

## **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 OLSEN, 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.

PATRICK

So, can we go on now?

CHARLIE

Go ahead.

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

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.

PATRICK  
Know what you mean?

CHARLIE  
Yeah.

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

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

PATRICK (thinks, then)  
I think it's dangerous to smoke in bed.

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

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

(Charlie gets up and starts pacing.)

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

PATRICK  
Just a report.

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

PATRICK  
This is the fourth.

CHARLIE  
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 hafta do any research; just make some shit up.

PATRICK

Will you help me?

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?

PATRICK

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Well, lemme tell you something, kid.

PATRICK

Patrick!

CHARLIE

All right! What the hell -- *Patrick!* Lemme tell you something, Patrick: Maybe your old man doesn't know as much as he thinks he knows, 'cause take my word for it, there's a few people out there that you hadn't ought to make friends with.

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.

PATRICK

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 *a/ways* 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?

CHARLIE

Okay, here's the deal. You can tell my story under one condition.

PATRICK

Back to that.

CHARLIE

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 --

PATRICK

If I do write it.

CHARLIE

Why wouldn't you write it?

PATRICK

Life is an iffy proposition.

CHARLIE

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?

PATRICK

Okay.

CHARLIE

Give me your word.

PATRICK

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.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

I gave you my word!

CHARLIE

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 goddman 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.

CHARLIE

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

WARDEN

Amen to that.

CHARLIE

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

WARDEN

Didn't think you were either.

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

CHARLIE

That's plagiarism.

WARDEN

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

CHARLIE

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.



CHARLIE  
Patrick needs a pecker?

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

CHARLIE (coming back at him)  
Then *you* give 'em one!

WARDEN  
I already did!

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

CHARLIE (looking for facts, without feeling)  
So what's wrong with the kid?

WARDEN  
Do you care?

CHARLIE  
Why should I?

WARDEN  
Then why should I tell you?

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

WARDEN  
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.

CHARLIE  
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?

FATHER JOHN

I know all right.

CHARLIE

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 just 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.

FATHER JOHN

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.

CHARLIE

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.

CHARLIE

I don't have time for this, kid.

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

Why do you want to prevent that?

CHARLIE

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?

PATRICK

Not on this, Charlie.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

Just a friend. I think you could use one.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

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. PATRICK

For how long? CHARLIE

Doesn't matter. PATRICK

Then why not tell me? CHARLIE

Because I don't want your sympathy. PATRICK

I know. You want my kidney. CHARLIE

No I don't. PATRICK

How long? CHARLIE

Most of the day. PATRICK

And night? CHARLIE

All night. PATRICK

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

Watch re-runs of Star Trek and eat popcorn. PATRICK

What about girls? CHARLIE

PATRICK  
What about them?

CHARLIE  
You like them?

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

CHARLIE  
Got anyone special?

PATRICK  
No.

CHARLIE  
Why not?

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

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

PATRICK  
I don't need a girl.

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

PATRICK  
Sure, but . . .

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

PATRICK  
Yeah, what would be the point?

CHARLIE  
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.

CHARLIE

Why not?

PATRICK

I'm not a criminal.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

It's not a job!

CHARLIE

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.

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

No job is perfect.

PATRICK

Charlie . . . it's *wrong*!

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

But you did it.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

For what?

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

A friend?

CHARLIE

. . . somebody down.

PATRICK

I'd try not to.

CHARLIE

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

But lousy kidneys.

PATRICK

Can't have everything.

CHARLIE

You know what I'm gonna do?

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

After that?

PATRICK

Don't have a clue.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

What'd you gonna do that for?

CHARLIE

I won't need it.

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

I dunno. It just seems like the right thing.

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

I told you already. I don't want your damn kidney. Probably all screwed up from drugs and shit anyway.

PATRICK

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!

FATHER JOHN (to Charlie)

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

Charlie James -- Verlene Washington.

CHARLIE

My pleasure, Verlène.

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.

CHARLIE

I appreciate your concern, Verlène.

VERLENE

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

CHARLIE

About what?

VERLENE

*Everything!*

CHARLIE

At who?

VERLENE

*Everybody!*

FATHER JOHN

Come over and sit down, Verlène.

VERLENE

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

FATHER JOHN

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

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?

CHARLIE

Police officer named Sanchez.

VERLENE

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

CHARLIE

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

VERLENE

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

CHARLIE

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

VERLENE

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

CHARLIE

Let me tell you something, Verlene.

VERLENE

You can't tell me nothin'.

CHARLIE

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

FATHER JOHN

What he means is --

VERLENE

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

CHARLIE

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. CHARLIE

(Verlene looks at him for a long time.)

I real sick. Can't ford no operations anyway. Don't matter. VERLENE

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.

I don't want no damn honkey kidney!

VERLENE

No conditions!

FATHER JOHN

Then no kidneys.

CHARLIE

What condition?

FATHER JOHN

Hey, is anybody listenin' to me?

VERLENE

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

CHARLIE

Pecker!

VERLENE

I'll see what I can do.

FATHER JOHN

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

CHARLIE

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

FATHER JOHN

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

VERLENE

(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 scenairo?

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.

FATHER JOHN

What did she say?

HANNA (woodenly)

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

FATHER JOHN

God have mercy on her.

HANNA

May He have mercy on us all.

WARDEN

We're going through with it then?

HANNA

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.

PETER

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

WARDEN

Yes. Midnight Saturday.

HANNA

This is a lousy way to make a living.

PETER

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

HANNA

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?

PATRICK

I'm not supposed to tell you.

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

She's *sixteen* for crying out loud!

CHARLIE

I mean for *you*, not for *me*! Christ!

PATRICK

Oh, okay, then.

CHARLIE

What'd you think of her?

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

I'm *fourteen* Charlie.

CHARLIE

So what?

PATRICK

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

CHARLIE

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

PATRICK

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.

PATRICK

But you are.

CHARLIE

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

(Patrick starts out then turns back.)

PATRICK

I didn't think you had a mother.

CHARLIE

Neither did I.

PATRICK (exiting)

See you tomorrow, Charlie.

CHARLIE (quietly, after he's gone)

Sure . . . Patrick.

(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 boozier of her age, however, she looks pretty damn good.

CHARLIE (incredulous)

*Ma!*

SHERRY

Hello, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I can't believe it's you.

SHERRY

It's me all right.

CHARLIE

You shouldn't of come.

SHERRY

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

CHARLIE

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

SHERRY

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.

(Charlie 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?

CHARLIE

Better times.

SHERRY

That won't be too hard to do.

CHARLIE

I'm with you on that.

(There are a few moments of uncomfortable silence.)

CHARLIE

Been a long time, Ma.

Has it?

SHERRY

Fourteen -- fifteen years.

CHARLIE

SHERRY

That long?

CHARLIE

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

SHERRY

Gone big time now haven't you, Charlie?

CHARLIE

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

SHERRY (awed)

Maximum security.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I wanted to make you proud, Ma.

SHERRY

Front page, Charlie.

CHARLIE

So how are things, Ma?

SHERRY

Which things, Charlie?

CHARLIE

You still on the sauce?

SHERRY

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

CHARLIE

I guess that's what I mean.

SHERRY

But it's not a *problem*.

CHARLIE  
Never was.

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.



CHARLIE  
Jesus Christ!

SHERRY  
It's been through a lot, Charlie.

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

SHERRY  
I gave *you* life, Charlie!

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

SHERRY  
We're practically a perfect match.

CHARLIE  
Ma!

SHERRY  
I carried you in my womb, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Did you ever carry me in your arms, Ma?

SHERRY  
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.

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

SHERRY  
I'm sorry.

CHARLIE  
So you come in here after 15 years --

SHERRY  
Fourteen!

CHARLIE (bitterly)  
-- to asked me to give you my liver?

SHERRY  
Why should you give it to a perfect stranger?

CHARLIE  
You think you're not a stranger to me?

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

CHARLIE  
Ma, this jist ain't what I expected.

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

CHARLIE  
I don't know what to say, Ma.

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

CHARLIE  
We were never a good match, Ma.

SHERRY  
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.

CHARLIE

I know you tried, Ma.

SHERRY (breaking)

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

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.

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.

SHERRY

Take care of yourself, Charlie.

(She exits.)

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.

FATHER JOHN

I understand your mother came by.

CHARLIE

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

FATHER JOHN

How long had it been?

CHARLIE

Half a lifetime.

FATHER JOHN

Parents.

CHARLIE

What the hell you gonna do with them?

FATHER JOHN

How is she . . . adjusting?

CHARLIE

I hope you don't mean to life without me.

FATHER JOHN

I mean, how does she feel about . . .

CHARLIE  
Charlie goin' bye-bye?

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.

FATHER JOHN

What?

CHARLIE

I know you have a fondness for the ladies.

FATHER JOHN

I'll see that she's taken care of after the surgery, Charlie. That's all!

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  
*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.)

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

You can bet your sweet ass on that one you pious son-of-a-bitch. CHARLIE

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.

FATHER JOHN

Charlie, I've done a terrible thing.

CHARLIE

Go tell it to a priest.

FATHER JOHN

To you!

CHARLIE  
Well you ain't gittin' no virgin.

FATHER JOHN  
Charlie, I can't go through with this.

CHARLIE  
What?

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

CHARLIE  
What about the kids?

FATHER JOHN  
I don't know.

CHARLIE  
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.

FATHER JOHN  
I have to stop this if I can.

CHARLIE  
You can't stop it Father.

FATHER JOHN  
I started it.

CHARLIE  
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.

FATHER JOHN (turning to go)  
I'm going to fight this thing, Charlie.

Fight the good fight, Father.

CHARLIE

Damn right!

FATHER JOHN

Onward Christian soldiers!

CHARLIE

Fuckin' A, Charlie. Marching off to war!

FATHER JOHN (as he exits)

Hard as fuckin' nails.

CHARLIE (smiling, after he's gone)

(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.?

WARDEN

I guess so.

CHARLIE

Why do you reckon that is, Warden?

WARDEN

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

CHARLIE

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

WARDEN (defensively)

You think it's easy, don't you?

CHARLIE

Killing people?

WARDEN

Having this job!

CHARLIE

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.

WARDEN

This is not a premeditated killing!

CHARLIE

What do you call it?

WARDEN

A lawful execution of a criminal by the state.

CHARLIE

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.

CHARLIE  
You're going to. Or one just like it.

WARDEN  
I have a choice.

CHARLIE  
You got me there, Warden.

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

CHARLIE  
For who?

WARDEN  
Everybody concerned.

CHARLIE  
And especially your son.

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

CHARLIE  
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.

WARDEN  
I feel plenty!

CHARLIE  
Of what? Guilt? Gratitude? Relief? Pity? Piety?

WARDEN  
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.

WARDEN

Damn right you won't.

CHARLIE (smiles)

(A moment of silence. Then.)

WARDEN

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

CHARLIE

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

WARDEN

It's true.

CHARLIE

Anything, huh?

WARDEN

You name it.

CHARLIE (thinks, then)

Company!

WARDEN

What?

CHARLIE

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

WARDEN

That's impossible.

CHARLIE

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.

CHARLIE

Anybody mind if I light up?

PATRICK

In here?

VERLENE

That nasty thing?

SHERRY

When did you start smokin', Charlie?

MACK

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

CHARLIE

Okay, fine. Forget it!

FATHER JOHN (pouring some wine)

Have a glass of wine instead.

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.

CHARLIE

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 / 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 señoritas, if you know what I mean.

PATRICK (innocently)

It's Spanish for an unmarried young woman.

CHARLIE  
That's *not* what I mean!

VERLENE (to Patrick)  
Oooh, I told you he was *bad*!

PATRICK  
So why did you come back?

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

SHERRY  
How could you spend it all, Charlie?

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

SHERRY  
Did you ever have a girl, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Had dozens, Ma.

SHERRY  
I mean one, someone special?

CHARLIE  
Someone I could bring home for you to meet?

FATHER JOHN  
She wants to know because she *cares*, Charlie.

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

Jerry Ann? The athletic one?

SHERRY (thinks)

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.

VERLENE

Come on, Father!

CHARLIE

Lemme get these kids cleaned up first, Father.

(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)

Amen. Amen.

(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?

SURGEON

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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