.

GEORGE
I know I told you . . . I shall probably tell you several more times. Martha tells me often, that I am in the History Department . . . as opposed to being the History Department . . . in the sense of running the History Department. I do not run the History Department.

NICK
Well, I don't run the Biology Department.

GEORGE
You're twenty-one.

NICK
Twenty-eight.

GEORGE
Twenty-eight! Perhaps when you're forty something and look fifty-five, you will run the History Department . . .

NICK
. . . Biology . . .

GEORGE
. . . the Biology Department. I did run the History Department, for four years, during the war, but that was because everybody was away. Then . . . everybody came back . . . because nobody got killed. That's New England for you.

Fun and Games
Isn't that amazing? Not one single man in this whole place got his head shot off. That's pretty irrational. *(Brooks)* Your wife *doesn't* have any hips . . . has she . . . does she?

NICK
What?

GEORGE
I don't mean to suggest that I'm hip-happy . . . I'm not one of those thirty-six, twenty-two, seventy-eight men. Nostirre . . . not me. Everything in proportion. I was implying that your wife is . . . slim-hipped.

NICK
Yes . . . she is.

GEORGE
*(Looking at the ceiling)*
What are they doing up there? I assume that's where they are.

NICK *(False heartiness)*
You know women.

GEORGE
*(Gives nick a long stare, of feigned incredulity . . . then his attention moves)*
Not one son-of-a-bitch got killed. Of course, nobody bombed Washington. No . . . that's not fair. You have any kids?

NICK
Uh . . . no . . . not yet. *(Pause)* You?

GEORGE
*(A kind of challenge)*
That's for me to know and you to find out.
Act One

Indeed?

GEORGE

No kids, hunh?

NICK

Not yet.

GEORGE

People do . . . uh . . . have kids. That's what I meant about history. You people are going to make them in test tubes, aren't you? You biologists. Babies. Then the rest of us . . . them as wants to . . . can screw to their heart's content. What will happen to the tax deduction? Has anyone figured that out yet?

(NICK, who can think of nothing better to do, laughs mildly)

But you are going to have kids . . . anyway. In spite of history.

NICK (Hedging)

Yes . . . certainly. We . . . want to wait . . . a little . . . until we're settled.

GEORGE

And this . . . (With a handsweep taking in not only the room, the house, but the whole countryside) . . . this is your heart's content—Illyria . . . Penguin Island . . . Gomorrah . . . You think you're going to be happy here in New Carthage, eh?

NICK (A little defensively)

I hope we'll stay here.

GEORGE

And every definition has its boundaries, eh? Well, it isn't a bad college, I guess. I mean . . . it'll do. It isn't M.I.T. . . . it isn't U.C.L.A. . . . it isn't the Sorbonne . . . or Moscow U. either, for that matter.

NICK

I don't mean . . . forever.

GEORGE

Well, don't you let that get bandied about. The old man wouldn't like it. Martha's father expects loyalty and devotion out of his . . . staff. I was going to use another word. Martha's father expects his . . . staff . . . to cling to the walls of this place, like the ivy . . . to come here and grow old . . . to fall in the line of service. One man, a professor of Latin and Eloquence, actually fell in the cafeteria line, one lunch. He was buried, as many of us have been, and as many more of us will be, under the shrubbery around the chapel. It is said . . . and I have no reason to doubt it . . . that we make excellent fertilizer. But the old man is not going to be buried under the shrubbery . . . the old man is not going to die. Martha's father has the staying power of one of those Micronesian tortoises. There are rumors . . . which you must not breathe in front of Martha, for she foams at the mouth . . . that the old man, her father, is over two hundred years old. There is probably an irony involved in this, but I am not drunk enough to figure out what it is. How many kids you going to have?

NICK

I . . . I don't know . . . . . My wife is . . .

GEORGE

Slim-hipped. (Rises) Have a drink.

NICK

Yes.
GEORGE

MARThA! (No answer) DAMN IT! (To Nick) You asked me
if I knew women... Well, one of the things I do not
know about them is what they talk about while the men
are talking. (Vaguely) I must find out some time.

MARThA’S VOICE

WHAT’YA WANT?

GEORGE (To Nick)

Isn’t that a wonderful sound? What I mean is... what do
you think they really talk about... or don’t you care?

NICK

Themselves, I would imagine.

MARThA’S VOICE

GEORGE?

GEORGE (To Nick)

Do you find women... puzzling?

NICK

Well... yes and no.

GEORGE (With a knowing nod)

Unh-hunh. (Moves toward the hall, almost bumps into
Honey, re-entering) Oh! Well, here’s one of you, at least.
(Honey moves toward Nick. George goes to the hall)

Honey (To George)

She’ll be right down. (To Nick) You must see this house,
dear... this is such a wonderful old house.

Yes, I...
ACT ONE

NICK (As honey starts)
You feel all right?

HONEY
(Reassuring, but with the echo of a whine. A long-practiced tone)
Oh, yes, dear... perfectly fine.

GEORGE
(Fuming... to himself)
So she wants to be comfortable, does she? Well, we'll see about that.

HONEY (To George, brightly)
I didn't know until just a minute ago that you had a son.

GEORGE
(Wheeling, as if struck from behind)
What?

HONEY
A son! I hadn't known.

NICK
You to know and me to find out. Well, he must be quite a big... .

HONEY
Twenty-one... twenty-one tomorrow... tomorrow's his birthday.

NICK (A victorious smile)
Well!

GEORGE (To Honey)
She told you about him?

Fun and Games

HONEY (Flustered)
Well, yes. Well, I mean...

GEORGE (Nailing it down)
She told you about him.

HONEY (A nervous giggle)
Yes.

GEORGE (Strangely)
You say she's changing?

HONEY
Yes... 

GEORGE
And she mentioned... ?

HONEY
(Cheerful, but a little puzzled)
... your son's birthday... yes.

GEORGE
(More or less to himself)
O.K., Martha... O.K.

NICK
You look pale, Honey. Do you want a... ?

HONEY
Yes, dear... a little more brandy, maybe. Just a drop.

GEORGE
O.K., Martha.

NICK
May I use the... uh... bar?
GEORGE
Hm? Oh, yes... yes... by all means. Drink away... you'll need it as the years go on. (For MARTHA, as if she were in the room) You goddamn destructive...

HONEY (To cover)
What time is it, dear?

NICK
Two-thirty.

HONEY
Oh, it's so late... we should be getting home.

GEORGE
(Nastily, but he is so preoccupied he hardly notices his own tone)
For what? You keeping the babysitter up, or something?

NICK
(Almost a warning)
I told you we didn't have children.

GEORGE
Hm? (Realizing) Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't even listening... or thinking... (With a flick of his hand)... whichever one applies.

NICK (Softly, to HONEY)
We'll go in a little while.

GEORGE (Driving)
Oh no, now... you mustn't. Martha is changing... and Martha is not changing for me. Martha hasn't changed for me in years. If Martha is changing, it means we'll be here for... days. You are being accorded an honor, and you must not forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss. She is his... right ball, you might say.

NICK
You might not understand this... but I wish you wouldn't talk that way in front of my wife.

HONEY
Oh, now...

GEORGE (Incredulous)
Really? Well, you're quite right... We'll leave that sort of talk to Martha.

MARTHA (Entering)
What sort of talk?
(MARTHA has changed her clothes, and she looks, now, more comfortable and... and this is most important... most voluptuous)

GEORGE
There you are, my pet.

NICK (Impressed; rising)
Well, now...

GEORGE
Why, Martha... your Sunday chapel dress!

HONEY (Slightly disapproving)
Oh, that's most attractive.

MARTHA (Showing off)
You like it? Good! (To GEORGE) What the hell do you mean screaming up the stairs at me like that?

GEORGE
We got lonely, darling... we got lonely for the soft purr of your little voice.
MARTHA
(Decking not to rise to it)
Oh. Well, then, you just trot over to the barie-poo. . . .

GEORGE
(Taking the tone from her)
... and make your little mommey a great big drunk.

MARTHA (Giggles)
That's right. (To NICK) Well, did you two have a nice little
talk? You men solve the problems of the world, as usual?

NICK
Well, no, we . . .

GEORGE (Quickly)
What we did, actually, if you really want to know, what
we did actually is try to figure out what you two were
talking about.

(Honey giggles, Martha laughs)

MARTHA (To honey)
Aren't they something? Aren't these . . . (Cheerfully dis-
dainful) . . . men the absolute end? (To George) Why
didn't you sneak upstairs and listen in?

GEORGE
Oh, I wouldn't have listened, Martha. . . . I would have
peeked.

(Honey giggles, Martha laughs)

NICK
(To George, with false heartiness)
It's a conspiracy.

GEORGE
And now we'll never know. Shucks!

Fun and Games

MARTHA
(To NICK, as Honey beams)
Hey, you must be quite a boy, getting your Masters when
you were . . . what? . . . twelve? You hear that, George?

NICK
Twelve-and-a-half, actually. No, nineteen really. (To
Honey) Honey, you needn't have mentioned that. It . . .

HONEY
Ohhh . . . I'm proud of you . . .

GEORGE (Seriously, if sadly)
That's very . . . impressive.

MARTHA (Aggressively)
You're damned right!

GEORGE (Between his teeth)
I said I was impressed, Martha. I'm beside myself with
jealousy. What do you want me to do, throw up? (To
NICK) That really is very impressive. (To Honey) You
should be right proud.

HONEY (Cay)
Oh, he's a pretty nice fella.

GEORGE (To NICK)
I wouldn't be surprised if you did take over the History
Department one of these days.

NICK
The Biology Department.

GEORGE
The Biology Department. . . . of course. I seem preoccu-
pied with history. Oh! What a remark. (He strikes a pose,
his hand over his heart, his head raised, his voice stentorian) "I am preoccupied with history."

MARtha

(As HONEY and NICK chuckle)
Ha, ha, ha, ha!

GEORGE (With some disgust)
I think I'll make myself a drink.

MARtha

George is not preoccupied with history... George is preoccupied with the History Department. George is preoccupied with the History Department because...

GEORGE

...because he is not the History Department, but is only in the History Department. We know, Martha... we went all through it while you were upstairs... getting up. There's no need to go through it again.

MARtha

That's right, baby... keep it clean. (To the others) George is bogged down in the History Department. He's an old bog in the History Department, that's what George is. A bog... A fen... A G.D. swamp. Ha, ha, ha ha!

A swamp! Hey, swamp! Hey swampy!

GEORGE

(With a great effort controls himself... then, as if she had said nothing more than "George, dear..."

Yes, Martha? Can I get you something?

MARtha (Amused at his game)

Well... uh... sure, you can light my cigarette, if you're of a mind to.
**Act One**

You musta been pretty good at it... I mean, you don't look like you got hit in the face at all.

**Honey (Proudly)**

He was intercollegiate state middleweight champion.

**Nick (Embarrassed)**

Honey...

**Honey**

Well, you were.

**Martha**

You look like you still got a pretty good body now, too... is that right? Have you?

**George (Intensely)**

Martha... decency forbids...

**Martha**

(To George... still staring at Nick, though)

Shut up! (Now, back to Nick) Well, have you? Have you kept your body?

**Nick**

(Unselfconscious... almost encouraging her)

It's still pretty good. I work out.

**Martha (With a half-smile)**

Do you!

**Nick**

Yeah.

**Honey**

Oh, yes... he has a very... firm body.

**Martha**

(Still with that smile... a private communication with Nick)

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**Fun and Games**

Have you! Oh, I think that's very nice.

**Nick**

(Narcissistic, but not directly for Martha)

Well, you never know... (shrugs)... you know... once you have it...

**Martha**

... you never know when it's going to come in handy.

**Nick**

I was going to say... why give it up until you have to.

**Martha**

I couldn't agree with you more.

(They both smile, and there is a rapport of some unformed sort established)

I couldn't agree with you more.

**George**

Martha, your obscenity is more than...

**Martha**

George, here, doesn't cotton much to body talk... do you sweetheart? (No reply) George isn't too happy when we get to muscle. You know... flat bellies, pectorals... .

**George (To Honey)**

Would you like to take a walk around the garden?

**Honey (Chiding)**

Oh, now...

**George (Incredulous)**

You're amused? (Shrugs) All right.

**Martha**

Paunchy over there isn't too happy when the conversation...
moves to muscle. How much do you weigh?

**NICK**
A hundred and fifty-five, a hundred and...

**MARTHA**
Still at the old middleweight limit, eh? That's pretty good.
(Swings around) Hey George, tell 'em about the boxing match we had.

**GEORGE**
(Slamming his drink down, moving toward the hall)
Christ!

**MARTHA**
George! Tell 'em about it!

**GEORGE**
(With a sick look on his face)
You tell them, Martha. You're good at it.
(Exits)

**HONEY**
Is he... all right?

**MARTHA** (Laughs)
Him? Oh, sure. George and I had this boxing match... Oh, Lord, twenty years ago... a couple of years after we were married.

**NICK**
A boxing match? The two of you?

**HONEY**
Really?

**MARTHA**
Yup... the two of us... really.
Act One

NICK

Yes...yes.

MARTHA

And he asked George to box with him. Aaaaannnnd... George didn't want to... probably something about not wanting to bloody-up his meal ticket...

NICK

Unh-hunh.

MARTHA

...Anyway, George said he didn't want to, and Daddy was saying, "Come on, young man... what sort of son-in-law are you?" ... and stuff like that.

NICK

Yeah.

MARTHA

So, while this was going on... I don't know why I did it... I got into a pair of gloves myself... you know, I didn't lace 'em up, or anything... and I snuck up behind George, just kidding, and I yelled "Hey George!" and at the same time I let go sort of a roundhouse right... just kidding, you know?

NICK

Unh-hunh.

MARTHA

... and George wheeled around real quick, and he caught it right in the jaw... Pow! (NICK laughs) I hadn't meant it... honestly. Anyway... Pow! Right in the jaw... and he was off balance... he must have been... and he stumbled back a few steps, and then, Crash, he landed... flat... in a huckleberry bush!

(NICK laughs, HONEY goes tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, and shakes her head)

Fun and Games

It was awful, really. It was funny, but it was awful.

(She thinks, gives a muffled laugh in rueful contemplation of the incident)

I think it's colored our whole life. Really I do! It's an excuse, anyway.

(George enters now, his hands behind his back.
No one sees him)

It's what he uses for being bogged down, anyway... why he hasn't gone anywhere.

(GEORGE advances. HONEY sees him)

MARTHA

And it was an accident... a real, goddamn accident!

(George takes from behind his back a short-barreled shotgun, and calmly aims it at the back of MARTHA's head. HONEY screams... rises. NICK rises, and, simultaneously, MARTHA turns her head to face GEORGE. GEORGE pulls the trigger)

GEORGE

Pow!!!

(Pop! From the barrel of the gun blossoms a large red and yellow Chinese parasol. HONEY screams again, this time less, and mostly from relief and confusion)

You're dead! Pow! You're dead!

NICK (Laughing)

Good Lord.

(Honey is beside herself. MARTHA laughs too... almost breaks down, her great laugh booming. GEORGE joins in the general laughter and confusion. It dies, eventually)
Honey
Oh! My goodness!

Martha (Joyously)
Where’d you get that, you bastard?

Nick
(His hand out for the gun)
Let me see that, will you?
(George hands him the gun)

Honey
I’ve never been so frightened in my life! Never!

George (A trifle abstracted)
Oh, I’ve had it awhile. Did you like that?

Martha (Giggling)
You bastard.

Honey (Wanting attention)
I’ve never been so frightened... never.

Nick
This is quite a gadget.

George
(Leaning over Martha)
You liked that, did you?

Martha
Yeah... that was pretty good. (Softer) C’mon... give me a kiss.

George
(Indicating Nick and Honey)
Later, sweetie.
(But Martha will not be dissuaded. They kiss,

Fun and Games

George standing, leaning over Martha’s chair.
She takes his hand, places it on her stage-side breast. He breaks away.

Oh! Ho! That’s what you’re after, is it? What are we going to have... blue games for the guests? Hunh? Hunh?

Martha (Angry-hurt)

You... prick!

George (A Pyrrhic victory)

Everything in its place, Martha... everything in its own good time.

Martha (An unspoken epithet)

You...

George
(Over to Nick, who still has the gun)

Here, let me show you... it goes back in, like this.
(Closes the parasol, reinserts it in the gun)

Nick
That’s damn clever.

George (Puts the gun down)

Drinks now! Drinks for all!
(Takes Nick’s glass without question... goes to Martha)

Martha (Still angry-hurt)

I’m not finished.

Honey
(As George puts out his hand for her glass)

Oh, I think I need something.
(He takes her glass, moves back to the portable bar)
NICK
Is that Japanese?

GEORGE
Probably.

HONEY (To Martha)
I was never so frightened in my life. Weren't you frightened? Just for a second?

MARThA
(Smothering her rage at George)
I don't remember.

HONEY
Ohhh, now ... I bet you were.

GEORGE
Did you really think I was going to kill you, Martha?

MARThA (Dripping contempt)
You? ... Kill me? ... That's a laugh.

GEORGE
Well, now, I might ... some day.

MARThA
Fat chance.

NICK
(As George hands him his drink)
Where's the john?

GEORGE
Through the hall there ... and down to your left.

HONEY
Don't you come back with any guns, or anything, now.

NICK (Laughs)
Oh, no.

MARTHA
You don't need any props, do you, baby?

NICK
Unh-unh.

MARTHA (Suggestive)
I'll bet not. No fake Jap gun for you, eh?

NICK
(Smiles at Martha. Then, to George, indicating a side table near the hall)
May I leave my drink here?

GEORGE
(As Nick exits without waiting for a reply)
Yeah ... sure ... why not? We've got half-filled glasses everywhere in the house, wherever Martha forgets she's left them ... in the linen closet, on the edge of the bath-tub ... I even found one in the freezer, once.

MARTHA
(Amused in spite of herself)
You did not!

GEORGE
Yes I did.

MARTHA (Ibid)
You did not!

GEORGE
(Giving Honey her brandy)
Yes I did. (To Honey) Brandy doesn't give you a hang-over?
HONEY
I never mix. And then, I don’t drink very much, either.

GEORGE
(Grimaces behind her back)
Oh... that’s good. Your... your husband was telling me all about the... chromosomes.

MARTHA (Ugly)
The what?

GEORGE
The chromosomes, Martha... the genes, or whatever they are. (To HONEY) You’ve got quite a... terrifying husband.

HONEY
(As if she’s being joshed)
Ohhhhhhh... .

GEORGE
No, really. He’s quite terrifying, with his chromosomes, and all.

MARTHA
He’s in the Math Department.

GEORGE
No, Martha... he’s a biologist.

MARTHA (Her voice rising)
He’s in the Math Department!

HONEY (Timidly)
Uh... biology.

MARTHA (Unconvinced)
Are you sure?

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HONEY (With a little giggle)
Well, I ought to. (Then as an afterthought) Be.

MARTHA (Grumpy)
I suppose so. I don’t know who said he was in the Math Department.

GEORGE
You did, Martha.

MARTHA
(By way of irritable explanation)
Well, I can’t be expected to remember everything. I meet fifteen new teachers and their goddamn wives... present company outlawed, of course... (HONEY nods, smiles silitly)... and I’m supposed to remember everything. (Pause) So? He’s a biologist. Good for him. Biology’s even better. It’s less... abstruse.

GEORGE
Abstract.

MARTHA
ABSTRUSE! In the sense of recondite. (Sticks her tongue out at GEORGE) Don’t you tell me words. Biology’s even better. It’s... right at the meat of things.

(NICK re-enters)
You’re right at the meat of things, baby.

NICK
(Taking his drink from the side table)
Oh?

HONEY (With that giggle)
They thought you were in the Math Department.

NICK
Well, maybe I ought to be.
MARTHA
You stay right where you are ... you stay right at the...
... meat of things.

GEORGE
You're obsessed with that phrase, Martha ... It's ugly.

MARTHA'
(Ignoring GEORGE ... to NICK)
You stay right there. (Laughs) Hell, you can take over the
History Department just as easy from there as anywhere else. God knows, somebody's going to take over the
History Department, some day, and it ain't going to be
Georgie-boy, there ... that's for sure. Are ya, swampy ... are ya, hunh?

GEORGE
In my mind, Martha, you are buried in cement, right up
to your neck. (MARTHA giggles) No ... right up to your
nose ... that's much quieter.

MARTHA (To NICK)
Georgie-boy, here, says you're terrifying. Why are you
terrifying?

NICK (With a small smile)
I didn't know I was.

HONEY (A little thickly)
It's because of your chromosomes, dear.

NICK
Oh, the chromosome business ...

MARTHA (To NICK)
What's all this about chromosomes?

NICK
Well, chromosomes are ...

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MARTHA
I know what chromosomes are, sweetie, I love 'em.

NICK
Oh ... Well, then.

GEORGE
Martha eats them ... for breakfast ... she sprinkles
them on her cereal. (To MARTHA, now) It's very simple,
Martha, this young man is working on a system whereby
chromosomes can be altered ... well not all by himself
—he probably has one or two co-conspirators—the genetic
makeup of a sperm cell changed, reordered ... to order, actually ... for hair and eye color, stature, potency ...
I imagine ... hairiness, features, health ... and mind.
Most important ... Mind. All imbalances will be cor-
rected, sifted out ... propensity for various diseases will
be gone, longevity assured. We will have a race of men ...
... test-tube-bred ... incubator-born ... superb and
sublime.

MARTHA (Impressed)

Hunh!

HONEY
How exciting!

GEORGE
But! Everyone will tend to be rather the same ... Alike.
Everyone ... and I'm sure I'm not wrong here ... will
tend to look like this young man here.

MARTHA
That's not a bad idea.

NICK (Impatient)

All right, now ...
GEORGE
It will, on the surface of it, be all rather pretty... quite jolly. But of course there will be a dank side to it, too. A certain amount of regulation will be necessary... uh... for the experiment to succeed. A certain number of sperm tubes will have to be cut.

MARTHA
Hunhh...

GEORGE
Millions upon millions of them... millions of tiny little slicing operations that will leave just the smallest scar, on the underside of the scrotum (MARTHA laughs) but which will assure the sterility of the imperfect... the ugly, the stupid... the... unfit.

NICK (Grimly)
Now look... I

GEORGE
... with this, we will have, in time, a race of glorious men.

MARTHA
Hunh!

GEORGE
I suspect we will not have much music, much painting, but we will have a civilization of men, smooth, blond, and right at the middleweight limit.

MARTHA
Awww...

GEORGE
... a race of scientists and mathematicians, each dedicated to and working for the greater glory of the supercivilization.

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MARTHA
Goody.

GEORGE
There will be a certain... loss of liberty, I imagine, as a result of this experiment... but diversity will no longer be the goal. Cultures and races will eventually vanish... the ants will take over the world.

NICK
Are you finished?

GEORGE (Ignoring him)
And I, naturally, am rather opposed to all this. History, which is my field... history, of which I am one of the most famous bogs...

MARTHA
Ha, ha, ha!

GEORGE
... will lose its glorious variety and unpredictability. I, and with me the... the surprise, the multiplexity, the sea-changing rhythm of... history, will be eliminated. There will be order and constancy... and I am unalterably opposed to it. I will not give up Berlin!

MARTHA
You'll give up Berlin, sweetheart. You going to defend it with your paunch?

HONEY
I don't see what Berlin has to do with anything.

GEORGE
There is a saloon in West Berlin where the barstools are five feet high. And the earth... the floor... is so...
far . . . below you. I will not give up things like that. No . . . I won't. I will fight you, young man . . . one hand on my scrotum, to be sure . . . but with my free hand I will battle you to the death.

**MARTHA** (Mocking, laughing)

Bravo!

**NICK** *(To GEORGE)*

That's right. And I am going to be the wave of the future.

**MARTHA**

You bet you are, baby.

**HONEY** *(Quite drunk—to NICK)*

I don't see why you want to do all those things, dear. You never told me.

**NICK** *(Angry)*

Oh for God's sake!

**HONEY** *(Shocked)*

Oh!

**GEORGE**

The most profound indication of a social malignancy . . . no sense of humor. None of the monoliths could see that. I know something about history.

**NICK** *(To GEORGE, trying to make light of it)*

You . . . you don't know much about science, do you?

**GEORGE**

I know something about history. I know when I'm being threatened.

**MARTHA** *(Salaciously—to NICK)*

So, everyone's going to look like you, eh?

**Fun and Games**

**NICK**

Oh, sure. I'm going to be a personal screwing machine!

**MARTHA**

Isn't that nice.

**HONEY** *(Her hands over her ears)*

Dear, you mustn't . . . you mustn't . . . you mustn't.

**NICK** *(Impatiently)*

I'm sorry, Honey.

**HONEY**

Such language. It's . . .

**NICK**

I'm sorry. All right?

**HONEY** *(Pouting)*

Well . . . all right. *(Suddenly she giggles insanely, subsides. To GEORGE)* . . . When is your son? *(Giggles again)*

**GEORGE**

What?

**NICK** *(Distastefully)*

Something about your son.

**GEORGE**

son!

**HONEY**

When is . . . where is your son . . . coming home? *(Giggles)*

**GEORGE**

Oooh. *(Too formal)* Martha? When is our son coming home?
Act One

Martha

Never mind.

George

No, no ... I want to know ... you brought it out into the open. When is he coming home, Martha?

Martha

I said never mind. I'm sorry I brought it up.

George

Him up ... not it. You brought him up. Well, more or less. When's the little bugger going to appear, hunh? I mean isn't tomorrow meant to be his birthday, or something?

Martha

I don't want to talk about it!

George (Falsely innocent)

But Martha ... 

Martha

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!

George

I'll bet you don't. (To Honey and Nick) Martha does not want to talk about it ... him. Martha is sorry she brought it up ... him.

Honey (Idiotically)

When's the little bugger coming home? (Giggles)

George

Yes, Martha ... since you had the bad taste to bring the matter up in the first place ... when is the little bugger coming home?

Fun and Games

Nick

Honey, do you think you ... ?

Martha

George talks disparagingly about the little bugger because ... well, because he has problems.

George

The little bugger has problems? What problems has the little bugger got?

Martha

Not the little bugger ... stop calling him that! You! You've got problems.

George (Feigned disdain)

I've never heard of anything more ridiculous in my life.

Honey

Neither have I.

Nick

Honey ... 

Martha

George's biggest problem about the little ... ha, ha, ha, ha! ... about our son, about our great big son, is that deep down in the private-most pit of his gut, he's not completely sure it's his own kid.

George (Deeply serious)

My God, you're a wicked woman.

Martha

And I've told you a million times, baby ... I wouldn't conceive with anyone but you ... you know that, baby.
A deeply wicked person.

Honey (Deep in drunken grief)
My, my, my, my. Oh, my.

Nick
I'm not sure that this is a subject for...

George
Martha's lying. I want you to know that, right now. Martha's lying. (Martha laughs) There are very few things in this world that I am sure of... national boundaries, the level of the ocean, political allegiances, practical morality... none of these would I stake my stick on any more... but the one thing in this whole sinking world that I am sure of is my partnership, my chromosomological partnership in the... creation of our... blond-eyed, blue-haired... son.

Honey
Oh, I'm so glad!

Martha
That was a very pretty speech, George.

George
Thank you, Martha.

Martha
You rose to the occasion... good. Real good.

Honey
Well... real well.

Nick
Honey...
Honey
He's not a floozie ... he can't be a floozie ... you're a floozie.

(Giggles)

Martha
(Shaking a finger at honey)
Now you watch yourself!

Honey (Cheerfully)
All right. I'd like a nipper of brandy, please.

Nick
Honey, I think you've had enough, now....

George
Nonsense! Everybody's ready, I think. (Takes glasses, etc.)

Honey (Echoing George)
Nonsense.

Nick (Shrugging)
O.K.

Martha (To George)
Our son does not have blue hair ... or blue eyes, for that matter. He has green eyes ... like me.

George
He has blue eyes, Martha.

Martha (Determined)
Green.

George (Patronizing)
Blue, Martha.

Martha (Ugly)
Green! (To honey and nick) He has the loveliest green eyes ... they aren't all flaked with brown and grey, you know ... hazel ... they're real green ... deep, pure green eyes ... like mine.

Nick (Peers)
Your eyes are ... brown, aren't they?

Martha
Green! (A little too fast) Well, in some lights they look brown, but they're green. Not green like his ... more hazel. George has watery blue eyes ... milky blue.

George
Make up your mind, Martha.

Martha
I was giving you the benefit of the doubt. (Now back to the others) Daddy has green eyes, too.

George
He does not! Your father has tiny red eyes ... like a white mouse. In fact, he is a white mouse.

Martha
You wouldn't dare say a thing like that if he was here! You're a coward!

George (To honey and nick)
You know ... that great shock of white hair, and those little beady red eyes ... a great big white mouse.

Martha
George hates Daddy ... not for anything Daddy's done
to him, but for his own...

GEORGE
(Nodding...finishing it for her)
...inadequacies.

MARTHA (Cheerfully)
That's right. You hit it...right on the snout. (Seeing
GEORGE EXITING) Where do you think you're going?

GEORGE
We need some more booze, angel.

MARTHA
Oh. (Pause) So, go.

GEORGE (Exiting)
Thank you.

MARTHA
(Seeing that GEORGE has gone)
He's a good bartender...a good bar nurse. The S.O.B.,
he hates my father. You know that?

NICK
(Trying to make light of it)
Oh, come on.

MARTHA (Offended)
You think I'm kidding? You think I'm joking? I never joke
...I don't have a sense of humor. (Almost pouting) I
have a fine sense of the ridiculous, but no sense of humor.
(Affirmatively) I have no sense of humor!

HONEY (Happily)
I haven't, either.

Fun and Games

NICK (Half-heartedly)
Yes, you have, Honey...a quiet one.

HONEY (Proudly)
Thank you.

MARTHA
You want to know why the S.O.B. hates my father? You
want me to tell you? All right...I will now tell you why
the S.O.B. hates my father.

HONEY
(Swinging to some sort of attention)
Oh, good!

MARTHA (Sternly, to HONEY)
Some people feed on the calamities of others.

HONEY (Offended)
They do not!

NICK
Honey...

MARTHA
All right! Shut up! Both of you! (Pause) All right, now.
Mommy died early, see, and I sort of grew up with
Daddy. (Pause--thinks)...I went away to school, and
stuff, but I more or less grew up with him. Jesus, I
admired that guy! I worshipped him...I absolutely
worshipped him. I still do. And he was pretty fond of
me, too...you know? We had a real...rapport going
...a real rapport.

NICK
Yeah, yeah.

MARTHA
And Daddy built this college...I mean, he built it up
Act One

from what it was... it's his whole life. He is the college.

NICK

Unh-hunh.

MARTHA

The college is him. You know what the endowment was when he took over, and what it is now? You look it up some time.

NICK

I know... I read about it...

MARTHA

Shut up and listen... (As an afterthought)... cutie. So after I got done with college and stuff, I came back here and sort of... sat around, for a while. I wasn't married, or anything. Well, I'd been married... sort of... for a week, my sophomore year at Miss Muff's Academy for Young Ladies... college. A kind of junior Lady Chatterley arrangement, as it turned out... the marriage. (NICK laughs) He mowed the lawn at Miss Muff's, sitting up there, all naked, on a big power mower, mowing away. But Daddy and Miss Muff got together and put an end to that... real quick... annulled... which is a laugh... because theoretically you can't get an annulment if there's entrance. Hal! Anyway, so I was revirginized, finished at Miss Muff's... where they had one less gardener's boy, and a real shame, that was... and I came back here and sort of sat around for a while. I was hostess for Daddy and I took care of him... and it was... nice. It was very nice.

NICK

Yes... yes.

MARTHA

What do you mean, yes, yes? How would you know?

Fun and Games

(Lover)

(NICK shrugs helplessly)

And I got the idea, about then, that I'd marry into the college... which didn't seem to be quite as stupid as it turned out. I mean, Daddy had a sense of history... of... continuation... Why don't you come over here and sit by me?

NICK

(Indicating Honey, who is barely with it)

I... don't think I... should... I...

MARTHA

Suit yourself. A sense of continuation... history... and he'd always had it in the back of his mind to... groom someone to take over... some time, when he quit. A succession... you know what I mean?

NICK

Yes, I do.

MARTHA

Which is natural enough. When you've made something, you want to pass it on, to somebody. So, I was sort of on the lookout, for... prospects with the new men. An heir-apparent. (laughs) It wasn't Daddy's idea that I had to necessarily marry the guy. I mean, I wasn't the albatross... you didn't have to take me to get the prize, or anything like that. It was something I had in the back of my mind. And a lot of the new men were married... naturally.

NICK

Sure.
from what it was . . . it's his whole life. He is the college.

**NICK**

Unh-hunh.

**MARTHA**
The college is him. You know what the endowment was when he took over, and what it is now? You look it up some time.

**NICK**

I know . . . I read about it . . .

**MARTHA**

Shut up and listen . . . (As an afterthought) . . . cutie. So after I got done with college and stuff, I came back here and sort of . . . sat around, for a while. I wasn’t married, or anything. Well!! I'd been married . . . sort of . . . for a week, my sophomore year at Miss Muff's Academy for Young Ladies . . . college. A kind of junior Lady Chatterley arrangement, as it turned out . . . the marriage. (NICK laughs) He mowed the lawn at Miss Muff’s, sitting up there, all naked, on a big power mower, mowing away. But Daddy and Miss Muff got together and put an end to that . . . real quick . . . annulled . . . which is a laugh . . . because theoretically you can't get an annulment if there's entrance. Ha! Anyway, so I was revirginized, finished at Miss Muff's . . . where they had one less gardener's boy, and a real shame, that was . . . and I came back here and sort of sat around for a while. I was hostess for Daddy and I took care of him . . . and it was . . . nice. It was very nice.

**NICK**

Yes . . . yes.

**MARTHA**

What do you mean, yes, yes? How would you know?

---

**Fun and Games**

**(NICK shrugs helplessly)**

Lover.

**(NICK smiles a little)**

And I got the idea, about then, that I'd marry into the college . . . which didn't seem to be quite as stupid as it turned out. I mean, Daddy had a sense of history . . . of . . . continuation. . . . Why don't you come over here and sit by me?

**(NICK)**

(Indicating HONEY, who is barely with it)

I . . . don't think I . . . should. . . .

**MARTHA**

Suit yourself. A sense of continuation . . . history . . . and he'd always had it in the back of his mind to . . . groom someone to take over . . . some time, when he quit. A succession . . . you know what I mean?

**NICK**

Yes, I do.

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Which is natural enough. When you've made something, you want to pass it on, to somebody. So, I was sort of on the lookout, for . . . prospects with the new men. An heir-apparent. (Laughs) It wasn't Daddy's idea that I had to necessarily marry the guy. I mean, I wasn't the albatross . . . you didn't have to take me to get the prize, or anything like that. It was something I had in the back of my mind. And a lot of the new men were married . . . naturally.

**NICK**

Sure.
**MARTHA**
(With a strange smile)
Like you, baby.

**HONEY (A mindless echo)**
Like you, baby.

**MARTHA** (Ironically)
But then George came along... along come George.

**GEORGE**
(Re-entering, with liquor)
And along came George, bearing hooch. What are you doing now, Martha?

**MARTHA** (Unfazed)
I'm telling a story. Sit down... you'll learn something.

**GEORGE**
(Stays standing. Puts the liquor on the portable bar)
All rightie.

**HONEY**
You've come back!

**GEORGE**
That's right.

**HONEY**
Dear! He's come back!

**NICK**
Yes, I see... I see.

**MARTHA**
Where was I?

**HONEY**
I'm so glad.

**NICK**
Shhhhh.

**HONEY** (Imitating him)
Shhhhh.

**MARTHA**
Oh yeah. And along came George. That's right. Who was young... intelligent... and... bushy-tailed, and... sort of cute... if you can imagine it...

**GEORGE**
... and younger than you...

**MARTHA**
... and younger than me...

**GEORGE**
... by six years...

**MARTHA**
... by six years... It doesn't bother me, George... And along he came, bright-eyed, into the History Department. And you know what I did, dumb cluck that I am? You know what I did? I fell for him.

**HONEY** (Dreamy)
Oh, that's nice.

**GEORGE**
Yes, she did. You should have seen it. She'd sit outside of my room, on the lawn, at night, and she'd howl and claw at the turf... I couldn't work.

**MARTHA**
(Laughs, really amused)
I actually fell for him... it... that, there.
GEORGE

Martha's a Romantic at heart.

MARThA

That I am. So, I actually fell for him. And the match seemed... practical, too. You know, Daddy was looking
for someone to...

GEORGE

Just a minute, Martha...

MARThA

...take over, some time, when he was ready to...

GEORGE (Stony)

Just a minute, Martha.

MARThA

...retire, and so I thought...

STOP IT, MARTHA!

MARThA (Irritated)

Whadda you want?

GEORGE (Too patiently)

I'd thought you were telling the story of our courtship,
Martha... I didn't know you were going to start in on
the other business.

MARThA (So-thereish)

Well, I am!

GEORGE

I wouldn't, if I were you.

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MARThA

Oh... you wouldn't? Well, you're not!

GEORGE

Now, you've already sprung a leak about you-know-
what...

MARThA (A duck)

What? What?

GEORGE

...about the apple of our eye... the sprout... the
little bugger... (spits it out)... our son... and if
you start in on this other business, I warn you, Martha,
it's going to make me angry.

MARThA (Laughing at him).

Oh, it is, is it?

GEORGE

I warn you.

MARThA (Incredulous)

You what?

GEORGE (Very quietly)

I warn you.

NICK

Do you really think we have to go through... ?

MARThA

I stand warned! (Pause... then, to Honey and Nick) So,
anyway, I married the S.O.B., and I had it all planned
out... He was the groom... he was going to be
groomed. He'd take over some day... first, he'd take
over the History Department, and then, when Daddy retired, he'd take over the college ... you know? That's the way it was supposed to be.

(To George, who is at the portable bar with his back to her)
You getting angry, baby? Hunh? (Now back) That's the way it was supposed to be. Very simple. And Daddy seemed to think it was a pretty good idea, too. For a while. Until he watched for a couple of years! (To George again) You getting angrier? (Now back) Until he watched for a couple of years and started thinking maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all ... that maybe Georgie-boy didn't have the stuff ... that he didn't have it in him!

George
(Still with his back to them all)
Stop it, Martha.

Martha (Viciously triumphant)
The hell I will! You see, George didn't have much ... push ... he wasn't particularly ... aggressive. In fact he was sort of a ... (Spits the word at George's back) ... a flop! A great ... big ... fat ... flop!

(Crash! Immediately after flop! George breaks a bottle against the portable bar and stands there, still with his back to them all, holding the remains of the bottle by the neck. There is a silence, with everyone frozen. Then ...)

George (Almost crying)
I said stop, Martha,

Martha (After considering what course to take)
I hope that was an empty bottle, George. You don't want to waste good liquor ... not on your salary.
GEORGE and HONEY
(Who joins him drunkenly)
Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf,
Virginia Woolf,
Virginia Woolf . . . (etc.)

MARTHA
stop it!
(A brief silence)

HONEY
(Rising, moving toward the hall)
I'm going to be sick . . . I'm going to be sick . . . I'm
going to vomit.
(exits)

NICK (Going after her)
Oh, for God's sake!
(exits)

MARTHA
(Going after them, looks back at GEORGE, contemp-
tuously)
Jesus! (exits. GEORGE is alone on stage)

CURTAIN
GEORGE, by himself: NICK re-enters.

NICK (After a silence)
I . . . guess . . . she's all right. (No answer) She . . . really shouldn't drink. (No answer) She's . . . frail. (No answer) Uh . . . slim-hipped, as you'd have it. (GEORGE smiles vaguely) I'm really very sorry.

GEORGE (Quietly)
Where's my little yin-yum? Where's Martha?

NICK
She's making coffee . . . in the kitchen. She . . . gets sick quite easily.

GEORGE (Preoccupied)
Martha? Oh no, Martha hasn't been sick a day in her life, unless you count the time she spends in the rest home. . . .

NICK (He, too, quietly)
No, no; my wife . . . my wife gets sick quite easily. Your wife is Martha.

GEORGE (With some rue)
Oh, yes . . . I know.

NICK (A statement of fact)
She doesn't really spend any time in a rest home.

GEORGE
Your wife?
Act Two

No. Yours.

GEORGE

Oh! Mine. (Pause) No, no, she doesn't ... I would; I mean if I were ... her ... she ... I would. But I'm not ... and so I don't. (Pause) I'd like to, though. It gets pretty bouncy around here sometimes.

NICK (Coolly)

Yes ... I'm sure.

GEORGE

Well, you saw an example of it.

NICK

I try not to. . . .

GEORGE

Get involved. Um? Isn't that right?

NICK

Yes ... that's right.

GEORGE

I'd imagine not.

NICK

I find it ... embarrassing.

GEORGE (Sarcastic)

Oh, you do, hunh?

NICK

Yes. Really. Quite.

GEORGE (Mimicking him)

Yes. Really. Quite. (Then aloud, but to himself) it's disgusting!

GEORGE (With great disdain)

I just don't see why you feel you have to subject other people to it.

IP

NICK

If you and your ... wife ... want to go at each other, like a couple of. . . .

GEORGE

il Why I want to!
...animals, I don't see why you don't do it when there aren't any.

GEOGE

(Laughing through his anger)

Why, you smug, self-righteous little...

NICK (A genuine threat)

CAN... IT... MISTER!

(Silence)

Just... watch it!

GEORGE

...scientist.

NICK

I've never hit an older man.

GEORGE (Considers it)

Oh. (Pause) You just hit younger men... and children... women... birds. (Sees that NICK is not amused)

Well, you're quite right, of course. It isn't the prettiest spectacle... seeing a couple of middle-age types hacking away at each other, all red in the face and winded, missing half the time.

NICK

Oh, you two don't miss... you two are pretty good. Impressive.

GEORGE

And impressive things impress you, don't they? You're... easily impressed... sort of a... pragmatic idealism.

NICK (A tight smile)

No, it's that sometimes I can admire things that I don't admire. Now, flagellation isn't my idea of good times, but... .

GEORGE

... but you can admire a good flagellator... a real pro.

NICK

Unh-huh... yeah.

GEORGE

Your wife throws up a lot, eh?

NICK

I didn't say that... I said she gets sick quite easily.

GEORGE

Oh. I thought by sick you meant...

NICK

Well, it's true... She... she does throw up a lot. Once she starts... there's practically no stopping her... I mean, she'll go right on... for hours. Not all the time, but... regularly.

GEORGE

You can tell time by her, huh?

NICK

Just about.

GEORGE

Drink?

NICK

Sure. (With no emotion, except the faintest distaste, as George takes his glass to the bar) I married her because she was pregnant.

GEORGE

(Pause) Oh? (Pause) But you said you didn't have any
children. ... When I asked you, you said. . . .

NICK
She wasn't . . . really. It was a hysterical pregnancy. She blew up, and then she went down.

GEORGE
And while she was up, you married her.

NICK
And then she went down.
(They both laugh, and are a little surprised that they do)

GEORGE
Uh . . . Bourbon is right.

NICK
Uh . . . yes, Bourbon.

GEORGE (At the bar, still)
When I was sixteen and going to prep school, during the Punic Wars, a bunch of us used to go into New York on the first day of vacations, before we fanned out to our homes, and in the evening this bunch of us used to go to this gin mill owned by the gangster-father of one of us—for this was during the Great Experiment, or Prohibition, as it is more frequently called, and it was a bad time for the liquor lobby, but a fine time for the crooks and the cops—and we would go to this gin mill, and we would drink with the grown-ups and listen to the jazz. And one time, in the bunch of us, there was this boy who was fifteen, and he had killed his mother with a shotgun some years before—accidentally, completely accidentally, without even an unconscious motivation, I have no doubt, no doubt at all—and this one evening this boy went with us, and we ordered our drinks, and when it came

his turn he said, I'll have bergin . . . give me some bergin, please . . . bergin and water. Well, we all laughed . . . he was blond and he had the face of a cherub, and we all laughed, and his cheeks went red and the color rose in his neck, and the assistant crook who had taken our order told people at the next table what the boy had said, and then they laughed, and then more people were told and the laughter grew, and more people and more laughter, and no one was laughing more than us, and none of us more than the boy who had shot his mother. And soon, everyone in the gin mill knew what the laughter was about, and everyone started ordering bergin, and laughing when they ordered it. And soon, of course, the laughter became less general, but it did not subside, entirely, for a very long time, for always at this table or that someone would order bergin and a new area of laughter would arise. We drank free that night, and we were bought champagne by the management, by the gangster-father of one of us. And, of course, we suffered the next day, each of us, alone, on his train, away from New York, each of us with a grown-up's hangover . . . but it was the grandest day of my . . . youth.

(Hands nick a drink on the word)

NICK (Very quietly)
Thank you. What . . . what happened to the boy . . . the boy who had shot his mother?

GEORGE
I won't tell you.

NICK
All right.

GEORGE
The following summer, on a country road, with his
learner's permit in his pocket and his father on the front seat to his right, he swerved the car, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into a large tree.

**NICK (Faintly pleading)**

No.

**GEORGE**

He was not killed, of course. And in the hospital, when he was conscious and out of danger, and when they told him that his father was dead, he began to laugh. I have been told, and his laughter grew and he would not stop, and it was not until they jabbed a needle in his arm, not until after that, until his consciousness slipped away from him, that his laughter subsided ... stopped. And when he was recovered from his injuries enough so that he could be moved without damage should he struggle, he was put in an asylum. That was thirty years ago.

**NICK**

Is he ... still there?

**GEORGE**

Oh, yes. And I'm told that for these thirty years he has ... not ... uttered ... one ... sound.

(A rather long silence: five seconds, please)

**MARSHA! (Pause) MARSHA!**

**NICK**

I told you ... she's making coffee.

**GEORGE**

For your hysterical wife, who goes up and down.

**NICK**

Went. Up and down.

**GEORGE**

Went. No more?
Well, no... I don't imagine so... now. Do you have any other kids? Do you have any daughters, or anything?

(As if it's a great joke)

Do we have any what?

NICK

Do you have any... I mean, do you have only one... kid... uh... your son?

GEORGE

(With a private knowledge)

Oh no... just one... one boy... our son.

NICK

Well... (Shrugs)... that's nice.

GEORGE

Oh ho, ho. Yes, well, he's a... comfort, a bean bag.

NICK

What?

GEORGE

A bean bag. Bean bag. You wouldn't understand. (Over-difinct) Bean... bag.

NICK

I heard you... I didn't say I was deaf... I said I didn't understand.

GEORGE

You didn't say that at all.

NICK

I meant I was implying I didn't understand. (Under his breath) For Christ's sake!
GEORGE
Well, I want to. I know you don’t like to become involved... I know you like to... preserve your scientific detachment in the face of—for lack of a better word—life... and all... but still, I want to tell you.

NICK (A tight, formal smile)
I’m a... guest. You go right ahead.

(Mocking appreciation)
Oh... well, thanks. Now! That makes me feel all warm and runny inside.

NICK
Well, if you're going to...

MARThA'S VOICE
Hey!

NICK
... if you're going to start that kind of stuff again...

GEORGE
Hark! Forest sounds.

NICK
Hm?

GEORGE
Animal noises.

MARThA (Sticking her head in)
Hey!

NICK
Oh!

GEORGE
Well, here’s nurse.

MARTHA (To NICK)
We're sitting up... we're having coffee, and we'll be back in.

NICK (Not rising)
Oh... is there anything I should do?

MARTHA
Nayh. You just stay here and listen to George’s side of things. Bore yourself to death.

GEORGE
Monstre!

MARTHA
Cochny!

GEORGE
Bëtel

MARTHA
Canaille!

GEORGE
Putain!

MARTHA (With a gesture of contemptuous dismissal)
Yaaaahhh! You two types amuse yourselves... we'll be in. (As she goes) You clean up the mess you made, George?

GEORGE
(MARTHA goes. GEORGE speaks to the empty hallway)
No, Martha, I did not clean up the mess I made. I've been
Act Two

trying for years to clean up the mess I made.

Nick

Have you?

George

Hm?

Nick

Have you been trying for years?

George

(After a long pause... looking at him)

Accommodation, malleability, adjustment... those do seem to be in the order of things, don't they?

Nick

Don't try to put me in the same class with you!

George

(Pause) Oh. (Pause) No, of course not. Things are simpler with you... you marry a woman because she's all blown up... while I, in my clumsy, old-fashioned way...

Nick

There was more to it than that!

George

Sure I'll bet she has money, too!

Nick

(Looks hurt. Then, determined, after a pause)

Yes.

George

Yes? (Joyfully) Yes! You mean I was right? I hit it?

Walpurgisnacht

Nick

Well, you see...

George

My God, what archery! First try, too. How about that!

Nick

You see...

George

There were other things.

Yes.

Nick

To compensate.

Yes.

George

There always are. (Sees that Nick is reacting badly) No, I'm sure there are. I didn't mean to be... flip. There are always compensating factors... as in the case of Martha and myself... Now, on the surface of it...

Nick

We sort of grew up together, you know...

George

... it looks to be a kind of knock-about, drag-out affair, on the surface of it...

Nick

We knew each other from, oh God, I don't know, when we were six, or something...
GEORGE

... but somewhere back there, at the beginning of it, right when I first came to New Carthage, back then...

NICK (With some irritation)

I'm sorry.

GEORGE

Hm? Oh. No, no ... I'm sorry.

NICK

No ... it's ... it's all right.

GEORGE

No ... you go ahead.

NICK

No ... please.

GEORGE

I insist ... You're a guest. You go first.

NICK

Well, it seems a little silly ... now.

GEORGE

Nonsense! (Pause) But if you were six, she must have been four, or something.

NICK

Maybe I was eight ... she was six. We ... we used to play ... doctor.

GEORGE

That's a good healthy heterosexual beginning.

NICK (Laughing)

Yup.

GEORGE

The scientist even then, eh?

NICK (Laughs)

Yeah. And it was ... always taken for granted ... you know ... by our families, and by us, too, I guess. And ... so, we did.

GEORGE

(Pause) Did what?

NICK

We got married.

GEORGE

When you were eight?

NICK

No. No, of course not. Much later.

GEORGE

I wondered.

NICK

I wouldn't say there was any ... particular passion between us, even at the beginning ... of our marriage, I mean.

GEORGE

Well, certainly no surprise, no earth-shaking discoveries, after Doctor, and all.

NICK (Uncertainty)

No ...

GEORGE

Everything's all pretty much the same, anyway ... in spite of what they say about Chinese women.
NICK
What is that?

GEORGE
Let me freshen you up. (Takes NICK's glass)

NICK
Oh, thanks. After a while you don't get any drunker, do you?

GEORGE
Well, you do ... but it's different ... everything slows down ... you get sodden ... unless you can up-chuck ... like your wife ... then you can sort of start all over again.

NICK
Everybody drinks a lot here in the East. (Thinks about it) Everybody drinks a lot in the Middle West, too.

GEORGE
We drink a great deal in this country, and I suspect we'll be drinking a great deal more, too ... if we survive. We should be Arabs or Italians ... the Arabs don't drink, and the Italians don't get drunk much, except on religious holidays. We should live on Crete, or something.

NICK
(Sarcastically ... as if killing a joke)
And that, of course, would make us cretins.

GEORGE (Mild surprise)
So it would. (Hands NICK his drink) Tell me about your wife's money.

NICK (Suddenly suspicious)
Why?
GEORGE (Shrugs)
Very well... Martha’s father has not been robbing this place blind for years, and Martha does not have any money. O.K.?

NICK
We were talking about my wife’s money... not yours.

GEORGE
O.K... talk.

NICK
No. (Pause) My father-in-law... was a man of the Lord, and he was very rich.

GEORGE
What faith?

NICK
He... my father-in-law... was called by God when he was six, or something, and he started preaching, and he baptized people, and he saved them, and he traveled around a lot, and he became pretty famous... not like some of them, but he became pretty famous... and when he died he had a lot of money.

GEORGE
God’s money.

NICK
No... his own.

GEORGE
What happened to God’s money?

NICK
He spent God’s money... and he saved his own. He built hospitals, and he sent off Mercy ships, and he brought the outhouses indoors, and he brought the people outdoors, into the sun, and he built three churches, or whatever they were, and two of them burned down... and he ended up pretty rich.

GEORGE (After considering it)
Well, I think that’s very nice.

NICK
Yes. (Pause. Giggles a little) And so, my wife’s got some money.

GEORGE
But not God’s money.

NICK
No. Her own.

GEORGE
Well, I think that’s very nice.

(NICK giggles a little)
Martha’s got money because Martha’s father’s second wife... not Martha’s mother, but after Martha’s mother died... was a very old lady with warts who was very rich.

NICK
She was a witch.

GEORGE
She was a good witch, and she married the white mouse...

(NICK begins to giggle)
... with the tiny red eyes... and he must have nibbled her warts, or something like that, because she went up in a puff of smoke almost immediately. FOUL!

FOUL!
GEORGE

Four! And all that was left, aside from some wart medicine, was a big fat will. ... A peach pie, with some for the township of New Carthage, some for the college, some for Martha's daddy, and just this much for Martha.

NICK (Quite beside himself)
Maybe ... maybe my father-in-law and the witch with the warts should have gotten together, because he was a mouse, too.

GEORGE (Urging NICK on)
He was?

NICK (Breaking down)
Sure ... he was a church mouse! (They both laugh a great deal, but it is sad laughter ... eventually they subside, fall silent) Your wife never mentioned a stepmother.

GEORGE (Considers it)
Well ... maybe it isn't true.

NICK (Narrowing his eyes)
And maybe it is.

GEORGE
Might be ... might not. Well, I think your story's a lot nicer ... about your pumped-up little wife, and your father-in-law who was a priest ...

NICK
He was not a priest ... he was a man of God.

GEORGE
Yes.

NICK
And my wife wasn't pumped up ... she blew up.

GEORGE

Yes, yes.

NICK (Giggling)
Get things straight.

GEORGE
I'm sorry ... I will. I'm sorry.

NICK
O.K.

GEORGE
You realize, of course, that I've been drawing you out on this stuff, not because I'm interested in your terrible lifestyle, but only because you represent a direct and pertinent threat to my lifestyle, and I want to get the goods on you.

NICK (Still amused)
Sure ... sure.

GEORGE
I mean ... I've warned you ... you stand warned.

NICK
I stand warned. (Laughs) It's you sneaky types worry me the most, you know. You ineffectual sons of bitches ... you're the worst.

GEORGE
Yes ... we are. Sneaky. An elbow in your steely-blue eye ... a knee in your solid gold groin ... we're the worst.

NICK
Yup.

GEORGE
Well, I'm glad you don't believe me ... I know you've got
history on your side, and all.

NICK
Unh-unh. You've got history on your side. ... I've got biology on mine. History, biology.

GEORGE
I know the difference.

NICK
You don't act it.

GEORGE
No? I thought we'd decided that you'd take over the History Department first, before you took over the whole works. You know ... a step at a time.

NICK
(Stretching ... luxuriating ... playing the game)
Nyaah ... what I thought I'd do is ... I'd sort of insinuate myself generally, play around for a while, find all the weak spots, shore 'em up, but with my own name plate on 'em ... become sort of a fact, and then turn into a ... a what ... ?

GEORGE
An inevitability.

NICK
Exactly. ... An inevitability. You know. ... Take over a few courses from the older men, start some special groups for myself ... plow a few pertinent wives. ...

GEORGE
Now that's it! You can take over all the courses you want to, and get as much of the young elite together in the gymnasium as you like, but until you start plowing per-

Walpurgisnacht

tinent wives, you really aren't working. The way to a man's heart is through his wife's belly, and don't you forget it.

NICK (Playing along)
Yeah. ... I know.

GEORGE
And the women around here are no better than puntas—you know, South American ladies of the night. You know what they do in South America ... in Rio? The puntas? Do you know? They hiss ... like geese. ... They stand around in the street and they hiss at you ... like a bunch of geese.

Gangle.

GEORGE
Hm?

NICK
Gangle ... gangle of geese ... not bunch ... gangle.

GEORGE
Well, if you're going to get all cute about it, all ornitho-

Gaggle? Not gangle?

GEORGE
Yes, gaggle.

NICK (Crestfallen)
Oh.

GEORGE
Oh. Yes. ... Well they stand around on the street and they
hiss at you, like a bunch of geese. All the faculty wives, downtown in New Carthage, in front of the A&P, hissing away like a bunch of geese. That's the way to power—plow 'em all!

NICK (Still playing along)

I'll bet you're right.

GEORGE

Well, I am.

NICK

And I'll bet your wife's the biggest goose in the gangle, isn't she . . . ? Her father president, and all.

GEORGE

You bet your historical inevitability she is!

NICK

Yessirree. (Rubs his hands together) Well now, I'd just better get her off in a corner and mount her like a god-dam dog, eh?

GEORGE

Why, you'd certainly better.

NICK

(Looks at George a minute, his expression a little sick)

You know, I almost think you're serious.

GEORGE (Toasting him)

No, baby . . . you almost think you're serious, and it scares the hell out of you.

NICK (Exploding in disbelief)

me!

GEORGE (Quietly)

Yes . . . you.
ALL RIGHT!

Hey, Honey.

(Silence. Then quietly)

All right... O.K. You want to play it by ear, right? Everything's going to work out anyway, because the timetable's history, right?

Right... right. You just tend to your knitting, grandma. ... I'll be O.K.

I've tried to... tried to reach you... to...

... make contact?

Yes.

... communicate?

Yes. Exactly.

Aw... that is touching... that is... downright moving... that's what it is. (With sudden vehemence) Up yours!

Hm?

You heard me

GEORGE (At Nick, not to him)

You take the trouble to construct a civilization... to... to build a society, based on the principles of... of principle... you endeavor to make communicable sense out of natural order, morality out of the unnatural disorder of man's mind... you make government and art, and realize that they are, must be, both the same... you bring things to the saddest of all points... to the point where there is something to lose... then all at once, through all the music, through all the sensible sounds of men building, attempting, comes the Dies Irae. And what is it? What does the trumpet sound? Up yours. I suppose there's justice to it, after all the years... Up yours.

(Brief pause... then applauding)

Ha, ha! Bravo! Ha, ha! (Laughs on)

(And MARTHA re-enters, leading HONEY, who is wan but smiling bravely)

Thank you... thank you.

Here we are, a little shaky, but on our feet.

Goodie.

What? Oh... oh! Hi, Honey... you better?

A little bit, dear... I'd better sit down, though.
NICK
Sure... c'mon... you sit by me.

HONEY
Thank you, dear.

GEORGE (Beneath his breath)
Touching... touching.

MARTHA (To GEORGE)
Well? Aren't you going to apologize?

GEORGE (Squinting)
For what, Martha?

MARTHA
For making the little lady throw up, what else?

GEORGE
I did not make her throw up.

MARTHA
You most certainly did!

GEORGE
I did not!

HONEY (Papal gesture)
No, now... no.

MARTHA (To GEORGE)
Well, who do you think did... Sexy over there? You think he made his own little wife sick?

GEORGE (Helpfully)
Well, you make me sick.

MARTHA
THAT'S DIFFERENT!

HONEY
No, now. I... I throw up... I mean, I get sick... occasionally, all by myself... without any reason.

GEORGE
Is that a fact?

NICK
You're... you're delicate, Honey.

HONEY (Proudly)
I've always done it.

GEORGE
Like Big Ben.

NICK (A warning)
Watch it!

HONEY
And the doctors say there's nothing wrong with me... organically. You know?

NICK
Of course there isn't.

HONEY
Why, just before we got married, I developed... appendicitis... or everybody thought it was appendicitis... but it turned out to be... it was a... (laughs briefly)... false alarm.

(GEORGE and NICK exchange glances)

MARTHA (To GEORGE)
Get me a drink.

(GEORGE moves to the bar)

GEORGE makes everybody sick... When our son was just
a little boy, he used to...

GEORGE

Don't, Martha...

MARTHA

... he used to throw up all the time, because of
George...

GEORGE

I said, don't!

MARTHA

It got so bad that whenever George came into the room
he'd start right in retching, and...

GEORGE

... the real reason (Spits out the words) our son...
used to throw up all the time, wife and lover, was noth-
ing more complicated than that he couldn't stand you
fiddling at him all the time, breaking into his bedroom
with your kimono flying, fiddling at him all the time, with
your liquor breath on him, and your hands all over
his...

MARTHA

Yeah? And I suppose that's why he ran away from home
twice in one month, too. (Now to the guests) Twice in one
month! Six times in one year!

GEORGE (Also to the guests)

Our son ran away from home all the time because Martha
here used to corner him.

MARTHA (Braying)

I never cornered the son of a bitch in my life!

GEORGE

(Handing MARTHA her drink)

Walpurgisnacht

He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd say,
"Mama's always coming at me." That's what he'd say.

MARTHA

Liar!

GEORGE (Shrugging)

Well, that's the way it was... you were always coming at
him. I thought it was very embarrassing.

NICK

If you thought it was so embarrassing, what are you talk-
ing about it for?

HONEY (Admonishing)

Dear...

MARTHA

Yeah! (To NICK) Thanks, sweetheart.

GEORGE (To them all)

I didn't want to talk about him at all... I would have
been perfectly happy not to discuss the whole subject.
... I never want to talk about it.

MARTHA

Yes you do.

GEORGE

When we're alone, maybe.

MARTHA

We're alone

GEORGE

Uh... no, Love... we've got guests.

MARTHA

(With a covetous look at NICK)

We sure have.
HONEY
Could I have a little brandy? I think I'd like a little brandy.

NICK
Do you think you should?

HONEY
Oh yes...yes, dear.

GEORGE
(Moving to the bar again)
Sure! Fill 'er up!

NICK
Honey, I don't think you...

HONEY
(Petulance creeping in)
It will steady me, dear. I feel a little unsteady.

GEORGE
Hell, you can't walk steady on half a bottle... got to do it right.

HONEY
Yes. (To MARTHA) I love brandy... I really do.

MARTHA
(Somewhat abstracted)
Good for you.

NICK
(Giving up)
Well, if you think it's a good idea...

HONEY
(Really testy)
I know what's best for me, dear.

NICK
(Not even pleasant)
Yes...I'm sure you do.

Walpurgisnacht

HONEY
(GEORGE hands her a brandy)
Oh, goodie! Thank you. (To NICK) Of course I do, dear.

GEORGE
(Pensively)
I used to drink brandy.

MARTHA
(Privately)
You used to drink bergin, too.

GEORGE
(Sharp)
Shut up, Marthal

MARTHA
(Her hand over her mouth in a little girl gesture)
Ooowwops.

NICK
(Something having clicked, vaguely)
Hm?

GEORGE
(Burying it)
Nothing... nothing.

MARTHA
(Shetoo)
You two men have it out while we were gone? George
tell you his side of things? He bring you to tears, unh?

NICK
Well... no...

GEORGE
No, what we did, actually, was...we sort of danced around.

MARTHA
Oh, yeah? Cute!
Honey

Oh, I love dancing.

Nick

He didn't mean that, Honey.

Honey

Well, I didn't think he did! Two grown men dancing... heavens!

Martha

You mean he didn't start in on how he would have amounted to something if it hadn't been for Daddy? How his high moral sense wouldn't even let him try to better himself? No?

Nick (Qualified)

No...

Martha

And he didn't run on about how he tried to publish a god-dam book, and Daddy wouldn't let him.

Nick


George

Please, Martha...

Nick (Egging her on)

A book? What book?

George (Pleading)

Please. Just a book.

Martha (Mock incredulity)

Honey

Just a book!
ACT TWO

HONEY (All sweetness again) (To Martha) Oh, I'm so glad... I just love dancing. Don't you?

MARThA
(With a glance at Nick)
Yeah... yeah, that's not a bad idea.

NICK (Genuinely nervous)
Gee.

GEORGE
Gee.

HONEY
I dance like the wind.

GEORGE (Picking a record)
Martha had her daguerreotype in the paper once... oh, 'bout twenty five years ago... Seems she took second prize in one o' them seven-day dancin' contest things... biceps all bulging, holding up her partner.

MARThA
Will you put a record on and shut up?

GEORGE
Certainly, Love. (To all) How are we going to work this? Mixed doubles?

MARThA
Well, you certainly don't think I'm going to dance with you, do you?

GEORGE (Considers it)
Noooooo... not with him around... that's for sure. And

Walpurgisnacht
not with twinkle-toes here, either.

HONEY
I'll dance with anyone... I'll dance by myself.

NICK
Honey...

HONEY
I dance like the wind.

GEORGE
All right, kiddies... choose up and hit the sack.
(Music starts... Second movement, Beethoven's 7th Symphony)

HONEY
(Up, dancing by herself)
De, de de da da, da-da de, da da-da de da... wonderful...!

NICK
Honey....

MARThA
All right, George... cut that out!

HONEY
Dum, de de da da, da-da de, dum de da da da... Wheeeeee...!

MARThA
Cut it out, George!

GEORGE (Pretending not to hear)
What, Martha? What?

NICK
Honey....
I'm sorry, Honey.

Just ... leave me alone!

Well, why don't you choose, Martha? (Moves away from the phonograph ... leaves it to Martha) Martha's going to run things ... the little lady's going to lead the band.

I like to dance and you don't want me to.

I like you to dance.

Just ... leave me alone. (She sits ... takes a drink)

Martha's going to put on some rhythm she understands ... Sacre du Printemps, maybe. (Moves ... sits by Honey) Hi, sexy.

Oooooohhhhh!

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Choose it, Martha ... do your stuff!

You're damn right!

You want to dance with me, angel-tits?
Honey (not entirely with it)

I'm surprised George didn't give you his side of things.

That's nice.

Honey

They like the way they move.

George (to Honey)

I like the way you move, too.

Nick

I like the way you move.

Martha

If they were pressed together...

Well, just sit here and watch.

Honey (pointing)

Hil, they dance, close together, swiftly.

Hm. Oh... oh...

Nick

OK, still, let's go. (Gives Nick)

Record on... in fancy show tune.

Martha

I'm not... no.

Nick

Don't be shy.

Martha

It's a family dance... they both know it.

George

They're dancing like they've danced before.

With permission.

Hil.

Oh boy!

George (disgusted)

What did you call my wife?

Nick

Act Two

I'm just that

Martha

Nick

Honey

Hey, you are strong, aren't you?

Martha (to Nick)

That's right.

George

Oh, don't be so...

George

It's a family dance... they both know it.

Martha

Don't do that.

George

They're dancing like they've danced before.

With permission.
Aren't they cute?  

George (To Honey)  

Well, he didn't.  

Martha  

That surprises me.  

(Perhaps Martha's statements are more or less in time to the music)  

Nick  

Does it?  

Martha  

Yeah ... he usually does ... when he gets the chance.  

Nick  

Well, what do you know.  

Martha  

It's really a very sad story.  

George  

You have ugly talents, Martha.  

Nick  

Is it?  

Martha  

It would make you weep.  

George  

Hideous gifts.  

Nick  

Is that so?  

Walpurgisnacht  

George  

Don't encourage her.  

Martha  

Encourage me.  

Nick  

Go on.  

(They may undulate toward each other and then move back)  

George  

I warn you ... don't encourage her.  

Martha  

He warns you ... don't encourage me.  

Nick  

I heard him ... tell me more.  

Martha  

(Consciously making rhymed speech)  

Well, Georgie-boy had lots of big ambitions  

In spite of something funny in his past ...  

George (Quietly warning)  

Martha. ...  

Martha  

Which Georgie-boy here turned into a novel. ...  

His first attempt and also his last. ...  

Hey! I rhymed! I rhymed!  

George  

I warn you, Martha.  

Nick  

Yeah ... you rhymed. Go on, go on.
MARtha
But daddy took a look at Georgie's novel...

GEORGE
You're looking for a punch in the mouth... You know that, Martha.

MARtha
Do tell... and he was very shocked by what he read.

NICK
He was?

MARtha
Yes... he was... A novel all about a naughty boy-child...

GEORGE (Rising)
I will not tolerate this!

NICK (Offhand, to George)
Oh, can it.

MARtha
... ha, ha! naughty boy-child who... uh... who killed his mother and his father dead.

GEORGE
STOP it, Martha!

MARtha
And Daddy said... Look here, I will not let you publish such a thing...

GEORGE
(Rushes to phonograph... rips the record off)

Walpurgisnacht
That's it! The dancing's over. That's it. Go on now!

NICK
What do you think you're doing, huh?

HONEY (Happily)
Violence! Violence!

MARtha
(Loud: a pronouncement)
And Daddy said... Look here, kid, you don't think for a second I'm going to let you publish this crap, do you? Not on your life, baby... not while you're teaching here... You publish that goddamn book and you're out... on your ass!

DESIST! DESIST!

MARtha
Ha, ha, ha, ha!

NICK (Laughing)
De... sist!

HONEY
Oh, violence... violence!

MARtha
Why, the idea! A teacher at a respected, conservative institution like this, in a town like New Carthage, publishing a book like that? If you respect your position here, young man, young... whippersnapper, you'll just withdraw that manuscript...

GEORGE
I will not be made mock off!
NICK
He will not be made mock of, for Christ's sake. (Laughs)
(Honey joins in the laughter, not knowing exactly why)

GEORGE
I will not!
(All three are laughing at him)
(Infuriated) The game is over!

MARTHA (Pushing on)
Imagine such a thing! A book about a boy who murders his mother and kills his father, and pretends it's all an accident!

HONEY
(Beside herself with glee)
An accident!

NICK
(remembering something related)
Hey... wait a minute...

MARTHA (Her own voice now)
And you want to know the clincher? You want to know what big brave Georgie said to Daddy?

GEORGE
No! No! No! No!

NICK
Wait a minute now...

MARTHA
Georgie said... but Daddy... I mean... ha, ha, ha, ha... but Sir, it isn't a novel at all... (Other voice)
Not a novel? (Mimicking George's voice) No, Sir... it isn't a novel at all...
Act Two

floor; Nick over him; Martha to one side, her hand on her throat)

Nick

That's enough now!

Honey

(Disappointment in her voice)

Oh... oh... oh...

(george drags himself into a chair. He is hurt, but it is more a profound humiliation than a physical injury)

George

(They watch him... a pause...)

All right... all right... very quiet now... we will all be... very quiet.

Martha

(softly, with a slow shacking of her head)

Murderer. Mur... der... er.

Nick (softly to Martha)

O.K. now... that's enough.

(A brief silence. They all move around a little, self-consciously, like wrestlers flexing after a fall)

George

(Composure seemingly recovered, but there is a great nervous intensity)

Well! That's one game. What shall we do now, hunh?

(Martha and Nick laugh nervously)

Oh come on... let's think of something else. We've played Humiliate the Host... we've gone through that one... what shall we do now?

Nick

Aw... look...
GEORGE
(Affirmatively, but to none of them)
I am not drowning.

HONEY
(To Nick, tearfully indignant)
You told me to shut up!

NICK (Impatiently)
I'm sorry.

HONEY (Between her teeth)
No you're not.

NICK
(To Honey, even more impatiently)
I'm sorry.

GEORGE
(Claps his hands together, once, loud)
I've got it! I'll tell you what game we'll play. We're done with Humiliate the Host ... this round, anyway ... we're done with that ... and we don't want to play Hump the Hostess, yet ... not yet ... So I know what we'll play.
... We'll play a round of Get the Guests. How about that? How about a little game of Get the Guests?

MARTHA
(Turning away, a little disgusted)
Jesus, George.

GEORGE
Book dropper! Child mentioner!

HONEY
I don't like these games.

NICK
Yeah ... I think maybe we've had enough of games, now ...

GEORGE
Oh, no ... oh, no ... we haven't. We've had only one game ... Now we're going to have another. You can't fly on one game.

NICK
I think maybe ...

GEORGE (With great authority)
SILENCE! (It is respected) Now, how are we going to play Get the Guests?

MARTHA
For God's sake, George ...

GEORGE
You be quiet!

(MARTHA shrugs)
I wonder ... I wonder. (Puzzles ... then ...) O.K. Well ... Martha ... in her indiscreet way ... well, not really indiscreet, because Martha is a naïve, at heart ... anyway, Martha told you all about my first novel. True or false? Hunh? I mean, true or false that there ever was such a thing. ni! But, Martha told you about it ... my first novel, my ... memory book ... which I'd sort of preferred she hadn't, but hell, there's blood under the bridge. sur! what she didn't do ... what Martha didn't tell you about is she didn't tell us all about my second novel.

(MARTHA looks at him with puzzled curiosity)
No, you didn't know about that, did you, Martha? About my second novel, true or false. True or false?

MARTHA (Sincerely)
No.
GEORGE

No.
(He starts quietly but as he goes on, his tone becomes harsher, his voice louder)
Well, it's an allegory, really—probably—but it can be read as straight, cozy prose... and it's all about a nice young couple who come out of the middle west. It's a bucolic you see. And, this nice young couple comes out of the middle west, and he's blond and about thirty, and he's a scientist, a teacher, a scientist... and his mouse is a wifey little type who gargles brandy all the time... and...

NICK

Just a minute here...

GEORGE

... and they got to know each other when they was only teensie little types, and they used to get under the vanity table and poke around, and...

NICK

I said just a minute!

GEORGE

This is my game! You played yours... you people. This is my game!

HONEY (Dreamy)

I want to hear the story. I love stories.

MARTHA

George, for heaven's sake...

GEORGE

And! And Mousie's father was a holy man, see, and he ran sort of a traveling clip joint, based on Christ and all those girls, and he took the faithful... that's all... just took 'em...
HONEY
I love familiar stories... they're the best.

GEORGE
How right you are. But Blondie was in disguise, really, all got up as a teacher, 'cause his baggage ticket had bigger things writ on it... H.I. HII! Historical inevitability.

NICK
There's no need for you to go any further, now...

HONEY
(Puzzling to make sense out of what she is hearing)
Let them go on.

GEORGE
We shall. And he had this baggage with him, and part of this baggage was in the form of his mouse...

NICK
We don't have to listen to this!

HONEY
Why not?

GEORGE
Your bride has a point. And one of the things nobody could understand about Blondie was his baggage... his mouse, I mean, here he was, pan-Kansas swimming champeen, or something, and he had this mouse, of whom he was solicitous to a point that faileth human understanding... given that she was sort of a simp, in the long run...

NICK
This isn't fair of you...

GEORGE
Perhaps not. Like, as I said, his mouse, she tooted brandy immodestly and spent half of her time in the up-chuck...

HONEY (Focusussing)
I know these people...

GEORGE
Do you!... But she was a money baggage amongst other things... Godly money ripped from the golden teeth of the unfaithful, a pragmatic extension of the big dream... and she was put up with...

HONEY (Some terror)
I don't like this story...

NICK (Surprisingly pleading)
Please... please don't.

MARTHA
Maybe you better stop, George...

GEORGE
... and she was put up with... stop? Ha-ha.

NICK
Please... please don't.

GEORGE
Beg, baby.

MARTHA
George...

GEORGE
... and... oh, we get a flashback here, to How They Got Married.

NICK
No!
GEORGE (Triumphant)

Yes!

NICK (Almost whining)

Why?

GEORGE

How They Got Married. Well, how they got married is this... The Mouse got all puffed up one day, and she went over to Blondie’s house, and she stuck out her puff, and she said... look at me.

HONEY (White... on her feet)

I... don’t... like this.

NICK (To GEORGE)

Stop it!

GEORGE

Look at me... I’m all puffed up. Oh my goodness, said Blondie...

HONEY (As from a distance)

... and so they were married...

GEORGE

... and so they were married...

HONEY

... and then...

GEORGE

... and then...

HONEY (Hysteria)

WHAT? ... and then, WHAT?

HONEY

... and then...

GEORGE

... and then...

HONEY (Grabbing at her belly)

Ohhhhh... noooeo.
Act Two

NICK
Honey . . . baby . . . I'm sorry . . . I didn't mean to . . .

GEORGE
(Abruptly and with some disgust)
And that's how you play Get the Guests.

HONEY
I'm going to . . . I'm going to be . . . sick . . .

GEORGE
Naturally!

NICK
Honey . . .

HONEY (Hysterical)
Leave me alone . . . I'm going . . . to . . . be . . . sick.
(She runs out of the room)

MARTHA
(Shaking her head, watching Honey's retreating form)
God Almighty.

GEORGE (Shrugging)
The patterns of history.

NICK (Quietly shaking)
You shouldn't have done that . . . you shouldn't have done
that at all.

GEORGE (Calmly)
I hate hypocrisy.

NICK
That was cruel . . . and vicious . . .

GEORGE
. . . she'll get over it . . .
GEORGE
Probably. I regret everything.

NICK
I mean, I'm going to make you regret this.

GEORGE (Softly)
No doubt. Acute embarrassment, eh?

NICK
I'll play the charades like you've got 'em set up... I'll play in your language... I'll be what you say I am.

GEORGE
You are already... you just don't know it.

NICK (Shaking within)
No... no. Not really. But I'll be it, mister... I'll show you something come to life you'll wish you hadn't set up.

GEORGE
Go clean up the mess.

NICK (Quietly... intensely)
You just wait, mister.
(He exits. Pause. GEORGE smiles at MARTHA)

MARTHA
Very good, George.

GEORGE
Thank you, Martha.

MARTHA
Really good.

GEORGE
I'm glad you liked it.

MARTHA

GEORGE
I mean... You did a good job... you really fixed it.

GEORGE
Unh-huh.

MARTHA
It's the most... life you've shown in a long time.

GEORGE
You bring out the best in me, baby.

MARTHA
Yeah... pigmy hunting!

GEORGE

MARTHA
You're really a bastard.

GEORGE

MARTHA
Yeah... you.

GEORGE
Baby, if quarterback there is a pigmy, you've certainly changed your style. What are you after now... giants?

MARTHA
You make me sick.

GEORGE
It's perfectly all right for you... I mean, you can make your own rules... you can go around like a hopped-up
Arab, slashing away at everything in sight, scarring up half the world if you want to. But somebody else try it ... no sir!

**MARThA**
You miserable...

**GEORGE (Mocking)**
Why baby, I did it all for you. I thought you'd like it, sweetheart ... it's sort of to your taste ... blood, carnage and all. Why, I thought you'd get all excited ... sort of heave and pant and come running at me, your melons bobbling.

**MARThA**
You've really screwed up, George.

**GEORGE (Spitting it out)**
Oh, for God's sake, Martha!

**MARThA**
I mean it ... you really have.

**GEORGE**
(Barely contained anger now)
You can sit there in that chair of yours, you can sit there with the gin running out of your mouth, and you can humiliate me, you can tear me apart ... ALL NIGHT ... and that's perfectly all right ... that's O.K....

**MARThA**
YOU CAN STAND IT!

**GEORGE**
I CANNOT STAND IT!

**MARThA**
YOU CAN STAND IT!! YOU MARRIED ME FOR IT!!

(A silence)

**WALPURGISNACHT**

**GEORGE (Quietly)**
That is a desperately sick lie.

**MARThA**
DON'T YOU KNOW IT, EVEN YET?

**GEORGE (Shaking his head)**
Oh ... Martha.

**MARThA**
My arm has gotten tired whipping you.

**GEORGE**
(Stares at her in disbelief)

You're mad.

**MARThA**
For twenty-three years!

**GEORGE**
You're deluded ... Martha, you're deluded.

**MARThA**
IT'S NOT WHAT I'VE WANTED!

**GEORGE**
I thought at least you were... on to yourself. I didn't know. I... didn't know.

I'm on to myself.

**MARThA**
(Angrily)

(As if she were some sort of bug)

No... no... you're... sick.

**MARThA**
(Rises—screams)

I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK!
GEORGE
All right, Martha... you're going too far.

MARTHA (Screams again)
I'll show you who's sick. I'll show you.

GEORGE (He shakes her)
Stop it! (PUSHES HER BACK IN HER CHAIR) Now, stop it!

MARTHA (Calmer)
I'll show you who's sick. (Calmer) Boy, you're really having a field day, hunh? Well, I'm going to finish you... before I'm through with you....

GEORGE
... you and the quarterback... you both gonna finish me...?

MARTHA
... before I'm through with you you'll wish you'd died in that automobile, you bastard.

GEORGE
(Emphasizing with his forefinger)
And you'll wish you'd never mentioned our son!

MARTHA (Dripping contempt)
You...

GEORGE
Now, I said I warned you.

MARTHA
I'm impressed.

GEORGE
... and I don't mean by liquor, though maybe that's been part of the process--a gradual, over-the-years going to sleep of the brain cells--I'm numbed enough now, to be able to take you when we're alone. I don't listen to you... or when I do listen to you, I sift everything. I bring everything down to reflex response, so I don't really hear you, which is the only way to manage it. But you've taken a new tack, Martha, over the past couple of centuries--or however long it's been I've lived in this house with you--that makes it just too much... too much. I don't mind your dirty underthings in public... well, I do mind, but I've reconciled myself to that... but you've moved bag and baggage into your own fantasy world now, and you've started playing variations on your own distortions, and, as a result...?

MARTHA
Nuts!

GEORGE
Yes... you have.

MARTHA
Nuts!

GEORGE
Well, you can go on like that as long as you want to. And, when you're done....

MARTHA
Have you ever listened to your sentences, George? Have
you ever listened to the way you talk? You're so frigging... convoluted... that's what you are. You talk like you were writing one of your stupid papers.

GEORGE
Actually, I'm rather worried about you. About your mind.

MARTHA
Don't you worry about my mind, sweetheart!

GEORGE
I think I'll have you committed.

MARTHA
You what?

GEORGE (Quietly... distinctly)
I think I'll have you committed.

MARTHA
(Breaks into long laughter)
Oh baby, aren't you something!

GEORGE
I've got to find some way to really get at you.

MARTHA
You've got at me, George... you don't have to do anything. Twenty-three years of you has been quite enough.

GEORGE
Will you go quietly, then?

MARTHA
You know what's happened, George? You want to know what's really happened? (Snaps her fingers) It's snapped, finally. Not me... it. The whole arrangement. You can go along... forever, and everything's... manageable. You make all sorts of excuses to yourself... you know... this is life... the hell with it... maybe tomorrow he'll be dead... maybe tomorrow you'll be dead... all sorts of excuses. But then, one day, one night, something happens... and snap! It breaks. And you just don't give a damn anymore. I've tried with you, baby... really, I've tried.

GEORGE
Come off it, Martha.

MARTHA
I've tried... I've really tried.

GEORGE (With some awe)
You're a monster... you are.

MARTHA
I'm loud, and I'm vulgar, and I wear the pants in this house because somebody's got to, but I am not a monster. I am not.

GEORGE
You're a spoiled, self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden... 

MARTHA
Snap! It went snap. Look, I'm not going to try to get through to you any more... I'm not going to try. There was a second back there, maybe, there was a second, just a second, when I could have gotten through to you, when maybe we could have cut through all this crap. But that's past, and now I'm not going to try.

GEORGE
Once a month, Martha! I've gotten used to it... once a month and we get misunderstood Martha, the good-
hearted girl underneath the barnacles, the little Miss that the touch of kindess'd bring to bloom again. And I've believed it more times than I want to remember, because I don't want to think I'm that much of a sucker. I don't believe you . . . I just don't believe you. There is no moment . . . there is no moment any more when we could . . . come together.

**M A R T H A (Armed again)**

Well, maybe you're right, baby. You can't come together with nothing, and you're nothing! SNAP! It went snap tonight at Daddy's party. *(Dripping contempt, but there is fury and loss under it)* I sat there at Daddy's party, and I watched you . . . I watched you sitting there, and I watched the younger men around you, the men who were going to go somewhere. And I sat there and I watched you, and you weren't there! And it snapped! It finally snapped! And I'm going to howl it out, and I'm not going to give a damn what I do, and I'm going to make the damned biggest explosion you ever heard.

**G E O R G E (Very pointedly)**

You try it and I'll beat you at your own game.

**M A R T H A (Hopefully)**

Is that a threat, George? Hunh?

**G E O R G E**

That's a threat, Martha.

**M A R T H A (Fake-spits at him)**

You're going to get it, baby.

**G E O R G E**

Be careful, Martha . . . I'll rip you to pieces.

**M A R T H A**

You aren't man enough . . . you haven't got the guts.

---

**Walpurgisnacht**

**G E O R G E**

Total war?

**M A R T H A**

Total.

*(Silence. They both seem relieved . . . elated.)*

**N I C K (re-enters)**

*(Brushing his hands off)*

Well . . . she's . . . resting.

**G E O R G E**

*(Quietly amused at Nick's calm, off-hand manner)*

Oh?

**M A R T H A**

Yeah? She all right?

**N I C K**

I think so . . . now. I'm . . . terribly sorry . . .

**M A R T H A**

Forget about it.

**G E O R G E**

Happens all the time around here.

**N I C K**

She'll be all right.

**M A R T H A**

She lying down? You put her upstairs? On a bed?

**N I C K (Making himself a drink)**

Well, no, actually. Uh . . . may I? She's . . . in the bathroom . . . on the bathroom floor . . . she's lying there.
ACT TWO

GEORGE (Considers it)
Well ... that's not very nice.

NICK
She likes it. She says it's ... cool.

GEORGE
Still, I don't think ...

MARTHA (Overruling him)
If she wants to lie on the bathroom floor, let her. (To
NICK, seriously) Maybe she'd be more comfortable in the
tub?

NICK (He, too, seriously)
No, she says she likes the floor ... she took up the mat,
and she's lying on the tiles. She ... she lies on the floor
a lot ... she really does.

MARTHA (Pause)
Oh.

NICK
She ... she gets lots of headaches and things, and she al-
ways lies on the floor. (To GEORGE) Is there ... ice?

GEORGE
What?

Ice. Is there ice?

GEORGE
(As if the word were unfamiliar to him)

Ice?

NICK

GEORGE (He too)

No! (Quietly again) You'll try anything, Martha. (Picks up the ice bucket)

NICK (To cover)

Actually, she's very ... frail, and ...
Act Two

George

... slim-hipped.

Nick (Remembering)

Yes... exactly.

George

(At the hallway... not kindly)

That why you don't have any kids?

(He exits)

Nick

(To George's retreating form)

Well, I don't know that that's... (Trails off)... if that has anything to do with any... thing.

Martha

Well, if it does, who cares? Hunh?

Nick

Pardon?

(Martha blows him a kiss)

Nick

(Still concerned with George's remark)

I... what?... I'm sorry.

Martha

I said... (Blows him another kiss)

Nick (Uncomfortable)

Oh... yes.

Martha

Hey... hand me a cigarette... lover. (Nick fishes in his pocket) That's a good boy. (He gives her one) Unh... thanks.

(Uumm...)

(He seems uncertain, but does not move. She smiles, moves her hand a little)

Now, for being such a good boy, you can give me a kiss. C'mon.

Nick (Nervously)

Look... I don't think we should...

Martha

C'mon, baby... a friendly kiss.

Nick (Still uncertain)

Well...

Martha

... you won't get hurt, little boy...

Nick

... not so little...

Martha

I'll bet you're not. C'mon...

Nick (Weakening)

But what if he should come back in, and... or...?

Martha

(All the while her hand is moving up and down his leg)

George? Don't worry about him. Besides, who could object to a friendly little kiss? It's all in the faculty.

(They both laugh, quietly... Nick a little nervously)
Act Two

We're a close-knit family here . . . Daddy always says so. . . . Daddy wants us to get to know each other . . . that's what he had the party for tonight. So c'mon . . . let's get to know each other a little bit.

Nick

It isn't that I don't want to . . . believe me . . .

Martha

You're a scientist, aren't you? C'mon . . . make an experiment . . . make a little experiment. Experiment on old Martha.

Nick (Giggling in)

. . . not very old . . .

Martha

That's right, not very old, but lots of good experience . . . lots of it.

Nick

I'll . . . I'll bet.

Martha

(As they draw slowly closer)

It'll be a nice change for you, too.

Nick

Yes, it would.

Martha

And you could go back to your little wife all refreshed.

Nick

(Closer . . . almost whispering)

She wouldn't know the difference.

Martha

Well, nobody else's going to know, either.

Walpurgisnacht

(They come together. What might have been a joke rapidly becomes serious, with Martha urging it in that direction. There is no frenetic quality, but rather a slow, continually involving intertwining. Perhaps Martha is still more or less in her chair, and Nick is sort of beside and on the chair)

George enters . . . stops . . . watches a moment . . . smiles . . . laughs silently, nods his head, turns, exits, without being noticed)

Nick, who has already had his hand on Martha's breast, now puts his hand inside her dress)

Martha (Slowing him down)

Hey . . . hey. Take it easy, boy. Down, baby. Don't rush it, hunh?

Nick (His eyes still closed)

Oh, c'mon, now . . .

Martha (Pushing him away)

Unh-unh. Later, baby . . . later.

Nick

I told you . . . I'm a biologist.

Martha (Soothing him)

I know. I can tell. Later, hunh?

(George is heard off-stage, singing "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" Martha and Nick go apart, Nick wiping his mouth, Martha checking her clothes. Safely later, George re-enters with the ice bucket)

George

. . . of Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia . . .
... ah! Here we are ... ice for the lamps of China, Manchuria thrown in. (To Nick) You better watch those yellow bastards, my love ... they aren't amused. Why don't you come on over to our side, and we'll blow the hell out of 'em. Then we can split up the money between us and be on Easy Street. What d'ya say?

**Nick**

(Not at all sure what is being talked about)
Well ... sure. Hey! Ice!

**George**

(With hideously false enthusiasm)
Right! (Now to Martha, purring) Hello, Martha ... my dove ... You look ... radiant.

**Martha (Off-hand)**

Thank you.

**George (Very cheerful)**

Well now, let me see. I've got the ice ...

... gotten ...

**George**

Got, Martha. Got is perfectly correct ... it's just a little ... archaic, like you.

**Martha (Suspicious)**

What are you so cheerful about?

**George (Ignoring the remark)**

Let's see now ... I've got the ice. Can I make someone a drink? Martha, can I make you a drink?

**Martha (Bravura)**

Yeah, why not?

**George**

(Taking her glass)

Indeed ... why not? (Examines the glass) Martha! You've been nibbling away at the glass.

**Martha**

I have not!

**George**

(To Nick, who is at the bar)

I see you're making your own, which is fine ... fine. I'll just hootch up Martha, here, and then we'll be all set.

**Martha (Suspicious)**

All set for what?

**George (Pause ... considers)**

Why, I don't know. We're having a party, aren't we? (To Nick, who has moved from the bar) I passed your wife in the hall. I mean, I passed the john and I looked in on her. Peaceful ... so peaceful. Sound asleep ... and she's actually ... sucking her thumb.

**Martha**

Awwwwww!

**George**

Rolled up like a fetus, sucking away.

**Nick (A little uncomfortably)**

I suppose she's all right.

**George (Expansively)**

Of course she is! (Hands Martha her drink) There you are.

**Martha (Still on her guard)**

Thanks.

**George**

And now one for me. It's my turn.
MARTHA

Never, baby ... it's never your turn.

GEORGE (Too cheerful)

Oh, now, I wouldn't say that, Martha.

MARTHA

You moving on the principle the worm turns? Well, the worm part's O.K. ... cause that fits you fine, but the turning part ... unh-unh! You're in a straight line, buddy-boy, and it doesn't lead anywhere ... (A vague afterthought) ... except maybe the grave.

GEORGE

(Chuckles, takes his drink)

Well, you just hold that thought, Martha ... hug it close ... run your hands over it. Me, I'm going to sit down ... if you'll excuse me ... I'm going to sit down over there and read a book.

(He moves to a chair facing away from the center of the room, but not too far from the front door)

MARTHA

You're gonna do what?

GEORGE (Quietly, distinctly)

I am going to read a book. Read. Read. Read? You've heard of it? (Picks up a book)

MARTHA (Standing)

Whaddya mean you're gonna read? What's the matter with you?

GEORGE (Too calmly)

There's nothing the matter with me, Martha. ... I'm going to read a book. That's all.

MARTHA (Oddly furious)

We've got company!
GEORGE (Never looking up)
No, no, now ... you go right ahead ... you entertain your guests.

MARThA
I'm going to entertain myself, too.

GEORGE
Good ... good.

MARThA
Ha, ha. You're a riot, George.

GEORGE
Unh-huh.

MARThA
Well, I'm a riot, too, George.

GEORGE
Yes you are, Martha.
(Nick takes Martha's hand, pulls her to him. They stop for a moment, then kiss, not briefly)

MARThA (After)
You know what I'm doing, George?

GEORGE
No, Martha ... what are you doing?

MARThA
I'm entertaining. I'm entertaining one of the guests. I'm necking with one of the guests.

GEORGE
(Seemingly relaxed and preoccupied, never looking)
Oh, that's nice. Which one?

WALPURGISMACH

MARThA (Livid)
Oh, by God you're funny. (Breaks away from Nick ... moves into George's side-line of vision by herself. Her balance is none too good, and she bumps into or brushes against the door chimes by the door. They chime)

GEORGE
Someone at the door, Martha.

MARThA
Never mind that. I said I was necking with one of the guests.

GEORGE
Good ... good. You go right on.

MARThA
(Pauses ... not knowing quite what to do)
Good?

GEORGE
Yes, good ... good for you.

MARThA
(Her eyes narrowing, her voice becoming hard)
Oh, I see what you're up to, you lousy little. . .

GEORGE
I'm up to page a hundred and....

MARThA
Cut it! Just cut it out! (She hits against the door chimes again; they chime) Goddam bongs.

GEORGE
They're chimes, Martha. Why don't you go back to your necking and stop bothering me? I want to read.

MARThA
Why, you miserable. ... I'll show you.
GEORGE
(Swings around to face her ... says, with great loathing)
No ... show him, Martha ... he hasn't seen it. Maybe he hasn't seen it. (Turns to NICK) You haven't seen it yet, have you?

NICK
(Turning away, a look of disgust on his face)
I ... I have no respect for you.

GEORGE
And none for yourself, either... (Indicating MARTHA)
I don't know what the younger generation's coming to.

NICK
You don't ... you don't even...

GEORGE
Care? You're quite right ... I couldn't care less. So, you just take this bag of laundry here, throw her over your shoulder, and...

NICK
You're disgusting.

GEORGE (Incredulous)
Because you're going to hump Martha, I'm disgusting?
(He breaks down in ridiculing laughter)

MARTHA (To GEORGE)
You Mother! (To NICK) Go wait for me, hunh? Go wait for me in the kitchen. (But NICK does not move. MARTHA goes to him, puts her arms around him) C'mon, baby ... please. Wait for me in the kitchen ... be a good baby.

(NICK takes her kiss, glares at GEORGE ... who has turned his back again ... and exits)

Walpurgisnacht
(MARTHA swings around to GEORGE)
Now you listen to me...

GEORGE
I'd rather read, Martha, if you don't mind...

MARTHA
(Her anger has her close to tears, her frustration to fury)
Well, I do mind. Now, you pay attention to me! You come off this kick you're on, or I swear to God I'll do it. I swear to God I'll follow that guy into the kitchen, and then I'll take him upstairs, and...

GEORGE
(Swinging around to her again ... loud ... loathing)
so what, MARTHA?

MARTHA
(Considers him for a moment ... then, nodding her head, backing off slowly)
O.K. ... O.K. ... You asked for it ... and you're going to get it.

GEORGE (Softly, sadly)
Lord, Martha, if you want the boy that much ... have him ... but do it honestly, will you? Don't cover it over with all this ... all this ... footwork.

MARTHA (Hopeless)
I'll make you sorry you made me want to marry you. (At the hallway) I'll make you regret the day you ever decided to come to this college. I'll make you sorry you ever let yourself down.

(She exits)
(Silence. GEORGE sits still, staring straight ahead. Listening ... but there is no sound. Outwardly
calm, he returns to his book, reads a moment, then looks up... considers...

**GEORGE**

"And the west, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must... eventually... fall."

(He laughs, briefly, ruefully... rises, with the book in his hand. He stands still... then, quickly, he gathers all the fury he has been containing within himself... he shakes... he looks at the book in his hand and, with a cry that is part growl, part howl, he hurls it at the chimes. They crash against one another, ringing wildly. A brief pause, then HONEY enters)

**HONEY**

(The worse for wear, half asleep, still sick, weak, still staggering a little... vaguely, in something of a dream world)

Bells. Ringing. I've been hearing bells.

**GEORGE**

Jesus!

**HONEY**

I couldn't sleep... for the bells. Ding-ding, bong... it woke me up. What time is it?

**GEORGE**

(Quietly beside himself)

Don't bother me.

**HONEY**

(Confused and frightened)

I was asleep, and the bells started... they BOOMED! Poe-bells... they were Poe-bells... Bing-bing-bong-BOOM!

**GEORGE**

I was asleep, and I was dreaming of... something... and I heard the sounds coming, and I didn't know what it was.

**GEORGE** (Never quite to her)

It was the sound of bodies...

**HONEY**

And I didn't want to wake up, but the sound kept coming...

**GEORGE**

... go back to sleep...

**HONEY**

... and it frightened me!

**GEORGE**

(Quietly... to MARTHA, as if she were in the room)

I'm going to get you... Martha.

**HONEY**

And it was so... cold. The wind was... the wind was so cold! And I was lying somewhere, and the covers kept slipping away from me, and I didn't want them to...

**GEORGE**

Somehow, Martha.

**HONEY**

... and there was someone there... I

**GEORGE**

There was no one there.
Honey (Frightened)
And I didn’t want someone there... I was... naked...

George
You don’t know what’s going on, do you?

Honey (Still with her dream)
I don’t want any... no...

George
You don’t know what’s been going on around here while you been having your snoozette, do you.

Honey
No!... I don’t want any... I don’t want them...

George
(Starts to cry) I don’t want... any... children...

Honey
I don’t want any... any... children. I’m afraid! I don’t want to be hurt... please!

George
(Nodding his head... speaks with compassion)
I should have known.

Honey
(Snapping awake from her reverie)
What! What?

George
I should have known... the whole business... the headaches... the whining... the...

Honey (Terrified)
What are you talking about?

George (Ugly again)
Does he know that? Does that... stud you’re married to

Honey
Know about that, huh?

George
About what? Stay away from me!

Honey
Don’t worry, baby... I wouldn’t... Oh, my God, that would be a joke, wouldn’t it! But don’t worry, baby. Hey! How do you do it? Huh? How do you make your secret little murders stud-boy doesn’t know about, huh? Pills? Pills? You got a secret supply of pills? Or what? Apple jelly? Will power?

I feel sick.

George
You going to throw up again? You going to lie down on the cold tiles, your knees pulled up under your chin, your thumb stuck in your mouth...?

Honey (Panicked)
Where is he?

George
Where’s who? There’s nobody here, baby.

Honey
I want my husband! I want a drink!

George
Well, you just crawl over to the bar and make yourself one.

(From off-stage comes the sound of Martha’s laughter and the crashing of dishes)

(Yelling) That’s right! Go at it!

Honey
I want... something...
GEORGE
You know what's going on in there, little Miss? Hunh?
You hear all that? You know what's going on in there?

HONEY
I don't want to know anything!

GEORGE
There are a couple of people in there. . .
(MARTHA'S laughter again)
. . . they are in there, in the kitchen. . . Right there, with
the onion skins and the coffee grounds. . . sort of . . .
sort of a. . . sort of a dry run for the wave of the future.

HONEY (Beside herself)
I. . . don't. . . understand. . . you. . .

GEORGE (A hideous elation)
It's very simple. . . When people can't abide things as
they are, when they can't abide the present, they do one
of two things. . . either they. . . either they turn to a con-
templation of the past, as I have done, or they set about to
. . . alter the future. And when you want to change some-
thing. . . you BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

HONEY
Stop it!

GEORGE
And you, you simpering bitch. . . you don't want chil-
dren?

HONEY
You leave me. . . alone. Who. . . who RANG?

GEORGE
What?
ACT TWO

... somebody rang ... it was somebody ... with ... I've got it! I've got it, Martha ...! Somebody with a message ... and the message was ... our son ... our son! (Almost whispered) It was a message ... the bells rang and it was a message, and it was about ... our son ... and the message was ... our ... son ... is ... dead!

HONEY (Almost sick)

Oh ... no.

GEORGE

(Cementing it in his mind)

Our son is ... dead. ... And ... Martha doesn't know. ... I haven't told ... Martha.

HONEY

No ... no ... no.

GEORGE (Slowly, deliberately)

Our son is dead, and Martha doesn't know.

HONEY

Oh. God in heaven ... no.

GEORGE

(To HONEY ... slowly, deliberately, dispassionately)

And you're not going to tell her.

HONEY (In tears)

Your son is dead.

GEORGE

I'll tell her myself ... in good time. I'll tell her myself.

HONEY (So faintly)

I'm going to be sick.

Walpurgisnacht

GEORGE

(Turning away from her ... he, too, softly)

Are you? That's nice.

(MARSHA'S laugh is heard again)

Oh, listen to that.

HONEY

I'm going to die.

GEORGE

(Quite by himself now)

Good ... good ... you go right ahead.

(Very softly, so MARTHA CANNOT POSSIBLY HEAR)

Martha? Martha? I have some ... terrible news for you.

(There is a strange half-smile on his lips)

It's about our ... son. He's dead. Can you hear me, Martha? Our boy is dead.

(He begins to laugh, very softly ... it is mixed with crying)

CURTAIN
ACT THREE

THE EXORCISM
(Martha enters, talking to herself)

Martha

Hey, hey... Where is everybody...? (It is evident she is not bothered) So? Drop me; pluck me like a goddamn whatever-it-is... creeping vine, and throw me over your shoulder like an old shoe... George? (Looks about her) George? (Silence) George! What are you doing: Hiding, or something? (Silence) George!! (Silence) Oh, fa Chri... (Goes to the bar, makes herself a drink and amuses herself with the following performance) Deserted! Abandoned! Left out in the cold like an old pussycat. Ha! Can I get you a drink, Martha? Why, thank you, George; that's very kind of you. No, Martha; no, why I'd do anything for you. Would you, George? Why, I'd do anything for you, too. Would you, Martha? Why, certainly, George. Martha, I've misjudged you. And I've misjudged you, too, George, WHERE IS EVERYBODY!!! Hump the Hostess! (laughs greatly at this, falls into a chair; calms down, looks defeated, says, softly) Fat chance. (Even softer) Fat chance. (Baby-talk now) Daddy? Daddy? Martha is abandon-ed. Left to her own vices at... (Peers at a clock)... something o'clock in the old a.m. Daddy White-Mouse; do you really have red eyes? Do you? Let me see. Ohhhhh! You do! You do! Daddy, you have red eyes... because you cry all the time, don't you, Daddy. Yes; you do. You cry all the time. I'LL GIVE ALL YOU BASTARDS FIVE TO COME OUT FROM WHERE YOU'RE HIDING!! (Pause) I cry all the time too, Daddy. I cry all the time; but deep inside, so no one can see me. I cry all the time. And Georgie cries all the time, too. We both cry all the
time, and then, what we do, we cry, and we take our tears, and we put 'em in the ice box, in the goddamm ice trays (Begins to laugh) until they're all frozen (Laughs even more) and then . . . we put them . . . in our . . . drinks. (More laughter, which is something else, too. After sobering silence) Up the drain, down the spout, dead, gone and forgotten . . . Up the spout, not down the spout; Up the spout: THE POKER NIGHT. Up the spout. . . . (Sadly) I've got windshield wipers on my eyes, because I married you . . . baby! . . . Martha, you'll be a song-writer yet. (Jiggles the ice in her glass) CLINK! (Does it again) CLINK! (Giggles, repeats it several times) CLINK! . . . CLINK! . . . CLINK! . . .

(Nick enters while Martha is clinking; he stands in the hall entrance and watches her; finally he comes in)

NICK
My God, you've gone crazy too.

MARThA
Clink?

NICK
I said, you've gone crazy too.

MARThA (Considers it)
Probably . . . probably.

NICK
You've all gone crazy: I come downstairs, and what happens . . .

MARThA
What happens?

NICK
. . . my wife's gone into the can with a liquor bottle, and she winks at me . . . winks at me! . . .

MARThA (Sadly)
She's never wunk at you; what a shame.

NICK
She is lying down on the floor again, the tiles, all curled up, and she starts peeling the label off the liquor bottle, the brandy bottle . . .

MARThA
. . . we'll never get the deposit back that way . . .

NICK
. . . and I ask her what she's doing, and she goes: shhhhhh! nobody knows I'm here; and I come back in here, and you're sitting there going Clink! for God's sake. Clink!

MARThA
Clink!

NICK
You've all gone crazy.

MARThA
Yes. Sad but true.

NICK
Where is your husband?

MARThA
He is vanish-ed. Pouf!

NICK
You're all crazy: nuts.

MARThA (Affects a brogue)
Awww, 'tis the refuge we take when the unreality of the
world weighs too heavy on our tiny heads. (Normal voice again) Relax; sink into it; you're no better than anybody else.

**NICK** (Warily)

I think I am.

**MARTHA**

(Her glass to her mouth)

You're certainly a flop in some departments.

**NICK** (Wincing)

I beg your pardon . . . ?

**MARTHA** (Unnecessarily loud)

I said, you're certainly a flop in some . . .

**NICK** (He, too, too loud)

I'm sorry you're disappointed.

**MARTHA** (Braying)

I didn't say I was disappointed! Stupid!

**NICK**

You should try me some time when we haven't been drinking for ten hours, and maybe . . .

**MARTHA** (Still braying)

I wasn't talking about your potential; I was talking about your goddamn performance.

**NICK** (Softly)

Oh.

**MARTHA** (She softer, too)

Your potential's fine. It's dandy. (Wiggles her eyebrows) Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such a dandy potential

in a long time. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop.

**NICK** (Snapping it out)

Everybody's a flop to you! Your husband's a flop, I'm a flop . . .

**MARTHA** (Dismissing him)

You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops. (More or less to herself) I disgust me. I pass my life in crummy, totally pointless infidelities . . . (Laughing ruefully) would-be infidelities. Humph the Hostess? That's a laugh. A bunch of booze-up . . . impotent lunk-heads. Martha makes goo-goo eyes, and the lunk-heads grin, and roll their beautiful, beautiful eyes back, and grin some more, and Martha licks her chops, and the lunk-heads slap over to the bar to pick up a little courage, and they pick up a little courage, and they bounce back over to old Martha, who does a little dance for them, which heats them all up . . . mentally . . . and so they slap over to the bar again, and pick up a little more courage, and their wives and sweethearts stick their noses up in the air . . . right through the ceiling, sometimes . . . which sends the lunk-heads back to the soda fountain again where they fuel up some more, while Martha-poo sits there with her dress up over her head . . . suffocating—you don't know how stuffy it is with your dress up over your head—suffocating! waiting for the lunk-heads; so, finally they get their courage up . . . but that's all, baby! Oh my, there is sometimes some very nice potential, but, oh my! My, my, my. (Brightly) But that's how it is in a civilized society. (To herself again) All the gorgeous lunk-heads. Poor babies. (To NICK now; earnestly) There is only one man in my life who has ever . . . made me happy. Do you know that? One!
NICK
The ... the what-do-you-call-it? ... uh ... the lawn mower, or something?

MARTHA
No; I'd forgotten him. But when I think about him and me it's almost like being a voyeur. Hunh. No; I didn't mean him; I meant George, of course. (No response from Nick) Uh ... George; my husband.

NICK (Disbelieving)
You're kidding.

MARTHA
Am I?

NICK
You must be. Him?

MARTHA
Him.

NICK (As if in on a joke)
Sure; sure.

MARTHA
You don't believe it.

NICK (Mocking)
Why, of course I do.

MARTHA
You always deal in appearances?

NICK (Derisively)
Oh, for God's sake. . . .George who is out somewhere there in the dark. . . . George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who under-

The Exorcism
stands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK (Echoing, still not believing)
Sad.

MARTHA
... whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes; this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK (Puzzled)
Sad.

MARTHA
... who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension. . . .

NICK
George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

MARTHA
Some day ... hah! some night ... some stupid, liquor-ridden night ... I will go too far ... and I'll either break the man's back ... or push him off for good ... which is what I deserve.

NICK
I don't think he's got a vertebra intact.
ACT THREE

MARTHA (Laughing at him)
You don't, huh? You don't think so. Oh, little boy, you
get yourself hunched over that microphone of yours....

NICK
Microscope....

MARTHA
...yes... and you don't see anything, do you? You see
everything but the goddamn mind; you see all the little
specks and crap, but you don't see what goes on, do you?

NICK
I know when a man's had his back broken; I can see that.

MARTHA
Can you!

NICK
You're damn right.

MARTHA
Oh... you know so little. And you're going to take over
the world, huh?

NICK
All right, now....

MARTHA
You think a man's got his back broken 'cause he makes
like a clown and walks bent, huh? Is that really all you
know?

NICK
I said, all right!

MARTHA
Ohhhhh! The stallion's mad, huh. The gelding's all upset.
Ha, ha, ha, ha!

THE EXORCISM

NICK (Softly; wounded)
You... you swing wild, don't you.

MARTHA (Triumphant)

HAH!

NICK
Just... anywhere.

MARTHA
HAH! I'm a Gatling gun. Hahahahahahahahaha!

NICK (In wonder)
Aimless... butchery. Pointless.

MARTHA
Aw! You poor little bastard.

NICK
Hit out at everything.

(The door chimes chime)

MARTHA
Go answer the door.

NICK (Amazed)

What did you say?

MARTHA
I said, go answer the door. What are you, deaf?

NICK
(Trying to get it straight)
You... want me... to go answer the door?

MARTHA
That's right, lunk-head; answer the door. There must be
something you can do well; or, are you too drunk to do
that, too? Can't you get the latch up, either?
NICK
Look, there's no need. . . .
(Door chimes again)

MARTHA (Shouting)
Answer it! (Softer) You can be houseboy around here for
a while. You can start off being houseboy right now.

NICK
Look, lady, I'm no flunky to you.

MARTHA (Cheerfully)
Sure you are! You're ambitious, aren't you, boy? You
didn't chase me around the kitchen and up the goddamn
stairs out of mad, driven passion, did you now? You were
thinking a little bit about your career, weren't you? Well,
you can just houseboy your way up the ladder for a while.

NICK
There's no limit to you, is there?
(Door chimes again)

MARTHA (Calmly, surely)
No, baby; none. Go answer the door. (NICK hesitates)
Look, boy; once you stick your nose in it, you're not going
to pull out just whenever you feel like it. You're in for a
while. Now, git!

NICK
Aimless . . . wanton . . . pointless. . .

MARTHA
Now, now, now; just do what you're told; show old Mar-
tha there's something you can do. Hunh? Atta boy.

NICK
(Considers, gives in, moves toward the door. Chimes
again)

THE EXORCISM
I'm coming, for Christ's sake!

MARTHA (Claps her hands)
Ha ha! Wonderful; marvelous. (Sings) "Just a gigolo,
everywhere I go, people always say. . . ."

NICK
STOP THAT!

MARTHA (Giggles)
Sorry, baby; go on now; open the little door.

NICK (With great rue)
Christ.
(He flings open the door, and a hand thrusts into
the opening a great bunch of snapdragons; they
stay there for a moment. NICK strains his eyes to
see who is behind them)

MARTHA
Oh, how lovely!

GEORGE
(Appearing in the doorway, the snapdragons cov-
ering his face; speaks in a hideously cracked
falsetto)

Flores; flores para los muertos. Flores.

MARTHA
Ha, ha, ha ha!

GEORGE
(A step into the room; lowers the flowers; sees
NICK; his face becomes gleeful; he opens his
arms)

Sonny! You've come home for your birthday! At last!

NICK (Backing off)
Stay away from me.
**MARTHA**

Ha, ha, ha, ha! That's the houseboy, for God's sake.

**GEORGE**

Really? That's not our own little sonny-Jim? Our own little all-American something-or-other?

**MARTHA (Giggling)**

Well, I certainly hope not; he's been acting awful funny, if he is.

**GEORGE (Almost manic)**

Ohhhh! I'll bet! Chippie-chippie-chippie, hunh? (*Affected embarrassment*) I ... I brungya dese flowers, Mart'a, 'cause I ... wull, 'cause you'se ... awwwww hell. Gee.

**MARTHA**

Pansies! Rosemary! Violence! My wedding bouquet!

**NICK (Starting to move away)**

Well, if you two kids don't mind, I think I'll just ...

**MARTHA**

Ach! You just stay where you are. Make my hubby a drink.

**NICK**

I don't think I will.

**GEORGE**

No, Martha, no; that would be too much; he's your houseboy, baby, not mine.

**NICK**

I'm nobody's houseboy ...

**GEORGE and MARTHA**

... Now! (*Sing*) I'm nobody's houseboy now ... (*Both laugh*)

---

**NICK**

Vicious ...

**GEORGE (Finishing it for him)**

... children. Hunh? That right? Vicious children, with their oh-so-sad games, hopscotching their way through life, etcetera, etcetera. Is that it?

**NICK**

Something like it.

**GEORGE**

Screw, baby.

**MARTHA**

Him can't. Him too fulla booze.

**GEORGE**

Weally? (*Handing the snapdragons to NICK*) Here; dump these in some gin. (*NICK takes them, looks at them, drops them on the floor at his feet*)

**MARTHA (Sham dismay)**

Awwwwww.

**GEORGE**

What a terrible thing to do ... to Martha's snapdragons.

**MARTHA**

Is that what they are?

**GEORGE**

Yup. And here I went out into the moonlight to pick 'em for Martha tonight, and for our sonny-boy tomorrow, for his birday.

**MARTHA**

(*Passing on information*)
There is no moon now. I saw it go down from the bedroom.

GEORGE (Feigned glee)
From the bedroom (Normal tone) Well, there was a moon.

MARTHA
(Too patient; laughing a little)
There couldn't have been a moon.

GEORGE
Well, there was. There is.

MARTHA
There is no moon; the moon went down.

GEORGE
There is a moon; the moon is up.

MARTHA
(Straining to keep civil)
I'm afraid you're mistaken.

No; no.

MARTHA (Between her teeth)
There is no goddamn moon.

GEORGE
My dear Martha ... I did not pick snapdragons in the stony dark. I did not go stumbling around Daddy's greenhouse in the pitch.

MARTHA
Yes ... you did. You would.

GEORGE
Martha, I do not pick flowers in the blink. I have never robbed a hothouse without there is a light from heaven.

MARTHA (With finality)
There is no moon; the moon went down.

GEORGE (With great logic)
That may very well be, Chastity; the moon may very well have gone down ... but it came back up.

MARTHA
The moon does not come back up; when the moon has gone down it stays down.

GEORGE (Getting a little ugly)
You don't know anything. If the moon went down, then it came back up.

MARTHA
Bull!

GEORGE
Ignorance! Such ... ignorance.

MARTHA
Watch who you're calling ignorant!

GEORGE
Once ... once, when I was sailing past Majorca, drinking on deck with a correspondent who was talking about Roosevelt, the moon went down, thought about it for a little ... considered it, you know what I mean? ... and then, pop, came up again. Just like that.

MARTHA
That is not true! That is such a lie!

GEORGE
You must not call everything a lie, Martha. (To Nick) Must she?
NICK
Hell, I don't know when you people are lying, or what.

MARTHA
You're damned right!

GEORGE
You're not supposed to.

MARTHA
Right!

GEORGE
At any rate, I was sailing past Majorca...

MARTHA
You never sailed past Majorca...

GEORGE
Martha...

MARTHA
You were never in the goddamn Mediterranean at all... ever...

GEORGE
I certainly was! My Mommy and Daddy took me there as a college graduation present.

MARTHA
Nuts!

NICK
Was this after you killed them?

(GEORGE and MARTHA swing around and look at him; there is a brief, ugly pause)

GEORGE (Defiantly)
Maybe.

The Esorcism

MARTHA
Yeah; maybe not, too.

NICK
Jesus!

(GEORGE swoops down, picks up the bunch of snapdragons, shakes them like a feather duster in NICK's face, and moves away a little)

HAH!

NICK
Damn you.

GEORGE (To NICK)
Truth and illusion. Who knows the difference, eh, toots? Eh?

MARTHA
You were never in the Mediterranean... truth or illusion... either way.

GEORGE
If I wasn't in the Mediterranean, how did I get to the Aegean? Huh?

MARTHA
OVERLAND!

NICK
Yeah!

GEORGE
Don't you side with her, houseboy.

NICK
I am not a houseboy.
Act Three

George

Look! I know the game! You don’t make it in the sack, you’re a houseboy.

Nick

I am not a houseboy!

George

No? Well then, you must have made it in the sack. Yes? (He is breathing a little heavily; behaving a little manic) Yes? Someone’s lying around here; somebody isn’t playing the game straight. Yes? Come on; come on; who’s lying? Martha? Come on!

Nick

(After a pause; to Martha, quietly with intense pleading) Tell him I’m not a houseboy.

Martha

(After a pause, quietly, lowering her head) No; you’re not a houseboy.

George (With great, sad relief)

So be it.

Martha (Pleading)

Truth and illusion, George; you don’t know the difference.

George

No; but we must carry on as though we did.

Martha

Amen.

George

(Flourishing the flowers)

Snap went the dragons!! (Nick and Martha laugh weakly)

The Exorcism

Hunh? Here we go round the mulberry bush, hunh?

Nick (Tenderly, to Martha)

Thank you.

Martha

Skip it.

George (Loud)

I said, here we go round the mulberry bush!

Martha (Impatiently)

Yeah, yeah; we know; snap go the dragons.

George

(Taking a snapdragon, throwing it, spear-like, stemfirst at Martha)

Snap!

Martha

Don’t, George.

George (Throws another)

Snap!

Nick

Don’t do that.

George

Shut up, stud.

Nick

I’m not a stud!

George (Throws one at Nick)

Snap! Then you’re a houseboy. Which is it? Which are you? Hunh? Make up your mind. Either way... (Throws
Act Three

Another at him) snap! you disgust me.

Martha

Does it matter to you, George?

George (throws one at her)

Snap! No, actually, it doesn't. Either way... I've had it.

Martha

Stop throwing those goddamned things at me!

George

Either way. (Throws another at her) Snap!

Nick (To Martha)

Do you want me to... do something to him?

Martha

You leave him alone!

George

If you're a houseboy, baby, you can pick up after me; if you're a stud, you can go protect your plow. Either way. Either way... Everything.

Nick

Oh for God's...

Martha (A little afraid)

Truth or illusion, George. Doesn't it matter to you... at all?

George

(Without throwing anything)

Snap! (Silence) You got your answer, baby?

Martha (Sadly)

Got it.

George

You just gir'd your blue-veneered loins, girl. (Sees Nick moving toward the hall) Now; we got one more game to play. And it's called Bringing Up Baby.

Nick

(More or less under his breath)

Oh, for Lord's sake...

Martha

George...

George

I don't want any fuss. (To Nick) You don't want any scandal around here, do you, big boy? You don't want to wreck things, do you? Hunh? You want to keep to your time-table, don't you? Then sit! (Nick sits) (To Martha) And you, pretty Miss, you like fun and games, don't you? You're a sport from way back, aren't you?

Martha (Quietly, giving in)

Collet, George; all right.

George

(Seeing them both cowed; purrs)

Gooooood; gooooood. (Looks about him) But, we're not all here. (Snaps his fingers a couple of times at Nick) You; you... uh... you; your little wifelet isn't here.

Nick

Look; she's had a rough night, now; she's in the can, and she's...

George

Well, we can't play without everyone here. Now that's a fact. We gotta have your little wife. (Hog-calls toward the hall) Sooooooowwwwwhere! Soooooowwwwwhere!!
NICK
(As Martha giggles nervously)
Cut that!

GEORGE
(Swishing around, facing him)
Then get your butt out of that chair and bring the little dip back in here. (As Nick does not move) Now be a good puppy. Fetch, good puppy, go fetch.
(Nick rises, opens his mouth to say something, thinks better of it, exits)
One more game.

MARTHA (After Nick goes)
I don't like what's going to happen.

GEORGE (Surprisingly tender)
Do you know what it is?

MARTHA (Pathetic)
No. But I don't like it.

GEORGE
Maybe you will, Martha.

MARTHA
No.

GEORGE
Oh, it's a real fun game, Martha.

MARTHA (Pleading)
No more games.

GEORGE (Quietly triumphant)
One more, Martha. One more game, and then beddie-bye. Everybody pack up his tools and baggage and stuff

The Exorcism
and go home. And you and me, well, we gonna climb them well-worn stairs.

MARThA (Almost in tears)
No, George; no.

GEORGE (Soothing)
Yes, baby.

MARTHA
No, George; please?

GEORGE
It'll all be done with before you know it.

MARTHA
No, George.

GEORGE
No climb stairs with Georgie?

MARTHA (A sleepy child)
No more games . . . please. It's games I don't want. No more games.

GEORGE
Aw, sure you do, Martha . . . original game-girl and all, 'course you do.

MARTHA
Ugly games . . . ugly. And now this new one?

GEORGE (Stroking her hair)
You'll love it, baby.

MARTHA
No, George.
GEORGE
You'll have a ball.

MARTHA
(Tenderly; moves to touch him)
Please, George, no more games, I...

GEORGE
(Slapping her moving hand with vehemence)
Don't you touch me! You keep your paws clean for the undergraduates!

MARTHA
(A cry of alarm, but faint)

GEORGE
(Grabbing her hair, pulling her head back)
Now, you listen to me, Martha; you have had quite an evening... quite a night for yourself, and you can't just cut it off whenever you've got enough blood in your mouth. We are going on, and I'm going to have at you, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. Now I want you to get yourself a little alert. (Slaps her lightly with his free hand) I want a little life in you, baby. (Again)

MARTHA (Struggling)
Stop it!

GEORGE
(Again) Pull yourself together! (Again) I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, and I want you up for it. (Again; he pulls away, releases her; she rises)

MARTHA
All right, George. What do you want, George?
Honey (Cheerfully)

Nick

You a bunny, Honey? (She laughs greatly, sits)

Honey

I'm a bunny, Honey.

George (To Honey)

Well, now; how's the bunny?

Honey

Bunny funny! (She laughs again)

Nick (Under his breath)

Jesus.

George

Bunny funny? Good for bunny!

Martha

Come on, George!

George (To Martha)

Honey funny bunnyl (Honey screams with laughter)

Nick

Jesus God. . .

George

(Slaps his hands together, once)

All right! Here we go! Last game! All sit. (Nick sits) Sit down, Martha. This is a civilized game.

Martha

(Cocks her fist, doesn't swing)

The Exorcism

(Sits) Just get on with it.

Honey (To George)

I've decided I don't remember anything. (To Nick) Hello, Dear.

George

Hunh? What?

Martha

It's almost dawn, for God's sake. . .

Honey (Ibid)

I don't remember anything, and you don't remember anything, either. Hello, Dear.

George

You what?

Honey (Ibid)

(An edge creeping into her voice)

You heard me, nothing. Hello, Dear.

George

(To Honey, referring to Nick)

You do know that's your husband, there, don't you?

Honey (With great dignity)

Well, I certainly know that.

George (Close to Honey's ear)

It's just some things you can't remember . . . hunh?

Honey

(A great laugh to cover; then quietly, intensely to George)

Don't remember, not can't. (At Nick, cheerfully) Hello, Dear.
Act Three

George (To Nick)
Well, speak to your little wifelet, your little bunny, for God's sake.

Nick (Softly, embarrassed)
Hello, Honey.

George
Awww, that was nice. I think we've been having a... a real good evening... all things considered. We've sat around, and got to know each other, and had fun and games... curl-up-on-the-floor, for example...

Honey
... the tiles...

George
... the tiles... Snap the Dragon.

Honey
... peel the label...

George
... peel the... what?

Martha
Label. Peel the label.

Honey (Apologetically, holding up her brandy bottle)
I peel labels.

George
We all peel labels, sweetie; and when you get through the skin, all three layers, through the muscle, slosh aside the organs (An aside to Nick) them which is still sloshable— (Back to Honey) and get down to bone... you know what you do them?

The Exorcism

Honey (Terribly interested)
No.

George
When you get down to bone, you haven't got all the way, yet. There's something inside the bone... the marrow... and that's what you gotta get at. (A strange smile at Martha)

Honey
Oh! I see.

George
The marrow. But bones are pretty resilient, especially in the young. Now, take our son... .

Honey (Strangely)
Who?

George
Our son... Martha's and my little joy.

Nick
(Moving toward the bar)

Do you mind if I...?

George
No, no; you go right ahead.

Martha
George...

George (Too kindly)
Yes, Martha?

Martha
Just what are you doing?

George
Why love, I was talking about our son.
Don't.

GEORGE

Isn't Martha something? Here we are, on the eve of our boy's home-coming, the eve of his twenty-first birthday, the eve of his majority... and Martha says don't talk about him.

MARSHA

Just... don't.

GEORGE

But I want to, Marsha! It's very important we talk about him. Now bunny and the... well, whichever he is... here don't know much about junior, and I think they should.

MARSHA

Just... don't.

GEORGE

(Snapping his fingers at Nick)

You. Hey, you! You want to play Bringing Up Baby, don't you!

NICK (Hardly civil)

Were you snapping at me?

GEORGE

That's right. (Instructing him) You want to hear about our bouncey boy.

NICK (Pause; then, shortly)

Yeah; sure.

GEORGE (To Honey)

And you, my dear? You want to hear about him, too, don't you?

HONEY

(Pretending not to understand)

Whom?

GEORGE

Martha's and my son.

HONEY (Nervously)

Oh, you have a child?

(MARSHA AND NICK laugh uncomfortably)

GEORGE

Oh, indeed; do we ever! Do you want to talk about him, Martha, or shall I? Hunh?

MARSHA

(A smile that is a sneer)

Don't, George.

GEORGE

All rightie. Well, now; let's see. He's a nice kid, really, in spite of his home life; I mean, most kids'd grow up neurotic, what with Martha here carrying on the way she does: sleeping 'till four in the P.M., climbing all over the poor bastard, trying to break the bathroom door down to wash him in the tub when he's sixteen, dragging strangers into the house at all hours...

MARSHA (Rising)

O.K. you!

GEORGE (Mock concern)

Marsha!

MARSHA

That's enough!
GEORGE
Well, do you want to take over?

HONEY (To NICK)
Why would anybody want to wash somebody who's sixteen years old?

NICK
(Slamming his drink down)
Oh, for Christ's sake, Honey!

HONEY (Stage whisper)
Well, why?

GEORGE
Because it's her baby-poo.

MARTHA
ALL RIGHT!!
(By rote; a kind of almost-tearful recitation)
Our son. You want our son? You'll have it.

GEORGE
You want a drink, Martha?

MARTHA (Pathetically)
Yes.

NICK (To MARTHA kindly)
We don't have to hear about it... if you don't want to.

GEORGE
Who says so? You in a position to set the rules around here?

NICK (Pause; tight-lipped)
No.

GEORGE
Good boy; you'll go far. All right, Martha; your recitation, please.

MARTHA (From far away)
What, George?

GEORGE (Prompting)
"Our son..."

MARTHA
All right. Our son. Our son was born in a September night, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty... one... years ago.

GEORGE
(By beginning of quiet asides)
You see? I told you.

MARTHA
It was an easy birth...

GEORGE
Oh, Martha; no. You labored... how you labored.

MARTHA
It was an easy birth... once it had been... accepted, relaxed into.

GEORGE
Ah... yes. Better.

MARTHA
It was an easy birth, once it had been accepted, and I was young.

GEORGE
And I was younger... (Laughs quietly to himself)
ACT THREE

MARTHA
And I was young, and he was a healthy child, a red, bawling child, with slippery firm limbs.

GEORGE
... Martha thinks she saw him at delivery.

MARTHA
... with slippery, firm limbs, and a full head of black, fine, fine hair which, oh, later, later, became blond as the sun, our son.

GEORGE
He was a healthy child.

MARTHA
And I had wanted a child... oh, I had wanted a child.

GEORGE (Prodding her)
A son? A daughter?

MARTHA
A child! (Quieter) A child. And I had my child.

GEORGE
Our child.

MARTHA (With great sadness)
Our child. And we raised him... (Laughs, briefly, bitterly) yes, we did; we raised him.

GEORGE
With teddy bears and an antique bassinet from Austria... and no nurse.

MARTHA
... with teddy bears and transparent floating goldfish, and

The Exorcism
a pale blue bed with cane at the headboard when he was older, cane which he wore through... finally... with his little hands... in his... sleep...

GEORGE
... nightmares...

MARTHA
... sleep... He was a restless child...

GEORGE
... (Soft chuckle, head-shaking of disbelief)... Oh Lord...

MARTHA
... sleep... and a croup tent... a pale green croup tent, and the shining kettle hissing in the one light of the room that time he was sick... those four days... and animal crackers, and the bow and arrow he kept under his bed...

GEORGE
... the arrows with rubber cups at their tip...

MARTHA
... at their tip, which he kept beneath his bed...

GEORGE
Why? Why, Martha?

MARTHA
... for fear... for fear of...

GEORGE
For fear. Just that: for fear.

MARTHA
(Vaguely waving him off; going on)
... and... and sandwiches on Sunday night, and Saturdays... (Pleased recollection)... and Saturdays the banana boat, the whole peeled banana, scooped out on top, with green grapes for the crew, a double line of green grapes, and along the sides, stuck to the boat with toothpicks, orange slices... shields.

George

And for the ear?

Martha (Uncertainly)

A... carrot?

George

Or a swizzle stick, whatever was easier.

Martha

No. A carrot. And his eyes were green... green with... if you peered so deep into them... so deep... bronze... bronze parentheses around the irises... such green eyes!

George

... blue, green, brown...

Martha

... and he loved the sun!... He was tan before and after everyone... and in the sun his hair... became... fleece.

George (Echoing her)

... fleece... 

Martha

... beautiful, beautiful boy.

George

Absolve, Domine, animas omnium fidelium defunctorum ab omni vinculo delictorum.

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Martha

... and school... and summer camp... and sledging... and swimming...

George

Et gratia tua illis succurrente, mereantur evadere judicium ultionis.

Martha (Laughing, to herself)

... and how he broke his arm... how funny it was... oh, no, it hurt him... but, oh, it was funny... in a field, his very first cow, the first he'd ever seen... and he went into the field, to the cow, where the cow was grazing, head down, busy... and he moo'd at it! (Laughs, ibid) He moo'd at it... and the beast, oh, surprised, swung its head up and moo'd at him, all three years of him, and he ran, startled, and he stumbled... fell... and broke his poor arm. (Laughs, ibid) Poor lamb.

George

Et lucis aeternae beatitudine perfuit.

Martha

George cried! Helpless... George... cried, I carried the poor lamb. George snuffling beside me, I carried the child, having fashioned a sling... and across the great fields.

George

In Paradisum deducant te Angeli.

Martha

And as he grew... and as he grew... oh! so wise!... he walked evenly between us... (She spreads her hands)... a hand out to each of us for what we could offer by way of support, affection, teaching, even love... and these hands, still, to hold us off a bit, for mutual protec-
tion, to protect us all from George's...weakness...and
my...necessary greater strength...to protect himself
...and us.

GEORGE
In memora aeterna exit justus: ab auditione mala non
timebit.

So wise; so wise.

MARTHA

NICK (To GEORGE)
What is this? What are you doing?

GEORGE
Shhhhh.

MARTHA

HONEY
Shhhhh.

NICK (Shrugging)

O.K.

MARTHA
So beautiful; so wise.

GEORGE (Laughs quietly)
All truth being relative.

MARTHA
It was true! Beautiful; wise; perfect.

GEORGE
There's a real mother talking.

HONEY
(Suddenly; almost tearfully)
I want a child.

NICK
Honey...
imperfection cries out against strength, goodness and innocence. And George tried.

**GEORGE**

How did I try, Martha? How did I try?

**MARThA**

How did you . . . what? . . . No! No . . . he grew . . . our son grew . . . up; he is grown up; he is away at school, college. He is fine, everything is fine.

**GEORGE (Mocking)**

Oh, come on, Martha!

No. That's all.

**MARThA**

Just a minute! You can't cut a story off like that, sweetheart. You started to say something . . . now you say it!

No!

**GEORGE**

Well, I will.

No!

**GEORGE**

You see, Martha, here, stops just when the going gets good . . . just when things start getting a little rough. Now, Martha, here, is a misunderstood little girl; she really is. Not only does she have a husband who is a bog . . . a younger-than-she-is bog albeit . . . not only does she have a husband who is a bog, she has as well a tiny problem with spiritous liquors—like she can't get enough . . .

The Exorcism

**MARTHA (Without energy)**

No more, George.

**GEORGE**

. . . and on top of all that, poor weighed-down girl, plus a father who really doesn't give a damn whether she lives or dies, who couldn't care less what happens to his only daughter . . . on top of all that she has a son. She has a son who fought her every inch of the way, who didn't want to be turned into a weapon against his father, who didn't want to be used as a goddamn club whenever Martha didn't get things like she wanted them!

**MARThA (Rising to it)**

Lies! Lies!!

**GEORGE**

Lies? All right. A son who would not disown his father, who came to him for advice, for information, for love that wasn't mixed with sickness—and you know what I mean, Martha—who could not tolerate the slashing, braying residue that called itself his mother. Mother? Hah!!

**MARThA (Cold)**

All right, you. A son who was so ashamed of his father he asked me once if it—possibly—wasn't true, as he had heard, from some cruel boys, maybe, that he was not our child; who could not tolerate the shabby failure his father had become . . .

**GEORGE**

Lies!

**MARThA**

Lies? Who would not bring his girl friends to the house. . . .
GEORGE
... in shame of his mother...

MARTHA
... of his father! Who writes letters only to me

GEORGE
Oh, so you think! To me! At my office!

MARTHA
Liar!

GEORGE
I have a stack of them!

MARTHA
YOU HAVE NO LETTERS!

GEORGE
And you have?

MARTHA
He has no letters. A son... a son who spends his summers away... away from his family... on any pretext... because he can't stand the shadow of a man flickering around the edges of a house...

GEORGE
... who spends his summers away... and he does!... who spends his summers away because there isn't room for him in a house full of empty bottles, lies, strange men, and a harridan who...

MARTHA
Liar!

GEORGE
Liar?

MARTHA
... A son who I have raised as best I can against...

The Exorcism
vicious odds, against the corruption of weakness and petty
revenues...

GEORGE
... A son who is, deep in his gut, sorry to have been
born...

(Both Together)

MARTHA
I have tried, oh God I have tried; the one thing... the one thing I've tried to carry pure and unsheathed through the sewer of this marriage; through the sewer of this marriage; through the sewer of this marriage, and the pathetic, stupid days, through the derision and the laughter... God, the laughter, through one failure after another, one failure compounding another failure, each attempt more sickening, more numbing than the one before; the one thing, the one person I have tried to protect, to raise above the mire of this vile, crushing marriage; the one light in all this hopeless... darkness... our son.

GEORGE
Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremendae: Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra: Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem. Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo, dum discussionis venerit, atque ven-
tura ira. Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra. Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae, dies magna et amara valde. Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem. Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine; et lux perpetua luceat eis. Libera me Domine de morte aeterna in die illa tremenda: quando caeli movendi sunt et terra; Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

(End together)
stop it!! stop it!!

GEORGE (With a hand sign)


HONEY

just stop it!!

GEORGE

Why, baby? Don't you like it?

HONEY (Quite hysterical)

You ... can't ... do ... this!

GEORGE (Triumphant)

Who says!

HONEY

Il Say!

GEORGE

Tell us why, baby.

HONEY

No!

NICK

Is this game over?

HONEY

Yes! Yes, it is.

GEORGE

Ho-ho! Not by a long shot. (To MARTHA) We got a little surprise for you, baby. It's about sunny-Jim.

MARTHA

No more, George.

yes!

GEORGE

Leave her be!

NICK

I'm running this show! (To MARTHA) Sweetheart, I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you ... for us, of course. Some rather sad news.

(HONEY begins weeping, head in hands)

MARTHA (Afraid, suspicious)

What is this?

GEORGE (Oh, so patiently)

Well, Martha, while you were out of the room, while the ... two of you were out of the room ... I mean, I don't know where, hell, you both must have been somewhere (Little laugh) ... While you were out of the room, for a while ... well, Missey and I were sittin' here havin' a little talk, you know: a shaw and a talk ... and the doorbell rang ... .

HONEY (Head still in hands)

Chimed.

GEORGE

Chimed ... and ... well, it's hard to tell you, Martha ...

MARTHA

(A strange throaty voice)

Tell me.

HONEY

Please ... don't.

MARTHA

Tell me.

GEORGE

... and ... what it was ... it was good old Western
Union, some little boy about seventy.

MARTHA (Involved)

Crazy Billy?

GEORGE

Yes, Martha, that's right ... crazy Billy ... and he had a telegram, and it was for us, and I have to tell you about it.

MARTHA

(As if from a distance)

Why didn't they phone it? Why did they bring it; why didn't they telephone it?

GEORGE

Some telegrams you have to deliver, Martha; some telegrams you can't phone.

MARTHA (Rising)

What do you mean?

GEORGE

Martha ... I can hardly bring myself to say it ... HONEY

Don't.

GEORGE (To HONEY)

Do you want to do it?

HONEY

(Defending herself against an attack of bees)

No no no no no.

GEORGE (Sighing heavily)

All right. Well, Martha ... I'm afraid our boy isn't coming home for his birthday.

The Exorcism

MARTHA

Of course he is.

GEORGE

No, Martha.

MARTHA

Of course he is. I say he is!

GEORGE

He ... can't.

MARTHA

He is! I say so!

GEORGE

Martha ... (Long pause) ... our son is ... dead.

(Silence)

GEORGE

He was ... killed ... late in the afternoon. ... (Silence)

(A tiny chuckle) on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket, he swerved, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into a.

MARTHA (Rigid fury)

YOU ... CAN'T ... DO ... THAT!

GEORGE

... large tree.

MARTHA

YOU CANNOT DO THAT!

NICK (Softly)

Oh my God. (Honey is weeping louder)

GEORGE

(Quietly, dispassionately)

I thought you should know.
NICK
Oh my God; no.

MARTHA
(Quivering with rage and loss)
No! no! you cannot do that! you cannot decide that for yourself! I will not let you do that!

GEORGE
We'll have to leave around noon, I suppose...

MARTHA
I will not let you decide these things!

GEORGE
... because there are matters of identification, naturally, and arrangements to be made...

MARTHA
(Leaping at George, but ineffectual)
YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
(Nick rises, grabs hold of Martha, pins her arms behind her back)
I won't let you do this, get your hands off me!

GEORGE
(As Nick holds on; right in Martha's face)
You don't seem to understand, Martha; I haven't done anything. Now, pull yourself together. Our son is dead! Can you get that into your head?

MARTHA
YOU CAN'T DECIDE THESE THINGS.

NICK
Lady, please.

MARTHA
Let me go!

GEORGE
Now listen, Martha; listen carefully. We got a telegram; there was a car accident, and he's dead. rour! Just like that! Now, how do you like it?

MARTHA
(A howl which weakens into a moan)
NOOOOOoooooo.

GEORGE (To Nick)
Let her go. (Martha slumps to the floor in a sitting position) She'll be all right now.

MARTHA (Pathetic)
No; no, he is not dead; he is not dead.

GEORGE

MARTHA
You cannot. You may not decide these things.

NICK
(Leaning over her; tenderly)
He hasn't decided anything, lady. It's not his doing. He doesn't have the power...

GEORGE
That's right, Martha; I'm not a God. I don't have the power over life and death, do I?

MARTHA
YOU CAN'T KILL HIM! YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM DIE!

HONEY
Lady... please...
MARSHA

you can't.

GEORGE

There was a telegram, Martha.

MARSHA (Up; facing him)
Show it to me! Show me the telegram!

GEORGE

(Long pause; then, with a straight face)

I ate it.

MARSHA

(A pause; then with the greatest disbelief possible, tinged with hysteria)

What did you just say to me?

GEORGE

(Barely able to stop exploding with laughter)

I ate it.

(MARSHA stares at him for a long moment, then spits in his face)

GEORGE (With a smile)

Good for you, Martha.

NICK (To GEORGE)

Do you think that's the way to treat her at a time like this? Making an ugly goddamn joke like that? Hunh?

GEORGE

(Snapping his fingers at HONEY)
Did I eat the telegram or did I not?

HONEY (Terrified)

Yes; yes, you ate it. I watched... I watched you... you

... you ate it all down.

GEORGE (Prompting)

... like a good boy.

HONEY

... like a... g-g-g-good... boy. Yes.

MARSHA (To GEORGE, coldly)

You're not going to get away with this.

GEORGE (With disgust)

You know the rules, Martha! For Christ's sake, you know the rules!

MARSHA

No!

NICK

(With the beginnings of a knowledge he cannot face)

What are you two talking about?

GEORGE

I can kill him, Martha, if I want to.

MARSHA

He is our child!

GEORGE

Oh yes, and you bore him, and it was a good delivery....

He is our child!

MARSHA

And I have killed him!

GEORGE

No!

MARSHA
GEORGE

yes!

(Long silence)

NICK (Very quietly)

I think I understand this.

GEORGE (Ibid)

Do you?

NICK (Ibid)

Jesus Christ, I think I understand this.

GEORGE (Ibid)

Good for you, buster.

NICK (Violently)

JESUS CHRIST I THINK I UNDERSTAND THIS!

MARTHA

(Great sadness and loss)

You have no right...you have no right at all...

GEORGE (Tenderly)

I have the right, Martha. We never spoke of it; that's all. I could kill him any time I wanted to.

MARTHA

But why? Why?

GEORGE

You broke our rule, baby. You mentioned him...you mentioned him to someone else.

MARTHA (Tearfully)

I did not. I never did.

GEORGE

Yes, you did.

MARTHA

Who? Who?

HONEY (Crying)

To me. You mentioned him to me.

MARTHA (Crying)

I forgot! Sometimes...sometimes when it's night, when it's late, and...and everybody else is...talking...I forget and I...I want to mention him...but I...hold on...I hold on...but I've wanted to...so often...oh, George, you've pushed it...there was no need...there was no need for this. I mentioned him...all right...but you didn't have to push it over the edge. You didn't have to...kill him.

Requiescat in pace.

GEORGE

Amen.

HONEY

You didn't have to have him die, George.

MARTHA

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine.

HONEY

Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

MARTHA

That wasn't...needed.

(A long silence)

GEORGE (Softly)

It will be dawn soon. I think the party's over.
Act Three

Nick (To George; quietly)

You couldn't have... any?

George

We couldn't.

Martha

(A hint of communion in this)

We couldn't.

George (To Nick and Honey)

Home to bed, children; it's way past your bedtime.

Nick (His hand out to Honey)

Honey?

Honey

(Rising, moving to him)

Yes.

George

(Martha is sitting on the floor by a chair now)

You two go now.

Yes.

Nick

Yes.

Honey

Yes.

Nick

I'd like to...

George

Good night.

Nick (Pause)

Good night.

The Exorcism

(Nick and Honey exit; George closes the door after them; looks around the room; sighs, picks up a glass or two, takes it to the bar)

(This whole last section very softly, very slowly)

George

Do you want anything, Martha?

No... nothing.

Martha (Still looking away)

All right. (Pause) Time for bed.

Yes.

George

Are you tired?

Yes.

Martha

I am.

George

Yes.

Martha

Sunday tomorrow; all day.

Martha

Yes.

(A long silence between them)

Did you... did you... have to?
GEORGE (Pause)
Yes.
MARThA
It was ...? You had to?
GEORGE (Pause)
Yes.
MARThA
I don't know.
GEORGE
It was ... time.
MARThA
Was it?
GEORGE
Yes.
MARThA (Pause)
I'm cold.
GEORGE
It's late.
MARThA
Yes.
GEORGE (Long silence)
It will be better.
MARThA (Long silence)
I don't ... know.
GEORGE
It will be ... maybe.
MARTHA
I'm ... not ... sure.
GEORGE
No.
MARTHA
Just ... us?
GEORGE
Yes.
MARTHA
I don't suppose, maybe, we could. . .
GEORGE
No, Martha.
MARThA
Yes. No.
MARThA
Are you all right?
GEORGE
Yes. No.
GEORGE
(Puts his hand gently on her shoulder; she puts her head back and he sings to her, very softly)
Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf,
Virginia Woolf,
Virginia Woolf,
MARThA
I ... am ... George. . .
GEORGE
Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf....

MARTHA
I...am...George...I...am...
(george nods, slowly)
(Silence; tableau)

CURTAIN

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