**THIS BLOOD’S FOR YOU**  
By Dave Christner

CAST OF CHARACTERS (4 women, 5 men with doubling)

CHARLIE JAMES.........................43, a convicted killer

PATRICK OLSEN .....................48, Warden of State Correctional Facility

PATRICK, JR. .........................14, the warden’s son

FATHER JOHN.......................60, an Episcopalian priest

VERLENE WASHINGTON ..........16, a troubled young black woman

HANNA ECHOLS.....................55, Governor of the state where play takes place

PETER RUDMAN ......................40, the Attorney General of the state

SHERRY JAMES .....................58, Charlie’s mother

BEATRICE MOBLEY ...............57, the state Medical Examiner

MACK DIAMOND......................60, a trucker, doubled with Peter Rudman

FATHER JAMES......................60, doubled with Father John

SURGEON...........................50, doubled with Beatrice Mobley

The Setting

Various location in a state correctional facility. Specific prison settings include a visitation area, the Warden’s office and an observation room. Set should be functional and basically sparse; a modular set would be ideal. Lighting should be used to direct attention to portion of set in use. Degree of realism is dependent upon physical and fiscal resources of producing theatres, but the more barren, the better.

The Time

The present.

*The gift of life is itself, life's most precious gift.*
ACT I, SCENE I: THURSDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on CHARLIE JAMES, 43, a convicted killer awaiting his execution on death row of a state correctional facility. He is a bright, gaunt, man with an keen mind, a quick wit and distant, disarming smile. He is certainly cynical, but not in the least bit mean. Sitting across a plain oak table from him in a special "room" set up for visiting is, 14-year-old, PATRICK OLSN, JR., son of the prison's warden. He is well-mannered, a model student and the joy of his father's life. He is articulate; has an inquisitive mind and an innocent charm. Life is precious to him because a peewee football injury left him with a damaged kidney, and were it not for undergoing hemodialysis treatment three times a week, he would probably not live a week. The "room" is divided by the table and a Plexiglas partition. On the table a small tape recorder is running, and Patrick is taking notes in a notebook.

CHARLIE

So, kid, you don't have a cigarette do you?

PATRICK

I'm just a kid!

CHARLIE

How old?

PATRICK

Fifteen -- almost.

CHARLIE

So you ought to have some smokes. I started when I was 12; hell I was chain smokin' when I was your age!
PATRICK
I don't think that's anything to brag about.

CHARLIE
Well . . . what'd I care what you think?

PATRICK (shrugs, then)
I dunno. (A beat.) Can't smoke in here anyway.

CHARLIE
Will you listen to this? (A beat.) Why the hell not?

PATRICK
Against the law.

CHARLIE
Smokin' is friggin' illegal now?

PATRICK
In state owned and state run facilities.

CHARLIE
Well I'll be damn! (Patrick flinches.) Sorry kid. (A beat.) But you shouldn't be in here anyway. This is no place for a kid -- warden's son or not. Passed a friggin' law . . . screw that! Damn! Sorry.

PATRICK
It's okay. I'm not a saint. (A beat.) You shouldn't smoke anyway.

CHARLIE
Oh, yeah, now why's that?

PATRICK
It's bad for you health.

CHARLIE
Is that a fact?

PATRICK
There's a ton of medical evidence that says so.
CHARLIE
Hey, kid, I'm a condemned man. I'm a little past the point of worryin' about the long term consequences of smokin' cigarettes. If you can't get me some cigarettes, jist forget it.

PATRICK
Oh, I can get them, but you can't smoke them, at least not in here.

CHARLIE (irritated)
Jist forget it! I'm sorry I ever brought it up.

So, can we go on now?

PATRICK
Go ahead.

CHARLIE
So, what do you think you'll miss the most?

When I'm dead?

PATRICK
Yes sir.

CHARLIE
Don't call me, "sir." I told you already. You can call me Charlie; you can call me Pal, Number 704816, poor miserable son-of-a-bitch, anything but "sir."

PATRICK
Okay. Sorry. (A beat.) So what do think you'll miss the most when you're dead, you poor miserable son-of-a-bitch, assuming you can think at all?

CHARLIE (smiles)
Women!

PATRICK
Then what?

CHARLIE
Smokin'. The two go hand in hand if you know . . . never mind, you probably don't.
Know what you mean?

Yeah.

I know. I go to the movies. People smoke after having sex.

Yeah, that's right. They do. What do you think about that, assuming you can think at all after seeing people having sex?

I think it's dangerous to smoke in bed.

Jesus Christ! You're startin' to piss me off, kid. Sometimes you come off sounding' like a goddamn preacher.

I don't think it's wrong to smoke in bed; I just think it's dangerous.

(Charlie gets up and starts pacing.)

So, what are you doin' with all this shit -- writing a book or what?

Just a report.

Well, it's gonna be one hell of a report; you been over here . . . what . . . three -- four times now?

This is the fourth.

That's what I mean -- hell of a report! Hell! I could write a report in one afternoon and never even consult a library. You don't havta do any research; just make some shit up.
Will you help me?

PATRICK

CHARLIE

Hell no! (A beat.) Hell, I am helping. I'm your subject matter. And that's the hardest part of writing any report is knowing what to write. I'm giving you that. (A beat.) So what kinda report is it?

PATRICK

Term paper, biggest project of the year for English class.

CHARLIE

And I'm your subject matter?

PATRICK

More or less.

CHARLIE

What the hell does that mean?

PATRICK

It's a generic report about capital punishment; it's not about you in particular.

CHARLIE

It may be generic to your ass, but it ain't to mine!

PATRICK

I see your point.

CHARLIE

So what's in for me?

PATRICK

I dunno.

CHARLIE

So if your report ain't about me, what'd gonna do with all this information? You got hours of tape here now.

PATRICK

It's jist . . . background material. I have to get familiar with my subject.
(Charlie looks into Patrick's eyes.)

CHARLIE
I don't want you writin' no friggin' book about me!

PATRICK
It's a report, not a book!

CHARLIE
No books!

PATRICK
I'm a kid; I don't want to write a book. I won't even want to write the friggin' report!

CHARLIE
Watch your language!

PATRICK
Look, I go to school. We have assignments; this paper is an assignment. I have to do what they tell me.

CHARLIE
Like shit! I didn't do what they told me.

PATRICK (nods at the room)
Yeah, well . . .

CHARLIE
Don't get smart! I see your friggin' point. (A beat.) I'll help you . . . under one condition.

PATRICK (waits, then)
You going to tell me the condition or do I have to guess it?

CHARLIE
You got spunk, kid. I like that.

PATRICK
You can call me, "Patrick."
CHARLIE
Look, kid, I can call you any friggin’ thing I want, but the point is: I ain't exactly in a position to be forging any new friendships. So let's jist keep it impersonal. When I say bye-bye, I don't wanna have any adoring throngs out there goin' all to pieces over my dead ass.

PATRICK
I don't think you have to sweat the adoring throngs.

CHARLIE
Jesus! There you go again. You got a real knack for comedy, kid. Maybe you can get us a spot on Letterman or the Tonight show. The networks would love it; you could call it -- Death Watch: The Surreal Thing. That way -- all my friends would watch. And the whole country could see the closing chapter in the saga of Charlie James, cop killer.

PATRICK (changing the subject)
My dad says you should never pass up an opportunity to make a friend.

CHARLIE
Oh, that's what he says, huh?

Yeah.

PATRICK
Well, lemme tell you something, kid.

CHARLIE
Patrick!

PATRICK
Is that how you got in trouble?

CHARLIE
Boys don't get, "in trouble," -- Patrick. That's for the girls. Boys just get screwed!
PATRICK
I thought that's how girls got in trouble.

CHARLIE
Son-of-a-bitch, if you ain't the cleverest little bastard I ever saw. You're right, of course. The girls git screwed; the boys git screwed. When it's all over we're all screwed -- you, your friends, your enemies, your goddamn in-laws and out, every body gits it in the end. So what'd you think about that?

PATRICK
If it's true I think it sucks.

CHARLIE
It's true all right.

PATRICK
You know you have a very cynical view of the world?

CHARLIE
I know it don't work right. (A beat.) So you must think your old man is pretty great?

PATRICK
He's got some problems, but I know he has my best interest at heart.

CHARLIE
And I'll bet you never disappoint him?

PATRICK
Sure I do -- lots. His expectations of me are pretty high, maybe even unrealistic; that's one of his problems.

CHARLIE
You ever been in trouble?

PATRICK
Boys don't get in trouble.

CHARLIE
Did you ever screw up then?

PATRICK
Yeah, I got a B in physics last semester.
CHARLIE
Jesus Christ! You'll probably do hard time for that. (A beat.) I mean trouble! Did you ever knock up some girl up or steal a car, say?

PATRICK
I wouldn't do that.

CHARLIE
Which?

PATRICK
Neither!

CHARLIE
Well if you did, what would your old man do?

PATRICK
I dunno. I can't even imagine because I wouldn't steal a car; I just wouldn't. And as for sex, I'm not very experienced. (A beat.) You stole a car and knocked up a girl when you were 14?

CHARLIE
Fifteen, almost.

PATRICK
What did your dad do?

CHARLIE
Mine? He didn't do a friggin' thing 'cause I hadn't seen him for ten years. But if he'd been there, he'd probably of beat the shit out of me, hoped like hell that the girl was half as hot as the goddamn car and kept both of 'em.

PATRICK
I'm sorry.

CHARLIE
That you asked?

PATRICK
No, that . . . that's the way things were.

CHARLIE
It don't matter. I knew kids that were worse off.
So what happened?

CHARLIE
You wanna know what happened? I'm gonna tell you what happened --

PATRICK
That's why I asked.

CHARLIE
The inevitable happened. (A beat.) I got caught; you *always* git caught. Remember that. They returned the car; girl got an abortion, and I went to form school.

PATRICK
*Reform* school.

CHARLIE
Who's tellin' this friggin' story -- you or me?

PATRICK
You, but I thought you made a mistake.

CHARLIE
I did. Lots of 'em. That's the story I'm tryin' to tell you.

PATRICK
I'm sorry.

CHARLIE
I wasn't. That's why I went to form school. They didn't know what the hell else to do with me.

PATRICK
They should have put you in a foster home.

CHARLIE
Kid, where the hell do you think the car and the girl came from?

PATRICK
Oh! (A beat.) Where was you real mom?
CHARLIE
With one of about a dozen surreal dads -- if you know what I mean?

PATRICK
Yeah, I think so; you don't have to explain it to me. (A few beats.) So you ended up in the joint.

CHARLIE
No! This is the joint. I was only 14.

PATRICK
Fifteen.

CHARLIE (nods)
Almost. I wasn't a fully formed criminal yet; that's what I learned in form school. When I got out I'd been formed into a hardened criminal; only then was I properly prepared for a life of crime.

PATRICK
I see. It was kind of like a finishing school

CHARLIE
Yeah, that's right. And now, I'm finished. (Laughs ruefully.) Graduated with a friggin' Ph.D. in criminology. When I got out I'd perfected the art of forgery, could hot-wire any vehicle on the road, by-pass the security system on a Caddy, and I knew where to get a new identity with birth certificate, social security card, driver's license and resume. I'd learned all there is to know about -- I wanna put this delicately -- same sex relationships. And I could make one hell of a license plate. I was what you could call a real renaissance man. A sure nominee for an ignoble prize.

PATRICK (moved)
So you never had any formal education after you were 14?

CHARLIE
What do you mean by "formal_"

PATRICK
With a real teacher and classes.
CHARLIE
Sure, I did. First thing I did in the joint was get my GED -- with friggin' honors, no less. Then I got two years of college credits, but had to quit the program 'cause I got released.

PATRICK
You're obviously a smart guy. Why didn't you finish on the outside.

CHARLIE
Kid -- *Patrick*, you jist don't git it, do you? (Patrick shrugs.) In the first place: ex-cons aren't real high up there on the recruitment list for universities, and, second: college ain't cheap. And I wasn't exactly what you'd call scholarship material. So the only way I saw to finance my education was to knock off a few convenience stores. (A beat.) Which led directly to my second incarceration.

PATRICK
At least you could finish your degree.

(Charlie just shakes his head.)

CHARLIE
Patrick, Patrick, Patrick -- you jist don't have any kind of an appreciation for how the criminal justice system works. Here's the way bureaucrats think: To punish me for knocking off the convenience store to get tuition money for college, they don't let me participate in the educational program in the joint.

PATRICK
That hardly seems fair.

CHARLIE
And they went to school to learn reasoning like that. Almost made me give up on the idea of education altogether. But I didn't. So, I figured the best thing I could do was to educate myself. So I get on the library staff in the joint and read everything I can get my hands on. (A beat.) And I learned a lot.

PATRICK
About what?

CHARLIE
Money! Cause that's what makes the world go 'round; I'm not the first one to say that. I studied economics, banking, finance, the stock market, mutual funds, security, public utilities, common stock, and I start playing the market in my cell --
CHARLIE (cont.)
not with any money, but with money I got on paper. And it took me a few years, but I did all right. With an initial "investment" of 10k I made $137,000 over ten year period.

PATRICK
If you had $137,000, why did you stick up that bank?

CHARLIE
It wasn't real money, son, it was hypothetical dollars. It's what I would have made if I'd had the money to play the market for those ten years, which I didn't. So when I got out, I needed 10k real bad. I went to five banks; I had all the figures, meticulous records; I know more about money than most bankers. But would they give me a loan -- with nothing but my no good name for collateral? No way!

PATRICK
So you robbed a bank?

CHARLIE
Where the hell else am I gonna get 10 grand?

PATRICK
But the inevitable happened -- you got caught and you ended up killing a cop. (Charlie shrugs.) Jeeze, you should write the book!

CHARLIE
No friggin' books. I don't want anybody to exploit my misfortune.

PATRICK (impulsively)
Your misfortune? What about . . .

CHARLIE
The cop? (Patrick nods.) His worries are over.

PATRICK
He had a wife and kids!
CHARLIE
Look, I never meant to kill no cop; that was an accident. Cheap friggin' Saturday Night Special had a hair trigger. Never use a cheap weapon to pull a job. Remember that!

PATRICK
Okay.

CHARLIE
So I run into Officer Sanchez in the parking lot; his weapon is trained on me; I knew it was over for me; his backup was on the way, but the friggin' gun went off in my hand. When I saw him, I tensed up, squeezed the trigger ever so slightly and the gun went off. End of story. I'm no Eagle Scout, but I never killed nobody until then. It was an accident

PATRICK
That's the story you should tell. My dad doesn't think you're a murderer; I know you're not. Maybe you could get a pardon or something.

CHARLIE
Patrick, accident or not, I killed a cop. The state wants retribution; the widow wants retribution; the family wants it; the right wing of God wants it. You kill a cop in this state, you go to the chair. That's the way it is. I got nine days. And that ain't time to write a book.

PATRICK
Then I'll write it for you!

CHARLIE
I told you: no book! I don't want any publicity.

PATRICK
I can't write it now! I'll write it later, when I know more.

CHARLIE
What difference will a book make then?

PATRICK
I dunno. To you, none. But -- I think killing people is wrong regardless of who does it. But I'm just a kid. What do I know?
Okay, here's the deal. You can tell my story under one condition.

Back to that.

And I ain't doing this cause I'm any friggin' "goody two shoes." (A few beats.) If you make any money on the book --

If I do write it.

Why wouldn't you write it?

Life is an iffy proposition.

Tell me about it. Anyway, if you do write it and if you do make any money on it, I want you to give the money to Sanchez's widow. Would you do that?

Okay.

Give me your word.

Okay, you have my word. If I write the book, and if I make any money on it, I'll give it to Officer Sanchez's widow.

And if you keep one nickel of it, I'll come back from the dead and haunt your little ass.

I gave you my word!

Okay. Relax.
PATRICK (tentatively)

Charlie?

CHARLIE (roughly)

What?

PATRICK

I don't think you're a bad person. I just think . . .

CHARLIE

. . . that I had an unfortunate childhood. (A beat.) Spare me the bleeding heart bullshit, Patrick. Take my word for it: I'm a bad person. I'd screw your old lady without giving it a second thought, make off with your friggin' piggy bank, and kick your goddamn dog if it got in my way.

PATRICK

Okay, you're a bad person! (A beat.) But you're not a killer.

CHARLIE

Tell that to the jury that convicted me. Tell it to Sanchez's widow.

PATRICK

Whose side are you on?

CHARLIE

You're the impartial observer. Whose side are you on?

PATRICK

I dunno. I think . . . I just want to see justice served.

CHARLIE

What do you know about justice, kid?

PATRICK

Not much. That's why I'm doing the report.

CHARLIE

I thought you had to write this report.

PATRICK

I have to write a report about something.
CHARLIE
And you just had this morbid curiosity about inmates on death row?

PATRICK
No, it was my dad’s idea.

CHARLIE
So it’s your old man who has the morbid curiosity?

PATRICK
I don’t know about that. He just suggested the subject matter and pulled a few strings so I could get in to see you.

CHARLIE
Pulled a few strings for his kid, huh? (A beat.) Maybe you can get him to pull a few more and get me off.

PATRICK
I don’t think that’s possible.

CHARLIE
Let me tell you something, Patrick: If you know the right people, anything is possible.

PATRICK
Dad says that too, but not the part about knowing the right people. He says if you believe in something and work hard enough for it, anything is possible.

CHARLIE
He’s absolutely right! If you believe in it, work for it, and know the right people.

PATRICK
Do you believe in anything? (Charlie give him a look.) It’s for the report.

CHARLIE
Yeah, I believe in something. I believe in the manifesto of the underclass. It goes something like this:

- I believe the American Dream is a goddamn lie,
- I believe in grabbing whatever you can get your hands on and making it yours,
- I believe in watching your back -- and both sides at all times,
CHARLIE (cont.)

- I believe in sleeping with one eye open,
- I believe the goddamn tooth fairy trades ivory for copper,
- I believe in the hardness of the human heart,
- I believe in letting lying dogs sleep,
- I believe God doesn't give a damn about His children,
- I believe organized religion is the biggest racket to come down the pike,
- I believe life is unfair,
- I believe in not picking up the soap if you drop it in the shower,
- I believe in taking care of number 1, and
- I believe in praying for anybody but yourself.

Put that in your goddamn report!

PATRICK

Maybe that will be my report.

CHARLIE

Good. Now git outta here. You're startin' to aggravate me, and you don't want to see me when I get aggravated. Guard! Kid's ready to go.

(Patrick rises, pack his notes and tape recorder in a backpack and rises to leave as the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY.)

ACT I, SCENE II: FRIDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP the next morning on Charlie sitting in the same room set up for visiting as used in the previous scene. WARDEN OLSEN, 48, enters from a door somewhere upstage. He is even-tempered, fit and has graying hair and some premature wrinkling on his face. He is a tough, principled moral man, and a fair prison administrator, who has, until now, played by the book. His position on capital punishment has been one of visible support in that he has been the overseer at more than one execution during his tenure as warden.
WARDEN

Good morning, Charlie.

WARDEN

CHARLIE

*Precious* Morning, Warden. When you only have eight left, they're precious.

Amen to that.

WARDEN

CHARLIE

Praise the lord! (A beat.) Didn't think you were a religious man, Warden.

 Didn't think you were either.

WARDEN

CHARLIE

Am now!

WARDEN

I guess it helps to believe in something?

CHARLIE

Damn straight. What do you believe in, Warden?

WARDEN (thinks, then consults a note)

- I believe the American Dream is a goddamn lie,
- I believe in grabbing whatever you can get your hands on and making it yours,
- I believe in watching your back -- and both sides at all times,
- I believe in sleeping with one eye open,
- I believe the goddamn tooth fairy trades ivory for copper,
- I believe in the hardness of the human heart,
- I believe in letting lying dogs sleep,
- I believe God doesn't give a damn about His children,
- I believe organized religion is the biggest racket to come down the pike,
- I believe life is unfair,
- I believe in not picking up the soap if you drop it in the shower,
- I believe in taking care of number 1, and
- I believe in praying for anybody but yourself
That's plagiarism.

CHARLIE

If I ever tell anyone else I'll give you credit.

WARDEN

I'm actually more concerned with retribution than credit, Warden. (A beat.) So, what are you doin' -- proof reading the kid's report or tryin' to git further inside the criminal mind so you can become a more effective public servant?

WARDEN

A little of both.

CHARLIE

And how's it comin'?

WARDEN

Which?

CHARLIE

Both.

WARDEN

The paper's coming along. They're are some grammatical errors -- Pat still confuses lie and lay . . .

CHARLIE

Memory aid: you usually have to lie to git laid.

WARDEN

. . . but his perspective is very refreshing.

CHARLIE

Innocent? Naive?

WARDEN

Yeah. The world through a child's eyes . . .

CHARLIE

Kid probably has no real appreciation for the kind of human being it takes to kill another human being.
WARDEN
That's an argument some people would make.

CHARLIE
You?

WARDEN
I think it's more complicated than that.

CHARLIE
What's so complicated -- an eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. Live by the sword, die by the chair -- I'm paraphrasing. Thou shalt not kill! Except in cases sanctioned by the state.

WARDEN
It's not my place to question the laws of the state. I just --

CHARLIE
Execute them! (The wardens nods.) I thought so. Even when it means executing people -- maybe people who are far from innocent, but not heartless killers.

WARDEN
If I didn't do it . . .

CHARLIE
. . . somebody else would. Besides, you're just . . . what? Following orders? Is that what you're gonna tell Saint Peter at the doorway to paradise? (German accent.) I was only following orders.

WARDEN
I don't want to debate you, Charlie. You screwed up; you killed a cop. The state won't let that go.

CHARLIE
Blah, blah, black sheep have you any pull. No sir, no sir, gag's on full. None for the Governor, none for the game, none for the jury who dealt out the pain. (A few beats.) Warden, pardon me for asking, but what the hell are you doin' here?

WARDEN (frankly)
I need a favor.
CHARLIE
You need a favor? From me? (Warden nods.) You're gonna have to explain that to me, Warden. Because from where I'm sittin', I'm the one that needs the favor -- real bad and real soon. Are you with me on this?

WARDEN
Yeah, I'm with you. (A beat.) One of the things my staff does in . . . cases like yours . . .

CHARLIE
I know what you mean.

WARDEN
. . . is verify and review the subject's records -- personal, medical, family, anything that might be of significance.

CHARLIE
So now you know all my secrets.

WARDEN
I doubt that, but one thing was brought to my attention that I found to be of interest.

CHARLIE
My baseball cards?

WARDEN
Your driver's license.

CHARLIE
I never got one!

WARDEN
It's with your things.

CHARLIE
I mean I never took the test. It's a forgery. (A beat.) Shit! Okay, you got me! I was driving without a valid license. You're already gonna kill me; what the hell else can you do?
WARDEN (thinks, then)
Were you aware that you had yourself listed as an organ donor on the back of your license?

CHARLIE
A what?

WARDEN
You had listed yourself as an organ donor in the space provided on the back of your license.

(The warden hands him the license.)

CHARLIE (looking)
It's 'forged; whoever made the damn things figured the cops might be more lenient on a bleeding heart organ donor. I don't give a shit. Only organ I'd donate is my pecker! And that to a porn star.

WARDEN (incredulously)
You never took the driver's test?

CHARLIE
Hell no! By the time I reached the age I needed one I'd already driven the getaway car for three road jobs. What the hell did I need to take a test for?

WARDEN (woodenly, to himself)
You were a good match.

(The warden gets up to go.)

CHARLIE
What?

WARDEN
 Doesn't matter.

CHARLIE
Maybe it matters! Good match for what?

WARDEN
Patrick.
Patrick needs a pecker?

CHARLIE

He needs a kidney you son-of-a-bitch! It's not a joking matter.

WARDEN (explodes)

Then you give 'em one!

CHARLIE (coming back at him)

I already did!

WARDEN

(This sinks home, and there is a moment of quiet.)

CHARLIE (looking for facts, without feeling)

So what's wrong with the kid?

Do you care?

WARDEN

Why should I?

CHARLIE

Then why should I tell you?

WARDEN

I didn't say I didn't care. I simply asked why I should.

CHARLIE

That's a question you have to answer for yourself. All I can tell you is that the kidney I gave my son is failing. And a new kidney would make his life a lot simpler and probably a whole lot longer.

WARDEN

So you figure, what the hell. Good old Charlie ain't gonna be needing his kidneys anymore. Why he'd probably be more than happy to donate a kidney to a worthy cause, that cause bein' your son. (A beat.) Is that what his report is all about? You just sent him in here to make friends with me so I'd give him a kidney.
WARDEN
Patrick doesn't know how bad off he is. I haven't told him yet.

CHARLIE
But you *did* send him in here for a kidney? That's what this report was all about!

WARDEN
Yes.

CHARLIE
Son-of-a-bitch! The things . . . you civilized people do to git what you want never ceases to amaze me.

WARDEN
Everything I did was predicated on my belief that you wanted to donate your organs. That's what the license said.

CHARLIE
So you took the liberty of having someone at the lab analyze and compare my medical records with the kid's to see if I would be a good match?

WARDEN
When your son is dying you do some extraordinary things.

CHARLIE
Now I wouldn't know anything about that, would I? (A beat.) What extraordinary things do you think my old man is up to? Hell, I doubt if he even knows I'm dying, but if he did you can bet your sweet ass he'd let you have one of my kidneys . . . for a price. My old man.

WARDEN
I have to go.

CHARLIE (bitterly)
Yeah, I do too. All kinds of shit to do back in my cell -- fan mail to answer, massage, supposed to get Knighted by the Queen, blessed by the Pope, whack off -- do that on my own. All kinds of important shit to keep my mind off . . . the business at hand.

(The warden starts to leave.)
CHARLIE
Warden, is it jist me, or is somethin' wrong with this picture? The chief administrator of a so-called State Correctional Facility is asking a condemned man to donate body parts to his son. (A beat.) What now? You going to the next cell to look for a donor? Gonna see if you can speed up the process so you can make a deadline for the recipient? What the hell is going on?

WARDEN
Look . . . this was entirely inappropriate. I'm . . . sorry.

CHARLIE
Just git the hell out! I mean I got some reservations about the idea of dying itself; I don't need this shit on top of that. Git outta here!

(The warden turns and storms out. The LIGHTS COME DOWN.)

ACT I, SCENE III: SATURDAY

SCENE: The following afternoon. LIGHTS COME UP on FATHER JOHN, 60, an Episcopalian priest and the prison chaplain. If he was fit for any other position in the church, he'd be something other than what he is, but an affinity for alcohol and parish wives has relegated him to the lowest rung of the ecclesiastical ladder. Still, he is a thinking, sensitive man with a no nonsense approach to religion. Father John is wearing a cleric collar, and is seated at the visiting table. A cell door CLANGS OPEN, and Charlie enters.

CHARLIE
Afternoon, Father! Whose neck brings you to this part of the woods?

FATHER JOHN
Yours.
CHARLIE
Just what I suspected. But I'm afraid you're a little late to save this one.

FATHER JOHN
I know I can't save your neck, so I thought I'd take a shot at your soul.

CHARLIE
Fire away; everybody else is.

FATHER JOHN
Yeah, but I aim to save it.

CHARLIE
So you want to save my soul, Brother.

FATHER JOHN
Father! (A beat.) I'd like to try.

CHARLIE
Why don't you start with saving my ass, and work up to a more lofty plain from there?

FATHER JOHN (thinks, then)
I've never saved anyone's ass before.

CHARLIE
You ever saved a soul?

FATHER JOHN
I like to think I have.

CHARLIE
But you don't know that you have -- for sure?

FATHER JOHN
No, because you can't see a soul.

CHARLIE
That's why saving my ass would be so much more satisfying than saving my soul. You'd have something tangible to work with.
FATHER JOHN
Something I could get my hands on!

CHARLIE
In a pig’s eye! Something some sweet thing in a roadhouse could git her hands on. If you know what I mean?

I know all right.

How ’bout it then?

FATHER JOHN (regretfully)
Charlie, I'm afraid it's too late to save . . . anything other than your soul.

(Charlie just snorts and nods.)

FATHER JOHN
Will you pray with me, Charlie?

CHARLIE
I don't see any point in it.

FATHER JOHN
Can't hurt anything.

CHARLIE
My knees.

FATHER JOHN
Pray with me, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Father, are you familiar with the phrase, "My ass is grass?"

FATHER JOHN
Are you familiar with the phrase, "It's never too late?"
CHARLIE
If you mean, "It's never too friggin' late." Yeah, I'm familiar with it, but I don't put much stock in it.

FATHER JOHN
The point I'm trying to make is this: Your life doesn't necessarily have to cease with the physical death of your body. There is a way for you to achieve a kind of immortality that will give you life beyond your physical being.

CHARLIE (thinks, then)
Now you're not referring to the warden's little scheme are you?

FATHER JOHN
There was no scheme; the warden honestly thought you had voluntarily signed on as an organ donor.

CHARLIE (incredulously)
Father, how in God's name can you come in here and ask a condemned man to donate his organs so somebody else might live?

FATHER JOHN
I'm not doing this in God's name. I'm asking in the name of a child, Patrick.

CHARLIE
Who just happens to be the son of the warden of the facility where I'm goin' bye-bye. Doesn't that strike you as being a little -- out of the ordinary?

FATHER JOHN
Whose child he is doesn't matter.

CHARLIE
Maybe not to you! (A few beats as Charlie paces nervously.) You're supposed to be concerned with my life, Father, not his. I could use a little somethin' to hang on to here. Or do you consider me a lost cause? And your job is just to git the protocol right; never mind the morals. (A beat.) Jesus, this is the first time in my life that I'd rather see a lawyer than a priest. At least with the lawyer I'd know enough to bring the Vaseline. I don't know what the hell to do when a priest wants to cut my heart out with a Crucifix and serve it up on a platter for a greater good.
FATHER JOHN
Charlie, there just isn't anything I can do other than to assure you that you will be forgiven and received into the bosom of Abraham if you acknowledge and accept responsibility for your sins and seek God's mercy.

CHARLIE
Bosom of Abraham? Is that the best you can do, Father?

FATHER JOHN
This is no joking matter, Charlie.

CHARLIE
All right, I accept responsibility and acknowledge my role in the accident that killed Officer Sanchez, and for the sin of robbing that bank. And I believe in my heart that if there is a God, He will grant me mercy for both acts. It's the State of Florida not God, that refuses to show any mercy in this case. (A beat.) Let me tell you something, Father: If Sanchez's widow wants to put a bullet in my head, I'll load the gun for her. I grant her the right to take my life because I took the life of her husband. But if she can't or won't do it, then for an "impartial" jury to decide through the application of sound logic and legal reasoning that I should die, is the moral equivalent of premeditated murder in the first degree. The criteria is already in place for such a killing -- you got motive and opportunity. The only thing missing is a blessing. That's where you come in. (A few beats.) Are you with me on this?

FATHER JOHN
Yes, I'm with you, but . . .

CHARLIE
There's nothing you can do.

FATHER JOHN
Not now.

CHARLIE
Bummer.

FATHER JOHN
Are you . . . afraid?
CHARLIE
I'm not crazy about the idea, but to tell you the truth, and I don't have any reason not to, there's not a whole lot I'm gonna miss. Never had a family or a girl, for more than one night. Only saw the streets -- shadows moving at night beneath street lights, dark places, blind alley's. What's to miss?

(Father John shrugs and shakes his head.)

CHARLIE
I'm not afraid of death, but I'm am scared of dyin'. The process itself. Literally gittin' cooked in the chair; that's what happens you know. They let me read up on it so I'd know what to expect. Body temperature rises to something 138 degree F; your surface skin does literally turn brown from cooking; your bowels let go, and your eye balls pop out. That's why they have you wear the hood. That and so they can't see your face, so they have to remember your face. Medina's mask caught on fire, burst into flames while he was still kicking. Poor son-of-a-bitch. If I had my way, I'd just lie down and go to sleep and not wake up. But none of that chemical shit: I saw Dead Man Walking, and that sucked big time! I'd like to jist lie down, go to sleep and not wake up.

FATHER JOHN
There may be a way.

CHARLIE
Goddammit, there you go again, Father. Now I want you to concentrate on saving my ass not on consecrating my soul.

FATHER JOHN
I'm responding to your desire not to . . .

CHARLIE
Die an agonizing death.

FATHER JOHN
Yes, that. (A few beats.) What if you were simply anesthetized, like you were going into surgery?

CHARLIE
I don't think I'm with you on this, Father.
FATHER JOHN
Charlie, are you familiar with the phrase: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."?

CHARLIE
Are you familiar with the phrase, "Kiss my ass."?

FATHER JOHN
Think about it . . .

CHARLIE
Father --

FATHER JOHN
A portion of you would continue to live on in another human being.

CHARLIE
My kidney lives on while the rest of my sorry ass lies in a cold, shallow grave. It's like I'd be a filter for somebody else's cigarette. Now how the hell can I pass up a deal like that?

FATHER JOHN
Patrick will die without a transplant. Did the warden tell you that?

CHARLIE
No, he jist said the kid was on the machine. What'd you call it -- dialysis.

FATHER JOHN
Yeah, has been for some time. More often now.

CHARLIE
His old man really gave him a kidney already?

FATHER JOHN
Couple of years ago.

CHARLIE
So what's the matter with it?
FATHER JOHN
They don't know. Complications. Sometime they just stop for no apparent reason.

CHARLIE
Too bad it wasn't the old man's that stopped working.

It is the old man's.

CHARLIE
The one he's got left, not the one in the kid!

FATHER JOHN
We're all God's children, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Yeah, well I've seen about as much evidence of my heavenly father as I have my real one. Where are they now that I really need them?

FATHER JOHN
I think God is showing you a way to continue to live.

Through the kid?

FATHER JOHN
He's a good kid.

CHARLIE (bitterly)
So he deserves better? (Father John looks away.) And the kids that aren't so good, the ones who are a little screwed up or lost somewhere out there in the system, don't deserve anything better.

FATHER JOHN
Of course they deserve better, but I don't know any of them that need a kidney.

CHARLIE
Or any who are in a position to extract one from the corpse of a new friend! Are you with me on this, Father?
FATHER JOHN (thinking out loud)
Charlie, yes I'm with you, and . . . listen to this: What if I could find another kid
that needed a transplant --

CHARLIE
Will you listen to this? Hell yes, I got two kidneys! Why not? I'm sure as hell not
gonna need them where I'm going.

FATHER JOHN
No, Charlie. Seriously. If I could find a kid -- in need of some help and a kidney,
would you do it?

CHARLIE
No. No! Father, I don't want to be carved up like a goddamn Christmas turkey
with gifts for all. Now git the hell out.

FATHER JOHN (leaving)
Think about it.

CHARLIE
Hell, I ain't got time to think about it. I got funeral arrangements to make --
flowers, music, gotta write my eulogy since nobody else is aware of my many
humanitarian achievements, gotta contact a caterer for the post-execution feast
and shop for a new suit -- something in black. Hell, I ain't got time to think of
anything but myself, and I don't have a lot of time to do that.

FATHER JOHN
I'll pray for you.

CHARLIE
Don't pray for me. Pray for rain. Short that friggin' chair out!

(Father John exits.)

CHARLIE
And say one for the kid!

(LIGHTS COME DOWN slowly.)

ACT I, SCENE IV: SUNDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on Charlie
pacing in the visiting room. A door opens
upstage, and Patrick enters. He's dressed up for church.

CHARLIE

So, kid, what the hell kept you?

PATRICK

Church.

CHARLIE

It's not like a I got a whole lotta time to waste, if you know what I mean.

PATRICK

Yeah, I know.

CHARLIE

You don't either from what I hear.

PATRICK

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

You know what I mean?

PATRICK (shrugs, then)

It's not that bad. I just had to finish something.

CHARLIE

So, what'd you want, kid.

PATRICK

Patrick!

CHARLIE

Kid to me -- as in kidney. (Laughs to himself.) Now what'd you wanna see me for?

PATRICK

To apologize.
CHARLIE
You didn't do anything.

PATRICK
For my father.

CHARLIE
Forget it. Wasn't your fault.

PATRICK
But it was my father. And what he did was wrong.

CHARLIE
Honest mistake.

PATRICK
Not the part about thinking you were an organ donor. The part about setting you up to feel something for me.

CHARLIE
I don't feel anything for you, kid.

PATRICK
Good. That will make it easier then.

CHARLIE
Make what easier?

PATRICK
For me not to feel anything for you.

CHARLIE
Good, 'cause that's jist the way I want it. No feelins 'cause they're gonna be jist as dead as everything else.

PATRICK
That's not so. Only half of them will die.
I don't have time for this, kid.

The feeling you have will die, but the feelings other people have for you will live on.

Yeah, that's right, assuming anybody else has any feelings for me, which is exactly what I'm tryin' to prevent.

Why do you want to prevent that?

I told you, kid. There's no point in developing feelings for anybody when I'm about to go bye-bye. Are you with me on this?

Not on this, Charlie.

Okay, so you wanna be Charlie's best friend or what? My friend for life?

Just a friend. I think you could use one.

That's where you're wrong. Don't need anybody, never have.

But don't you want a friend? Whether you need one or not?

What the hell do I want a friend now for? Think I can take you out to the ballpark or some shit?

I don't like competitive athletics.
CHARLIE
So what's a matter with sports? All kids like sports.

PATRICK
Nothing is the matter with them. There are just other things I'd rather do.

CHARLIE
Like what?

PATRICK
I like hiking and camping out. I like the mountains and fly-fishing.

CHARLIE
Great! Why don't you tell your old man I'd like to take you on a three-year trek into the Himalayas. They can fire up the chair when we git back.

PATRICK (thinks, then)
I just thought you might need somebody to talk to without it being for a report or some other ulterior motive.

CHARLIE
I got myself to talk to. And of course there's my spiritual advisor, Father John. As you probably expect he's been a joy and comfort in my time of need. He's even shown up sober a couple of times, so I know how seriously he's taking the salvation of my soul. Enough about me, kid. (A beat.) Now what's the matter with you?

PATRICK
I feel like shit because you won't let me do anything for you.

CHARLIE
I mean, what's wrong with your liver?

PATRICK
Nothing.

CHARLIE
Kidney?

PATRICK
One's dead. One's gone. And the one I got to replace the one that's gone isn't working right anymore.
CHARLIE
So what's this mean to you? How serious is it?

PATRICK
Just an inconvenience.

CHARLIE
So they gotta hook you up to the machine or what?

PATRICK
I do it myself.

CHARLIE
At home?

PATRICK
In my bedroom.

CHARLIE
How often?

PATRICK
As often as I need it.

CHARLIE
How often is that?

PATRICK
Pretty often.

CHARLIE
Jesus, kid, can't you give me a straight answer?

PATRICK
No.

CHARLIE
There you go. I knew you could do it. (A beat.) Now, no more bullshit! How often you git hooked up?
Everyday.

For how long?

 Doesn't matter.

Then why not tell me?

Because I don't want your sympathy.

I know. You want my kidney.

No I don't.

How long?

Most of the day.

And night?

All night.

Bummer. (A beat.) What do you do for fun?

Watch re-runs of Star Trek and eat popcorn.

What about girls?
What about them?

PATRICK

You like them?

CHARLIE

What's not to like? (A beat.) I like them fine.

PATRICK

Got anyone special?

CHARLIE

No.

PATRICK

Why not?

CHARLIE

Haven't met one that wants to go out with somebody who can't go out.

PATRICK

That's too bad. Kid your age outta have a girl.

CHARLIE

I don't need a girl.

PATRICK

But you want one! (Patrick shrugs.) Huh?

CHARLIE

Sure, but . . .

PATRICK

What's the point of havin' a girl friend if your kidney quits on you, huh?

CHARLIE

Yeah, what would be the point?

PATRICK

So you can understand now why I'm not interested in makin' any new friends.
PATRICK
Yeah, especially if they need a transplant.

CHARLIE
That's got nothin' to do with it.

PATRICK
Yeah, right.

CHARLIE
No, kid, you're all right. Honest. If I wasn't in the joint, I'd let you pull a job with me.

PATRICK
Thanks a lot.

CHARLIE
No, I mean it. I know I could depend on you.

PATRICK
I couldn't pull a job with you, Charlie.

Why not?

CHARLIE
I'm not a criminal.

PATRICK
Course you're not. You're not a criminal 'til you git caught.

CHARLIE
But you always get caught. You already told me.

PATRICK
Yeah, but until then you're just another guy tryin' to make a livin' the only way he knows how. It's a job!

It's not a job!
Sure it is, and it's not that bad of one either. You pick your own hours; you got no assholes lookin' over your shoulder every minute. Take a day off when ever you want. Get to drive any kinda car you want.

Get hunted by the cops; shot at; thrown in prison.

No job is perfect.

Charlie . . . it's wrong!

Not where I come from. It's a way of life. (A beat.) What is wrong is killin' somebody.

But you did it.

By accident. It was a job gone bad. If I'd had somebody like you there . . .

For whatever I needed. I can tell things about people. You'd never let . . .

A friend?

. . . somebody down.

I'd try not to.

That's what I mean. I could of depened on you. You've got a good heart.
PATRICK

But lousy kidneys.

CHARLIE

Can't have everything.

PATRICK

You know what I'm gonna do?

CHARLIE

I dunno. Go home, put on Star Trek, watch Uhura and whack off?

PATRICK

After that?

CHARLIE

Don't have a clue.

PATRICK

When my kidney fails -- for good. I'm gonna donate my heart.

CHARLIE

What'd you gonna do that for?

PATRICK

I won't need it.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but why should you, if nobody's willin' to come up with a kidney for you?

PATRICK

I dunno. It just seems like the right thing.

CHARLIE

Look, kid, you ain't gittin' my sympathy, and you ain't gittin' my kidney either.

PATRICK

I told you already. I don't want your damn kidney. Probably all screwed up from drugs and shit anyway.
CHARLIE
Watch your language! And I never used drugs; I mean I tried some -- crack, LSD, heroine, even smoked a little dope, but I didn't exhale.

PATRICK
I don't care. I want a drug free kidney.

CHARLIE
There's nothing wrong with my kidneys. I was kiddin' about not exhalin'. I exhaled, and I never got hooked on anything, not even tobacco. I can take it or leave it. (A beat.) What happened to your kidneys anyway?

PATRICK
One of them never did work, and the I hurt the other playing football.

CHARLIE
So that's why you don't like sports?

PATRICK
No. I didn't like sports before I got hurt.

CHARLIE
Then what the hell you doin' playin' football? (A few beats.) Talk to me kid.

PATRICK (reluctantly)
My dad wanted me to play.

CHARLIE
Oh. (A beat.) Wanted you to play or made you play?

PATRICK
Encouraged me to play. I didn't have to.

CHARLIE
But you didn't want to disappoint him?

PATRICK
No.
CHARLIE
So you play football for the old man. Take a hit in the good kidney and the rest, as they say, is history.

PATRICK
Not yet.

CHARLIE
And your old man gives you a kidney because he feels guilty.

PATRICK
No! Because he loves me, not because he feels guilty.

CHARLIE
Yeah, well, I wouldn't know anything about that.

PATRICK
Guilt had nothing to do with it. He would have given me his kidney regardless of the circumstances. It was a gift of love.

CHARLIE
Yeah, sure, kid. I understand.

PATRICK
No you don't. I don't think you can.

CHARLIE
I understand one thing: in a capital offense the state simply assigns guilt; it doesn't feel any.

PATRICK
I'm not the state.

CHARLIE
You're old man is. He isn't gonna hesitate to pull the switch whenever the state tell him. (A beat.) What's that all about?

PATRICK
I don't know. I'm trying to . . . figure it out.
CHARLIE
Do you wanna see me go bye-bye?

PATRICK
No!

CHARLIE
Then you keep thinkin’ about what you can do about it. You think hard, but not too long, because good old Charlie ain’t got much time left. Are you with me on this?

PATRICK
I’m with you, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Right, kid, till death do us part.

(They stare at each other across the table as the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY.)

ACT I, SCENE V: MONDAY

SCENE: The following afternoon.
LIGHTS COME UP on Charlie; he’s waiting in the visiting room for Father John. The door opens upstage and Father John enters.

CHARLIE
What’s this all about, Father? Gittin’ me up in the middle of the day like I got nothin’ to do!

FATHER JOHN
I have someone I want you to meet.

CHARLIE
If it ain’t the Governor, a Supreme Court Justice, Liv Tyler or Jesus Christ I’m not interested.
FATHER JOHN

It's a kid in trouble.

CHARLIE

My middle name. (A beat.) What kinda trouble?

FATHER JOHN

Shop lifting, truancy, B&E. But she's a good kid at heart.

CHARLIE

She? (Father John nods.) Bring her in.

(Father John motions to somebody upstage and the door opens. VERLENE WASHINGTON, 16, storms in and stands against the far wall away from Charlie and Father John. She is an aggressive, troubled black adolescent from a housing project. She is wearing jeans and a baggy T-shirt.

VERLENE (entering)

Keep your hands off me you son-of-a-bitch!

Sound familiar?

CHARLIE (snorts)

So what!

FATHER JOHN

This is the man I was telling you about, Verlene.

VERLENE

You dragged me all the way down here to meet his white ass? (A beat.) What for?

FATHER JOHN

My pleasure, Verlene.

Like hell it is! (A beat.) Father say they gonna cook your white ass in the lectric chair. That's some sorry shit, even for a white man.

I appreciate your concern, Verlene.

I ain't concerned; I jist mad. That's all.

About what?

*Everything!*

At who?

*Everybody!*

Come over and sit down, Verlene.

Don't you be tellin' me what to do, Father. I got my rights.

I have no intention of abusing your constitutional rights, Verlene.

Ain't gonna abuse nothin' else neither, Father. (A beat..) I got my guard up. I know the reason you the preacher in this joint is 'cause you got a fondness for the ladies.
FATHER JOHN
I drink a little too if the truth be known.

VERLENE
You be a bad one -- a wolf sure enough in sheep's clothin'.

CHARLIE
Would you like to sit down, Verlene, so we can talk. Father John will leave us alone.

FATHER JOHN
I have to stay, Charlie, but I'll just sit here in the corner and pray.

(He drags a chair to the corner and sits down. Verlene approaches the table reluctantly and finally sits down opposite Charlie.)

VERLENE
What you wanna talk about?

CHARLIE
I dunno.

VERLENE
I got nothin' to say to you. Father drag me down here so I git scared about goin' to prison, but I'm not scared. I be safer in here than in the neighborhood I live in.

CHARLIE
Where you live?

VERLENE
Projects. (A beat.) You know the projects?

CHARLIE
Oh, yeah. Some of my best friends come from the projects -- all of them in fact.

VERLENE
Who'd you kill?
Police officer named Sanchez.

Oh, you in some serious shit; no wonder they gonna fry your ass. Bet you wouldn't of killed no white police officer.

I was actually lookin' for a black one, but there aren't any in this state.

Oh, you is so bad! (A beat.) I don't believe that.

The fact is: I didn't want to kill anybody. It was an accident.

Yeah, and I accidentally walked outta J.C. Penney's with four blouses on too.

Let me tell you something, Verlene.

You can't tell me nothin'.

You're off to a great start, but, believe me, you don't wanna spend any time in this place.

What he means is --

I thought you was prayin'! I know what he means. Jist cause I skip school don't mean I'm stupid.

World doesn't work right, does it?
VERLENE
It shore don't. It sucks the way it works -- rich white people gittin' all the goodies. Nothin' but the droppins left for the rest of us.

CHARLIE
So you gotta grab your share, right?

VERLENE
Ain't nobody gonna give it to me.

CHARLIE
You got that right. (A beat.) Verlene, I think you and me has got lots in common.

VERLENE
What have I got in common with your white ass?

CHARLIE
A real bad attitude.

VERLENE
I am bad.

CHARLIE
I know you are. (A beat.) So am I.

VERLENE (looking at him)
You lookin' sad now, brother, not bad.

CHARLIE
So what's the matter with you?

VERLENE
Ain’t nothin’ wrong with me.

CHARLIE
Father John brought you down here because something’s wrong with you. (A beat.) What is it?

VERLENE
Ain't nothin' wrong.
Kidney? You need a kidney?  

CHARLIE

Not from you!  

VERLENE

Jesus! You're me 30 years ago.  

CHARLIE

'Cept for being black and female.  

VERLENE

I don't mean physically.  

CHARLIE

There ain't *nothing* white about me.  

VERLENE

How sick are you?  

CHARLIE

What'd you care?  

VERLENE

I don't. I'm jist curious.  

CHARLIE

That what killed the cat.  

VERLENE

Not this one. The chair be killin' this cat.  

(Verlene looks at him for a long time.)

CHARLIE

I real sick. Can't ford no operations anyway. Don't matter.
CHARLIE
Verlene, if I gave you a kidney, would you do something for me?

VERLENE
Why should I?

CHARLIE
Would you stay in school?

VERLENE
No! I don't like school, and I don't want no kidney from no white dude.

CHARLIE
Well, that's up to you. I won't be here to see you, but I'll know.

VERLENE
Know what?

CHARLIE
Whether you finish school or not. I'll be watchin' you.

VERLENE
Stop that now! I don't want you watchin' me.

CHARLIE
Too late. Father John!

FATHER JOHN
Yeah, Charlie.

CHARLIE
I've decided to give Verlene a kidney.

FATHER JOHN
And the other to Patrick?

CHARLIE (nods)
Under one condition.
VERLENE

I don't want no damn honkey kidney!

FATHER JOHN

No conditions!

CHARLIE

Then no kidneys.

FATHER JOHN

What condition?

VERLENE

Hey, is anybody listenin' to me?

CHARLIE

I don't wanna stop with the kidneys. I want to give it all -- heart, liver, both kidneys, pecker, anything else they want.

VERLENE

Pecker!

FATHER JOHN

I'll see what I can do.

CHARLIE

Don't see. Do it! Work a miracle.

FATHER JOHN

I'll do what I can. (A beat.) Thank you, Charlie. Thank you!

VERLENE

Don't expect me to thank you. I don't want any damn kidney of yours. I'm doin' just fine on my own!

(Charlie looks at her, seeing himself 30 years earlier and smiles.)
I wouldn't want it any other way.

(Charlie)

(Lights come down with Verlene staring at him defiantly. End Act I.)

_Act II, Scene I: Tuesday_

Scene: Lights come up on Father John, the Warden, Hanna Echols, 55, the Governor of the state, the state’s Attorney General, Peter Rudman, 40, and Dr. Beatrice Mobley, 57, the state Medical Examiner. They are seated in the Warden’s office; everyone is reading some kind of a report. The warden and Father John exchange a few anxious glances at one another as the other finish studying the report. Finally the governor looks up shaking her head incredulously. She is a strong woman, and a highly principled public servant. Peter is a young Turk with aspirations to a Senate seat. Beatrice is an overworked, extremely intelligent woman, with a wealth of medical and philosophical knowledge.

_Hanna_

Patrick, what in the name of Christ are you trying to do to me?

_Warden_

It’s for my son, Governor. I’m trying to save his life.

_Hanna_

Yes, I understand that, Patrick, but Father John here is attempting to parcel out body organs like communion wafers – a heart here, a liver there, I don’t know what the hell else.
FATHER JOHN
It's the only way Charlie will give Patrick a kidney -- everything has to go!

HANNA
Everything has to go! It sounds like a damn warehouse sale.

FATHER JOHN
I don't have recipients yet for everything.

PETER
Is it true he wants to donate his pecker?

HANNA (to Beatrice.)
His pecker? Is that possible?

FATHER JOHN
But only after we're sure he's left this world.

BEATRICE
I'm not aware of any pecker replace program, Governor.

HANNA (hard)
It doesn't matter, because this business is going to stop right here. Don't involve another soul in this fiasco, Father. We already have a media circus on our hands. (A beat.) Do we understand each other?

FATHER JOHN
I certainly understand you.

HANNA
I wish I could say the same about you. (A beat.) Okay, Peter, where does the state stand legally on this?

PETER
The problem for us, I believe, Governor, is more one of public perception and ethical considerations than it is a question of the legality of an execution.

HANNA
Really?
PETER
An impartial jury told the state to execute Charlie James. And we can do that tomorrow with no legal problems whatsoever. The problem arises from this scheme of his to donate his organs.

WARDEN
It's not a scheme!

PETER
Scheme or not, we cannot be perceived as an administration that uses death row as a potential site to harvest organs.

BEATRICE
This is undoubtedly going to provoke some comment from the ACLU.

WARDEN
We're not harvesting anything; Charlie has voluntarily decided to donate his organs.

PETER
Right, Warden . . . to your son. How do you think that looks?

HANNA
Are we harvesting organs, Doctor?

BEATRICE
It certainly looks like it.

PETER
This is just a grandstand attempt to get a stay of execution or a pardon.

WARDEN
That's not what this is!

PETER
Warden, pardon me for being blunt, but your input in this issue is not pertinent. You just can't be objective.
WARDEN
I'm objective. The state has directed me to execute Charlie James, and I'm going to do it. So what's the problem?

HANNA
The problem is you want to kill Charlie so you can harvest his organs for your son!

FATHER JOHN
That is a problem, Patrick.

WARDEN
Charlie wants to give up his organs; I can't help it that my son is dying and needs a kidney. Maybe Charlie just wants to do something decent for once in his life.

HANNA
Or maybe he wants a pardon for his munificence.

FATHER JOHN
You can't pardon him now, Governor.

HANNA
Why the hell not?

FATHER JOHN
Because four other people will be counting on Charlie's death to give them a new lease on life.

PETER
What the hell!

FATHER JOHN
The organ recipients -- a heart, a liver and two kidneys.

HANNA
Jesus Christ! How the hell did we get ourselves into this mess?
FATHER JOHN

I think it comes from playing God.

HANNA

You're the only one playing God! (A beat.) So I have to kill Charlie in this scenario?

PETER

We'd already decided to kill him; that's not an issue.

BEATRICE

Maybe not to you.

HANNA (reflects, then)

I was actually in the process of reviewing his appeal.

PETER

Governor, if you don't execute that cop killer you'll never see a second term. You won't even be nominated.

HANNA

Which means we'll all be out of a job, except for maybe Father John.

PETER

Jesus!

WARDEN

Charlie's not expecting a pardon; he expecting . . . the worst. He just wants to go out with a sense that his life was worth something.

BEATRICE

Did he tell you that, Warden?

WARDEN

Not in those exact words.

HANNA

What do you think, Father? You know him better than anyone.
FATHER JOHN
I think Patrick, Jr. knows him better than anyone.

PETER
Then by all means then, let's get the kid in here. He'll show us the way.

HANNA
Father?

FATHER JOHN
I think Charlie --

BEATRICE
Do we have to call him "Charlie?"

FATHER JOHN
I think -- the prisoner -- would certainly appreciate a pardon, but doesn't see that as a real possibility, so he is pretty much resigned to his fate. And for that reason, I think he's motivated to do something for these kids because nobody ever did anything for him.

WARDEN
So there's not a problem! Char -- the prisoner knows he has to pay for his crime; the state has told us to execute him; the execution date has been set. So we carry out the mandate of the court, just like we always have.

BEATRICE
There's another problem. (A few beats.) How do we execute him?

PETER
Chair has always worked before.

BEATRICE
That amount of electric current will cook the organs.

PETER
Injection!
BEATRICE  
That will poison them.

PETER  
Gas?

WARDEN  
Too expensive. Got rid of the chamber. It was your idea.

FATHER JOHN  
He wants to be put to sleep for the surgery and then . . . just not wake up.

HANNA  
So the surgery itself will kill him?

BEATRICE  
Removal of the heart is invariably fatal.

HANNA  
Where would that put us legally?

PETER  
The state has been charged by the criminal justice system to execute this man for killing a police officer. They don't specify exactly how to do it, and there is no statute on the books that tells us how to do it. The means of execution is totally irrelevant; we can lop off his head or feed him to alligators. The state doesn't care.

HANNA  
I'm the goddamn state, and I do care!

BEATRICE  
You cannot execute this man surgically. The AMA will have no part of it. We have this bothersome little catch-all phrase in our code of ethics about preserving life whenever possible. (A beat.) I know it's a totally idealistic notion.

FATHER JOHN (almost to himself)  
Peter's right, the methodology is beside the point. Why should we care how he dies?
PETER
So we bring in a doctor from Europe or Mexico. Get some marginal MD who will be damn happy he won't have to be concerned with losing the patient.

BEATRICE
Whoever you got would have to have a license to practice medicine.

PETER
This is not exactly practicing medicine.

BEATRICE
It's not exactly like carving up a Christmas turnkey either; it takes a skilled surgeon to harvest organs for a transplant.

HANNA
Okay, assuming we find a doctor with more skill than ethics who is able to -- harvest -- the organs successfully, will the doctors on the implant side be willing to use the organs from the victim of a state execution?

FATHER JOHN
That's a very interesting point.

HANNA
But it's a practical not a philosophical question. Beatrice? Peter?

WARDEN
Why wouldn't they use them? By this time the donor is already dead. He could just as well have been an accident victim.

BEATRICE
But he's not an accident victim! And some people in this state are still a little squeamish about killing a helpless man.

PETER (thinking aloud)
But ethically, and maybe even legally, they would be bound to preserve the lives of their patients by doing the implants. So they can't really refuse to treat their patients without risking a law suit.
BEATRICE
That's a pretty convoluted line of reasoning, but he's probably right. And with the likes of Peter on the other side of the courtroom . . .

HANNA (to Father John)
What did you say about playing God?

FATHER JOHN
That it gets you in deep water, real fast.

HANNA
I can't pardon him. And I can't execute him in any of the conventional humanitarian means. So we have to find a doctor who will be willing to kill him surgically for us.

WARDEN
I wouldn't put it like that.

HANNA
How would you put it, Patrick?

(He doesn't have an answer.)

PETER
What if we give him a lethal dose of the anesthesia, enough to put him out real fast, then we remove the organs before they are contaminated. That way, the anesthesia would kill him even if the surgery didn't, so the doctor is off the hook because the anesthesia, not the surgery is responsible. Is that a beautiful plan or what?

BEATRICE
I think that falls in the "or what" category.

FATHER JOHN
Let's remember we're not haggling about price with a hooker here. We're talking about a man's life here.
HANNA
Oh, we’re way past that point, Father. You’ve got it set up now so that maybe we’re talking about the lives of four people, two of them kids in addition to the life of the convicted which, of course, is of no value at this point except as a place to harvest organs.

PETER
The media is going to have a heyday with this one.

BEATRICE
They already are. I got a call from the New York Times this morning.

WARDEN
The good side is that this event will raise the public’s awareness of the need for organ donors.

PETER
Maybe we could find a brain to replace yours, Warden, because the one you have has sure as hell stopped functioning.

BEATRICE
We need time, Governor. You could appoint a commission to study the matter.

WARDEN
There isn’t time for a goddamn study!

PETER
Who doesn’t have time -- Charlie or Patrick?

WARDEN
I’m sorry, I . . .

HANNA
Do you want me to execute Charlie James as a personal favor for you, Patrick?

WARDEN
Jesus, no!
PETER
That's not fair, Governor. Charlie is a condemned man; we have every right as well as an obligation to kill him.

HANNA
I told you I was reviewing his case.

PETER
And the records will show that Charlie James pulled the trigger that killed Officer Sanchez.

HANNA
I know that! (A beat.) Did you fire the weapon that killed Sanchez?

PETER
That's immaterial.

HANNA
Did you?

PETER
Yes, I fired it.

HANNA
So did I. (A beat.) A gust of wind would fire that weapon.

PETER
But it didn't. Charlie James did! And that's why the state is extracting such an awful price.

HANNA (philosophically)
Do you honestly think Sanchez's widow will be happier if Charlie James is dead?

PETER
That's not for me to say, Governor.

HANNA
Patrick? (He looks away.) Beatrice?
BEATRICE
I'll think she'll feel like justice was done for some period of time. Then . . . I don't know.

HANNA
Father?

FATHER JOHN (thinks, then)
God does not condone killing in any context. In this case . . . Charlie killed a cop, but he's not a murderer. God will take care of Mrs. Sanchez.

PETER
All right, he isn’t the worst guy we’ve executed, but Sanchez is dead -- accident or not. And we are obligated to carry out the sentence handed down by an impartial jury in a fair trial. Cops on the beat need to know we take their lives seriously.

HANNA
And the only way we can show them that is to kill Charlie?

PETER
It's not the only way, but it's the best way.

BEATRICE
Didn't the governor show her support by funding body armor for every law enforcement officer in the state?

PETER
That was a show of support, of course.

HANNA
And if Sanchez had been wearing his he’d be alive today, and we wouldn't be in this goddamn mess.

PETER
Governor, you can’t put the blame on Sanchez; they’ll crucify you.
HANNA
I know. (A few beats. Then to Peter.) Get Mrs. Sanchez on the phone; I want to talk to her.

PETER
Right now?

HANNA
Right now!

(Peter goes to the desk and picks up the phone and speaks into it with us hearing him. He has to get the number and then dial it.)

FATHER JOHN
What do you hope to accomplish by talking to the widow, Governor?

HANNA
I don't know. (A beat.) I think I'm just trying to get a handle on how deep feelings against Charlie run.

BEATRICE
She's not the one to ask, Governor.

PETER
Governor, I have Mrs. Sanchez on the line.

HANNA (gets phone, then)
Mrs. Sanchez, this is Governor Echols . . . I'm as well as could be expected. Thank you. I regret that I have to bother you, but, as a matter of course, I'm reviewing Charlie James' case and am considering a stay of execution or perhaps even a pardon . . . yes, I'm well aware of that. That is why I'm calling before I study the case any further. What I really wanted know is where you would stand on an lesser sentence of life without parole? (A few beats.) Yes, I can understand how difficult things are for your children, and . . . yes, I know, life is unfair. I see . . . yes, and I hope we can all put this behind us in the very near future. (A beat.) Again, I'm sorry I had to call you. And I appreciate your comments. God bless you. Good-bye.
What did she say?

FATHER JOHN

That she won't be happy until Charlie James is dead.

HANNA (woodenly)

God have mercy on her.

FATHER JOHN

May He have mercy on us all.

HANNA

We're going through with it then?

WARDEN

I didn't say that! (A beat.) Peter, just see if it's possible. Find a surgeon who will remove the organs, and see if it's really feasible to have four transplant teams in place for the other people. Get a handle on the logistics of the thing, and keep me informed.

HANNA

I'll make some calls. Midnight Saturday, right?

PETER

Yes. Midnight Saturday.

WARDEN

This is a lousy way to make a living.

HANNA

Governor, put your motherly instincts aside and execute the law.

PETER

The law is easy to execute, Peter. It's executing people that gets a little tough. Tell me: are you going to feel better with Charlie James dead? Safer? Do you think the state is going to be a better place to live because we kill one hard luck habitual criminal?
PETER
Don't get soft, Governor. The people won't like it.

HANNA (snorts)
Me soft? Don't be ridiculous. (A beat.) I have the heart of a killer!

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE II: WEDNESDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP the next morning in the visiting room. Charlie is seated at the table across from Patrick. Patrick is dressed for school, and is carrying a backpack.

PATRICK
I can't stay, Charlie; I got to get to school.

CHARLIE
Sit down, kid; it won't hurt to be a little tardy once in your life.

PATRICK
No, I got to go, really.

CHARLIE
You're jist teasin' me then; you don't wanna be my best friend.

PATRICK
No, I mean, yes, I do want to be your friend, and no I'm not teasing you. I just came by to tell you that . . . Verlene thinks you're cool.

CHARLIE
Cool, huh?
I’m not supposed to tell you.

So Verlene thinks Charlie’s cool. (Patrick nods.) Well she looks pretty hot to me.

She’s sixteen for crying out loud!

I mean for you, not for me! Christ!

Oh, okay, then.

What’d you think of her?

I though she was pretty hot -- cool, I mean.

I know what you mean. Maybe you and her could git hooked up on the same dialysis machine. (A beat.) You might like it.

I’m fourteen Charlie.

So what?

So . . . I have a natural curiosity about sex, but I’m not ready to try it.

Who’s talkin’ about sex; I was talking about -- communal dialysis.

There’s no such thing.
CHARLIE
Maybe you jist don't want any black blood running in your veins?

PATRICK
All blood is red, Charlie.

CHARLIE (thinks, then)
How'd you git to be so damn smart at fourteen?

PATRICK
Mostly by keeping my mind open and my mouth shut. But I have a hard time doing it with you.

CHARLIE
Why do you reckon that is, kid?

PATRICK
Because you bring out the worst in me! And go ahead, call me "kid." I don't give a shit.

CHARLIE
Sure, kid, whatever you say. And watch your language; I don't want your old man blaming me for your foul mouth.

PATRICK
You know, you can be a real pain in the ass?

CHARLIE
I've heard it said.

PATRICK
And to pay you back for it, I'm going to call my new kidney "Charlie."

CHARLIE
What the hell you gonna do that for?
PATRICK

Just to piss you off.

CHARLIE

Now that's a good reason, kid, but by the time you git around to naming that kidney, I'll be way past the point of gittin' pissed off, however, if they can't keep those mongrel dogs out of the cemetery, there's a pretty good chance I'll be gittin' pissed on.

PATRICK (ashamed)

I'm sorry, Charlie. I didn't mean anything.

CHARLIE

I know that, kid; you don't have a mean bone in your body. (A beat.) Now git outta here before my mother shows up. I don't want her thinking I'm warping an impressionable young mind.

But you are.

CHARLIE

Damn right I am, but I don't want her to know!

(Patrick starts out then turns back.)

I didn't think you had a mother.

CHARLIE

Neither did I.

See you tomorrow, Charlie.

PATRICK (exiting)

Sure . . . Patrick.

CHARLIE (quietly, after he's gone)

(Charlie sits down and starts reading the *New York Times*; after a few moments the door opens upstage. SHERRY JAMES, Charlie's mother enters. She is 58,
basically nice looking but a little rough around the edges. She has on lots of make-up, and is dressed in a way to make her look younger. For a boozer of her age, however, she looks pretty damn good.

CHARLIE (incredulous)

*Ma!*

Hello, Charlie.

SHERRY

I can't believe it's you.

CHARLIE

It's me all right.

SHERRY

You shouldn't of come.

CHARLIE

I had to come, Charlie. I wanted to see you before . . . you know.

SHERRY

Yeah, well . . . how'd you find out?

CHARLIE

Fanny Bostich down at the Starlight Lounge saw your picture in the paper. So she says to me, “Sherry, ain't that your Charlie?” she says. I look and there your are -- on the front page no less.

(Sherry shows her the *Times*.)

CHARLIE

Get a load of this.
SHERRY
Oh my god! Imagine that: my Charlie making the front page of the *New York Times*.

CHARLIE
You gotta know somebody.

SHERRY
And they said you wouldn't amount to nothin’.

CHARLIE
Everybody gits 15 minutes of fame, Ma.

SHERRY
Well, I hadn't got mine yet, and as far as I can tell, it’s no where in sight.

CHARLIE
Hook you wagon to my star, Ma, I'll take you to another world.

SHERRY
That's nice of you to offer, Charlie, but I don't think I'm ready for that world yet -- fame or not.

CHARLIE
Then we'll jist sit here quietly and reminisce.

SHERRY
Okay, Charlie. We'll reminisce . . . about what?

Better times.

CHARLIE
That won't be too hard to do.

SHERRY
I'm with you on that.

(There are a few moments of uncomfortable silence.)

CHARLIE
Been a long time, Ma.
Has it?

Fourteen -- fifteen years.
That long?

SHERRY

Last time you saw me I was in that medium security unit over in Winchester.

CHARLIE

Gone big time now haven’t you, Charlie?

SHERRY

Oh, yeah. *Maximum* security. Top of the line . . . end of it too.

CHARLIE

Maximum security.

SHERRY (awed)

Yeah, I wanted to make you proud, Ma.

CHARLIE

Front page, Charlie.

SHERRY

So how are things, Ma?

CHARLIE

Which things, Charlie?

SHERRY

You still on the sauce?

CHARLIE

I still enjoy a cocktail now and then if that’s what you mean.

SHERRY

I guess that’s what I mean.

CHARLIE

But it’s not a *problem*. 
Never was.

CHARLIE

SHERRY

Don’t be critical, Charlie. I have . . . pressures.

CHARLIE

Got a man in your life, Ma?

SHERRY (thinks, then)

I got one in my trailer . . . which I suppose pretty much puts him in my life. He’s no Prince Charming, but he’s company, and I can't git him to leave.

CHARLIE

Does he treat you all right?

SHERRY

He’s never hit me.

CHARLIE

Keeps his weight on his elbows, does he?

SHERRY (blushing)

Charlie!

CHARLIE

Sounds like a real gentleman.

SHERRY (a little reluctantly)

Charlie, what’s this business about you donating your organs?

CHARLIE

Don’t believe everything you read in the paper.

SHERRY

What’s it all about, Charlie?

CHARLIE

It’s no big deal. (A beat.) A kid I know needs a kidney. That’s all.
SHERRY
Charlie, that’s awfully nice of you.

CHARLIE
I’m not doin’ it to be nice; I doin’ it for the kid. If I thought "nice" was involved I’d say to hell with it.

SHERRY
I read something about your heart and liver too. Some priest is lookin’ for recipients.

CHARLIE
That’s right. I think we got someone for my heart -- a trucker.

SHERRY
A trucker. Imagine that. (A beat.) What about your liver?

CHARLIE (starting to get it)
Don’t have anyone yet. (A beat.) Why are you asking?

SHERRY
Do I look okay to you, Charlie?

CHARLIE
You look great, Ma.

SHERRY
Is my coloring all right?

CHARLIE
You look a little jaundiced, Ma, always have. I thought it was from the booze.

SHERRY
It is from the booze. It’s taken its toll, Charlie.

CHARLIE
What are you sayin’, Ma?

SHERRY
My liver’s shot, Charlie.
Jesus Christ!  

CHARLIE

It's been through a lot, Charlie.  

SHERRY

It's been through a lot of booze is what it's been through!  

CHARLIE

I gave you life, Charlie!  

SHERRY

You want my liver! Is that why you're here?  

CHARLIE

We're practically a perfect match.  

SHERRY

Ma!  

CHARLIE

I carried you in my womb, Charlie.  

SHERRY

Did you ever carry me in your arms, Ma?  

CHARLIE

Of course, I did, Charlie. Whenever I could. You jist can't remember. (A few beats.) I'll be honest with you, Charlie. That is why I'm here -- to ask you this favor. I didn't even know where you were, whether you were even still alive or not. If it weren't for the paper I wouldn't even of known about -- your situation.  

SHERRY

It's not a "situation," Ma. It's a death sentence.  

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.
So you come in here after 15 years --

Fourteen!

-- to asked me to give you my liver?

Why should you give it to a perfect stranger?

You think you’re not a stranger to me?

Stranger or not. I’m still your mother. (A beat.) And I’m dyin’.

Ma, this jist ain’t what I expected.

I’ll never git one from anybody else -- too old, the damage is from drinkin’. They don’t care.

I don’t know what to say, Ma.

Jist thought I’d ask. I know we’d be a good match.

We were never a good match, Ma.

Yes we were, Charlie, when you were a baby. You jist don’t remember. I can hardly remember myself now, but it was lovely. Then . . . we jist got steamrolled . . .
CHARLIE
By what?

SHERRY
I dunno. Life? The system? Circumstances? All three I guess. Your father took off, and I lost you when I had to go to work jist for us to git by.

I know you tried, Ma.

SHERRY (breaking)
You have no idea how hard. (A beat.) I’m sorry, Charlie.

I am too, Ma.

SHERRY (crying hard now)
Guess I’d better go before I flood the place. I wish I could hold you, Charlie.

Don’t cry, Ma.

(She gets up to go.)

SHERRY
You’ll be okay, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Sure, Ma. Three squares a day and in bed by 10:00 every night.

Take care of yourself, Charlie.

(She exits.)

SHERRY

CHARLIE (quietly to himself)
I always have.
(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY to end the scene as we HEAR THE SOUND OF STEEL DOORS SLAMMING SHUT.)

ACT II, SCENE III: THURSDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP the next morning in the visiting room. Charlie is seated across the table from Father John.

I understand your mother came by.

CHARLIE
Well I'm glad you understand it, cause I sure as hell don't.

How long had it been?

CHARLIE
Half a lifetime.

Parents.

CHARLIE
What the hell you gonna do with them?

How is she . . . adjusting?

CHARLIE
I hope you don’t mean to life without me.

I mean, how does she feel about . . .
CHARLIE
goin' bye-by?

FATHER JOHN
That's a very civil way to put it.

CHARLIE
Oh, I'd have to say she adjustin' just fine. What brought her to me in my time of need was her time of need.

FATHER JOHN
I don't understand. What does she need?

CHARLIE
If I told you, Father, you wouldn't believe me.

FATHER JOHN
There isn't too much in this world I haven't seen, Charlie.

CHARLIE (thinks, then)
Ever see a mother who wanted her executed son's liver?

(Father John stares at him; he can't believe it.)

FATHER JOHN
Good God!

CHARLIE
What'd I tell you?

FATHER JOHN (incredulously)
Your mother came to see you because she wants you to give her your liver?

CHARLIE
Hers is shot to hell; I'm surprised it lasted this long.

(There are a few moments of uncomfortable silence.)
FATHER JOHN
Charlie, I don't know what to say.

CHARLIE
Say that God works in wondrous ways His miracles to perform. (A beat.)
Because I want her to have it!

FATHER JOHN
Oh, the governor's going to love this. (A beat.) And the media -- Jesus! Are you
sure about this, Charlie.

CHARLIE
You didn't find anyone else did you?

FATHER JOHN
No. A lot of people . . . would prefer not to have . . .

CHARLIE
The organs of a killer.

FATHER JOHN
That's right. So . . . I guess if you want your mother to have your liver, there's no
reason she shouldn't have it.

CHARLIE
And I want you to promise me something, Father.

FATHER JOHN
Anything, Charlie.

CHARLIE
My mother . . . make sure she's okay after the surgery.

FATHER JOHN
Of course, Charlie.

CHARLIE
She doesn't have anybody to look out for her. (A beat.) And try to git her off the
sauce.
FATHER JOHN
Charlie, that's not my field. I have a little problem myself you know.

CHARLIE
Jist try! That's all I'm asking. Otherwise she'll jist start goin' through livers like she does men.

FATHER JOHN
I'll try.

CHARLIE
And take her to dinner.

What?

FATHER JOHN
I know you have a fondness for the ladies.

CHARLIE
Okay, okay. (A few beats.) So, how are the -- arrangements -- comin' along?

FATHER JOHN
Things are falling into place rather nicely now. With the -- liver matter settled, we passed the last major obstacle.

CHARLIE
Ain't that great?

FATHER JOHN (doubtfully)

Yeah, great.

CHARLIE
The well-oiled machine of the American Judicial System moving along without a hitch or glitch. It's a terrible beauty. (A few beats.) Tell me about the heart guy. Trucker, right?
FATHER JOHN
All his life. Followed in his father's -- tread marks so to speak. Was conceived in a big Mack rig at a McDonald's outside Tampa; that's how he got his name -- Mack.

CHARLIE
For the truck or the burger?

FATHER JOHN
I don't know; maybe both. But it was a long time ago. Got six grandchildren now, and he's still on the road.

CHARLIE
Too much coffee and too many donuts probably got his heart all clogged up. No exercise sittin' behind the wheel all day. Nothin' but deadlines and snarled traffic, backin' in to tight spots. That's no life; he was as much a prisoner in his rig as I am in here.

FATHER JOHN
Maybe. (A beat.) His family is moved by what you're doing, Charlie.

CHARLIE
He's a good man, huh, with a bad heart?

FATHER JOHN
That's right.

CHARLIE
Which makes me a bad man with a good heart.

FATHER JOHN
You're not a bad man, Charlie.

CHARLIE
This Mack Diamond doesn't mind having the heart of a killer?

FATHER JOHN
When you're in his shape, any heart will do.
CHARLIE
He does *know* doesn't he?
FATHER JOHN
I told him myself.
CHARLIE (thinks, then)
I figured some big shot would get my heart, some CEO with a lot of money and clout.
FATHER JOHN
CEOs already have the hearts of killers.
CHARLIE
Yeah, and they git the big bucks for them. Hell of a system. (A beat.) Verlene’s taking the other kidney now?
FATHER JOHN
She'll take it.
CHARLIE
The kids with killer kidneys. Has a nice ring to it.
FATHER JOHN
To you maybe.
CHARLIE
Don't git soft on me, Father. This was *your* idea.
FATHER JOHN
I'm not getting soft, Charlie. I'm just . . . having doubts.
CHARLIE
Gotta be hard as fuckin' nails, Father. Jist like Charlie.
FATHER JOHN (not sure at all)
Yeah.
CHARLIE
Say it, Father. Hard as fuckin' nails!

FATHER JOHN
I can't say that.

CHARLIE
Say it!

FATHER JOHN (reluctantly)
Hard as fucking nails, Charlie.

CHARLIE (pushing)
Louder. (Silence.) Say it!

FATHER JOHN (yells, breaking)
Hard as fucking nails!

CHARLIE
Again!

FATHER JOHN (rises, screams)
*Hard as fucking nails!*

CHARLIE
All right. Now you're talkin'. Nail the bastards.

FATHER JOHN (rises, screams)
*Nail the mother fuckin' bastards!*

CHARLIE
Don't git carried away with the program here, Father.

FATHER JOHN (regaining control)
Jesus, sorry, I don't know what came over me. (A beat.) I've been feeling a little stressed.

CHARLIE
I'm with you on that one, Father. (A beat.) Saturday, huh?
Midnight.

FATHER JOHN

Hell of a way to spend a Saturday night.

CHARLIE

Can I get you anything, Charlie?

FATHER JOHN

A pardon.

CHARLIE

Anything else?

FATHER JOHN

Some smokes.

CHARLIE

Virginia Slims?

FATHER JOHN

Hell with you! Marlboros.

CHARLIE

Soft pack?

FATHER JOHN

Crush proof box.

CHARLIE

(Father John is into it now.)

FATHER JOHN

All right My man, Charlie! Hard as fucking nails!

CHARLIE

You can bet your sweet ass on that one you pious son-of-a-bitch.
FATHER
Kiss my ecclesiastical ass you sorry sack of shit!

CHARLIE
Forgive me Father, for I know not what I have done.

FATHER JOHN
You've created a monster, Charlie. (A beat.) Jesus, I'm sorry. But you manage to bring out the worst in me.

CHARLIE
That's my gift. Relax now, Father.

FATHER JOHN (after a moment)
So . . . how are things between you and your Maker, Charlie?

CHARLIE
The Big Guy in the sky?

FATHER JOHN
Old Number 1.

CHARLIE
I have to admit that our relationship is somewhat strained.

FATHER JOHN
That's why I'm here, Charlie.

CHARLIE
To redeem my soul so I can meet my Maker and spend eternity in paradise?

FATHER JOHN
There are worse places.

CHARLIE
Father, you can't be serious.

FATHER JOHN
I'm dead serious.
CHARLIE

No, I'm gonna be dead. And you're seriously screwed up. (A beat.) You're not here for me, Father, you're here for them. To give this killing by the state some semblance of Divine justification. To remove their guilt, not mine.

FATHER JOHN (quietly to himself)

What? (Thinks, then) Oh my god.

CHARLIE

Do you think anybody who wants to see me dead really wants to run into me in paradise? "Hey, Charlie, my man. How's it going. Sorry about that execution thing down there, but hey, you repented and here you are. Now we can be best friends. Why don't you come down and have some cocktails with me and Officer Sanchez." (A beat.) If they thought you could really save my soul, you wouldn't be here.

FATHER JOHN (thinking aloud)

Why would any of them want you to be saved?

CHARLIE

You're with me now, Father.

FATHER JOHN

I am here for them. My role is to sanctify the killing in order to give them a clear conscious. In their hearts they know it's murder.

CHARLIE

That's what I'm saying -- premeditated and cold blooded.

Charlie, I've done a terrible thing.

FATHER JOHN

Go tell it to a priest.

CHARLIE

To you!
Well you ain't gittin' no virgin.

Charlie, I can't go through with this.

What?

I'm . . . part of the madness. I can't do it.

What about the kids?

I don't know.

Do what you gotta do, Father, but if you git cold feet, they'll jist replace you with somebody worse. I don't wanna die, but I was kinda gittin' used to the idea of helpin' the kids. And I sure as hell ain't gonna beg for mercy.

I have to stop this if I can.

You can't stop it Father.

I started it.

You didn't start it. The warden started it. Or my old man started it. Or the system started it. Or God started it. Who the hell knows or cares? The fact is: the state is gonna end it.

I'm going to fight this thing, Charlie.
CHARLIE

Fight the good fight, Father.

FATHER JOHN

Damn right!

CHARLIE

Onward Christian soldiers!

FATHER JOHN (as he exits)

Fuckin’ A, Charlie. Marching off to war!

CHARLIE (smiling, after he’s gone)

Hard as fuckin’ nails.

(A BRIGHT SPOT ILLUMINATES Charlie momentarily as he sits smiling and nodding his head. Then we CUT TO BLACK TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE IV: FRIDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP the next morning in the visiting room. Charlie is seated across the table from the Warden.

WARDEN

Looks like everything is on track, Charlie.

CHARLIE

If you’re fishing for a compliment for all the effort you’re putting into this enterprise on my behalf, Warden, you’re talking to the wrong guy.

WARDEN

I don’t want a compliment, Charlie. I just . . .

CHARLIE

Have a hard time finishing a sentence about Charlie goin’ bye-bye.?
I guess so.

WARDEN

Why do you reckon that is, Warden?

CHARLIE

Look, Charlie, what I want you to understand . . . is that I truly appreciate what you’re doing for me.

WARDEN

Wish I could say the same about what you’re doing for me.

CHARLIE

You think it’s easy, don’t you?

WARDEN (defensively)

Killing people?

CHARLIE

Having this job!

WARDEN

I don’t know if it’s easy or not. I never killed anybody except by accident. But I don’t suppose premeditated killing is ever easy.

CHARLIE

This is not a premeditated killing!

WARDEN

What do you call it?

CHARLIE

A lawful execution of a criminal by the state.

WARDEN

At midnight. On Saturday, April 26, 19--. If that ain’t premeditated I’ll kiss your ass on the fifty yard line of the Orange Bowl on New Year’s day.
The warden stares at him; he doesn't know what to say. Then, finally he goes on.

WARDEN

I'm sorry, Charlie. But neither one of us is going to be at the Orange Bowl on New Year's day.

CHARLIE

But at least you got a shot at it.

WARDEN

I'm sorry. But I didn't pull that trigger.

CHARLIE

Everybody's sorry for Charlie. (A few beats.) You know, Warden, I'm sorry too. I'm sorry for Sanchez; I'm sorry for his widow; I'm sorry for his kids and parents and all his friends. But what I'm most sorry for is that he didn't kill me instead of me killing him. Because he'd be a live hero instead of a dead martyr. And the whole goddamn thing would be over.

(Silence. Again the warden is at a loss for words.)

WARDEN

Luck of the draw.

CHARLIE

Oh, that's funny, Warden. From where you're sitting.

WARDEN

I'm --

CHARLIE

Sorry! Don't even say it!

WARDEN

Look, Charlie, your only other option is life without parole. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life in this rat hole.
You’re going to. Or one just like it.

CHARLIE

I have a choice.

WARDEN

You got me there, Warden.

CHARLIE

What I’m trying to say, Charlie, is that . . . maybe it’s better this way.

WARDEN

For who?

CHARLIE

Everybody concerned.

WARDEN

And especially your son.

CHARLIE

Patrick’s illness is beside the point. Your execution was scheduled before I brought Patrick into the equation.

WARDEN

Is that what it is to you? A mathematical equation that simply needs a solution. Two negatives equal a positive! (A beat.) No wonder you can’t feel anything.

CHARLIE

I feel plenty!

WARDEN


CHARLIE

All of those things! Charlie, this . . . is as complicated as it is difficult.
CHARLIE
And you want so badly for me to tell you what you're doing is okay. You want Charlie to let you off the hook because you know in your heart that this execution is dead wrong. (A beat.) Well, Charlie ain’t gonna do it.

WARDEN (seething)
Why can’t you just go quietly?

CHARLIE
So you don’t have suffer? (No. answer.) No way, Warden.

WARDEN
Charlie, how the hell does someone as bright as you end up on Death Row?

CHARLIE
By tryin' to git a piece of the pie, Warden. Jist tryin' to git my piece of the pie.

WARDEN
Charlie, I can’t trade my son’s life for yours. You had your chance, and you blew it. I want to see that Patrick just gets a chance.

CHARLIE
With my kidney?

WARDEN
Or mine!

CHARLIE
What does that mean?

WARDEN
That if it ever comes down to it, I'll give Patrick my other kidney. I'll do whatever it takes to see my son live!

CHARLIE (easing up now)
Years from now, Warden, when you’re an old man, and I’m nothing but a -- calcium deposit, and Patrick’s in the prime of his life, don’t forget what each of us did for him. And what it cost.
I won’t forget, Charlie.

Damn right you won’t.

(A moment of silence. Then.)

You know for your last meal you can have anything you want.

Yeah, I’ve heard that. Didn’t know if it was true or not.

It’s true.

Anything, huh?

You name it.

Company!

What?

I want company -- Patrick, Verlene, my ma, Mack Diamond and Father John.

That’s impossible.

Nothin’s impossible, Warden, if you want it bad enough, are willing to work for it . . . and know the right people.
WARDEN

Where you hear that?

CHARLIE

You know where I heard it. Now I want it real bad, and I definitely know the right people.

WARDEN (shaking his head)

What do you want for the meal?

CHARLIE

Whatever the kids want.

WARDEN

They can’t eat before surgery.

CHARLIE

But I can?

WARDEN

With you it --

CHARLIE

Won’t matter? Another unfinished sentence.

WARDEN

Yeah. Jesus!

CHARLIE

In that case, I want surf and turf -- a 16 ounce T-bone, the biggest goddamn lobster you can find, four baked potatoes with a pint of sour cream -- each, two quarts of fresh tossed salad, a devil’s food cake with double-chocolate icing and whipped cream filling, and a quart of coffee and a nice bottle of wine for Father John, red.

WARDEN

Jesus, if this wasn’t your last meal, it would be your last meal. Anything else?
CHARLIE
Yeah, a fine Cuban cigar -- from Havana, not Miami. If you don't know where to
git one let me know. I can help.

WARDEN
I'll do what I can do, but don't expect a miracle.

CHARLIE
I learned better that a long time ago, Warden. But puttin’ a meal together is no
miracle. So jist do this for Charlie.

WARDEN
You got it, Charlie. I've already broken every rule in the book for you. Why not a
few more?

CHARLIE
Thank you, Warden. You're a hell of a guy.

WARDEN (exiting)
Yeah, right, Charlie. I'm a hell of a guy.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN TO END THE
SCENE.

ACT II, SCENE V: EARLY SATURDAY

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on Father
John, Charlie, Verlene, Patrick, Sherry
and MACK DIAMOND seated at a U-
shaped table facing the audience. Mack
Diamond, 63, who resembles Peter
Rudman physically (for doubling
purposes) is seated opposite Father John
at one end of the table. From left to right
facing the audience are Verlene, Patrick,
Charlie and Sherry, who is at the end
near Father John. Sherry's hair is done
up in some elaborate "big" hair fashion.
The meal is for the most part over, but there remains a bottle of wine and a layered chocolate cake on the table. Charlie pushes away from the table, satisfied, and starts to unwrap a huge cigar.

Anybody mind if I light up?

CHARLIE

In here?

PATRICK

That nasty thing?

VERLENE

When did you start smokin', Charlie?

SHERRY

I'll just step outside until you're done.

MACK

Okay, fine. Forget it!

CHARLIE

Have a glass of wine instead.

FATHER JOHN (pouring some wine)

SHERRY

You didn't even notice my hair, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I noticed it, Ma.

SHERRY

But you didn’t say anything about it.

CHARLIE

And you noticed that.
SHERRY
You bet I did!

CHARLIE
I love your hair, Ma. You look . . . terrific. Don’t you like her hair, Father John?

FATHER
It’s very . . . becoming. There’s something . . . very French about it.

SHERRY (flattered)
Thank you, Father. French. Hear that, Charlie?

CHARLIE (to Patrick)
You didn’t eat nothin’, kid.

PATRICK
Wasn’t hungry.

CHARLIE
Verlene?

VERLENE
I ate!

CHARLIE
Like a bird! (A beat.)

MACK
I don’t think any of us has an appetite, Charlie.

SHERRY
I ate, Charlie.

CHARLIE
You drank, Ma. It ain’t the same.

SHERRY
Don't start, Charlie!
CHARLIE
Will you listen to this? (A beat.) How 'bout you, Father? You're not scheduled for surgery. Won't you break bread with Charlie?

FATHER JOHN
Charlie, I broke bread; I cut meat; I shelled lobster, shredded lettuce. I popped a cork! What else do you want?

CHARLIE
I want -- everybody to have a good time, and . . . a piece of that cake there. So you cut it up and I'll pass it around.

(Father John starts cutting and serving the cake. They start eating the cake and the kids get chocolate icing smeared on their faces.)

PATRICK
This is great cake.

VERLENE
Better than my mama made, and that's sayin' somethin'.

SHERRY
Where's you mama now, Verlene?

VERLENE
Oh, she gone, now. I mean during better times.

(A few moments of silence.)

CHARLIE
What's the best time you ever had, Verlene.

VERLENE
I don't think I had it yet; 'least I hope I ain't.
CHAARLIE

Father?

FATHER JOHN (thinks, then)

I was visiting this cathedral in Europe --

CHARLIE (cutting him off)

I ain't got the time to hear about no cathedrals in Europe. (A beat.) Mack, you musta had some good times out on the road. All those truck stops . . . so many hookers and so little time.

SHERRY

Charlie! The kids!

PATRICK

What’s the best time you ever had, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I thought you’d never ask. (He smiles fondly, remembering.) I’d just pulled this job in Naples -- small bank, clean job, went like clockwork. Made off with jist shy of $63,000, mostly in small bills. Had a little charter boat set up to take me out into the Gulf. Ended up going all the way to the Yucatan. This was before it was ruined by all the development. Anyway, I lived like a king for seven months in a little coastal village nobody'd ever heard of.

PATRICK

If you’d invested that money, Charlie -- in Mexico especially, you could have lived off the interest.

CHARLIE

Not the way I was livin’, kid! It was the most delicious and carefree time of my life -- no obligations, no pressure. Jist the sun rising on a endless blue sea every mornin’, miles of deserted beaches to roam, a sky as big as Heaven itself and long afternoon siestas with my pick of the local senoritas, if you know what I mean.

PATRICK (innocently)

It's Spanish for an unmarried young woman.
That's not what I mean!

Oooh, I told you he was bad!

So why did you come back?

Cash flow problem. (A beat.) Ran outta cash to flow.

How could you spend it all, Charlie?

This was before I learned the principles of sound financial planning, and . . . I was very generous.

Did you ever have a girl, Charlie.

Had dozens, Ma.

I mean one, someone special?

Someone I could bring home for you to meet?

She wants to know because she cares, Charlie.

I'm sorry, Ma. (A beat.) Yeah, I had someone special. Remember that Robinson girl from the sixth grade?
SHERRY (thinks)

Jerry Ann? The athletic one?

CHARLIE

Yeah, Jerry Ann Robinson. I was madly in love with her. I can still see her face.

MACK

Should of run away and married her.

CHARLIE

I was 12-years-old, Mack.

MACK

Right, sixth grade.

CHARLIE

I discovered then what true love felt like, but I never felt it again.

VERLENE

That's sad, Charlie. Your whole life is nothin' but some very sad shit. And it ain't lookin' to git any better.

FATHER JOHN

Why didn't you stay with her, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Because Jerry Anne eventually went to college and I went to the pen.

(Mack lifts his wine glass.)

MACK

To true love!

CHARLIE (lifting his glass)

True love!
(The others follow suit. The kids raise empty glasses at this point because they haven’t been served any wine.)

FATHER JOHN & SHERRY

Here! Here!

SHERRY (tentatively)

I loved you, Charlie, in my own way.

CHARLIE

I know you did, Ma.

SHERRY

I wish we could start all over again with you a little baby in my arms.

CHARLIE

It’s okay, Ma. You did your best.

PATRICK

What would you do, Charlie, if you had it to do all over again?

CHARLIE (thinks, then)

No banks; that’s for sure. And convenience stores are jist not worth the trouble, even for petty cash. I think I’d git into drugs --

ALL

Charlie!

CHARLIE

Not into selling them, but into stealing money from the guys doing the pushing and distribution. That way I’m not robbin’ innocent people, and if somebody gits hurt -- nobody would even give a damn. Cops won’t bother you because they don’t care if you’re stealing from scum, and with what I know about investing now, I could make one good hit last a lifetime.

MACK

Charlie, the drug dealers would be more likely to kill you than the cops.
CHARLIE
You gotta take some risks in any business.

FATHER JOHN
Did the idea of going straight ever cross your mind?

CHARLIE (proudly)
Hell no!

FATHER JOHN
Jesus Christ.

CHARLIE
Crime is all I know, Father. It's what I been trained for.

VERLENE (to Father John)
What you think someone from the Fortune 500 gonna hire his ass? (A beat.) Father, you gotta git real. Ain't nothin' left for people like us but shit work. They'd have Charlie's ass out there pickin' up dead animals and shit on the roadside. Nothin' better.

MACK
I worked hard all my life behind the wheel of that rig, and that was damn sure no picnic either. But it was honest.

VERLENE
And what you got to show for it besides a bad heart and family you still don't ever see nothin' of?

MACK
It's not that bad. And we all have to do some things we don't like. Isn't that so, Father?

FATHER
There is no doubt that we all have to do things we don't like. (A beat.) But there is something I want to do before we finish and before Charlie lights up that Havana. (A beat.) I'd like to pray.
Come on, Father!

VERLENE

Lemme get these kids cleaned up first, Father.

CHARLIE

(Charlie wets a napkin in a glass of water and wipes the faces’ of Patrick and Verlene clean.)

PATRICK

Thanks, Charlie.

CHARLIE (as he washes Verlene)

Devil’s food!

VERLENE (licking her lips)

Can’t git too much of a good thing!

CHARLIE (sitting)

All right, Father. Have at it.

FATHER JOHN

Let us pray. Our most gracious and loving Heavenly Father we thank Thee for the gifts of Thy bounty and today pray especially for the soul -- (Charlie clears his throat, and gives Father John a questioning look.) -- and ass of our dear friend, Charlie James. We pray Dear Lord to forgive his multitude of sins and to welcome him into the bosom of Abraham -- (Charlie clears his throat again.) -- and whatever other bosoms you might deem appropriate. Charlie is your humble servant and is much in need of redemption for his manifold sins and transgressions against Thee and his fellow beings --

CHARLIE

I am, real sorry, Lord. But Father John is paintin’ a pretty black picture here. I think we both know, that I never committed all that many sins.

FATHER JOHN

Will you just leave the praying to me, Charlie.?
CHARLIE

Sorry, Father.

FATHER JOHN

Dear Lord, please forgive Charlie’s variety of sins, and permit him to find comfort in your love. We pray as well Dear Father for Charlie’s friends gathered here, for the new life promised them through Charlie’s sacrifice. For these things and for these people gathered here, we ask the blessing of our most Holy Savior, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross so that we all might live. Amen.

ALL (not necessarily together)


(Father John gets up, takes the bottle of wine and pours everyone, including the kids, a splash of wine. He raises his glass and the other follow his lead.)

FATHER JOHN

Drink this in remembrance of Him.

(They all drink. Then Sherry wraps her arms around Charlie and starts to cry. Patrick and Verlene embrace Charlie as well as he LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY to END THE SCENE.)

ACT II. SCENE VI: LATE SATURDAY

We open in a dimly illuminated "observation" room with the entire cast assembled with the exception of Patrick, Charlie and Beatrice. Only those with speaking parts in this scene are in character. The others are just observers. All are seated with their backs to the audience and each person is dressed in dark clothing and all is wearing a black
hood. A clock on the upstage wall shows a few minutes before midnight. The CLANG of a cell door opening is heard, and then Charlie appears, wearing a hospital gown.

FATHER JAMES
Does the prisoner have any last words?

CHARLIE
Who wants to know?

FATHER JAMES
Father James.

CHARLIE
Where is Father John?

FATHER JAMES
He chose not to come.

CHARLIE
Did he tell you why?

FATHER JAMES
Yes, he told me.

CHARLIE
Then what are you doin' here?

FATHER JAMES
Somebody has to --

CHARLIE
Sanctify this sacrifice for the state!

FATHER JAMES
Do you have any last words?
CHARLIE
Yeah, I've got something to say, not that it's gonna do any good. (A few beats.) Again, I want to apologize to Mrs. Sanchez, her family and all of Officer Sanchez's friends for what I did. The fact that it was an accident isn't going to bring him back to life, but if my death gives you some sense of satisfaction, then I will not have died entirely in vain. (A beat.) If the state wasn't going to kill me, I'd like to say too that if given the opportunity, I'd dedicate my remaining years in this joint to trying to right the wrong I did. I know a lot about making money, and if I could help Mrs. Sanchez git by, to educate her kids, to help keep them off the streets so they don't end up . . . hell with it. Aw, hell with it, it don't matter. (A few beats as Charlie gathers his courage and thoughts.) And for all of you good citizens out there who have somehow appropriated the right to play God . . . This bloods's for you!

(He turns and exits up stage. We hear the door CLANG shut. The clock reaches midnight and GONGS 12 times. There is a moment of silence then the door CLANGS open again. A SURGEON enters wearing a surgical gown and carrying a scalpel. The surgeon's head is covered with a hood)

SURGEON
Governor, I just received word that none of the transplant recipients have shown up to receive their new organs. We can't start until they do.

PETER
What?

HANNA
Haven't shown up?

WARDEN
Where the hell are they?

PETER
One of them is your son! How the hell should we know?
What shall we do, Governor?

HANNA (removing her hood)

I . . . don't . . . know.

(A door opens upstage, and young Patrick enters. He is not wearing a hood.)

WARDEN

Patrick, what are you doing? You've got to get ready!

PATRICK (shaking his head)

I can't go through with it, Dad. (A beat.) None of us can go through with it.

WARDEN (desperately)

Do you know what this means?

PATRICK

I know; we all know.

WARDEN (breaking)

Come here, son. (He runs to his dad, and they embrace lovingly.)

PETER

This is all very touching, Governor, but we still have an execution to carry out.

(A spot comes up on Hanna as she walks down stage and faces the audience. She drops the hood and stands in the white-hot light of the SPOT.)

PETER

They're waiting on your decision, Governor. (A beat.) All you have to do is give the word.

(Hanna stands in the pool of white light, agonizing over her decision. BLACK OUT. END OF PLAY)

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