

GRACE NOTES

BY RACHEL RUBIN LADUTKE

CHARACTERS

Grace: Ages from 34 to 81.
Molly: Grace's stepdaughter. Age 12 and age 34.
Jason: Grace's son. 16.
Catherine: Grace's daughter. Ages from 19 to 47.
Emily: Grace's daughter. 16-17.
Terry Morgan: An adoption counselor. 27.
Samantha: Catherine's daughter. 27.
Erik: Catherine's son. 15.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act One

Scene 1: The kitchen of a farmhouse in western Connecticut. A Sunday morning in July, 1946.
Scene 2: The kitchen of the farmhouse. September, 1957.
Scene 3: The kitchen of the farmhouse. Thursday, December 23, 1966. Late afternoon.
Scene 4: A Manhattan adoption agency. A Saturday morning in March, 1967. 10:30 a.m.
Scene 5: The kitchen of the farmhouse. June, 1967.
Scene 6: The kitchen of the farmhouse. Late afternoon. June, 1978.

Act Two

Scene 1: The grounds of the Connecticut Agricultural Society. An afternoon in August, 1994.
Scene 2: The back porch of Grace's home in western Connecticut. Around 5 p.m. the same day.
Scene 3: The dining room of Grace's home. Late that night, around 1 a.m.
Scene 4: The dining room and back porch. The next morning, around 11 a.m.

ACT ONESCENE ONE

SETTING: The kitchen of a farmhouse in western Connecticut. A Sunday in July of 1946. Late morning.

AT RISE: GRACE, an attractive woman of 33, dressed in a conservative suit, is examining herself in the mirror. A bridal veil is on the table, along with a bouquet of flowers. There is a knock on the door. GRACE looks at the door nervously, sits, then stands again and resumes pacing. A second knock, more insistent this time.

MOLLY

Grace?

GRACE (steeling herself)

Come on in, Molly.

(MOLLY enters. She is nearly 13, and rather awkward. She wears a formal dress and looks very uncomfortable.)

MOLLY

Everybody's here. Daddy said to see if you were ready.

GRACE

Molly, look at you! You look lovely! (tries to hug MOLLY)

MOLLY (pulling away)

Thanks. (Pause) I gotta talk to you.

GRACE

Now? Molly, I don't really have time right now. I've got a million things to do yet.

MOLLY

It's important.

GRACE (with an effort)

All right. What is it? (pause) Molly? I'm listening.

MOLLY (blurts it out)

Do you have to marry Daddy? Can't you stop this?

GRACE

What? It's a little late, don't you think?

MOLLY

No it's not. We could just have a party instead.

GRACE

A party? What are you talking about? There's no turning back now. (deep breath) I can't call this off. Not any more.

MOLLY

Sure you can. You're the only one who can. You have to, Grace! I don't want you to marry Daddy!

GRACE

I thought you were excited about the wedding.

MOLLY

Sure, but what about after? Daddy's not gonna have any time to spend with me, and then I have to go away to stupid school in the fall, and...everything's changing, and I hate it! I don't want a stepmother!

GRACE

Now, Molly. Everything is going to be fine. You'll see.

(MOLLY looks away, slumps onto a chair)

I'll tell you a secret. I'm nervous, too.

MOLLY

Yeah?

GRACE

Absolutely.

MOLLY

I didn't know grown-ups got nervous about anything. (Giggles) I guess that's why Daddy couldn't even light his pipe this morning. His hand was shaking too much. I just thought he drank too much coffee.

GRACE

Everyone gets nervous on their wedding day.

MOLLY

Well, can't you tell Daddy you're nervous? Then maybe you won't have to get married.

GRACE

It's not that simple. Anyway, I want to marry your father. I love him. Just because I'm nervous doesn't change that.

MOLLY (deflated)

Oh.

GRACE

Molly, I know this is a big change for all of us. I've been in the city for a long time. And Jason's never lived on a farm before. You'll have to show him a lot of things. He looks up to you.

MOLLY

Well...I just don't see why Daddy has to get married all of a sudden. We've gotten along OK. I think he thinks he's doing this to help me.

GRACE

So you think everything revolves around you? Did you ever think we might love each other?

MOLLY

Well, I heard Daddy talking to Uncle Stan. He thinks I'm too much of a tomboy. He thinks I need a...womanly influence.

GRACE (a bit annoyed)

He said that?

MOLLY (slyly)

Uh huh.

GRACE

I see.

MOLLY

At least he's being honest. Why can't you? You're just after his money, like everyone else.

GRACE

Molly, this is really none of your business. But I assure you, I don't need your father's money. I've got plenty of my own.

MOLLY (abashed)

Oh. Is that why you divorced Jason's daddy? Was *he* after *your* money?

GRACE (caught off guard)

No, no. We couldn't...I don't know, Molly. We just weren't any good together, that's all.

MOLLY

Oh. So what makes you so sure you and Daddy will...be any good together?

GRACE

Molly! Do you always say exactly what's on your mind?

MOLLY

Yeah, mostly. And I never knew anyone else who got divorced. Do you really love Daddy?

GRACE

I care a great deal for him.

MOLLY

Is that all?

GRACE

And I can depend on him. That's very important. Bill was never someone I could count on.

MOLLY

I know the feeling.

GRACE

Listen, Molly. You can count on me. Once I make a promise, I keep it. Understand?

MOLLY

I'm okay.

GRACE

Sure, you are. You're tough. But everyone needs to count on someone else, once in a while.

MOLLY

You can't count on anyone. Don't you know that by now? It never works out. You must be pretty dumb for a grownup.

GRACE

Maybe I am. But I happen to think giving up is about the worst thing you can do. And I know what I'm talking about, Molly. You're not the only one who's lost a mother young. My mother died when I was fourteen.

MOLLY

Yeah? At least you remember her. Even when I look at pictures of Mommy and me together, and I try really really hard, I'm not sure if I actually remember her or if I'm just imagining I do.

GRACE

Sometimes I used to dream about my mother, sitting by my bed, and I'd wake up feeling sure she was sitting right there, watching me.

MOLLY

That's dumb. I used to do that when I was a little kid. But she was never there. You know something? I think Mommy loved drinking more than me.

GRACE

No, honey, don't say that. She loved you very much. She must have.

MOLLY

Then why wouldn't she stop? Even after she went to the hospital, again and again, she wouldn't stop.

GRACE

I guess she just couldn't help herself. But that doesn't mean she didn't love you.

MOLLY

How do you know? You never even met her!

GRACE

I know how a mother feels. You can't have a child and not love them more than anything.

(MOLLY glares)

Not good enough, huh? Okay, then, look at the pictures. Notice how she's looking at you.

MOLLY

I miss her so much.

GRACE

Your mother loved you, Molly. And I love you, too. (surprised at herself) I really do.

MOLLY

How can you lie to me like that? You don't love me. You don't even know me!

GRACE (fiercely)

Oh yes, believe it or not, I do know you, Molly! Only too well. You're exactly like I was. You feel so angry. So abandoned. I wish to heaven that neither of us had lost our mothers so young. But I do love you. I want you love me, someday. And I hope that together we can make up for some of what we've lost. You don't have to give anything up. Not your mother, and especially not your father. I want us to be a family. I want that more than anything. Can't we give each other that chance? All of us?

MOLLY (pause)

Do I really have to go away to school?

GRACE

I suppose not, not if you don't want to.

MOLLY

You know what, Grace? You're OK, I guess. You're funny, and nice, and you don't try so hard to make me like you. Most of Daddy's girlfriends are so pushy.

GRACE

Most of them? Were there so many?

MOLLY (shrugging)

I dunno. I didn't meet all of them.

GRACE

I see.

MOLLY (hesitantly offering her hand)

Anyway, I guess - if he's gonna marry somebody, sometime - it might as well be you.

GRACE (wryly, taking it)

Thanks. (awkward pause) The odd thing is, I never thought of myself as the stepmother type.

MOLLY (giggling)

Like in Cinderella?

GRACE (laughing too)

I won't make you clean any chimneys, don't worry about that.

MOLLY

I think it would be fun to clean chimneys.

GRACE

Mm hmm. You say that now.

MOLLY

Hey, Grace? Did you know I'll be thirteen in only two months? I can't wait!

GRACE

Well, we'll have to do something very special to celebrate.

MOLLY

Neat! Judy thinks she's so great 'cause she's already thirteen. We'll show her, right?

GRACE

I thought she was your best friend.

MOLLY (shrugging)

Sometimes. You know what I really want? A little sister.

GRACE

I can't make any promises, but we'll see what we can do about that.

MOLLY

Neat! Hey, who's your favorite movie star? Mine is Frank Sinatra. Isn't he a dreamboat?

GRACE

Why don't we talk about this another time? We have a wedding to go to, remember?

MOLLY

Oh. Yeah.

GRACE

Don't say yeah.

MOLLY (rolling her eyes)

Oh, please don't start that. (Pause.) Yes.

GRACE

So will you help me with my veil now?

MOLLY

Sure.

(GRACE sits, adjusts veil, and waits as MOLLY fusses with bobby pins)

GRACE

It's a beautiful day, anyway.

MOLLY

It's all right. Does that feel like it's on good?

GRACE

It feels fine. Is it straight?

MOLLY

Yep.

GRACE

All right, then let's get this over with, Cinderella. (Stands up) What do you think?

MOLLY

I think you look beautiful...Mother. (giggles) It feels strange to say that. It's gonna be weird having a mother.

GRACE

Well, we can practice on each other. I'm not used to having a daughter either. (sighs) Speaking of which, I'll bet Jason's filthy by now. If there's anything six year old boys hate, it's dressing up.

MOLLY

No, he was being good this morning. Besides, Daddy's keeping an eye on him.

GRACE

I can just imagine. Are you ready?

MOLLY

Yup. You?

GRACE

Ready as I'll ever be. You have my bouquet, right?

MOLLY

I have it.

GRACE

So you want a little sister, hmm?

MOLLY

At least one.

GRACE

Well, you'll have to promise to babysit.

MOLLY

Neat!

GRACE

Isn't anything ever wonderful? Or good? Do you ever say anything besides neat?

MOLLY

Yeah.

GRACE

Very funny.

(As GRACE and MOLLY exit, MOLLY takes GRACE's hand.)

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE ONE

ACT ONESCENE TWO

SETTING: The kitchen of the farmhouse. September of 1957. Next door in the living room, preparations for MOLLY's wedding reception are taking place.

AT RISE: The stage is empty. After a minute, JASON, 16, enters surreptitiously and removes a tray of hors d'oeuvres from the oven. He is handsome and wears jeans and a dirty white T-shirt. His hair is slicked back. He sits at the table and begins eating the hors d'oeuvres ravenously. Hearing something offstage, he quickly stands up and moves away from the food. GRACE enters. She is now in her mid-forties. She is dressed elegantly and looks very annoyed to see JASON.

GRACE

There you are!

JASON (jumps)

Hey, Mom.

GRACE

Jason, where have you been? You're not even dressed! The wedding is in two hours!

JASON

It's not *my* stupid wedding. If Molly wants to turn the house upside down...

GRACE

Now, Jason, be reasonable. This is one day out of your life.

JASON

This is a drag.

GRACE

Where are your sisters?

JASON

Oh, Emily is helping Molly get dressed. Catherine's eating icing off the cupcakes.

GRACE

Wonderful. Why didn't you stop her?

JASON

Am I my sister's keeper? Don't worry, Mom. She'll just throw it right up again.

GRACE

You really aren't helping.

JASON (mutters)
 Sorry.

GRACE
 Where is your father?

JASON
 Stepfather. How the hell should I know?

GRACE
 Jason!

JASON
 Probably down at the orchards. Look, Mom, I gotta talk to you.
 I saw something.

GRACE
 What? Jason, can this wait?

JASON
 No! It can't.

GRACE
 The photographer will be here any minute.

JASON
 The hell with the photographer!

GRACE
 Jason! Watch your language!

JASON
 Why won't you even listen to me?

GRACE
 Okay. If you insist, you have five minutes. Then you have to
 get dressed. Is it a deal?

JASON
 Okay. Last week, I was hanging out with some of the guys. Just
 walkin' around, you know, in town? We were in the woods behind
 the church.

GRACE
 Haven't I told you not to...

JASON
 Anyway. You'd been out with the Winslows for dinner or
 something. Joe -

GRACE
 Your father...

JASON

He's not my father! And I'm glad he's not! Mom, would you just please listen?

GRACE

All right. I'm sorry.

JASON

Joe was dropping off the sitter, I guess. Annie Dayton. He and Annie drove into the lot and they parked there. He leaned over and kissed her. It was disgusting, Mom. He's, what, three times her age? And that's not all that happened. He...They...

GRACE (with forced cheer)

Jason. You must be mistaken.

JASON

And then last night, they were dancing together. Remember?

GRACE

It was a party. Joe was dancing with everyone last night.

JASON

Everyone except you. And did you see *how* they were dancing? Not far apart, even during the fast songs. No, they were dancing real close and slow.

GRACE

That doesn't mean a thing.

JASON

How can you say that?

GRACE

Jason, calm down.

JASON

I knew he was no good! I wish you'd never married him! I wish we were still in New York!

GRACE

Jason, stop it! Did Joseph do something to you? Or say something? Are you trying to get even with him for something?

JASON

No, Mom! Why don't you believe me? I wouldn't make up something like that!

GRACE (after a pause)

Answer one question. Did anyone else see them together? At the church, I mean.

JASON

I don't think so. But I'm going to make damn sure everyone

knows it. Starting with Joe.

GRACE

Oh, no, Jason, no. You mustn't.

JASON

Give me one good reason.

GRACE

I can give you four good reasons. Molly. Catherine. Emily. And me.

JASON

You? He's treating you like dirt! Don't you have any pride?

GRACE

Of course I do! But it's not the most important thing here. What matters is this family.

JASON

This family is a lie!

GRACE

Maybe, but it's all we've got! Jason, think a minute. Suppose you did tell everyone what you saw. Who would be hurt most by this? Joe? What does he have to lose? Whereas Molly would be crushed. Especially today. Do you want to ruin her wedding day? Your little sisters would be devastated if Joe and I split up. And I'd be a laughing stock.

JASON

You already are!

GRACE

I don't think so. He's always been very discreet.

JASON

Always? This isn't the first time, is it?

GRACE

Jason, please, don't...

JASON

How long has he been doing this?

GRACE

That's not important.

JASON

Not important? He comes off like such a hero to everyone, Mr. Bigshot Gentleman Farmer. Mr. Charity. People should know what a bastard he is.

GRACE

What would that solve?

JASON

Why are you protecting him? He doesn't deserve it!

GRACE

If you must know, I'm trying to protect all of us. And now that you know, I need your help.

JASON

Help with what? Lying? Didn't you always teach me to tell the truth?

GRACE

And do you always tell the truth? Or do you do it when it suits your needs? Honestly, now.

JASON

I guess sometimes I bend it a little.

GRACE

Then congratulations. You're just like the rest of us. We all bend the truth sometimes, honey.

JASON

Yeah, but this is a lot worse than white lies, Mom!

GRACE

Everyone makes mistakes, Jason.

JASON

And you're making a big one right now!

GRACE

Show some respect!

JASON

Well, isn't that what parents are for? To teach kids how to act? And to tell right from wrong?

GRACE

Yes, of course it is.

JASON

Then how can you let this go on? Don't you care about us?

GRACE

You know I do! And so does Joseph. That man has done so much for you. Treated you like his own son.

JASON

Yeah, sure. Every day he reminds me I'm not!

GRACE

Oh, now, he does not!

JASON

OK, not every day, but...why did you have to divorce Dad anyway? He never ran around on you. (a beat) Did he?

GRACE

No, of course not. But your father wasn't there for me, when I needed him most. When you kids got so sick...maybe he blamed me for Bobby and Peggy dying. Maybe he blamed himself for being away. Whatever the reason, he just closed down. He stopped talking. He spent all his time writing and traveling for the paper. I think he wanted to be the next Eugene O'Neill, and there was no chance of that. Noel Coward, he could have done. But that wasn't enough. Nothing was. Then he moved out, and I went into analysis.

JASON

You saw a shrink? I never knew this stuff.

GRACE

You never needed to know. You were too young to understand. I think maybe you still are.

JASON

No, I'm not. So then what happened?

GRACE

After a while, I realized that either my marriage, or my sanity, would have to go. It was almost a race, which would go first. Your father was surprised, but he didn't put up much of a fight. In a way, I wished he had. That would have shown me there was something to fight for. Anyway, I took you to Reno for six weeks, and that was that. Do you remember Reno?

JASON

A little, I think. But after all that, you rushed right into marrying Joe. Why was he so great?

GRACE

Oh, I just went head over heels for that man. Nobody ever took care of me before. We're a good team. We both commit ourselves entirely to what we do. That's a rare quality. You get that from him, you know. And Joe and I both wanted more children. Maybe I wanted to replace the ones I lost. I don't know. But I do know that so far I've lost two families - one when I was a little girl, and one when your brother and sister died. And I am not going to lose this one, no matter what. Do you understand me?

JASON

You've already lost it! Mom, he doesn't give a damn about you. Can't you see that?

GRACE

No, Jason, you're wrong. He doesn't mean to hurt me. If he knew how it made me feel...

JASON

He doesn't even think about you! Only about himself. Somebody should teach him a lesson.

GRACE

Revenge wouldn't solve anything. And it wouldn't change anything.

JASON

So Joe gets everything his way, as usual. I don't like this. I don't like it at all.

GRACE

I understand. But please, Jason. I'm begging you. Don't say anything. Promise me?

JASON (long pause)

Only if you talk to Joe about it. If you don't, I will.

GRACE

Oh, I'll talk to him. Soon. Believe me.

JASON

Then I promise. For now.

GRACE (deep breath)

Fine. Now *please* go get changed? And tell Molly I'll be right up to help her with her veil.

JASON

Okay, okay.

(JASON exits. GRACE sighs as she puts the hors d'oeuvres back into the oven.)

GRACE (muttering)

Damn you, Joseph.

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE TWO

ACT ONESCENE THREE

SETTING: The kitchen of the farmhouse. Late December, 1966.
Around 3:00 p.m.

AT RISE: EMILY, 16, is sitting at the kitchen table, holding a book but staring into space. The Beatles "Do You Want To Know A Secret?" is playing. EMILY sings along absently.

EMILY

"I've known a secret for a week or two, nobody knows, just we two..."

(CATHERINE, EMILY's 19 year old sister, sneaks up behind her. CATHERINE usually has a good figure; in fact, she models. But she is now five months pregnant, and in a poor attempt to conceal this, she is wearing baggy clothes.)

CATHERINE (singing)

Em-i-ly. Still off-key.

EMILY

Cath!

(They hug)

I was not off-key.

CATHERINE

Were too. (Shrugs out of her coat and drops her two bags at the door.)

EMILY

Where's Mom? Didn't she go to pick you up?

CATHERINE

Yeah. Right behind me.

(Notices EMILY staring at her stomach)

Quit that.

(Plops down and lights a cigarette)

EMILY

Sorry. I can't help it. Jeez, Cath, you're really starting to show.

CATHERINE

Shut up! Where is everybody?

EMILY

Molly went for a long walk. Hal's still in Washington. He's going to fly in to New York in the morning and come back with Daddy. Jason's got a gig in New Haven tonight, and the twins are taking a nap.

CATHERINE

Damn it. So nobody's going to be here for dinner?

EMILY

I guess not. Well, just us and Molly and Mama. Why?

CATHERINE

Why do you think, you jerk? I can't keep this a secret much longer. I was going to tell everyone at dinner. Get it over with.

EMILY

You could still tell them.

(Sighs, watching CATHERINE blow smoke rings)

I wish I could smoke.

CATHERINE

Go ahead. Want one?

EMILY

Yeah, right. Mom'd kill me.

CATHERINE

Sooner or later, you're gonna have to quit being so afraid of everything.

EMILY

I'm not afraid of everything. Just of Mom.

(They both laugh)

Cath?

CATHERINE

Yeah.

EMILY

What are you afraid of?

CATHERINE

Nothing.

EMILY

Bullshit. Then why don't you just tell everyone anyway?

CATHERINE

All in good time.

EMILY

You're five months already.

CATHERINE

Twenty-one weeks.

EMILY

Jeez, come on! (Pause) Can I touch it?

CATHERINE

Later.

EMILY

Please?

CATHERINE

Cool it, OK? Here comes Grace.

(GRACE enters, carrying grocery bags. She is now in her mid-50's. She is clearly annoyed at CATHERINE and slams the door.)

EMILY

Hi, Mom. Do you need some help?

GRACE

That would be nice, thank you, honey. (To CATHERINE) Why did you run off like that?

CATHERINE

Sorry, I just wanted to get my bags in.

GRACE

So what stopped you?

CATHERINE

Well, I haven't seen my baby sister in months! We've been catching up.

EMILY

Quit calling me that, you doofus.

CATHERINE

Oh, I'm wounded! My baby sister thinks I'm a doofus. God, I haven't been called that since junior high.

EMILY

Yeah? What do they call you in New York? Bitch?

GRACE

Emily! Honestly, Catherine, you've been home five minutes and

she's talking like a sailor!

CATHERINE
I'll get you for that! (pulls EMILY's hair)

EMILY
Ow! Stop it! I'm sorry, OK? I'm sorry!

GRACE (over the din)
Girls! Stop it now! What's gotten into you?

CATHERINE
Watch your mouth!

EMILY
Okay, okay!

(CATHERINE releases EMILY, who stands rubbing her head)

GRACE
What's the matter with you two? This is Christmas.

CATHERINE
So?

GRACE
So whatever happened to peace on earth?

CATHERINE
I'm all for it. But I can't promise you peace in this house, not if Emily's going to be such a brat.

EMILY
Look who's talking!

GRACE
Don't start this again. Emily, go to your room.

EMILY
No.

GRACE
Fine. Then go down to the farm stand and bring me up some cider. I forgot to stop on the way home.

EMILY (defiantly)
How much?

GRACE
We don't want to have to open it up again till Monday. Get four gallons. Here's the key.

EMILY

Okay. (Sullenly, to CATHERINE) Sorry.

CATHERINE

It's cool.

(CATHERINE palms EMILY the pack of cigarettes as she passes by)

EMILY

Thanks! I'll be back soon, Mom. (exits)

GRACE (calling after her)

Take the wagon! It'll be easier to carry! (Sits at the table and lights a cigarette) I swear, that girl would forget her head if it weren't attached. She's always got her nose in those ridiculous fashion magazines, and if it's not that, all she talks about is boys, boys, boys. It's a miracle she's doing so well in school.

CATHERINE

She's getting really fresh, Mama. You ought to do something.

GRACE

I try, Catherine, I try. She'll get sorted out, though. Sooner or later we all do. I was a lot like her. So was Molly, actually. A mind of her own. That's one thing all my children have going for them.

CATHERINE

But Molly's not yours.

GRACE

She is though. Catherine, why do you always bring that up? She's been my daughter since she was twelve. You've been my daughter your whole life. It's not a contest. I love you both, and Jason and Emily as well.

CATHERINE

Yeah.

GRACE

It's just different, that's all.

CATHERINE

That's cool. (gets up, starts putting groceries away)

GRACE

Oh, don't get all moody on me.

CATHERINE

I'm not. You said you needed help.

GRACE

Yes, I did. Well...thank you. (Pause) So have you given much thought to college applications?

CATHERINE

Not really.

GRACE

Why not?

CATHERINE

I just finished high school, Mama. I'm not in much of a rush to get back to that, if you want to know the truth.

GRACE

Get back to what? (Pause) Well then, what do you propose to do with your life?

CATHERINE

I don't know, Mama! I guess I need time to figure that out. What's the rush, anyway? Why do I have to decide now? All I want to do for now is paint, and do some modeling, and have fun. What's wrong with that?

GRACE

I'll tell you what's wrong with that. You have to have some goals for your life. You're turning into one of those beatniks.

(CATHERINE cracks up)

What's so amusing?

CATHERINE

That word! Beatniks! Mama, this is 1966, not 1956! Nobody says that any more! (Laughing) Beatniks!

GRACE

Listen, Catherine. I don't care what you call it. You're nineteen years old, it's time you made some decisions. Your father and I will help you if you go back to school. Otherwise, you'd better think about getting a job.

CATHERINE

That's not fair! Mama, why do I have to do what you want me to do? Don't worry, Emily will be your college kid. She's a good girl. Pick on her for a change.

GRACE

I'm not picking on you! (Calmer) I'm just concerned, that's all.

CATHERINE

Well, don't be! Mama, I just need some more time. Honest. Just give me till June. You promised me a year. Why are you

changing the rules now?

GRACE
All right, you have a point. We did say that, didn't we?

CATHERINE
Yeah, you did.

GRACE
Catherine?

CATHERINE
Yeah.

GRACE
Look at me.

CATHERINE
What for?

GRACE
Are you putting on weight?

CATHERINE
I guess a little.

GRACE
I can't put my finger on it. You almost...no, it can't be.

CATHERINE
What can't be?

GRACE
You almost look like you're pregnant. (Laughs, then falls silent) Catherine.

CATHERINE
(Squares her shoulders, turns to face her mother)
I am.

EMILY (bursting in)
Mom! I put the cider in the fridge in the garage! Was that where you wanted it? (Long pause) Mama? (Pause) What's up?

GRACE
(keeping her eyes on CATHERINE)
Emily, would you please leave us alone for a while?

EMILY
Oh, shit, you told her, didn't you?

GRACE
You knew about this?

CATHERINE
I didn't have to. She guessed.

GRACE
Wait a minute! Back up. (To EMILY) How on earth could you keep this a secret from me?

EMILY
I promised.

GRACE
This isn't a game.

CATHERINE
She knows that!

GRACE
Do you?

CATHERINE
Look, I made her promise not to tell. I wanted to break it to everyone at dinner.

GRACE
Oh, Lord. (Sits.) I feel...strange.

CATHERINE
What's wrong, Mama?

GRACE
What's wrong? What's wrong! (Deep breath) How far along are you?

CATHERINE
Twenty-one weeks.

EMILY
Five months. Why not just say it?

CATHERINE
You don't know everything. You're supposed to go by weeks, not months. The doctor told me.

GRACE
When did this happen? I mean...how long have you known about it?

CATHERINE
I figured it out after about five weeks. It was when Emily was visiting me, just before school started. She overheard me talking to one of my friends.

GRACE
What friends? Whose baby is it?

CATHERINE (taking a deep breath herself)
I won't say.

GRACE
What? Catherine!...

CATHERINE
No. I'm not saying. It doesn't matter. He's not in the picture.

GRACE
It's not a picture, Catherine. This is a living creature. The father needs to be told.

CATHERINE
He knows. He'd just rather not be involved. This is my decision too.

GRACE
Decisions! You have no decisions. You have no choices left! It's too late to do anything about this now. Why did you wait so long? Why didn't you come to us sooner?

CATHERINE
I guess because I knew you'd act like this.

GRACE
Like what? Catherine, be reasonable. You can't have a baby.

CATHERINE
But I am having one. Around May 10th, in fact. And you know what, Mama? I'm glad.

GRACE
You're glad. Well, I'm so happy for you! What about your future? How are you going to manage?

EMILY
We'll help, won't we, Mama?

GRACE
Emily, hush.

EMILY
No, I won't hush! This is going to be your first grandchild with Daddy. Doesn't that mean anything?

GRACE
That's beside the point.

CATHERINE
How can my child be beside the point, Mama? Molly's not even yours, and you love her kids.

GRACE

First of all - that is not the same thing at all. Molly has a husband to help her with the girls, she has a home, Hal has a good job. How are you going to take care of a baby?

CATHERINE

I'll manage!

GRACE

You've got to do better than that! Catherine, you have no idea what you're saying.

CATHERINE

What are you saying, Mama?

GRACE (backing down)

I don't know! I can't think about this now. It's simply absurd! When your father gets home, we're going to sit down and discuss it. Just the *three* of us, Emily!

CATHERINE

There's nothing really to discuss. I'm going to have this baby.

GRACE

Don't start, Catherine. We have to talk about the future. What to do afterwards. (Deep breath) I can't think straight. Lord, how am I going to get dinner ready?

EMILY

Who gives a damn about dinner?

GRACE

I do! Okay. It's Thursday night. We're going to have a nice quiet meal for a change. The Wards are coming over for cards later. Tomorrow your father will be home. And on Monday, after everyone's left, Joseph and you and I are going to sit down and have a long talk.

CATHERINE

Sure. We can talk about it all you want. I've made my decision.

GRACE

Nobody's making any decisions right now. Not me, not you. This is too emotional.

CATHERINE

I'm not emotional, Mama. I'm perfectly calm. I've had a long time to think about this.

GRACE

Fine, now I'm entitled to the same courtesy. I don't want either of you to say a word about this tonight. In fact, nobody is to know until after Christmas. Is that clear?

EMILY

Sure, but why not?

GRACE

Because we're going to have a nice, family holiday. I don't want anything to ruin it.

CATHERINE (mutters)

What bullshit.

GRACE

Catherine? Promise me. No big scenes. (Pause) Don't you think your father deserves to be told next?

CATHERINE

Sure, Mama.

GRACE

Nobody says a word till Monday. Agreed? Emily?

EMILY

I promise.

CATHERINE

Okay. No big scenes.

GRACE

Fine. Who wants to help me with the pies?

EMILY

I don't really feel like it.

CATHERINE

I think I'll go lie down for a while.

GRACE

Catherine? Have you been taking care of yourself?

CATHERINE

Sure. I'm fine, Mama. Just tired, that's all.

GRACE

Eating all right?

CATHERINE

Yes, I said!

EMILY

You want help with your bags?

CATHERINE

Sure. Thanks.

(They grab the bags and exit. GRACE mixes herself a martini, sits at the table, and lights a cigarette. MOLLY enters from outside. She is 34 and hugely pregnant.)

MOLLY

Whew, it's really nippy out there! (Shrugs out of her coat)

GRACE

Oh, Molly! Here, sit down. I'll take that. (takes MOLLY's coat.) Enjoy your walk?

MOLLY

It was wonderful! I'd forgotten how beautiful the trees look when they get covered in snow. In Washington, everything just melts right away. It's been warm so far this winter.

GRACE

Not up here.

MOLLY

I can see that! Abby and Annie...?

GRACE

Last time I checked, they were fast asleep.

MOLLY

Wonderful. (Grimaces) Oh, boy. Sometimes I think this one is twins again. He's so strong. Cath get in all right?

GRACE

I suppose.

MOLLY

Martinis in the afternoon? This looks serious.

GRACE

My funny daughter. (Pause) I was just trying to relax a little.

MOLLY

Grace? Is something wrong?

GRACE

Not a thing. I'm just preoccupied. (Forcing a smile) I've got so much to do.

MOLLY

I could help if you'd let me.

GRACE

No, you won't. One of the main reasons for having you all up here this year is so you wouldn't have to lift a finger. And I meant that. Besides, Emily's a great help to me.

MOLLY

Sure, when she thinks about it. And Cath-... (Really looking at her) You look kind of drawn out. Are you getting enough sleep?

GRACE

I should be asking you that. (Gets up) Would you like some hot chocolate?

MOLLY

I'd love some! I miss your hot chocolate more than just about anything else on the farm.

GRACE

Flattery will get you everywhere. (Gets down two mugs) I think I'll join you.

MOLLY

Are you sure you're feeling all right?

GRACE

Molly, let it go. I'm fine.

MOLLY

Okay, okay. At least let me make the sweet potatoes?

GRACE

Nope. You can help next year.

MOLLY

With *three* kids hanging on me? It'll be a miracle if I get anything done.

GRACE

You love it though.

MOLLY

This one's going to be a boy. I just know it.

(unable to take any more, GRACE begins to cry.)

Grace? What is it? (gets up and embraces GRACE) I *knew* something was wrong.

GRACE

No...

(GRACE tries to compose herself. CATHERINE bursts in.)

CATHERINE

I'm going to the store. You need anything else?

GRACE

Oh...no, I don't think so. I thought you were tired.

MOLLY

Why don't you slow down for a second? Can't you see she's upset?

CATHERINE

Mind your own damn business, Molly! (To GRACE) I see you couldn't keep quiet for ten minutes.

MOLLY

Keep quiet about what?

GRACE

Catherine, calm down.

CATHERINE

No, I won't calm down! God, you're such a hypocrite!

GRACE

Catherine...

CATHERINE

You said we'd keep this quiet till after Christmas! But the minute I get out of the room, you blab to her!

MOLLY

What are you talking about?

CATHERINE

Come off it, Molly. Don't pretend she didn't tell you I'm pregnant!

MOLLY (stunned)

You're *what*?

CATHERINE

Some secret, Mom. Thanks a lot.

GRACE

Actually, I didn't tell her.

CATHERINE

Sure. Then what was all that about when I came in? You crying, your precious Molly hugging you...

GRACE

I needed a little comfort, that's all! But I didn't tell her why I was upset, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Yeah, right.

MOLLY

She's telling the truth. You just told me yourself.

(Awkward silence)

CATHERINE

Oh, man...I gotta get out of here for a while. Where's the car keys?

GRACE

Where are the car keys?

(CATHERINE just glares at her)

Here. (Hands them to her)

CATHERINE

Do you have a couple of bucks?

(GRACE hands her some money)

Thanks. See ya. (grabs her coat and slams out)

GRACE (trying to joke)

Car keys, money...if I closed my eyes and her voice was a little lower, I'd think Jason was here.

MOLLY

Grace...I'm sorry.

GRACE

You didn't do anything wrong, honey. (Getting tearful again) I don't know what to do. How did this happen? I'm scared for her, Molly. I'm so scared.

EMILY

Cath! Wait for me! (EMILY bursts in, runs to kitchen door, and stands looking out)

MOLLY

She's going to be all right, Mom. Catherine's a survivor. Like you were.

GRACE

I wish I felt that way.

EMILY

She never waits for me! (Suddenly starts crying) She's always running on ahead.

GRACE

It's okay, honey. It's okay. Shh. She just needs some time to herself, that's all. Shh. Everything's going to be fine.

(GRACE hugs EMILY tight, nearly crying herself. MOLLY looks on.)

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE THREE

ACT ONESCENE FOUR

SETTING: An office in a Manhattan adoption agency. A Saturday morning in March, 1967. Around 10:30 a.m.

AT RISE: CATHERINE sits reading a magazine. Now seven months pregnant, she is huge. GRACE is pacing.

CATHERINE

Mom, would you please sit down?

GRACE

What is taking so long?

(CATHERINE shrugs, keeps reading)

This is what I hate about New York. One of the things I hate about New York. They keep everybody waiting, just to show who's in charge.

CATHERINE

I'm in charge, aren't I? I'm the one who's having the baby.

GRACE

You needn't keep reminding me, Catherine! It's quite obvious.

(CATHERINE smiles to herself and touches her stomach)

You know, I do believe you're proud of yourself!

CATHERINE

In a way I am. I mean, I created something, Mom. There's a whole new person inside me. I mean, isn't that amazing?

GRACE

Now you listen to me. I don't care what kind of positive face you try to put on things. You've got nothing to be proud of.

CATHERINE

Well, I'm not ashamed and I won't pretend I am.

GRACE

The only thing you've created by getting pregnant is a whole mess of problems. For all of us. (Pause) Where is that woman? This is ridiculous. We shouldn't be kept waiting this long. I won't stand for it.

CATHERINE

Cool. Let's leave then. (Starts to rise)

GRACE

Sit down, Catherine!

CATHERINE

Come on! Let's go get some lunch or something.

GRACE

It is ten-thirty in the morning.

CATHERINE

Yeah, and our appointment was half an hour ago. I'm sick of talking to shrinks, anyway. Maybe I'm not meant to give up the baby. Maybe I shouldn't sign those papers. Maybe this is a sign. We're not supposed to be here. Our destiny lies elsewhere.

GRACE

Would you stop this nonsense!

CATHERINE

But it is our fate to seek out that which awaits us! (Extends her arm) Adventures, my lady?

GRACE

Catherine! Would you please stop making a spectacle of yourself!

CATHERINE

In front of who?

GRACE

In front of *whom*?

CATHERINE

That's what I said.

GRACE

Sit down.

(CATHERINE, hurt, sinks down in the chair, looks around, brightens.)

CATHERINE

She just kicked!...Don't you want to feel it? (Pause) There, she did it again! Come on, Mom! Put your hand--right here.

(She tries to take GRACE's hand to her stomach; GRACE resists)

GRACE

That won't be necessary.

CATHERINE

Just once.

GRACE

Catherine, stop it! You're acting like a child.

CATHERINE

No, you are! You're trying to pretend this baby doesn't exist.

GRACE

No, I'm not. I'm quite aware that it exists.

CATHERINE

She exists. She's a girl, and she's going to love me.

GRACE

Catherine, do yourself a favor. Don't get attached.

CATHERINE

Don't get attached? I *am* attached. She's part of me.

GRACE

What I meant was, don't make this harder on yourself than it has to be.

CATHERINE

How could I? I don't want to give her away.

GRACE

I know you don't, but it's the only way.

CATHERINE

No, it's not!

GRACE (overlapping)

Everything is perfectly clear. You're going to have this baby in two months, and you're going to sign those papers, and then we can all get on with our lives.

CATHERINE

What if that's not what I want?

GRACE

Now, honey! We've been over this. You can't take care of it.

CATHERINE

Her.

GRACE

We don't even know that.

CATHERINE

I know.

GRACE

They'll find the baby a good home.

CATHERINE

She's a person, not a stray dog! How can you make me do this? She's your granddaughter.

GRACE

Do you have any idea what a big responsibility it is, to have a child?

CATHERINE

Why won't you help me?

GRACE

You know that's out of the question. What would people say?

CATHERINE

I don't give a damn what people say, Mama.

GRACE

What about when you want to get married?

CATHERINE

That's a stupid reason. I might never get married.

GRACE

You will want to, someday.

CATHERINE

Well, if someone loves me enough to marry me, he'd just have to love her too.

GRACE

You're not being realistic. It's not fair to ask a man to take care of someone else's child.

CATHERINE

Why not? You and Poppa did.

GRACE

That wasn't the same thing.

CATHERINE

Why? Because Molly and Jason weren't bastards?

(GRACE flinches)

That's what you think, right? You don't care what people say. You never have. That's how you feel.

GRACE

Catherine, you are underage, and you are signing those papers, and that's all there is to it. You can't take care of a child right now, and your father and I certainly can't. This is for the best.

CATHERINE

But, Mama, you have children. How can you ask me to give up mine?

GRACE

Catherine, you have no idea what you're saying. A baby changes your whole life.

CATHERINE

She already has. And you're forcing me to turn my back on my own flesh and blood.

GRACE

Don't be so dramatic. You'll have other children.

CATHERINE

Sure, and I guess I'll love them more because they'll be legitimate. God! This is so...unfair.

GRACE

I know. You're so young.

CATHERINE

Not as young as I was.

GRACE

No, and I suppose you never will be again.

(TERRY MORGAN enters. She is 27, attractive, and edgy.)

TERRY

Mrs. Roberts? I'm Terry Morgan. I'm so sorry I'm late.

GRACE

Oh, were you?

TERRY

Yes, please excuse me. We are backed up right now.

GRACE

I see. Call me Grace, please.

TERRY

Grace. I've always loved that name.

GRACE

Thank you.

TERRY

And you must be Catherine.

(Offers her hand; CATHERINE ignores it)

How are you today?

(CATHERINE shrugs)

I'm Terry.

CATHERINE (turning a page)
Yeah, I heard you the first time.

GRACE
Catherine...

TERRY
Mrs. Roberts, maybe we should be alone.

CATHERINE
Cool. I'll be in the waiting room. (starts to get up, with difficulty)

TERRY
No, I meant you and me, Catherine.

CATHERINE
You and I?

GRACE (taken aback)
Very well. (To CATHERINE) Be civil.

(GRACE exits. TERRY sits and watches CATHERINE, who keeps reading.)

TERRY
How about putting down that magazine?

CATHERINE
Can't. I'm reading this great article.

TERRY
Come on. You can finish it later.

CATHERINE
No, I can't. I don't plan on hanging around.

TERRY
Really?

CATHERINE
Sure. This isn't a jail, is it?

TERRY
Of course not. You know your mother's right out there.

CATHERINE
Well, then, I want to go home.

TERRY
Do you know why you're here?

CATHERINE

Sure I do. I'm not crazy. Just pregnant.

TERRY

I can see that.

CATHERINE

Yeah? You must be smarter than you look.

TERRY

OK. Come on, now. Let's talk.

CATHERINE

Sure, just a second. (snaps the magazine shut) Done. What's on your mind?

TERRY

I was going to ask you that.

CATHERINE

Nothing's on *my* mind.

TERRY

Come on, Catherine. I'm here to help you.

CATHERINE

Yeah? Well, you're wasting your breath. I'm not talking to any more shrinks.

TERRY

Catherine, I'm not a...shrink. I'm an adoption counselor.

CATHERINE

Oh, here we go again. That's even worse. Look, you're the third one they've dragged me to. It's not gonna do any good. You might as well turn around and walk out right now.

TERRY

Can we just talk about this?

CATHERINE

Go ahead, talk all you want.

TERRY

You're feeling a bit overwhelmed, right?

CATHERINE

What would you know about it?

TERRY

Believe me, I know.

CATHERINE

Sure. You see this all the time, right?

TERRY

Catherine, you should be thinking about your choices.

CATHERINE

What choices? I'm having a baby in two months. I don't have any choices left.

TERRY

Actually, you've got a lot of choices to make.

CATHERINE

Yeah? Like what?

TERRY

Well, that's what we need to discuss. What do you want to do?

CATHERINE

I want to keep my baby. But my parents won't even consider it.

TERRY

And if you keep your baby...if you go against your parents' wishes, what do you think will happen?

CATHERINE

I guess they'd cut me off.

TERRY

Really?

CATHERINE

I don't know. They said they would.

TERRY

What if you give the baby away? What would you do then?

CATHERINE

I think I'd go nuts.

TERRY

Seriously.

CATHERINE

Do you see me laughing?

TERRY

Isn't there anything else you want to do?

CATHERINE

What does that matter? God, I can't believe you do this all the time. You ask some really dumb questions.

TERRY

No, really. Aside from the baby, if you could do anything you like, what would it be?

CATHERINE

It's stupid.

TERRY

Come on. Anything. Let your imagination wander.

CATHERINE

I guess...I've always wanted to study art. For real, not just messing around. I do paintings sometimes. I even sold one to this chick in the Village.

TERRY

What kind of paintings?

CATHERINE

Different stuff.

TERRY

I'd like to see them.

CATHERINE

Why, you want to buy one?

TERRY

You don't trust too many people, do you?

CATHERINE

Why should I? It never works out.

TERRY

Does your baby's father fall into that category?

CATHERINE

There you go with the stupid questions again. Do you see him hanging around?

TERRY

What happened?

CATHERINE

He says it's not his. He went to school somewhere.

TERRY

Did you try writing to him?

CATHERINE

Of course I did! What do you care? You just want me to sign the papers.

TERRY

I care about you, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Why? You just met me.

TERRY

Look, you're here already. You could at least hear me out. Not for my sake, for your baby's sake.

CATHERINE

Bullshit! Look, I'm all she's got. If I give her up, wouldn't I just be a quitter? I'd be letting both of us down.

TERRY

Maybe you could try to look at it differently. Maybe you could be giving her what she needs, and you'd be giving yourself what you need too.

CATHERINE

I shouldn't be thinking about myself. Who can love my baby more than I can? That can't be right.

TERRY

Listen, Catherine. I can't help you decide what's right for you. But I can tell you a couple of things for sure. One, it is ultimately your decision. Whether or not your parents realize it. Because you're the one who's having the baby, and you're the one who's going to take care of it, if you keep it. Even if they do come around, and say they'll help you, it's your responsibility, and yours alone. I just want you to realize what a big deal that is. (taking a deep breath) And two...I do understand what you're going through. Because when I was sixteen, I gave my son up for adoption.

CATHERINE

Oh, man...I don't believe this.

TERRY

I wouldn't lie about that.

CATHERINE

But...how could you do that?

TERRY

It was for the best.

CATHERINE

Whose best? Yours or his?

TERRY

Both of us! I was on my own. I couldn't take care of him. I got a chance to get my life together, and I even went to college. He got two parents who loved him.

CATHERINE

How do you know?

TERRY

The agency told me.

CATHERINE

And you believed them. And you never think about him?

TERRY

Sure I do. Every day. (Deep breath) And I'll tell you something else. You remind me of me. I was pretty angry and confused, too. But you're luckier than I was.

CATHERINE

Yeah, sure, I'm lucky.

TERRY

My parents didn't want anything to do with me when I told them I was pregnant. They actually threw me out. I ended up going to one of those halfway houses. But didn't your mom move to New York to be with you? Your parents must care about you a lot.

CATHERINE

Why, 'cause they didn't exile me from my house? They might as well have. Mom only brought me here 'cause she doesn't want anyone to know about the baby. She doesn't want me around my own kid sister. She doesn't want me seen around town. I'm a bad influence, people will talk, shit like that. All she cares about is appearances. Then there's my big sister Molly. She'd never get herself in a mess like this. She's smarter than that. She's perfect, right? And my brother Jason, who I thought was so cool. He keeps telling me what a mess I've made of my life. Like I really need to hear that right now. Like I could forget about it for a minute. Like I don't feel bad enough as it is.

TERRY

What about your father? How is he handling all of this?

CATHERINE

He's not. He hasn't been able to look me in the eye since they found out. Not that we ever talked much anyway. He's never home. I think he blames me too.

TERRY

Blames you for what?

CATHERINE

For screwing up. But not because of me, because of them. They're making all the decisions! Nobody cares about how I'm feeling, and what I want! Just as long as I'm a good little girl and do as they say. But they want me to give up my baby. That feels really wrong, but maybe I'm gonna have to do it anyway. Maybe it is for the best. I just don't know. I don't even know what's the right thing to do.

TERRY

Why not? Why sacrifice both your baby's happiness and your own, because you feel guilty?

CATHERINE

That's not it! I don't know. I'm confused.

TERRY

Look, if it was so bad, would I be here?

CATHERINE

Everybody's got to earn a living somehow.

TERRY

You know what? I do this because I want to. I'm a volunteer.

CATHERINE

What do you want, a medal? (beat) I don't want to spend my life wondering if I did the right thing.

TERRY

It's not like that.

CATHERINE

Do you really mean that? Can you honestly look me in the eye and tell me you have no regrets?

TERRY

Everybody has some regrets, Catherine.

CATHERINE

No, I mean about giving up your baby. If you can honestly tell me you believe you're happy, that you don't regret it...then maybe I *should* sign the papers. Maybe it is the right thing to do. (Deep breath) Can you look me in the eye and say that? (Pause) Can you?

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE FOUR

ACT ONESCENE FIVE

SETTING: The farmhouse kitchen. June of 1967, mid-afternoon.

AT RISE: EMILY comes in with a book bag, drops it at the door.

EMILY

Anyone home? (Louder) Mom? Cath? (To herself) Like she'd answer anyway.

(She gets a soda and cookies, sits, opens a book, then snaps it shut)

What's the point?

(Tosses the book aside and picks up a magazine. CATHERINE enters. She has lost all her pregnancy weight but looks haggard, not slim. She is still in pajamas.)

Hey. You're up.

(CATHERINE gets wine from the fridge, and lights a cigarette off the one she has just finished.)

How you feeling? Did you get any sleep today? (Pause) OK, you could at least answer me. (Pause) I wish you'd quit. I've heard smoking is really no good for you.

(CATHERINE shrugs, moves to exit.)

No, wait! You just got up. Sit with me a little.

(CATHERINE pauses, then sits, but does not meet EMILY's eyes)

How long are you gonna keep this up? Ever since you got home, all you do is stay in your room and cry. I've heard you. Cath, you've got to snap out of it. I'm scared. There's something weird going on. Nobody's talking to anybody. Even Mom and Papa hardly say a word to each other. I don't think they had a fight or anything, I mean not really. They just seem...disconnected. But I bet you haven't even noticed a damn thing.

Meanwhile, everyone's tiptoeing around you like someone died, and nobody has the guts to say what's on their mind. Well, I will. I think you like this. You're getting all this attention, just like always. You may think it's taking your mind off the baby, but you have to stop pretending it didn't happen. You gotta talk about it. You gotta talk, period. And you've gotta start acting like a normal human being again. You're my sister. I need you. Please, come back.

(Pause; she grows angry)

Okay, I know you think of me as just a kid. Everyone does. But I'm not a baby any more. I'm seventeen, and you know what? I'm not as naive as everyone thinks I am. I know you've been through a lot. Well, so have all of us. So why don't you cut it out? Why don't you think of someone else for a change?

CATHERINE

Go to hell.

EMILY

You go to hell! (Pause) You talked to me!

(Hugs her; CATHERINE starts coughing, pulls away to get her wine)

Why don't you quit?

CATHERINE

Mind your own business.

EMILY

If you're not my business, who is?

(CATHERINE glares at her. EMILY grabs the cigarettes, and CATHERINE grabs her wrist.)

CATHERINE

Drop 'em.

(Starts an Indian burn; EMILY obeys)

EMILY

Ow! (Rubs her wrist) Gimme one?

CATHERINE

No. You don't need 'em. What's wrong with you, anyway? Why don't you grow up?

EMILY

That's what I'm trying to do! You drive me nuts, you know that?

(goes to slap CATHERINE, who deflects the blow and grabs her hand)

CATHERINE

Christ, get ahold of yourself! Calm down, okay?

EMILY (overlap)

You make me so mad!

CATHERINE

I'm not letting go till you cool it!

EMILY
Okay! (calmer) Okay.

CATHERINE
Promise?

EMILY
Yeah.

(CATHERINE releases EMILY, who rubs her wrist. They regroup.)

CATHERINE
Where is everybody?

EMILY
Beats me.

CATHERINE
Get a glass.

EMILY
What the hell for? You already have one.

CATHERINE
Just do it! God, why is everything an argument with you?

EMILY
Now you sound like Mom.

(She gets a glass; CATHERINE pours EMILY wine, and hands her a cigarette.)

I don't get it.

CATHERINE
Christ, Emily, just shut up for once, huh?

(They smoke. EMILY coughs a little.)

CATHERINE
Every time I get to sleep, I keep having the same dream. I'm walking through this long hallway, and there's nobody else around. Except, I'm walking a little dog. It's really friendly and it loves me. All of a sudden this door opens - I didn't even see it. It's at the end of the hall, right in front of me. There's a really bright light, and voices, and I start feeling faint. The next thing I know, I wake up and the dog is gone. Just when I open my eyes, I hear the door slam shut. As soon as I feel like I can get up, I turn the knob, but it won't open. I try and try, but the door's locked tight.

I start crying and screaming, and then I see a window and I notice it's snowing out. So I go outside, and I start dancing

in the snow. I feel so free, I can almost forget about losing the dog. Off in the distance I see a little building, and I start running towards it. When I get close enough, I see that it's an animal shelter, and I realize what I really want is to get another dog. But the woman in the shelter says I can't. Somehow she knows I felt happy when the dog disappeared, and she tells me I don't deserve another one. I beg and beg her, and finally she agrees to let me look at their dogs. But I can't find any like the one I lost, and that's the only one I want. I start crying. Then I wake up, and I'm really crying.

I don't remember much about giving birth, but I know I heard her cry. I didn't get to look at her, or hold her. The nurse even said I didn't deserve to see her, because I was giving her away. They did let me feed her once. I had to refuse to sign the papers before they'd even let me do that. She had blue eyes. I think most babies have blue eyes, but hers weren't at all pale. They were really deep, deep blue. Like the ocean. One hour, that's all we had together. Then they took her away again.

You know what I really don't get, Emmy? When I talked to the other girls at the agency, they all kept saying they couldn't wait to give birth so they could get back to normal. But I didn't want to have the baby, because then I was going to lose her. I tried to keep her with me as long as I could. I started having pains in the middle of the night, but I didn't wake Mom up until I couldn't stand it any more. I didn't want to go to the hospital, 'cause I knew I'd be coming home alone and empty. That's the worst part, I think. I feel so empty. I'm cold all the time.

And now everyone expects me to just go on like nothing happened. They lied to me. Nobody told me it would be like this. I'm not even twenty years old, Emily, and I feel like my life is over. And I just keep waiting for it to stop hurting. But it doesn't. It just gets worse. You don't know how much it hurts.

EMILY

I'm sorry.

CATHERINE

Emmy. Hold me?

(EMILY hugs CATHERINE. CATHERINE cries on her shoulder.)

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE FIVE

ACT ONE

SCENE SIX

SETTING: The kitchen of the farmhouse. June, 1978.

AT RISE: GRACE, 65, enters from rear of house with three large shopping bags. She struggles out the door. A minute later she returns empty-handed, sits, and lights a cigarette. She rises almost at once, and crosses to outside door.

GRACE

Catherine? Do you need a hand?

CATHERINE (offstage)

No, I think I've got it.

GRACE

If we need to, we can make two trips.

CATHERINE

No, it's OK! (sound of car doors slamming; GRACE, watching from door, winces)

GRACE

Be careful of the china!

(CATHERINE, now 30, enters. She is on edge.)

CATHERINE

OK, Mom, the car's all packed.

GRACE

Did everything fit?

CATHERINE

It's fine, Mom.

GRACE

I just hope you didn't shove everything in, any which way.

CATHERINE

You can repack the whole damn car if you want! I'm taking a break. (sits and lights a cigarette)

GRACE

No, no, honey. I'm sure it's fine. (pause) It's an awfully warm day, isn't it?

CATHERINE

Not as warm as it is back home.

GRACE

I can believe that. I don't know how you stand it down there, it's so hot.

CATHERINE

I love it, Mom. Tucson is beautiful. You really should come out to visit.

GRACE

I will, I will. You only just moved there.

CATHERINE

No, we've been back from Mexico almost eight months, and you haven't been to see us once.

GRACE

Catherine, you know, I've had a lot on my mind this past year. Your father and I had a lot of details to iron out, and it was hard to find a suitable place. I'll be out as soon as I get settled. (sighs, looking around her) I wish I hadn't packed the vodka. We deserve a drink.

CATHERINE

Then you'll be glad I planned ahead. (Rifles through her purse) It's not vodka exactly, but it'll do. I got some rum on the plane, but then I decided against having a drink. And I think there's still a few Cokes in the fridge. (sets a small bottle on the table)

GRACE

Good thinking, honey! (starts to get up)

CATHERINE

I'll get it, Mom. Relax. You've had a hard day.

GRACE

I've had a hard few months.

CATHERINE

Yeah, moving's a drag, isn't it? Of course, nobody put a gun to your head.

GRACE

Catherine, don't start. Please, not today.

(CATHERINE brings Cokes and two glasses to the table)

CATHERINE

Would you please not call me that name any more! I've asked you a hundred times to call me Dinah.

GRACE

I will not. I just can't get used to it. Why do you want to change your name, anyway?

CATHERINE

You're not the only one who wants a fresh start. I'm cleansing myself. Reinventing my psyche.

GRACE

You never talked this way before you lived in Mexico. Are you feeling all right?

CATHERINE

I feel great, Mom. I'm being reborn. I deserve a new name. One I can choose for myself.

GRACE

But Catherine is such a beautiful name.

CATHERINE

It's a fine name. It's just not me anymore.

GRACE

I don't know what you mean by that. You're still the same person.

CATHERINE

I'm not. I never was.

GRACE

You mystify me.

CATHERINE

Same here. Why are you and Poppa separating? Come on, tell me. Something must have happened.

GRACE

I knew you were going to be expensive help.

CATHERINE

Yeah, but you don't have to tip me.

(GRACE hedges, pours them sodas and spikes hers. When she tips the bottle towards CATHERINE's drink, CATHERINE shakes her head)

I'll have it straight, thanks, Mom.

GRACE

You sure?

CATHERINE

Yeah, I'm just not in much of a drinking mood lately.

GRACE

Oh. Well. Good.

CATHERINE

So?

GRACE

What do you want me to say?

CATHERINE

Just tell me the truth. Why are you leaving Poppa? Did he hurt you somehow?

GRACE

Of course not.

CATHERINE

What, then?

GRACE

I don't know if I can explain it. There's no one specific reason. It just is what it is, that's all.

CATHERINE

Don't you love him any more?

GRACE

As much as ever. (Sips her drink) Mmm. You sure you don't want any?

CATHERINE

All I know is, when I get married, it's going to be forever.

GRACE

Well, I certainly hope so!

CATHERINE

Mom...Greg and I are getting married.

GRACE

Oh. Well. That's wonderful.

CATHERINE

You don't sound very enthusiastic.

GRACE

No, honey! If that's what you want, then I'm very happy for you.

CATHERINE

There's more. (Deep breath) I'm going to have a baby. In October.

GRACE (absorbing this)

Oh...my.

CATHERINE (hastily)

But we were talking about getting married anyway, you know? We just didn't think it'd be this quick. We were thinking of getting engaged over the summer.

GRACE

I see.

CATHERINE

It's just a little sooner than we'd planned, that's all. Everything's going to be great, though! Greg is working nights. And we have some extra money coming in because I've got this job at the department store now. And we're even going to set up a little studio for my painting, just as soon as we can get a house.

GRACE

And you're happy?

CATHERINE

Yes, I really am.

GRACE

Does Greg know about the baby?

CATHERINE

Of course he does! I'm five months already. He's thrilled too.

GRACE

No, I meant the *other* baby.

(Long silence)

CATHERINE (softly)

Why are you bringing her up now?

GRACE

Isn't it obvious?

CATHERINE

The only thing that's obvious is that you're trying to upset me.

GRACE

Now, Catherine. Don't you think Greg deserves to know the whole story?

CATHERINE

Why? That was eleven years ago. I've put it behind me. It's taken me a long time to get over it, but I finally am over it. Let it stay in the past, why can't you?

GRACE

The question is, can you? Should you?

CATHERINE

What if I do tell him? What do you think he's going to think of me if he finds out I gave my baby up for adoption? He'll think I didn't care about my own daughter, that's what.

GRACE

Sweetie, nobody would think that.

CATHERINE

Sure they would. Anyone who knows what I did would think I was just selfish. And maybe they'd be right.

GRACE

You didn't "do" anything, Catherine. You're not the only person in the world that's ever gone through this. And as you said, it was a long time ago. You were a baby yourself. He can't hold that against you.

CATHERINE

I don't know. I hold it against me, why shouldn't he?

GRACE

When do you plan to have this wedding of yours? Before the baby's born, I hope.

CATHERINE

Of course, Mom! In two weeks.

GRACE (taken aback)

Doesn't give you much time to plan, does it?

CATHERINE

Everything's taken care of. All you have to do is show up.

GRACE

I see.

CATHERINE

We wanted you and Daddy to be there. I guess that's not gonna happen, huh?

GRACE

Nonsense! We wouldn't miss it.

CATHERINE

You sure? It won't be weird for you?

GRACE

Not at all.

CATHERINE

Well...great!

GRACE

I suppose you've discussed all this with Emily.

CATHERINE

Sure. She's going to be the baby's godmother.

GRACE

I should have known. Why am I always the last to find out about these things?

CATHERINE

Oh, Mom. I'm sorry. I could have timed this better. We were going to tell you together, but Greg got stuck at work, and this wasn't exactly the way we planned it.

GRACE

I understand, honey.

CATHERINE (getting a bit teary)

I mean, we thought we'd come up for your anniversary, and tell you and Poppa together, and then you called and asked me to help you move out, and it's just been such a shock, you know?

GRACE

Yes, well, I'm sorry to spring things on you like that.

CATHERINE

Me, too...Mom, I just want this to work out.

GRACE

Have I ever told you how proud I am?

CATHERINE

Of what?

GRACE

Of you, honey. You're very strong, and you're a talented artist, and you've really come through this all right. I hope you realize that. You should be proud of yourself.

CATHERINE

Sometimes I am, and sometimes I feel like I haven't gotten anywhere.

GRACE

Sure you have. You made the right choice.

CATHERINE

You left me no choices!

GRACE

I don't see it that way. You made the choice to have the baby.

CATHERINE

And you made the choice for me, that I should give her away! Do you think that didn't affect me? Do you think I just walked away with a clean slate? What if Greg walks out? What if I walk out? What if I turn out to be a lousy mother?

GRACE

You won't.

CATHERINE

How the hell do you know? I let my first baby down, didn't I?

After I gave her up, I thought I couldn't trust anyone again. I didn't even trust myself. And ever since I found out I'm pregnant, I'm having the same nightmares again.

GRACE

Why do you think that is?

CATHERINE

I guess I'm scared I'll lose this baby too. Somehow, I won't be able to keep him.

GRACE

Now, listen to me. This is not out of your control. It's a completely different situation.

CATHERINE

I'm not so sure. Anyway, that situation could have been different too. I could have kept her.

GRACE

So you honestly don't intend to talk to Greg about your daughter? You want to start off your marriage with a secret like that between you?

CATHERINE

Well, no...So often, I've been about to tell him, and something stopped me every time. It just didn't feel right.

GRACE

If you don't tell him, you'll always regret it. And it will be even worse if he finds out later.

CATHERINE

How do you know?

GRACE

You don't get to be my age without learning a few things about human nature, honey.

CATHERINE

You're not so old, Mom. But I guess you're right. He has to know. (Pause) Mom?

GRACE

Mmm.

CATHERINE

I'm scared.

GRACE

There's no need to be. If you know Greg as well as you think you do. Let me ask you something. Do you love each other?

CATHERINE

Oh, yeah. I feel like he's my other half, Mom. We're just so...*connected*.

GRACE

Then, if he really loves you, this isn't going to make any difference to him.

CATHERINE

How can it not? Maybe we shouldn't even be thinking about getting married, anyway. You and Poppa couldn't make it work after all this time. What chance have we got?

GRACE

Now, just a minute. If something's holding you back, that's one thing. But don't blame it on anyone else. Just because your father and I can't live together doesn't mean we don't care about each other.

CATHERINE

But if you...

GRACE (laughing)

How about this? I'm 65. Most people retire at my age. Let's just say I'm retiring from your father. OK?

CATHERINE

That's not funny, Mom!

GRACE

All right, honey. I'm sorry. But we won't resolve this tonight, will we, Catherine?...Dinah.

CATHERINE

I suppose not.

GRACE

So have you picked out any names yet?

CATHERINE

If it's a girl, Hannah. And if it's a boy, we're thinking of naming him Dylan.

GRACE

I hope you're kidding.

CATHERINE

No, I'm not. I like that name. Dylan Quinn. Boy, you just hate my taste in names lately, huh?

GRACE

Well, it's a name. You've still got time to change your mind. (Looks around) You know, I think this is going to be a good step for me. Do you realize, I've never lived on my own? First I lived with my sister and her husband, then my own husbands and children. I'm going to enjoy having my own place. Thanks for your help, sweetie.

CATHERINE

Thanks for your help, Mom.

(They smile, then both look away, a bit embarrassed)

OK, we'd better get to work.

GRACE

That's for sure. Let's head on over, then. If we can at least get some of those boxes into the right rooms, then we can go out for a nice dinner with a clear conscience.

CATHERINE

Who's buying?

GRACE

Mama, of course. Call it your tip.

CATHERINE

That's a deal. (Makes a face) Oooh.

GRACE

Are you all right?

CATHERINE

Yeah. I think he just kicked. For the first time, Mom!

GRACE
Really? (tentatively) Can I feel?

CATHERINE
Sure.

(GRACE puts her hand on CATHERINE's stomach.
CATHERINE puts her hand over GRACE's hand.)

LIGHTS FADE

END ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE ONE

SETTING: A stretch of lawn at the Connecticut Agricultural Society. August, 1994.

AT RISE: ERIK, SAMANTHA, and CATHERINE are standing a distance apart, looking out front. CATHERINE is smoking a cigarette. She is 47 but seems younger. SAMANTHA is her 27 year old daughter: ill at ease, on her best behavior. ERIK is her 15 year old son: insecure, handsome, disgusted with everyone.)

SAMANTHA

It looks nice.

CATHERINE

Doesn't it?

SAMANTHA

What does it say?

CATHERINE

I know it has Poppa's name on it. I'm not sure what else. Mom picked the inscription.

SAMANTHA

Can we get a closer look?

CATHERINE

Soon. (Pause) What do you think of it, Erik?

ERIK

It's a goddamn rock. What's there to say?

CATHERINE

Erik!

ERIK

Come on, look at it. Is that the best they can do? Joe spent a lot of time at this place.

SAMANTHA

I think it's really cool of them to have a whole service for him.

ERIK

Look, Sam, this is lame. They're just cramming in his memorial dedication like he was nothing. They have this open house thing every year.

SAMANTHA

Well, how would I know that?

CATHERINE

Poppa did raise a lot of money and support for them. I think it's good they're doing this.

SAMANTHA

Me too.

CATHERINE

There wasn't a funeral, you know.

SAMANTHA

Why not?

CATHERINE

Oh, he didn't really want one. (Pause)

SAMANTHA

Was he...

CATHERINE

Believe it or not, he donated his body to science.

SAMANTHA

Well. That's different.

CATHERINE

Your grandfather was a very original person.

SAMANTHA

So am I. According to most people I meet.

CATHERINE

I'm just so glad we're all here. I know it sounds weird to say that, on a day like this, but...I never thought we'd all three be together like this. Aren't you, Erik? Isn't it wonderful that your sister found us?

ERIK

Sure, I'm ecstatic. How many more times are you gonna ask me that?

(GRACE enters. She is now 81, with traces of Southern belle remaining despite more than sixty years of living 'up North.' She was once stunning and is still rather attractive.)

GRACE

There you are! I was looking for you.

SAMANTHA

Hey, Gran!

(SAMANTHA and GRACE hug; CATHERINE and ERIK look on.)

GRACE

They want everyone up at the tent.

CATHERINE

We'll be right there! (To ERIK) Listen, don't stir things up. Consider someone else for a change.

ERIK

Look who's talking.

CATHERINE

What's that supposed to mean?

ERIK

Think about it.

GRACE

Erik! Catherine! I want to get some pictures.

CATHERINE

Don't call me Catherine, Mom.

ERIK

I don't feel like it.

SAMANTHA

Go ahead, you guys.

GRACE

Come on. I want some pictures of the whole family! (To SAMANTHA) You too, honey.

SAMANTHA

Well...okay. But aren't people going to wonder who I am? I shouldn't really be up there.

CATHERINE

Anyone who matters, already knows. The rest of them can wonder all they want.

SAMANTHA

You told people you gave up a baby for adoption?

CATHERINE

It's been a long time. I've got nothing to hide now.

ERIK

And since when am I part of this family?

GRACE

Nonsense, Erik! Of course you are.

ERIK

I didn't get to see my grandfather since I was nine years old. What difference does it make if I'm here now? He's not gonna know.

CATHERINE

Please, don't pull this now.

ERIK

Go to hell, Mom! You don't care about Joe, or about any of us.

CATHERINE

What are you talking about?

ERIK

Forget it! Just...why did you keep having kids if you didn't want them?

CATHERINE

Of course I wanted you! I wanted both of you!

ERIK

Well, you've got a funny way of showing it.

CATHERINE

Erik, when I had Samantha I wasn't much older than you are now. Tell me, you think you could handle a kid?

ERIK

Maybe I have the sense not to get into a mess like you did!

CATHERINE

Well, good for you! So you think you have all the answers, huh?

GRACE

Listen, I want both of you to cut this out. We can talk about this when we get home. But right now we have a memorial service to get through, in case you've forgotten.

CATHERINE (resigned)

Sure, Mom.

ERIK (sullen)

Okay, Gran.

GRACE

Fine. Let's go. It's almost time for the lunch.

SAMANTHA

I'm starving. I hope there's something I can eat.

CATHERINE

Your teeth still hurt?

SAMANTHA

Kinda, yeah.

CATHERINE

When I had my wisdom teeth out, it didn't bother me at all. But then I only had two out at a time.

SAMANTHA

I'm glad I got them all done at once. I'd never have gone back. I've been in hell.

ERIK

Welcome to my world.

SAMANTHA (teasingly)

Your teeth hurt too?

ERIK

No, that's not what I meant.

SAMANTHA

All right, let's get this over with. I hate having my picture taken.

CATHERINE

Me too.

GRACE

Who doesn't? I must look a mess.

ERIK

Bullshit. You all love it.

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE ONE

ACT TWOSCENE TWO

SETTING: The dining room and back porch of GRACE's home in a retirement community. Later that day, around 5:00 p.m.

AT RISE: GRACE and SAMANTHA are sitting out on the back porch. GRACE is drinking a glass of wine. SAMANTHA sips a soda.

GRACE

So we were going through Joseph's belongings.

(GRACE lights a cigarette)

And Catherine called. The first words out of her mouth were...

CATHERINE (joining them)

Mom, I wish you wouldn't smoke.

GRACE (not missing a beat)

No, you said, "I just got a letter from my daughter."

CATHERINE

No, I mean, I wish you would quit. The doctor says...

GRACE

I know what the doctor says. We all have to go sometime. I'm going to enjoy myself while I can. So what did Greg want?

(CATHERINE lights a cigarette)

CATHERINE

I'd rather not get into that right now.

SAMANTHA

Hey, you said you were going to quit too.

CATHERINE

I will. I've done it before.

SAMANTHA

So do it now.

CATHERINE

Soon.

GRACE

Don't you want to hear the story?

SAMANTHA

Sure, Gran.

GRACE

Where's Erik?

SAMANTHA

Come to think of it, I haven't seen him since we got back. I guess he took off somewhere.

CATHERINE

Terrific.

SAMANTHA

Aren't you worried?

CATHERINE

About what?

SAMANTHA

I don't know. About where he is?

CATHERINE

Your brother is almost sixteen years old, Sam. He'll be fine.

SAMANTHA

I think I'll go try to find him. Any idea where he might have gone?

GRACE

He might be down at the pool.

CATHERINE

I doubt that. He doesn't seem to be in a fun mood.

GRACE

Well, who is? Try the circle, honey. Down the end of the drive and make a left. Maybe he went for a walk.

SAMANTHA

OK. See ya. (exits)

CATHERINE

Well, maybe she can talk to him.

GRACE

Why don't you go with her?

CATHERINE

If I see that kid now, I just might say something I'll regret. I need a break, Mom.

GRACE

What's the matter? Did Greg upset you?

CATHERINE

Oh, just a bit. You asked what my darling ex had to say? Our

little angel is repeating ninth grade.

GRACE

Mmm. I thought it might be something about that.

CATHERINE

You knew?

GRACE

When Erik got here, I could tell something was wrong. I had to pry it out of him, but he finally told me about it.

CATHERINE

That's nice. Well, they say the mother is always the last to know. It's good to know that's not just an idle expression.

GRACE

I think that's actually the wife. And trust me, it is.

CATHERINE

It is what?

GRACE

An idle expression. The wife is the first to know. But she's the last to admit it.

CATHERINE

Are we still talking about Erik's school?

GRACE

Forget it.

CATHERINE

Anyway. All I know is, Erik hasn't said a civil word to me since I got here. I doubt he was going to confide in me. And get this - Greg's blaming me! Erik was doing fine in school when he went to live with his precious father. So tell me, how the hell is this my fault?

GRACE

A lot can happen in three years. He's had a rough time.

CATHERINE

I could have told him that. He should have stayed with me.

GRACE

Erik said you told him to go live with Greg.

CATHERINE

What? He said *I* told him...

GRACE

I probably have the letter somewhere in Joseph's things.

CATHERINE

What did he say I said?

GRACE

Something along the lines of, "If you think I'm so bad, you should try living with your father!"

CATHERINE

I don't remember that! I mean - I didn't mean it like that.

GRACE

I don't think he knew that.

CATHERINE

I shouldn't have left. When Poppa got sick, I mean.

GRACE

He didn't blame you, honey.

CATHERINE

Well, I blame myself. And Erik blames me. You heard him today. When we were living up here with Poppa, the two of them were so close. Sometimes I felt like a third wheel.

GRACE

Joseph certainly did love that child.

CATHERINE

I just wish Poppa had loved me like that.

GRACE

What are you talking about? Of course he did.

CATHERINE

No, he didn't! Molly was his best friend, and Jason was his boy, and Emily was his little princess. He did not need me! He used to spend all his time with the other kids.

GRACE

No, Catherine, you're wrong. He used to spend all his time working on the goddamned farm!

CATHERINE

Why do you always defend him?

GRACE

He was my husband. That used to mean something.

CATHERINE

He didn't think so. If you knew...

GRACE

Knew about what?

CATHERINE

Never mind.

GRACE

You mean his...side dishes?

CATHERINE

His *what*?

GRACE

That's what I used to call them. Oh, let's see. There must have been at least one every year. It wasn't always the case, but more often than not.

CATHERINE

You did know?

GRACE

Contrary to popular belief, darling, I'm neither naive nor blind.

CATHERINE

You never said anything.

GRACE

Not to you children. What would that have accomplished? All it would have done is turned you against him, or against me. I didn't want you to feel like you had to choose.

CATHERINE

Well, how come you never got a divorce? If you didn't love each other any more?

GRACE

I didn't say that. You did. Anyway, it wasn't that simple. I'd already been divorced once, I didn't want to do it again. And I had a lot of work and energy tied up in the farm. It would have been wrong to just walk away from all that.

CATHERINE

You did still love him, didn't you?

GRACE

Of course I loved him. We were together for thirty years. You don't just stop loving someone.

CATHERINE

You're amazing. He never gave a damn about any of us, especially you, and you're making him sound like some kind of saint.

GRACE

No, not a saint. A human being. Who made mistakes, like all of us. Tell me, Catherine. Look me in the eye and tell me you

would have been happier if Joseph and I had gotten divorced. Like the Winslows? Or the Millers. You would have been devastated.

CATHERINE

So you stayed together for our sake. Come on, Mom!

GRACE

And because I believed if you make a commitment, you stick it out.

CATHERINE

So you think I was wrong to get a divorce from Greg?

GRACE

I didn't say that! Everyone's different. I'm not judging your decisions, honey. You could pay me the same courtesy. I just wanted you all to be happy.

CATHERINE

Yeah? Well, I'm not sure I ever knew what it feels like to be happy. Or truly loved.

GRACE

Oh, now, that's just nonsense. You know how I feel about you. And you won't convince me your father didn't love you, either. I don't buy it. He was crazy about you. You were our first child together. That was very special to him. And you knew that, too. You must have. Joseph could make anyone he was with feel like they were the most important person in the world.

CATHERINE

That's just the thing. He did that with everyone. Not just me.

GRACE

Well, like it or not, darling, you are *not* the only person in the world. That doesn't mean you weren't loved. When you and Emily were born...

CATHERINE

You were stuck, huh?

GRACE (not listening)

...we were so proud of you girls. I remember driving you and Emily to Sunday school. In the early Fifties it must have been. You were all dressed up, ribbons in your hair, the whole lot. Oh, how you hated those ribbons! And I looked at the two of you in the backseat, and I thought to myself, I haven't done too badly. I've got Jason and myself out of the city, and I've got myself a real man, and I have these two little treasures on top of it. Don't you know how much we loved you?

CATHERINE

Poppa didn't show it much. He ignored me.

GRACE

Nonsense. He was just very busy most of the time. Don't you remember when we used to go into the city and eat at those fancy restaurants, just the three of us?

CATHERINE

When I had my ear operations?

GRACE

That's right.

CATHERINE

But that was because I was sick!

GRACE

So it doesn't count? Listen, Catherine...

CATHERINE

Damn it, Mom! Don't call me...*that name* any more. Call me Dinah!

GRACE

You can call yourself whatever you want, and you can deny your past, but that doesn't change the facts!

CATHERINE

Maybe not, but I can forget them if I want to!

GRACE

Do you want to forget about Sam too?

CATHERINE

Of course not! I just got her back.

GRACE

You did not get her 'back.' She was never yours.

CATHERINE

She wants to be with me. She found me. I'm her mother!

GRACE

No, you're not.

CATHERINE

She's my daughter!

GRACE

That's not the same thing.

CATHERINE

I had to give her up! I didn't want to!

GRACE

You want to dig up old ghosts? Can't you just be happy you have her now? Listen to me, honey. It's time you stop feeling sorry for yourself. I'm tired of it. Your father loved you. I love you. Your brother and sisters love you. And your children want to love you. Give them a chance.

CATHERINE

Sam's just so - distant. It's not what I expected.

GRACE

She's a grown woman. She needs time. What about your son?

CATHERINE

It's too late, Mom. He doesn't need me any more.

GRACE

I'd say he needs you more than ever. He needs to know you won't turn your back on him.

CATHERINE

Turn my back on him? He's the one that walked out!

GRACE

That's exactly what he said about you. (beat) You said before you didn't feel loved. Is that how you want Erik to feel?

CATHERINE

Of course not, Mom! He's just impossible!

GRACE

Well, it runs in the family!

(They are both silent, calming down for a moment.)

CATHERINE

Mom?

GRACE

Mmm?

CATHERINE

Side dishes?

(They both laugh)

GRACE

Listen, I know you're upset about Joseph now. And about Erik's school. We all are. But you won't get anywhere by coming down on him about it. He's embarrassed, and I think that's part of the reason he hasn't been talking to you.

CATHERINE

This is ridiculous, him being left back! He's a smart kid, Mom.

GRACE

Yes, but he needs someone he can count on. And I don't think Greg has been very supportive.

CATHERINE

That sounds familiar.

GRACE

Oh, Catherine. He just wasn't the right man for you.

CATHERINE

Neither was Ted. I didn't pick very good fathers for my kids, did I?

GRACE

You were young. Everybody makes mistakes. Don't sell yourself short.

CATHERINE

I'm not! Look, if I wasn't there for Sam, how can I be any good with Erik?

(ERIK enters, unseen)

GRACE

For one thing, you were an adult when you had Erik. You made decisions.

CATHERINE

Yeah, well, maybe they should give you an instruction book with each kid. And a money-back guarantee, too! That way, if there's a problem, like your kid won't talk to you, you can find out if he's still under warranty!

ERIK

And trade him in for a newer model?

CATHERINE

Erik! I was just kidding.

(SAMANTHA enters behind ERIK)

ERIK

Well, isn't that what you did? You gave Sam up, and then you gave me up, too.

GRACE

Sam, would you help me inside please?

SAMANTHA

Well...

GRACE

Just for a minute?

SAMANTHA

You OK?

ERIK

Yeah, go ahead.

(SAMANTHA, obviously relieved, follows GRACE into the house)

CATHERINE

Your father tells me you're being left back.

ERIK

So?

CATHERINE

So why didn't you tell me?

ERIK

I was gonna.

CATHERINE

Yeah? When? When I came to your graduation and didn't see you on the stage?

ERIK

Whatever, Mom.

CATHERINE

Not whatever, Erik! I don't want to see you throwing your life away!

ERIK

Over geometry? Bullshit. You finished high school and look where that got you.

CATHERINE

I should have gone to college.

ERIK

Well, you didn't. So I'll follow in your footsteps. What's it matter?

CATHERINE

It matters! Erik...I know you're upset about Poppa. I miss him too. We need to talk about it.

(She moves to touch him. He jumps up to get away.)

ERIK

No! What good's it gonna do? I'll bet you told Sam all about it too. Now she'll know how stupid I am. Thanks a lot!

(ERIK runs out)

But I didn't...! CATHERINE

(he's gone)

Damn it. (she lights a cigarette)

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE TWO

ACT TWOSCENE THREE

SETTING: The living room. Late that night, around 1:00 a.m.

AT RISE: SAMANTHA is on the sofa reading a book. Only one small light is on.

A Deluxe Scrabble board sits on the dining table. After a moment, ERIK comes onto the deck and through the back door. He looks around, is relieved to see nobody waiting up for him, and heads toward the kitchen.

SAMANTHA

(just as ERIK reaches the kitchen)

Well, look who's here.

ERIK

God damn! (flips on the light) You scared the shit out of me.

SAMANTHA

Nice language. Where were you all this time?

ERIK

None of your business. (Pause) Why didn't you come looking for me?

SAMANTHA

I'm getting tired of that game.

ERIK

What the hell are you reading?

SAMANTHA

None of *your* business.

ERIK

Fair enough. (HE exits into the kitchen) Want a beer?

SAMANTHA

What's the choices?

ERIK (sticks his head out)

Bud, and Guinness.

SAMANTHA

Drinking Bud is like making love in a canoe...

BOTH

It's fucking close to water.

(They share a laugh)

ERIK (back in kitchen)
There's only one Guinness.

SAMANTHA
Then we'll have to share, won't we?

ERIK
Guess so. (beat) Hey, I found a Molson.

SAMANTHA
That's got your name on it.

(ERIK enters with two opened beers)

ERIK
Tough noogies.

SAMANTHA
I'll give you tough noogies, Mr. Under-Age. (raises her voice slightly) Gran! Dinah!

ERIK (shushing her)
All right, all right! Geez. You drive a hard bargain.

(SAMANTHA takes the Guinness, sits at the dining table)

SAMANTHA
Yeah, well. What do you know about decent beer, anyway?

(ERIK sits opposite her)

ERIK
I could ask you the same question.

SAMANTHA
Doug and I make our own. I'm actually kinda picky about what I drink now.

ERIK
Who's Doug?

SAMANTHA
My fiancé.

ERIK
Touching.

SAMANTHA
So did you inherit the Scrabble gene?

ERIK
The what?

SAMANTHA

The Scrabble game. We were all playing before. Molly and Emily too.

ERIK

They're here?

SAMANTHA

They came for dinner. They're back at the hotel now.

ERIK

Good. (pause; amused) What the hell - you're crazy. There's no such thing as genes for stuff like that.

SAMANTHA

Why are you so hard on Dinah?

ERIK

What's it to you?

SAMANTHA

Fair enough. (Pause) Look, I know this is kind of weird for you. It's weird for me too. But I'm glad I have a younger brother. I'd like to get to know you.

ERIK

Let's play.

SAMANTHA

How's the Molson?

(ERIK takes a sip and makes a face)

ERIK

It's OK.

SAMANTHA

Never had a beer before, did you?

ERIK

Sure I have. Lots of times.

SAMANTHA

Bullshit.

ERIK

Once or twice. Some of the older guys snuck it into their room, and I heard them. Late at night, like this. I made them give me some so I wouldn't tell.

SAMANTHA

How old were you?

ERIK

It was my first year away at school. So I guess, thirteen.
(Sips again) It still tastes pretty bad.

SAMANTHA

Then maybe you should have had the Bud.

ERIK

You calling me a wimp?

SAMANTHA

I wouldn't dream of it.

(They set up the Scrabble board)

C'mon, little brother. What's eating you?

ERIK

Nothing.

SAMANTHA

Don't pull that clam act with me. I do the same thing with my
parents. Maybe that's genetic too. (handing ERIK the bag of
tiles) Pick one.

ERIK (he does)

G.

SAMANTHA.

J. Damn, that was close. You go first.

(ERIK pulls seven letters from the bag)

ERIK

You want to know what really makes me mad?

SAMANTHA

No.

ERIK

What?

SAMANTHA

Don't tell me unless you feel like it. It's none of my
business, like you said. Except you seem like a pretty great
kid. Don't you know how smart and funny you are?

ERIK

Nope. Tell me.

SAMANTHA

You tell me first.

ERIK

Okay. Here's the thing. Dinah talks like she's this real earth-mother type. But she always just does what she wants to do. She doesn't give a damn about me. She hasn't come to see me once in three years, I always have to come to her. I loved it when we lived up here, with Joe. But she hated it. So we left. I never got to see him again.

SAMANTHA

What was he like?

ERIK

Joe? He was...I don't know. Pretty cool. We used to drive down to the lake and go swimming after I got out of school. The last time we went before Mom and I left, he let me drive. Nine years old. I couldn't even reach the pedals. It was kind of a disaster. (smiles to himself)

SAMANTHA

Crazy. I think it would be great to grow up on a farm.

ERIK

It was. But then we went to Florida, and we moved around a lot.

SAMANTHA

I lived in the same house till I left for college.

ERIK

Wow, you're kidding. I can't even imagine that.

SAMANTHA

Can I ask you something?

(ERIK shrugs)

Did Dinah tell you about me before I found her?

ERIK

Yeah. Sort of. I don't remember how it came up. I just remember she said, "Well, you have an older sister somewhere." I didn't understand then. Why you weren't with us.

SAMANTHA

Funny. I always used to wonder if I had any little sisters.

ERIK

I always wanted a big brother.

SAMANTHA

Sorry to disappoint you.

ERIK

Sorry to disappoint you.

SAMANTHA

You're not. I was really psyched when Dinah told me about you.

ERIK

This is really weird, huh?

SAMANTHA

Really weird.

ERIK

When did you find out you were adopted?

SAMANTHA

I always knew, I think. At least, I don't remember being sat down and told about it, like it was a big deal. My mom remembers hearing me and my brother - I think we were about four and seven. He said, "You know, you're adopted!" And I said, "So? So are you!" That kind of sums it up, I guess. It just didn't matter that much. I think it's stupid when people treat it like some deep dark secret.

ERIK

Then what made you come looking for Dinah?

SAMANTHA

I still wanted to know who my birth parents were. But I didn't think about it, like, all the time or anything. My brother Scott was trying to find his birth mother for a long time. He hasn't had much luck, and he's kind of stopped looking for the last few years.

ERIK

Bummer.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, I almost feel kind of guilty because I wasn't really even trying that hard. It was an accident, almost. Back in June, my dad happened to see Joe's obituary. We knew the family name. Dad called and told me there was a man who died with that name, and how many kids he had, and some of them were about the right age. And it said he'd written an autobiography. So I started calling all over the city, trying to find a copy. As soon as I opened the book and saw a picture of Joe, I knew it was the right family.

ERIK

How come?

SAMANTHA

You know the picture of him when he was twelve? You wouldn't believe how much that looks like my sixth grade graduation photo.

ERIK

You must have been one weird-looking girl.

SAMANTHA

Oh, I was! I was really tall for my age, and flat, and I cut my hair short right after the picture was taken. In seventh grade I kept getting called "young man." Talk about humiliation.

ERIK

Damn!

SAMANTHA

Anyway, it gets better.

ERIK

I wish I could believe that. I was a lot happier when we lived up here.

SAMANTHA

But then you went to live with your Dad?

ERIK

About three years ago. I thought anything would be better than Florida.

SAMANTHA

So was it?

ERIK

Not really. Now I have to go away to school. That sucks even worse.

SAMANTHA

I used to wish I could go away to school. I hated my school. It was really boring. And I used to get picked on all the time. Till about tenth grade.

ERIK (caught)

Then what happened?

SAMANTHA

I got my braces off, I got contact lenses, started putting on a little weight - I was a string bean till then. My sweet sixteen party was a real turning point. I had my first boyfriend then, too. It was great after that. Maybe things will get better this year for you too.

ERIK

Yeah, right.

SAMANTHA

What does your Dad do?

ERIK
Computer stuff. He's in Seattle.

SAMANTHA
Why do you hate school so much?

ERIK
Everyone hates school. You know, you ask a lot of questions.

SAMANTHA
Okay. Sorry!

ERIK
Forget it. (Pause)

SAMANTHA
So Dinah says she's moving back to Arizona.

ERIK
Yeah, she's always gonna do something. She just never does it.

SAMANTHA
Look, parents can be a pain sometimes, but we have to put up with them.

ERIK
What for?

SAMANTHA
I don't know. I guess because they're in charge.

ERIK
That's a stupid reason.

SAMANTHA
I know. My older brother dropped out of college in his sophomore year. So when I was in college, I wanted to drop biology because I knew I was going to fail. But my parents wouldn't let me. They wiggled out and thought if I dropped one course, I'd quit or something. Parents are weird.

ERIK
Great analogy. Your science class, my life. Yeah, that works. (slaps down some tiles)

SAMANTHA (it's her turn)
Hmm. But school is part of life.

ERIK
Don't you start too.

SAMANTHA
Start what?

ERIK

That line of crap.

SAMANTHA

Look, I...okay, you're right. I don't even know you. Let's just play.

ERIK

I'm sorry.

SAMANTHA

No, no, you're right. And you know what? It's not my problem either. It's yours and hers. I have my own shit to deal with.

ERIK

Fine. Why should you be any different?

SAMANTHA

Okay. First you act like you want to talk. Then when I try to help, you get all huffy. You really are a brat sometimes.

ERIK

Yeah, well, it's my prerogative.

SAMANTHA

Where'd you hear that word?

ERIK

I read.

SAMANTHA

Yeah? What?

ERIK

Books. Lots of books. There's a pretty good library at my school.

SAMANTHA

Erik, why are you being left back?

ERIK

I knew she'd blab to you!

SAMANTHA

Who cares?

ERIK

I bet you were all talking about it at dinner.

SAMANTHA

We were not!

ERIK

Now you probably think I'm dumb too.

SAMANTHA

Nobody thinks you're dumb. Dinah's proud of you, you know.

ERIK

Sure.

SAMANTHA

Erik? What's going on?

ERIK

Okay. I really don't want to talk about this.

SAMANTHA

You keep saying that but you don't stop.

(Long pause; he puts down some tiles, she records the score, waits)

ERIK

I've been getting into fights.

SAMANTHA

Mm hmm...

ERIK

These assholes just pick on me. For whatever reason they can find. I'm not dressed right. My hair is sticking up. They just feel like it. They want to show how tough they are. Anything that comes into their tiny little minds, they say it. And they laugh. And then everyone starts believing it.

SAMANTHA

Which assholes?

ERIK

The jocks.

SAMANTHA

I thought you did sports too. See? Dinah talks about you all the time.

ERIK

I do track. It doesn't exactly give me a fair fight against half the football team.

SAMANTHA

Couldn't you have done something about it?

ERIK

Sure, if I wanted to get my ass kicked even more. (Pause) All right, I guess I should've talked to someone. But it's too late

now. I got suspended so I had to take summer classes. And my new school doesn't have the results, so they're putting me in ninth grade again.

SAMANTHA

Why do you go away to school anyway?

ERIK

Oh, that. My dad doesn't want me around either.

SAMANTHA

Oh, come on.

ERIK

No, I swear! He's got this new wife - my *stepmother*. I think she's younger than you. How old are you anyway?

SAMANTHA

Never ask a lady her age. (Pause) Twenty-seven.

ERIK

Yep. Katie's a year younger than you. *Stepmother*, please. See? She could be my sister. Half-sister. And now I have a baby...*sister* too. Sorry, Erik. No room for you. Katie's got too much on her mind. Dad's out of town half the time. Nobody wants me around.

SAMANTHA

I do. Erik. I do.

ERIK

What are you talking about?

SAMANTHA

Listen. You know how you hear about all these adopted kids wondering what their parents are really like? I sort of wondered that. Still do, actually. I'd like to meet my birth father, too. But I always used to wonder if I had any little brothers or sisters. I've got one older brother, and I always wanted to be somebody's big sister. I didn't think I ever would. So I want you. I've been waiting my whole life for you. I just didn't know it.

ERIK

Is that supposed to make it all better?

SAMANTHA

Of course not. But I hope it'll help.

ERIK

I guess it should.

SAMANTHA

Why don't you talk to Dinah about how you're feeling? Or try

calling your dad.

ERIK

He's not home. They went to Europe for a month. With the baby. See what I mean? They didn't even ask me if I wanted to go.

SAMANTHA

Well, maybe they thought you'd want to see Dinah.

ERIK

Yeah, sure. I don't think Dad even knows I'm here.

SAMANTHA

You're kidding. Look, why don't you leave a message and ask him to call you?

ERIK

Yeah, maybe.

SAMANTHA

Will you talk to Dinah in the morning?

ERIK

Stop pushing me, OK? (Pause) Only if you do.

SAMANTHA

About what?

ERIK

You said you wanted to know more about your birth father. Fair is fair.

SAMANTHA

Well, every time I bring it up, she gets kind of freaked out.

ERIK

So?

SAMANTHA

Okay, it's a deal.

(She offers her hand; ERIK takes it. They tug-of-war briefly)

ERIK

Good. Maybe it won't be so bad, having a big sister to push around.

SAMANTHA

Obviously you've got no experience with this kind of thing. I'm the one that gets to do the pushing.

ERIK

Not in this family. Everything's backwards. The kids are the

parents, the parents are the kids, and the younger kids get to pick on the older ones.

SAMANTHA

We'll see about that. Finish your Molson.

ERIK

Take your turn.

SAMANTHA

Okay.

ERIK

See? I'm the boss.

SAMANTHA

Only 'cause you were right. This time.

GRACE

Who's up? What's going on? (Enters) Erik!

ERIK

In the flesh.

GRACE

When did you get back?

ERIK

Awhile ago.

GRACE (tartly)

Enjoying a nightcap?

ERIK

Yeah. (takes another swig of beer)

SAMANTHA

Oh, we're just getting to know each other better.

GRACE

Scrabble? I'm in.

ERIK

Only if you don't wake up Dinah. This is us-time.

GRACE

Sam, go fix me a vodka martini.

SAMANTHA

Are you nuts? I don't know how to make a vodka martini.

GRACE

That's disgraceful! Your education is sorely lacking. Come, watch and learn.

(Moves towards the kitchen)

It's too hot to sleep anyway.

SAMANTHA

Gran...Erik's going to talk to Dinah in the morning.

GRACE

What?

SAMANTHA (louder)

Erik's going to talk to Dinah.

GRACE

I still don't get you.

ERIK (louder still)

I'm going to talk things over with Mom tomorrow.

GRACE

Oh? Well, of course you will. Why doesn't anybody in this family ever talk to the people they should be talking to? What nonsense, this silent treatment. You're too old for that, all of you.

SAMANTHA

Old doesn't mean mature.

GRACE

You're telling me. (exits into the kitchen) Come on, Sam!

ERIK

(Softly to SAMANTHA, who is about to follow)
Sam...thanks.

SAMANTHA

No changing the board while we're in here!

ERIK

Yeah, right, like I would need to. I'm gonna kick your Scrabble butts. (Studies the board)

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE THREE

ACT TWOSCENE FOUR

SETTING: The dining room and back porch. The next morning, around 11:00 a.m.

AT RISE: GRACE is seated out on the porch with a magazine. CATHERINE is sitting at the dining table, staring into a mug. After a moment, SAMANTHA enters the dining room. She looks wrung out.

CATHERINE

Good morning!

SAMANTHA (groggy)

Hi. What time is it?

(Sits at the table and puts her head down)

CATHERINE

About eleven. Rough night?

SAMANTHA

You could say that.

CATHERINE

Sounded like there was a party going on out here.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, well, Erik and I got to talking when he came back. Then Grace got up. I'm sorry we kept you up.

CATHERINE

Not really. I couldn't sleep either.

SAMANTHA

Why not?

CATHERINE

I'm not sure. Thinking, I guess.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, me too.

CATHERINE

About what?

SAMANTHA

Lots of stuff. (Deep breath) Dinah...I really need to know about my birth father.

CATHERINE

Oh, Sam. It's very hard for me to talk about this.

SAMANTHA
It's got nothing to do with you and me.

CATHERINE
Sam, please...

SAMANTHA
All I'm saying is, I have a right to know who he is.

CATHERINE
I know that! I just need some time, OK?

(SAMANTHA shrugs, looks away; Pause)

How are you feeling?

SAMANTHA (seething)
Throbbing a little.

CATHERINE
Still?

SAMANTHA
I'm usually a pretty good healer. This is really a drag.

CATHERINE
Why don't you have something hot to drink?

SAMANTHA
I guess. (Pause) Would you mind getting me some tea please?

CATHERINE
Sure! Sorry. (She exits to the kitchen.) God!

(ERIK comes in.)

ERIK
Hey.

SAMANTHA
Good afternoon.

ERIK
How you doing?

SAMANTHA
I shouldn't have had that beer last night. I forgot, I'm still taking painkillers. You ready to face Dinah?

ERIK
Do I look ready?

SAMANTHA

No, you look like you just crawled out from under a car.

ERIK

Very funny.

SAMANTHA

She's coming back in a minute.

ERIK

I can handle it.

SAMANTHA

Good.

(CATHERINE enters)

CATHERINE

Look at this. My two kids talking to each other.

ERIK

Hey, Mom.

CATHERINE

Don't 'Hey Mom' me! Where the hell were you?

SAMANTHA

Thanks for the tea. Maybe I'll go take a walk or something.

CATHERINE

Good idea.

(SAMANTHA beats a hasty retreat with her tea)

Erik, you've got to quit pulling this disappearing act.

ERIK

Look who's talking.

CATHERINE

I was worried to death!

ERIK

Why? I can take care of myself.

CATHERINE

Sure you can.

ERIK

I have to, don't I? Nobody else will.

CATHERINE

What is that supposed to mean?

ERIK

You and Dad don't give a shit about me.

CATHERINE

Erik, your father and I both love you!

ERIK

Sure. It's just, neither one of you happens to want me around right now. Maybe I'm just not convenient. Or maybe I wasn't the kid you always wanted. Maybe now that you have Sam back, you don't need me!

CATHERINE

(overlapping above)

Don't be ridiculous!

ERIK

What was I supposed to be, some kind of replacement? Must have been a big disappointment that you didn't have another girl, huh?

CATHERINE

(overlapping above)

Of course not! What are you talking about?

ERIK

I know I was born six months after you guys got married. It doesn't take a genius to figure out, I was a mistake.

CATHERINE

No, you were a surprise.

ERIK

What's the difference?

CATHERINE

Erik, I never thought I wanted to have another child. I didn't think I could. You were like a gift. I felt like I was getting a second chance. I wanted to do everything right this time. I felt like I had to be the perfect mother. But I got so scared I was going to lose you too, that someone was going to take you away from me...

ERIK

Like Sam got taken away.

CATHERINE

Exactly.

ERIK

Only she wasn't. You gave her away.

CATHERINE

I had to! Erik...giving Sam up was the hardest thing I

ever had to do.

ERIK

But you sent me away too! That's stupid.

CATHERINE

You wanted to go!

ERIK

And you should've seen the look on your face! You were so relieved! (breaking a little) How could you let me go?

CATHERINE

I thought it was what you wanted. I didn't know what else to do. I just wanted you to be happy, and I didn't think I was doing you any good.

ERIK

Yeah, well, I figured you wouldn't even notice I was gone. And I was right! It's easier for you, isn't it?

CATHERINE

We weren't getting along very well, were we?

ERIK

Yeah, so you just walked away. Like you always do.

CATHERINE

(overlapping above)

That's not fair!

ERIK

But I kept hoping you'd say, come back, Erik. I want to be your Mom again.

CATHERINE

Of course I did! I just couldn't.

ERIK

This is such bullshit.

(ERIK moves to leave, but CATHERINE blocks his way)

CATHERINE

No, you sit down! You're going to hear me out this time.

(ERIK hesitates, then sits, keeping his distance.)

When I gave up Samantha, I felt like I wasn't fit to be a mother. That's the only way I could do it, because I was convinced that I wasn't good enough to take care of her. I never really thought this through until she found me. I

felt like I was no good to anybody, not fit to keep my own kids, not fit to be a wife, an artist...nothing. I felt like nothing.

ERIK

Yeah. I feel that way a lot.

CATHERINE

Erik, you can't imagine what I went through, and I hope to God you never find out.

ERIK

I hope not too.

CATHERINE

I've been thinking about this a lot. It's taken me a long time to figure it out. I was so scared when I had you. I felt like I didn't deserve to have another child. I didn't understand why I was pushing you away, and at the same time I couldn't stop myself.

ERIK

See? Nobody but Joe ever loved me, really. And now he's gone!

CATHERINE

No, Erik, that's not true. I love you - I can't even tell you how much. Joe did love you, yes. Your dad loves you, too. He's just not very good at telling people. I guess I'm not either.

ERIK

You can't love me! You don't even know me. And you don't want to! You sure as hell don't want me around!

CATHERINE

Yes, I do! I want you!

ERIK

Then why did you let me go? Why does Dad keep sending me away? What's wrong with me? Why does everybody want to get rid of me?

CATHERINE

Nothing! Nothing is wrong with you, Erik! What makes you think something is wrong with you?

ERIK (breaking down)

Because nobody wants me around!

CATHERINE

Maybe that's our problem!

(She opens her arms and ERIK hugs her, holding on for dear life)

I had no idea you felt this way.

(SAMANTHA joins GRACE on the deck.)

SAMANTHA

Hey, Gran.

GRACE

Good morning!

SAMANTHA

I just took a walk around the house. It's beautiful out here today.

GRACE

It certainly is! What's going on in there?

SAMANTHA

I don't know. Possibly World War Three.

GRACE

At least they're talking. Sleep all right?

SAMANTHA

Eventually. You?

GRACE

I think so. I had the funniest dream. I was standing on the porch at the farm, and I was talking to Joseph. But he kept interrupting me every time I tried to say something. Finally I yelled at him, "You can't say anything! You're dead!" And I started laughing. Then I woke up, and I was still laughing. (Chuckles) I finally got the last word!

SAMANTHA (laughing too)

You crack me up. (Pause) Gran?

GRACE

Mm hmm?

SAMANTHA

Don't you think I have a right to know who my birth father is?

GRACE

Of course you do.

SAMANTHA

Every time I bring it up, she changes the subject.

GRACE

You know, she went through a lot to have you.

SAMANTHA

Why did she give me up?

GRACE

Things were different then.

SAMANTHA

In the Sixties? Come on.

GRACE

She was still a teenager. She couldn't even take care of herself.

SAMANTHA

Obviously.

GRACE

Your parents are good people.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, I know. I'm not saying I have regrets. I just want to know the whole story.

GRACE

Your mother was right out of high school. Your father didn't take responsibility. We, Joseph and I, she wouldn't even tell us who it was for a while.

SAMANTHA

So who was it?

GRACE

Look, it's not fair of you to ask me these things. Your mother should tell you.

SAMANTHA

But she won't. It's like she's afraid I'm going to go away, or something.

GRACE

Maybe she is.

SAMANTHA

I don't get it.

GRACE

It's not exactly her happiest memory. I lost two children myself, but they were sick. They passed on. It must have been very hard for her, not knowing where you were, or if you were all right.

SAMANTHA

But she knows I'm okay now. What does that have to do with anything?

GRACE

It's not that simple. You'll see when you have children.

SAMANTHA

I hate when people say that! I think she's just being selfish.

GRACE

Well, I'm not going to listen to this. In fact, we should change the subject right now.

SAMANTHA

Come on, Grace.

GRACE

Your mother will talk to you about him, and she'll do it when she's ready. I'll not get caught in the middle.

SAMANTHA

Fair enough. (Pause) Can't you at least tell me his first name? It would help.

(ERIK has separated from CATHERINE, sits turned away from her)

CATHERINE

Erik, do you know why we moved to Florida?

ERIK

Sure. You felt like it.

CATHERINE

No. Your grandfather wasn't well, and he had to sell the farm.

ERIK

Joe was sick?

CATHERINE

That's right. That's when he went to live in the home. You don't remember that, do you?

ERIK

Nobody ever told me why. I just thought you were jealous of him or something.

CATHERINE

Do you really think I would take you away from Joe? Just because I was jealous?

ERIK

Well, you guys never got along too well either. I just figured you wanted me to yourself.

CATHERINE

Wow. You must really think a lot of me.

ERIK

I guess I was wrong about that. I'm sorry, Mom. I just really missed him.

CATHERINE

Well, I could have explained it better, couldn't I? (Pause.) Everybody loved Joe. And he loved everybody right back. Everybody but me. I could never do anything right in his eyes.

ERIK (snidely)

Well, getting knocked up sure wasn't a good start!

CATHERINE

You watch it!

ERIK

What are you gonna do, ground me?

CATHERINE

Look, Erik, I guess I figured your dad would be better at helping you. I thought he could be a better parent than I was. But I guess neither of us has been much good at it, huh?

ERIK

You can say that again.

CATHERINE

But I'd like another chance.

ERIK

Yeah? School breaks aren't gonna cut it.

CATHERINE

Speaking of school, how serious is this problem?

ERIK

I'd rather not talk about it.

CATHERINE

Tough. What's going on?

ERIK

Why don't you just read the reports?

CATHERINE

What are they going to say? Will they tell me about all the fights?

ERIK

See? You know all about it.

CATHERINE

No, your grandmother told me *what's* happened. But I don't know *why* you've been fighting.

ERIK

'Cause the other guys are assholes.

CATHERINE

Come on, Erik.

ERIK

You said you and Dad were the problem, not me. So the other guys are the problem, not me. Self-defense.

CATHERINE

So you had nothing to do with it.

ERIK

Fine. Don't believe me. Nobody else does.

CATHERINE

Were they suspended too?

ERIK

Of course not. They're on the football team. Might get athletic scholarships. Can't mess with that. Let's pin it all on Erik. He doesn't do us any good anyway. So I get nailed. I didn't even start the goddamned fights! What the fuck am I supposed to do, sit there and let them stuff me into a locker?

CATHERINE

I can't believe that.

ERIK

Sure, nobody can. That's why I get blamed. "Oh, Tommy and Jeff and Dave are such nice boys! They wouldn't hurt a fly!" Fine upstanding citizens, those guys. Yeah, right.

CATHERINE

What does your Dad have to say about this?

ERIK

Not much. He can always buy my way in somewhere. I'm sure as hell not going back to that place.

CATHERINE

That's right, you're not. You're not going away to school any more.

ERIK

I have to. The local schools aren't good enough. According to Dad. The real reason is, they have the baby now and Katie just doesn't want the trouble. Same as you. The further I am, the better.

CATHERINE

Well, if your behavior on this visit is any indication, you haven't exactly been sweetness and light.

ERIK

I guess not.

(They smile briefly. SAMANTHA and GRACE have clasped hands.)

SAMANTHA

The first picture I saw was the one where he's in that white suit, you know? And he looks like Tennessee Williams.

GRACE

I know the one.

SAMANTHA

Then I saw a picture of him when he was a kid, and I swear Gran, it was creepy. It looked so much like me. The forehead, the ears, the shape of the face, everything. I just got freaked out. I didn't realize till I saw that picture, how much it meant to see someone who looked like me. It was like putting together the last pieces in a puzzle. (pause) I wish I could've met him.

GRACE

You're a great deal alike, in some ways. Joseph would have loved meeting you.

SAMANTHA

He must have had a temper, like I do.

GRACE

Sometimes.

SAMANTHA

I feel like Dinah wants me to call her mom. But I just don't feel that way.

GRACE

You should do whatever makes you feel comfortable.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, I know. It just never seems like enough for her.

GRACE

Well, what do you want?

(SAMANTHA stares at her. CATHERINE lights a cigarette.)

CATHERINE

You think Arizona is far enough? For your Dad?

ERIK

Where can I go to school in Arizona?

CATHERINE

The one near my new apartment.

ERIK

Very funny. It's a little too late for that.

CATHERINE

Why?

ERIK

You don't really want to do this. Do you?

CATHERINE

Don't tell me what I want and don't want, Erik Daniel Quinn.

ERIK

You're just feeling sorry for me.

CATHERINE

No, I've been feeling sorry for myself. And I'm going to stop doing that. It's not doing either of us any good.

ERIK

What do you mean?

CATHERINE

Erik, I was wrong. I'd like you to give us another chance.

ERIK

That's easy for you to say.

CATHERINE

No, it's not. You're right. I don't even know you. But I want to. And I want you to know me. Can't we try again? To make this work?

ERIK (quietly)

Why should I trust you this time?

CATHERINE

All I can do is give you my word, I'm not going anywhere. And neither are you. Not if you don't want to. Please?

(Holds out her hand. After a long pause, ERIK takes it.)

ERIK

If you can talk Dad into it, I guess we can give it a try.

CATHERINE

You mean it?

ERIK

If you do. He won't want to give any child support though.

CATHERINE (laughing)

Tough! You leave that to me. He owes both of us.

ERIK

Mom...I won't run off again.

CATHERINE

Me neither.

ERIK

Promise?

CATHERINE

Promise. Hey, what do you know about child support, anyway?

ERIK

Are you kidding? Almost every kid at school has, like, six parents. I only have one stepmother, I've got nothing on them.

CATHERINE

That's pretty sad.

ERIK

Joe and Grace were separated for a long time, weren't they?

CATHERINE

Since before you were born.

ERIK

Wow. How come they never got a divorce?

CATHERINE

I asked her that same question yesterday.

(GRACE enters the living room)

GRACE

It would have been a real pain in the ass! (she laughs)

CATHERINE

We're going to talk to Greg about letting Erik live with me.

GRACE

Well, it's about time!

ERIK

I wouldn't get too excited. He's gonna say no anyway.

CATHERINE

Where's Sam?

GRACE

Still out in the yard.

CATHERINE

I think I'll go talk to her.

GRACE

Good idea. And you, sir, are drafted to help with breakfast.

ERIK

Oh, shit. I can't cook.

GRACE

Well, it's about time you learned, don't you think?

ERIK

No, I don't.

GRACE

Too bad. You can help or go hungry.

ERIK

Oh, all right, if those are my only choices...

(They exit. SAMANTHA is lying on the deck chair, her eyes closed. As CATHERINE approaches, SAMANTHA turns and meets her gaze.)

CATHERINE

I held you once. I never told you that before. I asked the nurse if I could feed you. It was the day before I left the hospital. She didn't want to let me at first, but I insisted. I held you for a long time. You went to sleep in my arms. (Pause) Then they gave me one of the newborn pictures to keep. I signed the papers. And I never saw you again. Till Poppa died. (Pause) What do you want to know?

SAMANTHA

Whatever you can tell me. (Pause) Okay. Let's start simple. What was his name?

CATHERINE

Henry Theodore Watts. The third. Ted.

SAMANTHA

Did you go to school with him?

CATHERINE

Sure. Well, sort of. For a year I did. Then he went somewhere else. His parents weren't too thrilled about us. He was a year younger but we were in the same grade. I lost some time when I moved to New York for school.

SAMANTHA

That's so cool, that you got to go to New York by yourself when you were sixteen. I would have loved to do something like that.

CATHERINE

It was pretty great. But I wasn't alone. I was living with one of Poppa's cousins.

SAMANTHA

Were you in love with my father?

CATHERINE

Oh, I don't know. I guess I thought so. I was seventeen when I met him. We saw each other for about two years.

SAMANTHA

Where is he now?

CATHERINE

I have no idea. You might be able to find him through his school.

SAMANTHA

I met Doug when I was seventeen, but we ignored each other for a long time.

CATHERINE (annoyed)

Anyway.

SAMANTHA

Sorry.

CATHERINE

No, it's just, you ask me something and then you start putting in your own little ideas and it feels like you're not really interested in what I have to say.

SAMANTHA

Sure I am! I just thought we were having a conversation, that's all. You know, back and forth? Give and take?

CATHERINE

Okay, fine! Never mind.

SAMANTHA

Fine.

CATHERINE

You don't make things easy, you know.

SAMANTHA

Why do you expect us to be best friends right away?

CATHERINE

I don't.

SAMANTHA

Sure, you do! Every time we argue a little bit, or see things differently, you get all offended. Like you think we're supposed to be Siamese twins or something. We don't even know each other.

CATHERINE

I guess I just wish we had more time together.

SAMANTHA

Well, so do I. But we happen to live thousands of miles apart. That doesn't mean we can't be close. It's just going to take time.

CATHERINE

Sowing the seeds.

SAMANTHA

What?

CATHERINE

Poppa used to say that when we kids had fights with our friends, or each other. He used to tell us we should be careful about how we treated each other, because we were learning how to get along and it was going to stay with us our whole lives. He called it sowing the seeds.

SAMANTHA

(with CATHERINE)
...Sowing the seeds. I like that.

CATHERINE

I used to think it was really corny.

(They laugh)

When I get back to Florida, I can try to find the letters Ted wrote me. I might not have packed them yet.

SAMANTHA

I'd really like to see them.

CATHERINE

Okay.

SAMANTHA

Dinah? Were you ever sorry you had me?

CATHERINE

Not in the least. I wanted to keep you with me. I tried so hard to find a way to do that. I just couldn't.

SAMANTHA

Then how come you never came looking for me?

CATHERINE

I guess I thought I had no right. I gave that up when I signed those papers. If you came looking for me, that would be wonderful. But I didn't think it was my place, that I should break my word.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry I've been kind of bitchy. I'm not feeling so great.

CATHERINE

I know. I'm sorry we've been fighting too.

SAMANTHA

Dinah...can I have a cigarette?

CATHERINE

Oh, no, Sam! Really?

SAMANTHA

All right, just a drag. Then we can go help with breakfast.

CATHERINE

No, let's let them handle it. They've got some seeds to sow too.

SAMANTHA

Okay. By the way, when are you going to leave for Arizona?

CATHERINE

I'll be packing up in a few weeks. But I'm going to make a few stops along the way. Why?

SAMANTHA

I've got an idea! Why don't I make the drive from Florida to Arizona with you? I've always wanted to drive cross country like that. It'd be fun!

CATHERINE

You sure you want to do that? The two of us alone in a car for ten days?

SAMANTHA

Are you kidding? It'd be a blast. Then I could fly back to New York.

CATHERINE

I'd really love that.

SAMANTHA

Cool!

CATHERINE

Hey, Sam. Can I have a hug?

(They rise and embrace, awkwardly at first, then tighter)

LIGHTS FADE

CURTAIN

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