

L:

start: And we are expecting

quite a crowd so you better tell Cecil to pull out those extra folding chairs. Oh, I didn't know there was an extra charge for that. Well, I'm sure that won't be a problem. (*Ray-Bud clears his throat.*) Now there'll probably be quite a bit of food, so we'll be needing those long tables y'all had out for the Crenshaw funeral. Oh really? (*She glances over at Ray-Bud, then turns away and whispers into the phone.*) How much? (*Ray-Bud clears his throat again.*) Well, okay. Now, we're planning on having the service Friday about eleven and then head out for the cemetery around noon. Right now, I'm assuming Ray-Bud's mother and sister will probably be riding in the hearse with the body and we'll.... Oh, I see. Well, I just assumed.... Well what if one of us drove it? Ray-Bud's a real good driver. Oh, of course, your insurance and all.

RAY-BUD. (*Loudly.*) Tell her we'll just strap him on top of the Impala!

LUCILLE. (*Deeply embarrassed.*) Oh no, honey. That was ... that was just the T.V. (*Calling off.*) "Ray-Bud, turn down that T.V.! I'm trying to make your Daddy's funeral arrangements in here!" I'm so sorry, Merline. Now, where were we? Oh, of course, I understand. Yes, I know Cecil has to make a living. I'm sure he's a wonderful driver. Listen, honey, I've got to get going here. Ray-Bud hasn't even had breakfast yet. I'll see you this afternoon and we'll work out the rest of the details then. Okay ... okay ... okay. Thanks, Merline. (*She hangs up.*)

RAY-BUD. What the hell are you thanking her for? Damn thieves!

LUCILLE. Now, Ray-Bud.

RAY-BUD. Who ever thought up the word "grave-robber" must have had one of Cecil and Merline's calendars hanging on their wall.

LUCILLE. Now, Ray.

RAY-BUD. (*Nervously pacing.*) And what's my Daddy doing down at Depew's anyway. That's what I'd like to know? The Turpins have always gone to Patterson's.

LUCILLE. Well, I thought that was sort of strange too, but Depew's is what your Mama wanted.

RAY-BUD. Revenge! That's what it is, Lucille!

LUCILLE / RAY-BUD

51

LUCILLE. What are you talking about?

RAY-BUD. Cold blooded revenge. After all these years he's got me. He's got me by the throat!

LUCILLE. Who's got you?

RAY-BUD. Cecil Depew! Don't you remember when Cecil peed his pants in the fourth grade! "P.U. HERE COME DEPEW!" I started it! I started it, and it followed him all the way through high school!

LUCILLE. Ray, you got to get ahold of yourself.

RAY-BUD. I should've known it! I should've seen it coming! When the rest of us was out shooting birds with B.B. guns, Cecil was running around burying 'em in shoe boxes. He's gonna nickel and dime me to death!

LUCILLE. (*Trying to get ahold of him.*) Ray!

RAY-BUD. He's gonna break me!

LUCILLE. Ray! Ray, you got to calm down. Now, listen to me, Honey. Depew's is your mama's choice and we just have to respect it. I know this is a hard time. I know how much you loved your Daddy. Why I loved him too. He and your mama were always so sweet to me. They never failed to send me a card after every one of my miscarriages. And I remember how Daddy Bud would always write the same sweet thing: "Better Luck Next Time."

RAY-BUD. I don't know how I'm gonna get through this, Lucille. I swear to God, I don't. I hate funerals. I hate everything about 'em.

LUCILLE. Now we're a family and we're all gonna hang together. And speaking of family, your Aunt Marguerite has volunteered to spend the night with your mama. And Junior, Suzanne, and the kids can stay here with us.

RAY-BUD. They're not staying here, Lucille.

LUCILLE. Ray-Bud! He's your brother!

RAY-BUD. They can shack up down at the Motel 6. I'm not having Junior and that mess in here.

LUCILLE. Ray, you know they can't afford a motel.

RAY-BUD. Is that my fault? Did I hold a gun to his head and tell him to mortgage his house and blow all his money on that pipe dream? Junior, a businessman? ~~Junior couldn't~~

END

sell lemonade in Hell, Lucille.

LUCILLE. He tried so hard, Ray.

RAY-BUD. Face it, Lucille. He's an idiot, and I'm not having him in here. I'm not gonna sit here and listen to Suzanne running her mouth and I believe them children are demon possessed.

LUCILLE. They're sweet people, Ray. They've just had a little string of hard luck lately.

RAY-BUD. Demon possessed, Lucille. Mark my words.

LUCILLE. *(Handing him his sack lunch.)* We'll talk about it tonight. You're gonna be late. Clyde says they got three transmissions backed up there waiting for you. And don't forget you got to stop by the shoe store. Size 10-D.

RAY-BUD. I'll remember.

LUCILLE. And Ray.... We're not gonna have any "problems" are we?

RAY-BUD. No, Lucille, we're not gonna have any "problems." Just do me one favor. When I die, don't tell nobody. Just bury me in the backyard and tell everybody I left you.

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

Junior and Suzanne in the car. They drive in silence. Suzanne is looking over some sheet music.

→ SUZANNE. How's she gonna go on? That's what I'd like to know. How's she gonna face life without Daddy Bud? I just don't know how she's gonna go on without losing her mind. *(She waits for a response but doesn't get one.)* Well, I can't decide what to sing. Of course, I don't know how I'll get through it. I swear to God, I don't. I'll probably just fall down on the floor in a big pool of tears. God knows nobody would blame me if I did. All our humiliation and now Daddy Bud has to up and die without seeing you make something of yourself.

JUNIOR. Maybe you could sing "Jesus on the Cross."

SUZANNE. I don't know. That doesn't seem sad enough for a funeral. And God knows it's gonna be sad to be sitting there thinking that your Daddy died knowing we had to sell everything we owned and move into that God-awful trailer just to pay off that big dream of yours.

JUNIOR. Maybe you could set *that* to music, Suzanne.

SUZANNE. I believe I was just stating the facts, wasn't I? You know I loved him too, Junior. He was just like my own Daddy. I was the one that had to go crawling to him like a snake and beg for the money to buy shoes for our children, you know. But I did it. I humbled myself. And do you know why I did it, Junior? It can all be summed up in two little words: "For Love." *(Suddenly slapping "the children" over the backseat.)* I TOLD YOU TO QUIT KICKING THE BACK OF MY SEAT! I know you're hungry! You think I'm not! It'd be nice to stop and get something to eat wouldn't it? Well, maybe we could if your Daddy hadn't lost all our money! *(Back to Junior.)* Love, Junior. That's been the curse of my life. And now we have to face your family with all of them knowing. All of them looking down at us. Laughing at us. Who ever heard of a machine that cleans parking lots?

JUNIOR. That'll do, Suzanne.

SUZANNE. All our money down the toilet, Junior. How do you feel about that? You think I like working at Newberry's? Slaving to keep that wax fruit section looking nice. You think I wouldn't love to stay home and watch soap operas all day like my good for nothing sisters do. That would suit me fine, mister. Let me tell you that right now. I don't want to work, I have to. I'd love to stay home and keep a decent house, cook for you, maybe learn to sew and make some clothes for the children. That's all I ever wanted to be was just a good wife and mother. *(Suddenly slapping "the children" again.)* YOU DO THAT AGAIN AND I'M GONNA TELL YOUR DADDY TO PULL THIS CAR OVER AND THROW YOU ALL OUT IN THE ROAD! How would you like us to just put you out in the road, and drive off and never look back? Then what would you do with no mother and daddy to look after you?

Starve! Starve to death in the road! *(She settles back in her seat, returns to her music.)* Go on and cry, you big babies.

JUNIOR. *(Over his shoulder, quietly.)* Y'all know your Mama loves you. She was just kidding.

SUZANNE. We'll see who's kidding? Don't miss this turn off. I just don't know how they expect me to stand up there and sing. I don't know how I'll do it.

JUNIOR. I'm sure you'll do your best.

SUZANNE. My best? That's a good one. You don't know a thing about it, Junior. In order to do my best, I'd have to have confidence. I used to have confidence. I could have been a professional. I had the talent. I could have married your cousin, Teddy-Wayne, and been the wife of a lawyer. Had a big house with a swimming pool. But no, I couldn't think of myself. That's been my curse my whole life. I never once thought of myself. I had to listen to my foolish heart and get married to a dreamer. A beautiful dreamer who goes out and blows all our money on a big piece of machinery to clean parking lots.

JUNIOR. You're pushing it.

SUZANNE. Did you ever once stop to think that maybe nobody gave a damn about a clean parking lot.

JUNIOR. You're really pushing it.

SUZANNE. And of course, it came as a big surprise to you when everybody just laughed in your face when you asked them if they wanted their parking lot cleaned.

JUNIOR. I'm gonna kill us, Suzanne.

SUZANNE. Don't make me laugh. *(Junior starts swerving the car back and forth across the road.)*

JUNIOR. *(Overlapping.)* I'M GONNA KILL US! I'M GONNA KILL US! I'M GONNA KILL US! I'M GONNA KILL US!

SUZANNE. *(Overlapping.)* STOP IT! STOP IT, JUNIOR! STOP IT! STOP IT! *(Junior slams on the brakes, reaches under the seat and produces a gun.)*

JUNIOR. SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP! I've had it, Suzanne! I'm at the end of my goddamn rope! I can't take it anymore! My Daddy just died! Can you understand that? Can you hear me? Am I getting through that thick skull of yours?

My Daddy just died. I'm thirty-five years old, I'm dead ass broke, I've got no job, no prospects, three kids and worst of all, I'm married to you! Now, shut up! Just shut up! I want some peace, you hear me! You say one more word about parking lots and I swear to God, I'll kill you and me too! You got that? *(Pause.)*

SUZANNE. Tense, tense, tense. You are so tense. Put that away. *(She goes back to her music. He puts away the gun, starts the car, and pulls out on the road. Over her shoulder, quietly.)* Your Daddy wasn't really gonna kill me. He was just kidding. Y'all know your Daddy and I love each other. Buddy, what have you got in your mouth? *(She reaches out her hand.)* Spit that out! Don't pick things up off the floor of the car. You don't know what kind of filth it's got on it. *(She rolls down the window and starts to throw the object out, when she notices what it is.)* Junior?

JUNIOR. What?

SUZANNE. Do you know what this is?

JUNIOR. No.

SUZANNE. It's a woman's earring.

← END

BLACKOUT

Scene 5

Raynelle, Reverend Hooker and Raynelle's obese daughter are seated in Raynelle's kitchen. The daughter is eating potato chips.

RAYNELLE. Can I get you a little more coffee, Reverend Hooker?

REVEREND. No, Sister Turpin, I'm fine. You just rest yourself. I know this has been an awful day for you.

RAYNELLE. Yes, it has.

REVEREND. It must be a blessing to have your daughter living here with you at this time of bereavement.

it must have been a quick one cause he was dead by the time he hit the floor.

REVEREND. Well, we don't know that for sure, do we Sister?

RAYNELLE. Looked dead to me.

REVEREND. *(Putting his notes away.)* Well, I believe I've got all the information I need. I'll just be on my way. I'm sure you've got family coming and all. Is Brother Bud resting down at Patterson's?

RAYNELLE. No, we've got him down at Depew's. Little cheaper.

REVEREND. Now don't you worry, Sister Turpin, I believe I'll be able to come up with a suitable eulogy for your husband. Delightful, is there anything you'd like to add? *(Delightful lets out a huge belch and shakes her head.)*

RAYNELLE. Guess that about does it, Reverend.

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

Marguerite and Royce sit in his car. There is a long silence. Royce looks over his shoulder, then checks his watch.

Start → MARGUERITE. I can not believe you ran out of gas.

ROYCE. Well, I did.

MARGUERITE. I can not believe it. Today of all days. My only brother laying in the funeral home. The entire family waiting for us. And here we sit on Route 35, in the middle of nowhere, in this death trap you call a car and not a speck of gas in it. You did this on purpose, didn't you?

ROYCE. Ray-Bud'll be here soon. It's been over a half hour since I called him. Said he'd come as soon as he could.

MARGUERITE. What time is it?

ROYCE. 'Bout five.

MARGUERITE. I can not believe it.

ROYCE. Believe it, alright! Just believe it!

MARGUERITE. You do these things to torture me, don't you?

ROYCE. Yeah, Mama. I siphoned out that gas just so you and I could spend a little more time together.

MARGUERITE. You're a demon, Royce. I swear to God, you're the devil incarnate.

ROYCE. Look, just keep your drawers on, alright. Ray-Bud'll be here soon as he can. And believe me, he can't get here soon enough to suit me. So let's just sit here and be quiet for a while. *(Pause.)*

MARGUERITE. So, we're just gonna sit here.

ROYCE. Yep, that's the plan. *(They sit in silence for a moment. Royce turns the ignition, and then reaches down and turns on the radio. It is tuned in to his favorite station which is playing a raunchy, honky tonk song. After a moment, Marguerite leans over and changes the station to a contemporary Christian station. After another moment, Royce changes it back. Marguerite changes it back. It becomes a rapid battle with each person determined to keep it on the station of their choice. Suddenly, the knob comes off in Marguerite's hand.)*

MARGUERITE. Ha! Ha! Jesus got the knob! *(She drops it down the front of her dress.)*

ROYCE. That's okay, Mama, cause Satan's got the car keys. *(He turns the ignition and the radio goes dead. He laughs maniacally.)*

MARGUERITE. I can not believe you're my son. You got Beelzebub in you, boy. What happened to you, Royce? Why did you turn out so evil?

ROYCE. Just lucky, I guess.

MARGUERITE. To think I was in labor seventeen hours with you. Seventeen hours of unbelievable torment.

ROYCE. Mama.

MARGUERITE. Screaming out in unbearable agony.

ROYCE. Mama, don't get started in on ...

MARGUERITE. They offered me drugs to ease my suffering, but I turned 'em down. Said, "No, I don't want your dope to ease my misery. I'll gladly bear the torment to give life to my child."

~~Lord hath made. Rejoice and be glad therein.~~

~~SINGERS. (Uptempo, but not looking particularly joyful.) "We've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in our hearts. Down in our hearts. Down in our hearts. We've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in our hearts. Down in our hearts today."~~

Start REVEREND. Real good, kids. Well, it's been a busy day and I've been in the car all day today, rushing from place to place, offering comfort and counsel to some of our brothers and sisters in crisis, catharsis and confusion. As I sat in the various kitchens, offices and hospital rooms, I was made aware of all the different kinds of problems we encounter here on this journey called life. And I said to myself, Beverly, what is this thing we call life? Is it nothing but a collection of problems, disappointments and heartache? Or do we make it that way with our endless wants, needs and desires? And if it is we ourselves who create all this unhappiness, why do we do it? Why don't we realize that the slender and fragile canoe of life can be so easily overturned in the turbulent rapids of the world? Why don't we just relax and take things as they come? And not expect so much. And why do we feel we have to call somebody when we're troubled? Why don't we just keep it to ourselves? Why do we feel the need to unload it on somebody and make them drive all the way out to our house on the hottest day of the year? Why do we cry and moan and bend somebody's ear till they think they're gonna die? Why don't we say to ourselves, before we pick up the phone, "Now is this really a problem or am I just bellyaching again?" Let us remember in these times of confusion, distress and sorrow, that when it seems you can't go on, you probably can. And when you think to yourself, there's just no answer, you're probably right. Remember friends, our time here is short. Shorter than any of us can imagine. And if you feel your life is nothing but a pit of unrelenting torture, try to make the most of it. After all, tomorrow is another day. Alright. Now we got a lot more show for you, so don't go away. We're welcoming a new sponsor to the program tonight. (Reading from his notes.) Depew's Funeral Home. Where they combine a thrifty, no nonsense

approach with Christlike sensitivity to answer your funereal needs. Alright, kids. Take us into the commercial. ← END SINGERS. "We've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in our hearts. Down in our hearts to stay!"

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

before everybody gets here. It's gonna be a long sit. *(Raynelle and Delightful exit. The brothers look at the body.)*

JUNIOR. Well, there it is, Ray. Death. Mortality. The Grim Reaper staring ya right in the face.

RAY-BUD. *(Truly sick.)* Shut up, Junior.

JUNIOR. What's the matter, Ray?

RAY-BUD. Nothin'.

JUNIOR. You don't look too good, Ray.

RAY-BUD. I can't move, Junior.

JUNIOR. What do you mean you can't move?

RAY-BUD. Get me out of here, Junior. I need some air.

JUNIOR. *(As he slowly helps him out.)* It's nothing to be scared of, Ray. It's just death. The end of the line. The last hurrah.

Crossing the River Jordan.

RAY-BUD. Shut up, Junior.

JUNIOR. Why does Daddy have them dancing shoes on?

RAY-BUD. I'll tell you later. Listen, Junior, when I'm feeling a little better, I want you to help me do something.

JUNIOR. Sure, Ray. What are we gonna do?

RAY-BUD. *(As they are exiting.)* We're gonna beat the shit out of Cecil Depew.

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

The visitation takes place in the various corners of the community room at Depew's. The lights come up on Raynelle, who is seated with Veda and Norval, an elderly couple.

Stent → VEDA. Well, we sure were sorry to hear about Bud.

RAYNELLE. Thank you, Veda. Norval's looking better than he did the last time I saw him.

VEDA. Well, he has his good days and his bad days. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, NORVAL? *(Norval mumbles something unintelligible.)*

RAYNELLE. What did he say?

VEDA. I believe he said: "The corn eats many miles." *(She pats his hand.)* THAT'S GOOD, NORVAL!

RAYNELLE. THAT'S REAL GOOD, NORVAL!

VEDA. Every once in a while, Norval takes a little walk through the garden, if you know what I mean.

RAYNELLE. Well. How are you doing, Veda? Haven't seen you in so long.

VEDA. Oh, not so bad, I guess. I still manage to get out to services on Sunday. And of course, we go into Timson every

Wednesday for Norval's dialysis and to get his prescriptions filled. The doctor's got him on these new liver pills that seem

to be working out a lot better. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, NORVAL? *(Norval seems to have fallen asleep.)* NORVAL! *(She pokes him.)* NORVAL! *(He stirs and mumbles something else.)*

Whew. I thought we'd lost him for a minute there. I got to

remember to get them batteries changed on his pacemaker. Since he had his bypass done and his gallbladder out, I've

noticed a real improvement. *(She takes a small pill box out of her purse and shakes it. Responding to the sound, Norval opens his*

mouth and tilts his head back. Veda begins to feed pills to Norval as she talks.) AND NEXT MONTH, WE'RE GETTING RID OF

THAT PROSTATE AREN'T WE, NORVAL? Of course, we got

to keep that blood pressure down, and this one's for his stomach, and this one keeps them kidneys working. I'll tell you, it's

a lot to remember. *(She takes the last pill herself.)*

RAYNELLE. I can imagine. *(Veda takes a small tank of oxygen out of her bag and hands Norval the mask, which he places over his*

nose and mouth.)

VEDA. *(As she turns the valve.)* Of course, Verna Swindell comes in twice a week to help me with his bath and all. And

she sits with him if I have to go into town. YA GETTING ANYTHING NORVAL? Of course, he's on a real strict diet so

I got to be real careful what he eats. No salt, no sugar, no fat, no meat, no dairy, nothing too spicy, nothing too heavy. *(Pulling a small package out of her bag.)* YOU WANT A CRACKER? *(He shakes his head.)* Cracker, Ray?

RAYNELLE. *(Taking one.)* Thank you, Veda.

VEDA. *(Taking one herself.)* Yeah, after we get his physical therapy out of the way in the morning, I give him his injections and irrigate him for about an hour. Once he's had his lunch, he takes a good long nap, and then I usually put him out on the porch and let him watch the sun set while I get supper ready. I got to be careful though. One time I got to talking on the phone and left him out there for over an hour, and the mosquitos got him pretty bad. Of course, supper's his big meal of the day, so it's always a gamble to see if he's gonna be able to keep it down. Once I get his evening medication done and get him into bed, he usually sleeps through till morning. Of course, I don't get too much sleep myself since I have to get up and turn him every couple of hours.

(Pause.)

RAYNELLE. Well, you're just so lucky to have him.

VEDA. I know. *(Norval mumbles something.)* WHAT'D YOU SAY? *(He repeats it.)* UH HUH! OKAY!

RAYNELLE. What was it?

VEDA. I'm not exactly sure. Sounded like something about Debbie Reynolds. *(Pause.)*

RAYNELLE. *(Overlapping.)* WELL, THAT'S GOOD, NORVAL! THAT'S REAL GOOD!

VEDA. *(Overlapping.)* THAT'S GOOD! THAT'S REAL GOOD, NORVAL!

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

Lucille sits with Nadine, a young woman. They look at a long string of photographs from Nadine's wallet. She is holding a baby and is hugely pregnant with another.

S → NADINE. This one's Perry Como. He's by my first marriage to A.C. You remember him?

LUCILLE. Oh sure.

NADINE. And this is Alan Alda and that's Linda Evans there

in the back. *(Pointing off.)* And that one over there is Charles Bronson. And then there's the twins, Ann-Margret and Anne Murray. *(Referring to the baby in her arms.)* And this here's Farrah-Zsa Zsa.

LUCILLE. Aw, isn't she beautiful. They're all just so precious, Nadine.

NADINE. Thank you, Lucille.

LUCILLE. And you named them all after someone famous.

NADINE. Yes, I did. Call me a fool, but I've always thought each of 'em was special in some way. And I just figured if you're special, you should have a special name. Excuse me, Lucille. *(Calling off.)* OPRAH, PUT THAT DOWN! PUT IT DOWN!

LUCILLE. Well, honey you're just so lucky to have all these precious babies. Ray-Bud and I have tried so many times but I just never seem to be able to carry to term.

NADINE. Oh, I just know it'll all work out for you. You would be such a good mother and I know how happy Ray-Bud would be.

LUCILLE. Oh he would. You know he never talks about it, but I just know how bad he wants one.

NADINE. Well, eighth time's a charm that's what I've always heard.

LUCILLE. Nadine, can you keep a secret?

NADINE. Oh, sure.

LUCILLE. Now, this is a surprise, so don't breathe a word of it, cause I don't want to get everybody's hopes up ... but ... well ...

NADINE. Lucille, you're not!

LUCILLE. "My friend" is almost a week late.

NADINE. Oh, Lucille, that's just wonderful!

LUCILLE. Well, it's just a week, but I've got my fingers crossed.

NADINE. Oh mine too. That would just be so wonderful. Y'all have been together so long.

LUCILLE. Almost fifteen years.

NADINE. Fifteen years. You know it's just so funny how things work out. Here you and Ray-Bud been together so long

NADINE/LUCILLE 2 of 2 (56)

and wanting children so bad. To tell you the truth, Lucille, I never really planned on having a big family.

LUCILLE. Really?

NADINE. No, I sorta had this plan to move out to Hollywood, but then I met A.C., and then I met Carl ... and then I met Wendell and then I met Duane. And things just sorta didn't work out.

LUCILLE. Well, Honey, you're young. You could still go out there.

NADINE. No. After Geraldo was born, I pretty much gave up on that idea. But the good news is I'm engaged again.

LUCILLE. Oh good for you, Honey.

NADINE. It's love this time, Lucille. He's nothing like those other men. I got a real good feeling about it.

LUCILLE. Oh how wonderful! Well, tell me all about him!

NADINE. Well, his name is Rebel, and he works for the carnival. Travels all over the country guessing people's weight. The only problem is he doesn't like kids. I'm not gonna worry about it though.

LUCILLE. Love conquers all.

NADINE. It sure does.

LUCILLE. A person's just got to follow their heart.

NADINE. Amen.

LUCILLE. You just got to do what you feel's best.

NADINE. Call me a fool.

LUCILLE. You're a fool. ← END

BLACKOUT

(57) CLYDE / Ray Bud
Scene 4

Ray-Bud and Clyde, his boss. Clyde wears his blue garage uniform and drinks a can of beer as he speaks.

CLYDE. Well shit, Ray. It's all a mystery ain't it. Life. Death.

RAY-BUD. Yes, it is.

Clyde / Ray-Bud 1 of 2 (57)

CLYDE. We just don't know, do we?

RAY-BUD. No, we don't.

CLYDE. We're not meant to know.

RAY-BUD. No, we're not.

CLYDE. Least it was quick.

RAY-BUD. Yes, it was.

CLYDE. That's the best way, you know. Quick. You don't want to linger. That's awful.

RAY-BUD. Yeah, it is.

CLYDE. Quick. That's how I want to go. Bolt of lightning. Car crash. Piano falling on my head. That's what I want.

RAY-BUD. Well, I hope that happens to you, Clyde.

CLYDE. Me too, Ray. Wouldn't want to just hang on and hang on. That's no good.

RAY-BUD. No.

CLYDE. Wouldn't want to be in a coma either.

RAY-BUD. Nope.

CLYDE. You see the flowers me and the boys sent over?

RAY-BUD. Oh yeah, I did. Thank you, Clyde. That was real thoughtful.

CLYDE. "Clyde's Auto Repair and Body Shop" take care of their own, Ray.

RAY-BUD. Well, I sure appreciate it.

CLYDE. We're not just a garage, Ray. We're a family. When you were nothing but a drunken bum and didn't show up for work half the time, we stood by you, 'cause that's what families do. They look out for each other. You just let me know if you have any problems around here. We'll take care of 'em. *(He winks at him.)*

RAY-BUD. What are you talking about?

CLYDE. You say the word and they'll be paying out more in hearse repair than they can make in a year.

RAY-BUD. Thank you, Clyde.

CLYDE. We take care of our own, Ray.

RAY-BUD. I know you do.

CLYDE. They park that thing right out on the street, you know. Anything in the world could happen to it, if you get my meaning. You say the word and that thing might just blow up

some night.

RAY-BUD. I'll keep that in mind.

CLYDE. Stranger things have happened, Ray. My brother-in-law's in the demolition business, you know.

RAY-BUD. I got the picture, Clyde.

CLYDE. You just let me know.

RAY-BUD. I will.

CLYDE. It's times like these you find out who your real friends are. You find out all sorts of strange and mysterious things. Speaking of which ... you never told me your Daddy was a dancer, Ray. *(Pause.)*

RAY-BUD. Well, that's a pretty well kept secret.

BLACKOUT

END

Scene 5

Junior stands outside the bathroom door. Two chairs sit next to the door.

JUNIOR. Honey? Baby? People are asking about you. You're not gonna stay in there all night are you? 'Cause I really need you out here. Honey, I know what you're thinking. But I didn't do what you're thinking I did. Well, I mean, I did it. I definitely did it. I just didn't do it for the reasons you're thinking I did it. I did it ... I did it ... *(He pulls a chair up next to the door and sits.)* Whew! You know maybe I could just start over here for a minute. Baby, do you remember what it was like when we first started dating? How happy we were? How much fun we had? But you know what I remember most about that time? It was when I we used to stop by the Dairy Queen and I'd buy you a grape slush. And then I'd take you home and we'd sit out on that sofa your folks had out in their front yard. And we'd just talk about the future and how it was gonna be. I miss that, Honey. I miss who I was then. And I miss who you were then too. And I guess standing out

there in that parking lot I sorta lost my head, and I just forgot how much you and the kids mean to me. And I'm hoping you can find it in your heart to forgive me. 'Cause you're my whole world and I love you. *(The bathroom door opens and Royce comes out wiping his hands on a paper towel.)*

ROYCE. Thanks, Junior. I love you too.

JUNIOR. Royce, you haven't seen Suzanne, have you?

ROYCE. Yeah, I think she's helping Lucille out in the kitchen.

JUNIOR. Okay. Well, thanks.

ROYCE. Things aren't going too well, are they Junior?

JUNIOR. Well, that's one way of putting it. Listen, Royce, I got some pretty complicated things to think over here, so if you don't mind ... *(Junior wanders over and sits in one of the chairs.)*

ROYCE. Answers are sure hard to come by, aren't they, Junior?

JUNIOR. Yeah, they are.

ROYCE. Sometimes a man's just got to sit down and think it all through doesn't he. *(Royce plops down in the chair beside Junior.)*

JUNIOR. Yep.

ROYCE. Well, Junior, this is how I see it. Life is like a big circle. And you don't know where it began and you just never know how it's all gonna end. That's the way I see it.

JUNIOR. So, life is a circle.

ROYCE. Yeah. But the trouble is all some people see is the circle itself. And they feel trapped inside it. Like they'll never get out. And before too long, all they can think about is all the things they wish they had inside their circle. Jim-Ed was always one of those kind of people. So much so that when that highway patrolman pulled him over, he had quite a few things in the trunk of his car that actually belonged in some other people's circles. So for the next three to five years, Jim-Ed's circle is gonna be about eight feet by eight feet.

JUNIOR. How's he liking it since they transferred him up to Parkersville?

ROYCE. Oh, he likes it okay, I guess.

Marguerite / Lucille /

Suzanne / Juanita

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it "Macaroni and Ham Loaf Surprise with Cheese" and it sure looks good.

LUCILLE. It sure does! Uh.... What's that you have down there, Delightful?

DELIGHTFUL. *(Examining it without leaving her chair.)* Beans. *(Slight pause.)*

LUCILLE. Well, alright. Delightful's got beans if anybody wants 'em. Aunt Marguerite?

Start → MARGUERITE. Well, Suzanne brought this bag of potato chips. Of course, she didn't bring a bowl or anything, so I guess she just expects you all to just stick your hand down in this bag.

LUCILLE. Suzanne, Honey, what have you got down there that the folks might like to know about?

SUZANNE. Well, we got some kinda ... *(The penny drops.)* Bernice Talbot picks up men in the K-Mart parking lot?

LUCILLE. *(Quickly picking something up.)* Next, we have a real nice ...

SUZANNE. BERNICE TALBOT PICKS UP MEN IN THE K-MART PARKING LOT?

LUCILLE. Suzanne, Honey, maybe we could talk about that a little bit ...

JUANITA. Suzanne!

SUZANNE. MY HUSBAND DID IT WITH THAT DOG IN THE K-MART PARKING LOT? I CAN'T STAND IT! *(Suzanne wales and collapses behind the food table. There is a short stunned silence.)*

MARGUERITE. *(To Lucille and Juanita.)* Don't pay her any mind. She just wants attention. Alright, Lucille, what else is left?

SUZANNE. *(A disembodied voice.)* Bernice Talbot!

MARGUERITE. Would you quit harping on that! Now get up before you get your dress dirty! *(Suzanne slowly gets to her feet.)*

LUCILLE. Well, this doesn't have a card with it but it looks like somebody brought us some ... *(Lucille pulls from the brown paper sack, a large bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. She is frozen for a moment, then tries to recover.)* Some.... Some real tasty ...

WHO BROUGHT THIS! *(Lucille bursts into tears and goes running from the room. Juanita follows.)*

JUANITA. *(As she exits.)* Lucille! Honey! What's the matter? *(Suzanne attempts to run after them and gets as far as the doorway.)*

SUZANNE. Lucille! Come back! Who's gonna do this?

MARGUERITE. Suzanne! I just got one question. Are we gonna serve this meal or are we all gonna sit in the toilet and cry all night? *(Suzanne slowly makes her way back to the table.)* Well, alright then. Now stand up straight and have a little pride for once in your life. I've got a son in the penitentiary and you don't see me wallering on the floor. These people don't care what your husband did with Bernice Talbot. They never liked you before, you think they're gonna think less of you now? So, let's get this done. *(Marguerite shoots a look over at Delightful, who rises and takes a place at the food table. Marguerite, Suzanne and Delightful each pick up a dish. Marguerite speaks out front.)* Alright, now who wants the ham loaf?

END

BLACKOUT

Scene 7

Raynelle and Lucille in Raynelle's bedroom. Later that night. Lucille is folding some clothing. Raynelle is wiping off Bud's slippers.

LUCILLE. Well, we sure had a nice turn out tonight.

RAYNELLE. Yes, we did.

LUCILLE. I'm sorry I got so sick. I just don't know what came over me. I sure hated not being able to see everybody.

RAYNELLE. Trust me, Lucille. You didn't miss that much.

LUCILLE. I just thought it was so sweet. All those people. Each one of them touched in some way by Daddy Bud.

RAYNELLE. Yeah, they're all touched alright. Lucille, hand me that bag. *(She places slippers inside.)*

LUCILLE. It's funny what will bring people together. All

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gathered together in one place like that.

RAYNELLE. I think it might have had something to do with the free meal they just got.

LUCILLE. Oh, now you don't mean that.

RAYNELLE. No, I don't guess I do. People mean well. They come there wanting to tell you how sorry they are for you and they wind up telling you how sorry they are for themselves, and by the end of the evening, you sort of feel like slitting your throat.

LUCILLE. Oh, you're just tired, Mama Ray.

RAYNELLE. *(Handing her the bag.)* Set this down by the door so we don't forget it tomorrow. And would you see if Junior can use any of them shirts. If he's gonna be job hunting, we can't have him going out looking like a scarecrow.

LUCILLE. I will. *(Ray-Bud enters.)* You about ready to go, Honey?

RAY-BUD. No, I got to talk to Mama for a little while. You don't mind do you, Lucille?

LUCILLE. Not a bit. *(To Raynelle.)* You get some sleep.

RAYNELLE. 'Night Honey. *(Lucille exits.)* Ray.

S → RAY-BUD. Mama.

RAYNELLE. You know, Ray, it's funny how you can feel like you know somebody and then you find out something about them you never knew. That ever happen to you, Ray?

RAY-BUD. Yeah, I guess it has.

RAYNELLE. Take your Daddy for instance. Here I was married to him for almost forty years and he never once said a word to me about defecting from that Russian ballet company. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you?

RAY-BUD. I'm sorry, Mama. I don't know why I said that. Something just came over me. I didn't mean to embarrass you.

RAYNELLE. You should have some respect, Ray.

RAY-BUD. Yeah, well it's funny you should mention that, Mama, 'cause that's exactly what brings me here tonight. Cecil told me what you had requested on the stone. I'm not having it, Mama. He may have been your husband, and I know you all had your problems, but he was my father, and I'm not

having it. It's gonna say "Rest in Peace" which is only eleven letters, so Cecil's gonna give us a two dollar credit.

RAYNELLE. I understand, Ray. It's alright. *(She reaches down and picks up her purse.)*

RAY-BUD. Well, that's all I had to say. I'll let you get to sleep now.

RAYNELLE. Sit down for a minute. I want to show you something. *(She pulls a pair of scissors from her purse.)* Do you remember these?

RAY-BUD. No.

RAYNELLE. There's no reason you should. You were just a little boy. These are my old sewing scissors. My mother gave them to me not long after Bud and I were married. Lord knows all the things I made with these. Quilts for the beds. Clothes for you boys. And then one day, they just disappeared. Searched this house from top to bottom and never could find them. They were just lost. And they stayed lost for twenty-seven years. I can't tell you the number of times I wondered what ever happened to these things. And do you know where I found them?

RAY-BUD. No.

RAYNELLE. In your Daddy's shoebox yesterday. Ain't that funny? Reckon how many thousands of times I must have walked right past them, never knowing they were in there. I can't imagine what he wanted with them. But the real funny thing is in all them twenty-seven years, it never once occurred to me to ask Bud if he knew where they were. Ain't that strange?

RAY-BUD. Yeah, I guess it is.

RAYNELLE. I didn't lose your Daddy, Wednesday morning, Ray. I lost him a long, long time ago. But you know what? I think he'll turn up one of these days. And it'll be just like finding these scissors. Maybe I'll be opening a drawer or cleaning out a closet, and there he'll be. Well, I don't mean "him" exactly. I don't expect he'll be flying through the house in a white sheet or anything. Just a feeling. Like I had when I found these things. Not real happy and not real sad. Just glad, I guess. Glad it all happened. Glad I knew him. *(Pause.)* Well,

5 END

JUNIOR. Making a lot of new friends, is he?
 ROYCE. Well, it's hard you know, when you move to a new place.
 JUNIOR. Well, sure.
 ROYCE. You see, Junior, what Jim-Ed didn't understand was the circle ain't something that's outside you. It's something that's inside you. It doesn't keep you from having things, it just protects what you already got. And the funny thing is that when you stop pushing and punching and trying to get out of it ... when you finally just let go, the circle sorta opens up a little. And all of sudden, you got room for everything. Room for Jim-Ed. Room for Mama. Room for all the things that didn't quite work out. And just a little bit left over for all the things that might just work out yet. You know what I mean, Junior?
 JUNIOR. So, what you're saying is ... life is a circle.
 ROYCE. Well, yeah. You know, I guess we better be getting in there. Food's gonna be out in a minute.
 JUNIOR. Royce, if you don't mind my asking. How did you happen to figure out that life is a circle.
 ROYCE. Well, Junior. In the sewage business, you tend to let your mind roam a lot. Cause if you ever thought about what you're actually doing, I believe you'd snap.

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

Lucille, Suzanne, Delightful and Juanita, an attractive and expensively dressed woman enter. Each carries a covered dish. Throughout the scene, the food table is gradually set up with a table cloth, Tupperware, paper plates, etc. After Suzanne deposits her dish on the table, she crosses over, sits, takes off one of her shoes and rubs her foot.

I'm just so sorry Teddy-Wayne couldn't be here. He always loved his uncle Bud so much. But his law practice is just doing so well it just keeps him busy day and night. Why I just feel like I hardly ever see him.
 LUCILLE. Aw, that's such a shame.
 JUANITA. Suzanne, Honey, since you're not doing anything, would you mind to give us a hand with this. *(Suzanne replaces her shoe and crosses back to the table. She seems to be at a bit of a loss as to what exactly she's supposed to be doing. As soon as Suzanne vacates her chair, Delightful pulls it up next to the table, sits, and begins to eat a package of M&Ms she has brought with her.)* I'll tell you what's a shame. It's a shame it takes something this sad to bring us all together again. Suzanne, do you remember how Lucille was a part of my royal court when I was elected Yam Queen.
 SUZANNE. Seems to me I remember that.
 JUANITA. *(Placing her arm around Lucille.)* Oh, that was just such a wonderful time. All of us up on that beautiful float. Why, I can still remember the faces of all those other girls just floating by like so much garbage. Why, I believe we were just the prettiest girls in this town.
 LUCILLE. *(Glancing at Suzanne.)* Oh, I don't know about that! Well, I mean, you were certainly pretty. Why, I believe you were just about the prettiest Yam Queen we ever had. Don't you think so, Suzanne?
 SUZANNE. *(Plopping a dish down on the table.)* Well, about as pretty as a woman can be with a big pile of yams sitting on her head.
 LUCILLE. Oh, that was all such a long time ago. It's just so good to know that we're all a family now. And we can come together like this in a time of sadness.
 JUANITA. You are so right, Lucille. You can't be living in the past. It's so important at a time like this to be kind and loving to each other. So, how are things with you, Suzanne?
 SUZANNE. Well, Juanita, I feel like my life has come to an end. Like everything I ever dreamed of has died a slow and horrible death. And that my whole world was built on sand.
 JUANITA. Oh Honey, I'm so sorry to hear that. ~~Well, chin~~

Start → JUANITA. Well, I can't believe how many old friends I've seen here tonight. People I haven't seen since high school.

↑ END