Sponsors: Rose Muskat Marcou; Matt and Jessica Amaranek Marcou; the Rest of the Marcou and Amaranek Families Too; Mgr. Bernard McGarty; Ellen McGarty Flynn; Charles and Christine Freiberg; David W. Johns; Mark and Jean Smith; Dale Barclay; Roger L. Chase and Brian; Richard Dungan; and Ignacio and Argentina Peterson.

Immediate Family of David A. and Rose C.M. Marcou, their Prospect Street back yard, La Crosse, Memorial Day 1997, Pic by Matt A. Marcou (David Joseph Marcou, Matt’s dad, is at far left in pic).

SA4 is David Joseph Marcou’s 119th book so far. Included in it are his Pulitzer-nominated play “Remembering Davy Crockett”, and “Song of Joy—Or the Old Reliables”, the National Theatre of Ireland-critiqued sequel to a Sean O’Casey classic. David is a direct descendant of Canadian explorer Louis Joliet; he graduated Aquinas High School and the Universities of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri. His works have twice been nominated for Pulitzers, and twice for POYi book awards. He has published 1,000 shorter pieces of his writing and many thousands of his photos, including in La Crosse Tribune, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, New York Times, Smithsonianian magazine, RPS Journal, British Journal of Photography, and Business Korea. David had some of his 2008 campaign photos on display at the Smithsonian in a 2011-2012 group-show, "Gift of the Artist," curated by SI Archivist David Haberstick. His son, Matthew A. Marcou, is an Army Special Ops Combat Medic veteran now a top Engineering student in Pennsylvania, who married to successful artist and univserity teacher Jessica Amaranek Marcou.

Cover photos: (Top L-R) 2 young dancers, with hair beautifully curled, peek into text where “Song of Joy” pub scene will soon be staged, Irishfest-La Crosse, 8-9-08, Pic by NDI; Playwright David Joseph Marcou, Gutter Biker near Covent Garden, London, Autumn 1981, Pic by David Joseph Marcou, (Bottom L-R) Matt & Jessica Amaranek Marcou (L) group, Old Country Buffet, Onalaska, WI, 12-28-15, Pic by David Joseph Marcou; Pulitzer Nominated Cast & Crew for “Remembering Davy Crockett”, including playwright-director David Joseph Marcou (TR), AIDS, La Crosse, April 12, Pic by Roger A. Grant.

Contents: Along Towards Easter; As Angels Do in Heaven; Bloody Math; Borderline; Fearful Past and Future; Korean Love Song; Remembering Davy Crockett (Unabridged); Song of Joy—Or the Old Reliables; The Marcou of Prospect Street.

Dedicated to my son, Matthew A. Marcou, and his wife, Jessica Amarnek Marcou, my mom and other family and friends, especially to the memory of David A. Marcou Jr. & Sr., and Agnes Mary Fitzgerald Marcou, and to the memory of Sean O’Casey, the greatest Irish playwright of all time.

©31 July 2005 for original ‘Along Towards Easter’ script, and revised script written on and 15 June 2008 by David J. Marcou, with Matthew A. Marcou as co-holder of Copyright. It was further-revised, somewhat modestly, on December 23, 2016. This drama was reconstructed very loosely from the 2004 Revised Version of David J. Marcou’s ‘Song of Joy’, with original draft of ‘Song of Joy’ written by David J. Marcou in 2000. “Song of Joy—Or the Old Reliables” is the current title of David’s first Irish play.

Characters:

Juno Boyle, a Dublin matriarch
“Captain” Jack Boyle, her husband
Johnny Boyle, the couple’s murdered son (and the ‘apparitions’ who killed him)
Commandant Tancred (and the ‘apparitions’ who killed him)
Mary Boyle Fitzgerald, their grown daughter
Dr. John Fitzgerald, Mary’s husband
Shivaun Fitzgerald, John’s adoptive and Mary’s teenage daughter
John “Johnny” Fitzgerald Jr., John Sr. and Mary’s teenage son
Joxer Daly, the Captain’s best friend
Dave and Rose George, a newly arrived American businessman and his wife
Fr. Michael “Rocky” Murphy, pastor of St. Bartholomew’s Church
Lynn Murphy, Fr. Murphy’s sister and the church-organist
Matt Brett, a young courier
Jessica Flynn, Matt’s girl friend
Maggie Mulligan, a neighbor of the Boyle’s
Dicky and Donny Mulligan, Maggie’s brothers
Two “solicitors,” friends of John Sr.
Ray O’Reilly, publican
Frank O’Malley, solicitor
Daisy Morgan, a neighbor of Joxer’s
Police Officers Slattery and Shannon
Additional police officers and/or medics
Musicians and people in bar

Settings:

Dramatic Prologue: The night before Ash Wednesday, 1940, the Boyles’ bedroom
Scene 1: Interior, St. Bartholomew’s Church, Ash Wednesday, 1940
Scene 2: The Boyles’ tenement flat, the next Saturday morning.
Scene 3: The backroom of O’Reilly’s Pub, the next Monday night
Scene 4: The drinking area of O’Reilly’s Pub, same night
Scene 5: The Boyle’s flat, Palm Sunday evening
Scene 6: The Boyle’s flat, Palm Sunday, two hours later
Scene 7: St. Bartholomew’s sacristy, early Easter Saturday evening.
Scene 8: St. Bartholomew’s sacristy, an hour or so later.
Scene 9: St. Bartholomew’s sacristy, several minutes afterward.

Dramatic Prologue:

Action: Old Irish melodies play in the theatre while the audience assembles, including “Danny Boy” and “My Wild Irish Rose”. Darkness onstage until the word is given to begin, following a pause in the music. When the lights come up dimly, we see the Boyles’ bedroom. Juno and the Captain are asleep. The Captain is snoring, and Juno is breathing heavily. She begins speaking groggily to herself, in the midst of a bad dream.

JUNO: Oh, me darlin’ Johnny – where have ya gone off ta now? Where have ya gone off ta…?

(The vision of Johnny Boyle appears, accompanied by a handful of Irish Irregulars. Johnny is forced to kneel down, and he begins to finger his beads anxiously, starting the “Our Father.” Just as he gets to the words, “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,” a separate figure emerges, and a verbal order is given; the Irregulars aim their pistols. Johnny’s final words are, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from Evil…” as a hand-signal is given to the Irregulars and gunfire breaks out. Johnny and the separate figure slump to the ground; Johnny’s hand twitches once, as his beads flap up but stay attached round his fingers. Juno, his mother, who has sat up in her bed to watch her nightmare-vision, in a kind of hazy, dim light, shouts upward at last, with arms imploiring:

1
JUNO: Blessed Virgin, where were you when me beautiful boyo was riddled with IRA bullets, when me beautiful boyo was done in by their bullets? And now I see that Johnny is implicated in Commandant Tancred’s death in my dream? Sacred Heart o’ Jesus, take away our heartless deeds, and forgive us for those sins! Take away this deadliest hate, an’ give us Your own eternal love!”

(Somber organ music plays briefly now. Lights out.)

Scene 1

(Scene: The interior of St. Bartholomew’s Catholic Church, Ash Wednesday afternoon 1940. We see a portion of the right side of the church with a confessional in back-center stage, pews in front of it, and a statue of St. Bartholomew nearby. A woman, the organist and pastor’s sister, passes through the church toward to the choir-loft. The front door of the church, stage left, opens and shuts. Two voices, arguing.)

FIRST MAN: I keep tellin’ yous, Joxer, I’m not goin’ ta tell the Father all me sins, jes the big ‘un.

SECOND MAN: But it won’t take with the priest, much less Juno, unless ya tell ’em everything.

(They enter. The First Man is “Captain” Jack Boyle, a fleshy sort of man, not quite portly but close. He is in his 60’s with a semi-bald, shaggy-sided head of gray hair, and is carrying an old train conductor’s hat, black. He wears lived-in clothes and a pair of spectacles. Though his language seems coarse, he is not unhandsome nor completely without charm, sort of an Irish Archie Bunker. Joxer is a man of slightly taller than medium height, same as the Captain, but is much slimmer and with spryer good looks. He wears an ironic smile often on the face, as well as only slightly better lived-in clothes than the Captain’s. He wears a dark green beret, which he has just removed.)

JOXER: I tell ya, Captain, Juno’ll never believe ya when you say you’ve been ta confession, if you don’t show enough of the truth. You know, you and me haven’t exactly been keepin’ company with heavenly angels since Johnny died. Especially the night o’ his funeral.

BOYLE: No, we ain’t. But if I spill me guts to the priest, I’ll spill me guts to Juno, too, and no matter what you say about her believin’, it’s her ire that she’ll be sportin’ if I tell her everything we been up to these past 18 years.

JOXER: For one thing, we haven’t darkened the door of the church in all that time, not since yur boy’s funeral. That’s a devil-king’s ransom of missed Sunday Masses. Then there’s all the drinkin’ and lyin’ we been about, and that night, you know which night, we spent with the Nacker sisters…

BOYLE: (Motioning): Hush, Joxer! Don’t ya know, Juno will tie me tail to the streetlight and kick in more than me shin s, if she finds out about the Nacker sisters.

JOXER: Just so, just so. But I’m tellin’ ya, you’ll pay an even bigger price, if ya don’t tell the Father about the Nacker sisters now, both to Juno and to God, which is pretty close to one and the same. I’m guessin’, but the windfall’ll seem like a lesser sin, if your Missus forgives you for the Nackers.

(A cough comes from the priest’s station in the confessional.)

BOYLE: You don’t know me Juno like I do, Joxer. She’ll kill me for both. I’m goin’ ta kenfishun now, Joxer, an’ I’ll do me best.

JOXER: Your best better be good enough, or you’ll hear ‘bout it from Juno in the end.

(Just as Boyle enters the confessional, the church doors open and a man and woman enter. The man, David George, 30, is six feet tall, and wears a dark blue suit and dark brown shoes. He also wears spectacles and carries a black umbrella, with a brown fedora in hand, too. His wife, Rose, is a handsome young woman of 28, who wears a dark green dress and navy blue shoes, while carrying a dark brown purse. The couple have come from America for business and personal reasons. Right now, they are looking for Father Michael Murphy.)

ROSE (Standing at stage left, front): Sweetheart, it looks as though there are some people in here. (Looking toward the confessional.)

DAVID: Good, I was worried that we’d not find him in, if it is him in the confessional. Let’s ask this man if it is Father Michael who’s in there.

ROSE: Good idea. (The couple approach Joxer, who is kneeling in a pew.)

DAVID: Excuse me, sir.

JOXER (Standing up): No excuses needed for you, sir, or you either, ma’am. There’s others of us who do need them, though, but you’d not know about that, I’d guess.

DAVID: Well, we’re wondering if the priest in the confessional is Fr. Murphy, Michael Murphy.

JOXER: I didn’t see who went in except me friend Captain Boyle, but I’d guess he’s confessing to Rocky Murphy at this very minute.
DAVID: Is that what they call Fr. Murphy, Rocky?

JOXER: That they do. He used to box, and a tougher nut to beat stuffins’ out of there isn’t.

DAVID: By the way, my name’s David George, and this is my wife, Rose. (They shake hands.) We’re here from the States and looking to find out more about my wife’s family history. I am working for my company here, as well.

ROSE: Yes, we’re trying to find out more about my father’s side, the Fitzgeralds.

JOXER: The Fitzgeralds, ya say? Well, there may be somethin’ we can help ya with on that score. In fact, there may be quite a bit of help to you here on that score. Captain Boyle, me friend in the confessional, he’ll have somethin’ to say about all this. Just give it a second or two…

(Captain Boyle emerges from the confessional. He is surprised to see Joxer talking with someone in church, and moves quickly, while still aware of the visitors’ space, toward them.)

JOXER: Captain Boyle, this here is the Georges. They’re visitin’ from the States, ‘n looking for their connections to the Fitzgerald family. I said we may be able to help them on that score.

BOYLE: Ya don’t say, Joxer. (He shakes hands with the Georges.) I happen to be the father-in-law of a Fitzgerald meself. John Fitzgerald, Doctor at that, is me son-in-law. He’s married ta me daughter, Mary.

DAVID: Is he any relation to Sean Fitzgerald of Limerick?

BOYLE: Ye don’t say, Joxer. (He shakes hands with the Georges.) I happen to be the father-in-law of a Fitzgerald meself. John Fitzgerald, Doctor at that, is me son-in-law. He’s married ta me daughter, Mary.

DAVID: Is he any relation to Sean Fitzgerald of Limerick?

BOYLE: Well, I know his ancestors came from around there, but I don’t know the name Sean Fitzgerald.

ROSE: Well, Sean Fitzgerald would have been at least three generations before me. Sean was my great-grandfather.

BOYLE: Me son-in-law is a first-rate doctor, helps me with the pain in me legs, and he’s a gentleman, too.

DAVID: We’re here for a year, while I do some work for my company, which is based in Chicago. I hope we can meet this Dr. Fitzgerald.

BOYLE: Wouldn’t be any trouble at all. John is home every night by six o’clock, unless he goes out on a house-call. His phone number is 1688, I think. Why don’t ya call him?

ROSE: Sounds like a fine plan to us, Captain Boyle.

DAVID: We are temporarily staying at the Green Coulee Hotel on O’Connell Street. Where do you live, then, Captain Boyle?

BOYLE: Me wife and me stay at 148 Gallagher Road, just a few blocks from here. We even have a tallyphone. The number is 1916. Maybe you could visit us sometime, but tonight’s bad. Mrs. Boyle is cookin’ liver and most people ain’t in love with it as much as Juno is — includin’ me.

ROSE: We wouldn’t want to inconvenience you, Mr. Boyle. Could we stop by some other time? We’ve just arrived in town and have to get a bit more situated.

BOYLE (Thinking): Yis, that’ll be fine. Meantime, Joxer’n’ me’ll make sure we got plenty o’ provisions in hand for yous when ya do visit.

ROSE: Good, then we’ll look forward to seeing you and Mrs. Boyle soon. Maybe by then, you can find out if your John Fitzgerald is related to my Sean Fitzgerald, whose wife was Margaret Alice, by the way. And then, when it’s convenient, maybe we could visit the doctor and his family.

JOXER: Ah, Margaret Alice, tis an angel’s name, don’t ya think, Captain?

BOYLE: So tis, Joxer, so tis.

ROSE: Well, it was nice meeting you both.

BOYLE: Twas daesent meetin’ the two o’ you, too.

DAVID: We’ll be seeing you soon, then.

BOYLE: Right you are.

(The Georges move toward the confessional as Boyle and Joxer exit. Organ music begins to play, not quite so somber this time, yet not too light either. Lights out.)
Scene 2

(Action: The living room and kitchen of the Boyle’s tenement flat in Dublin mid-morning on the Saturday after Ash Wednesday. It is a modest, clean apartment. There is a radio, stage right in front, with a telephone atop it. A bedroom door is just left of it. Further back, stage right, is the door to Juno and the Captain’s bedroom. There are bright touches here and there – in the green and yellow drapes in the two windows at back, and two black-and-white photos on the walls: one of Johnny Boyle as a youngster, the other of Mary Fitzgerald and her family. Also at back is a shelf with some delftware and small utensils on it. Above it is a central picture of the Sacred Heart, with a smaller picture of the Blessed Virgin below it. Just to the side of the shelf and below, is a small stand with a lit, red votive candle on it, with a picture of Juno’s immediate family, taken while Johnny was still alive, attached to the stand. Just to its side, hung on the wall, is a very small stained glass window. At back, stage left, is the door to the hallway. Also stage left is a fireplace. A sink and icebox are near the fireplace, in the kitchen, as well as a dining table. A rocking chair is between the two areas, with a barebones but decent couch nearby it, towards center-stage. The living area is not over-large. Juno is sewing, and her daughter, Mary Fitzgerald, is in the main bedroom. Juno is humming “Immaculate Mary”, while she sews.)

JUNO (Stops singing and sewing): Mary, come in here, girl. Tis a fine seamstress I’ve turned into over these many years. Have a look.

MARY (Entering with a photo-album): Yes, ma. You’re as fine a seamstress as Dublin has seen. I guess da’s had somethin’ to do with that – if he had steady work, you wouldn’t have to sew for hire.

JUNO (Sewing again): When you’re right, you’re right, daughter o’ mine. Why, just the other night I asked your da when he was goin’ to go over to McGintey’s to see about that night watchman job. Says he: “I’ll go to McGintey’s when McGintey stops smirkin’ everytime I walk by his factory. Like he’s Gawd or somethin’.”

MARY: Take’s one ta know one, I guess.

JUNO: I told him that McGintey was smirkin’ just ta tease him, and that he’d better get used ta some teasin’ from his boss, if he ever wants ta hold a job.

MARY: Wasn’t McGintey the one that told him, “Gawd bless ya, Captain, cuz no one else will.”

JUNO (Remembering, with a smile): Yeah, that be he. But glory be , there’s a lot worse shot at the Captain in some of the pubs he and Joxer frequent, and that bounces right off his back, I’d guess. You know – anything for a drink and a little joke.

MARY (Opening the album as she sits on the couch): Da never did have much stomach for teasin’, unless he was the one doin’ it.

JUNO: Exactly me thought, Mary. He ken dish it out, but can’t take it. I wish I owned a penny for every time Joxer has lit him up and let him down, though. Joxer can be alright, in a mischievous sort of way, but he ain’t grand about everything.

MARY: As much satire as Joxer brings to life, though, ma, it’s better da should hang out with Joxer than with the ruffians down the block – the Mulligans, who carouse and fight and steal as much as any night-time marauders.

JUNO: Know what ya mean, daughter. The Mulligans are a bad lot, except for their daughter, Maggie, who may just be the only good thing to come out of that clan in a hundred years.

MARY: Yeah, Maggie may be good, and I’d guess she is, but Dicky and Donny, the marauding brothers, more than make up for her. (Looking at the album.) Ma, not to change subject, but I was lookin’ through your album at the dozen or so pictures you have my brother, Johnny, to see how my own Johnny compares, and in three or four of the pictures, I can barely tell the difference between them, in looks, at least.

JUNO: Yes, they do look alike, an awful lot alike. When my Johnny was small, he had a way of walking, too, that reminded me of your Johnny at same age. Kind of a hip and a hop. Tis a shame your brother never met your own Johnny, because they would have been great boodies. I know your husband, John, and my Johnny would have gotten along well, too. ’Tis a shame they never met.

MARY: I wish they would have, ma. Maggie, in a very small way, has tried. I wish they were closer, because they might have had a good effect on each other.

JUNO: Know what you mean, daughter. The Mulligans are a bad lot, except for their daughter, Maggie, who may just be the only good thing to come out of that clan in a hundred years.

MARY: Yeah, Maggie may be good, and I’d guess she is, but Dicky and Donny, the marauding brothers, more than make up for her. (Looking at the album.) Ma, not to change subject, but I was lookin’ through your album at the dozen or so pictures you have my brother, Johnny, to see how my own Johnny compares, and in three or four of the pictures, I can barely tell the difference between them, in looks, at least.

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MARY: With a wink: Ah, but they knew some of the same people, didn’t they, Ma, and fine people they are at that. As for my young Johnny and my brother, Johnny, they’d’ve gotten along like two peas in an Irish pod. They could’ve gone down to the Liffey sometimes and had a day of fishin’, or just set on the front stoop and talked out the problems of the world, like an uncle and his nephew can do. If my brother would’ve lived, he might even have had a positive effect on da.

JUNO: Who knows, still might. I hold with the keen effects of the spirit as much as the body of a person.

MARY: So true, sometimes, ma, so true.

(A knock on the door.)

MARY (Closing the album and getting up): I’ll get it, ma. Maybe it’s one of me own, after ta see where I’ve been this mornin’. We’ll get back to the album when there’s time.

(Mary opens the door. It’s Maggie Mulligan.)

MARY: Maggie, what brings you here this morning?
MAGGIE (In an exercised state): I hate to break in on yas, but your da and Joxer got into a row with me bruthers, and Joxer looks in bad shape. Your da is bringin’ him over now. Have ya a bed for him ta rest in, while we get a doctor.

MARY: Yes we do, right ma? (Juno indicates where and goes to prepare a bed.) I’ll call my husband to take a look at Joxer. Thanks for stoppin’, Maggie.

MAGGIE: Oh, no thruble a-tall. Your da and Joxer are comin’ now.

(Voices in the hallway. Maggie disappears, and Joxer is half-carried in by the Captain, who seems in rough shape himself, but mainly from the labor of carrying Joxer in.)

MARY: Da, Joxer -- Maggie Mulligan was just here. What happened?

BOYLE: Tis a long story, Mary. I’ll tell ya when we get Joxer inside. (They take him into the spare bedroom.)

(Mary and Boyle emerge.)

BOYLE: I need a drink, Mary. Is there one about?

MARY: I’ll get you some cold water. You know what ma’ll do if she sees ya drinkin’ spirits here.

BOYLE (Taking the water from Mary): This morning calls for a stiff one, but a glass of the clear stuff’ll have ta do. (He takes one sip, and sets the glass down.)

MARY: I’m calling John. (She goes to phone and dials.) John, dear, it’s me. I’m at Ma and Da’s and Da just brought Joxer in. He was in a fight. Can you come by right away? Good. I’ll see you soon. (She hangs up. Talking to Boyle.) Now, tell me what happened.

BOYLE: Joxer ‘n’ me, we was headed for O’Reilly’s ‘bout half hour ago, when Dick y Mulligan comes up and says ta Joxer ‘n’ me: “You old boys ain’t still huffin’ and puffin’ round town, are yous? Can’t a guy walk the streets without seein’ the ugly likes o’ yous?” And Joxer says straight back at Dicky: “Sure tis a regal mornin’ when we ken see the likes o’ you. What, has Dicky Mulligan been elected king, pope, and dogcatcher, when he’s a third-rate mongrel himself?”

MARY: He didn’t!

BOYLE: By the stars, he did. I don’t know what’s got inta Joxer lately, but he’s standin’ up straight about some things, and not usin’ his usual curvaceous talk. For a fact, though, Dicky decked him good, and Joxer’ll be lingerin’ for a day or two, I’d guess.

MARY: Praise be God -- Joxer’s caught religion.

BOYLE: That’s what I said ta him just this morning, didn’t I. And he says: “Tis time we both did.”

MARY: Then Joxer’s makin’ more sense now than for the last 18 years.

BOYLE: Sure he is, me daughter. Sure he is. (Taking a second sip of water, then acting like he doesn’t know why he did.)

MARY: Da, why wasn’t Donny Mulligan involved? Dicky is hardly ever seen without Donny.

BOYLE: Swear to Gawd, I don’t know where Donny was. Yur right, Dicky’s never without his other daf’ bucko.

MARY: R ight. (Getting up and going to the wi ndow, back right.) The Mulligan brothers are nowhere ta be seen. Guess they don’t want to own up ta what they just did.

BOYLE: They’ll be ownin’ up ta your da himself, if they cum round this place. A man ken only stan’ so much.

JUNO (Emerging, as the other two watch her for her judgments): Well, Joxer should be alright til John gets here. I’ll get him some water in a minute. (Knowingly.) Don’t want to shock his system too much in such a short space o’ time. (Smiles.) I don’t ‘spect he’ll want to miss out on carousin’ too long, but I hope he doesn’t want to see the Mulligans anytime soon again, either.

BOYLE: I dunno, wife. He’s been actin’ strange lately, and no tellin’ what he’ll do next.

JUNO: I noticed he seems on his best behaviour, but then he was always good about not splashin’ water in yur face when a cool, long one was nearby. (In an admonishing tone.) Cool, long drinks are very much ta your likin’, too, aren’t they, love? (Boyle looks at her, but is afraid to speak up.)

MARY (Hearing a noise, she gets up and goes towards the spare bedroom): You just made me think of somethin’, ma. Joxer had a look on his face… (She opens the door, and looks in.) Jees, ma, the winda’s open and Joxer’s gone!

BOYLE: What?! He wouldn’t go anywhere without me. What’s that weasel up to?
JUNO: Mary, go down and find Maggie Mulligan, and see if she’s got any idea where Joxer got off to. And hurry! (Mary exits.)

BOYLE: I’ll go too, ma. I’ve got a coupla ideas where he’s at.

JUNO: No, you stay right here. I don’t need you crippled anymore than you are, and the Mulligans would annihilate ya.

BOYLE: Annihilate me? What? Those two little dumplin’s? Why they’d have no more chance against me than… than… against the president himself.

JUNO: Just as ya say, husband. But I’d guess the Mulligans are better situated, wherever they are, right now, and you’d be walkin’ into somethin’. They’re probably expectin’ you to try somethin’ like revenge, don’t ya know?

BOYLE (Feeling better sitting now.): When you’re right you’re right, wife o’ mine. Better I stay out of the fray for an hour or two.

JUNO: Just as ya say, Captain. By the way, got a call early this morning from the people you met at church. (Boyle looks surprised.) What’s got into you and Joxer lately? Tis a new set of shoes for yous, a man who’d never think ta enter the fray, except backwards and at a curvaceous angle, and two men who haven’t darkened a church doorstep for near 20 years...

BOYLE: I don’t know. (Not thinking.) I guess our little trip to church...

JUNO: Yes, church… tell me all about it.

BOYLE (He knows he has to say something.): Joxer and me we’re thinkin’ we haven’t been in church for 18 years – might be nice to say a prayer and stroke Gawd’s brow, even if it is with our sweaty palms. (Looking up to see if he is doing okay.)

JUNO: You, saying prayers? Well, what’d ya pray for?

BOYLE (Thinking as fast as he can.): I guess we prayed for blessings (nervous) and forgiveness… you know, for the sins we’ve done, little or big, no matter how ya slice it. But we were only in church a minute or two, just enough to catch our breath before we went ta O’Reilly’s again.

(A knock on the door. Juno answers it.)

JUNO: John. Didn’t ya see yur wife on the way in? I should’ve called. Joxer’s disappeared, and we don’t know where he is. Maybe lookin’ for the Mulligans – he’s had such a change o’ heart, though I doubt he’ll be lookin’ ta make peace with ‘em, if he has.

JOHN FITZGERALD: No bother, mother. Should I go look for him?

JUNO: No, Mary’s out doing that, with Maggie Mulligan. You’ve got your business to tend to. Maybe you should get back to it.

JOHN: I insist on staying. I’m on call today, and my secretary knows how to reach me. I’m going to go downstairs just for a minute, and take a look-see. I’ll be right back.

JUNO: Yes, do that, then. I’ll keep company with the Captain, while you take a look.

(John exits. Juno goes over and sits with her husband.)

JUNO: Now, Captain, we don’t often have a chance ta talk. What were you sayin’ about church? Praying for forgiveness and all?

BOYLE: All I ken tell ya is Joxer ‘n’ me are working on a plan to make some real money, and it ain’t goin’ ta cost us nothin’.

JUNO (Incredulous.) Oh, it won’t, won’t it? Seein’ is believin’, Captain. And when are you goin’ ta tell me what sin’s are weighin’ most heavy on your mind? I’d love ta hear all o’ them. Lay your cards on the table, then.

BOYLE (Very uncomfortable.): Well… it’s like this…. (The hallway door bursts open, and in comes Joxer.)

JOXER: Captain, come on outside. I’ve somethin’ ta tell ya.

JUNO: Oh, no you don’t, Joxer Daly. What’s cookin’? Besides your goose, if ya don’t talk.

JOXER: Oh… alright. (He sits in the rocking chair.) I just slipped in when Dr. John wasn’t looking. The Mulligans got this scheme, see, where they plan on robbin’ the new-rich to pay the old-poor, themselves, that is.

JUNO: And who be the new-rich?

JOXER (Winking to Boyle.): There’s an old guy and his pal on Wicklow Street. The Captain and me see ‘em all the time at O’Reilly’s.
BOYLE: All the time. (Winking back.) Jim and Bobby. What’s the Mulligans’ plan, Joxer, me boyo?

JOXER: It’s like this: Monday, the old guy and his pal are picking up some money they’ve come into, at O’Reilly’s, and the Mulligans plan on robbin’ ’em blind before they get home with it.

BOYLE: How did they find out about the money?

JOXER: Dunno, except it has ta do with the Mulligans overhearin’ the old guys as they were walkin’ by Del Monte’s Pub the other day.

JUNO: Del Monte’s, ya say? That’s over by St. Bart’s, isn’t it?

JOXER: Yes, tis, Mrs. Boyle, yes tis.

JUNO: Twas it by any chance, that you two were in that neighborhood then, too?

BOYLE: Yes, we were, come ta think of it. (Concocting a story quickly.) Joxer and me, we were headin’ over ta McGintey’s, ta see about work, when we ran across our butties, Jim and Bobby. They were tellin’ us about them winnin’ a lot of money on a horse-race, a big horse-race, and the Mulligans must’ve overheard us at Del Monte’s. (Winking.) Right, Joxer? In fact, Jim and Bobby are the ones who are goin’ ta help us earn that money I was tellin’ ya about, Mrs. Boyle.

JUNO: Oh, really, go on…

BOYLE (Semi-comfortable with the half-lie he plans on telling.): Well, it’s like this…

(Voices in the hallway. Mary and John enter with Maggie.)

MARY: Joxer, how’d you get back up here?

JOHN: Yes, Joxer, how did you do that with me downstairs?

JOXER: It’s a long story, Dr. John. I guess it’s just dumb luck as much as anything.

JUNO: What dumb luck?

JOXER: The luck o’ the Irish, Mrs. Boyle. The luck o’ the Irish.

MAGGIE: You do have some kinda luck. Still, I’d advise you to stay clear o’ me brothers. They cluck right up ta Lady Luck, as soon as she comes round.

JOXER: Know what ya mean, Miss Mulligan. Sorta can’t see why one legal pound’ll do when two illegal ones can be had? Right?

MAGGIE: That’s me thought exactly.

MARY: I don’t know what you’re talking about, you two. What’s up?

JOHN: Yes, what is up?

JUNO: I’ll put some tea on quick, and then we’ll all have a nice little talk. Alright?

BOYLE: Maggie, you’ve got to promise not to tell your brothers what I’m about ta tell everyone.

MAGGIE: My brothers and me don’t exactly see eye-to-eye. You can trust me, Captain, as God is my witness. Me rotten brothers ken burn in hell before I tell ’em anything…

(Lights dim to nothing, as Juno gets tea and the others gather round the Captain.)

Scene 3

Action: Lights up on the backroom of O’Reilly’s Pub, Captain Boyle and Joxer’s favorite watering hole. Ray O’Reilly, the owner, has given them leave to conduct some business in the backroom, and his two most faithful patrons are just entering, via a window. Joxer gets inside deftly, and stands by the open, side window, waiting. It’s 7:20 p.m., the next Monday.

BOYLE (Getting stuck in the window.): Jeezus, Mary, and Joseph, what’ve we got ourselves inta, Joxer, help a man through it. (Joxer helps the Captain through the window and into the backroom.)

JOXER: I don’t know about you, Captain, but let’s hope our little plan works, all I ken say.

BOYLE: When did you say O’Malley’d be showin’ up?
JOXER: 7:30 sharp. The Mulligan’s think we’ll be meeting him and ‘our mates’ in front at 7:15, but we’ll be meeting our moneyman here instead, and at 7:30. It’ll be good to see the Mulligans sweating it out.

BOYLE: Juno still thinks we’re here to back up Jim and Bobby, but it’s grand we’re here of our own accord, and ready to get our money. I hope you were wise to let John in on our real plan. If he keeps it a secret til we’ve done some good with the money, then Juno won’t have it spent on other things than what Ken do the most good for us and a few others. Tis our money, after all.

JOXER: Yes. We’ll get our money, if you act smarter than most and look a little less pretty. As for how we spend it, the part that goes toward our little investment, well, jest hope Juno understands that.

BOYLE: Me too, Joxer… Say, tis a good thing ya run inta Marty O’Rourke when you ditched our place t’other day.

JOXER: Well, I didn’t jes run inta him. We sorta had a meetin’ planned, after he’d sent the young courier, Matt Brett, with a message that somethin’ was up. The somethin’ was spelled Mulligans.

BOYLE: Yeah, we may have a fight on our hands, if the Mulligans get wind of where we really are. I hope that boy carrying the message to O’Malley was reliable.

JOXER: Matt is more reliable than you or me ever was, and slicker than any kid his age. He’s best buddies with a great little gal, too, Jessica Flynn. They got the message to O’Malley.

BOYLE: Thank God the Mulligans don’t know what O’Malley looks like. Did you give O’Malley good directions about the window? T’wouldn’t be wise for him to try a door, front or back.

JOXER: Yep. O’Malley says he knows the place well, used to drink here years ago.

BOYLE: Then, what about the rest of the plan?

JOXER: That’s where John comes in. After you and I met with him Saturday night, he talked with a couple of boyos he knows, and they’ll be spreadin’ the word that I hope’ll keep the Mulligans outa our hair, but we gotta be careful. You never know about the Mulligans. I guess tis good we didn’t tell Mrs. Boyle that the two horsemen of the Apocalypse overheard us comin’ out of church, not Jim and Bobby. She’ll probably think you and me are in a little less danger, because the money supposedly isn’t comin’ ta us.

BOYLE: And what is the word again?

JOXER: John’s butties’ll pretend to be solicitors. And they’ll say they’ve come ta tell the two o’ us that the money’s gone. That the inheritance fell through, because of court fees and a new heir contestin’ what little’s left.

BOYLE: What if they don’t buy it?

JOXER: They’ll have to. John took care of putting together some sham papers with a solicitor-friend o’ his. We’ll be in like flint, as the Americans like ta say.

BOYLE: I hope you’re right. We could be dead like flint, if anyone slips up.

JOXER: Trust old Joxer, Captain. This is a better deal than the Mulligans know, and not for them. And O’Malley’ll have our inheritance money for us when he gets here.

BOYLE: Thank Gawd, we had a friend like Charlie Waters. Meetin’ him last year was a stroke o’ luck. He musta liked us pretty well, ta leave us 25,000 pounds. I guess when you’re in the theatre business you’re really in the theatre business.

JOXER: To be sure, twas bad news ta hear that Charlie had died in that car accident in New York State last month. He was straight as an arrow and twice as sweet. (They chuckle.)

BOYLE: That he was, that he was. I just hope he is restin’ comfortable someplace in the greenery above.

JOXER: Aye, but O’Malley’ll be here any minute, with our check. Let’s go over the plan again…

(Lights out.)

Scene 4

(Action: Lights up on the drinking area, 7:30 p.m. The pub’s business is a little slow, it being early on a Monday night. Two workmen take barstools to have an ale and Ray O’Reilly serves them. There’s a musical group singing in a corner. The Mulligan brothers are in the corner closest to the audience, as the two “solicitors”, one carrying a satchel, enter the bar. They’ve been instructed to situate themselves close to the Mulligans, all wearing hats so no one will recognize them, who are close enough to hear “what’s happened”.)

SOLICITOR #1: Well, Bill, a long, cool one ought ta taste pretty good, I’d say.
SOLICITOR #2: Ya, you’re right there. Looks like our clients’ll need one, too, when they find out the bad news. It won’t be easy on them.

SOLICITOR #1: Won’t be easy on us, either. No real money ta be made when your clients aren’t rich, and the money’s not comin’ in.

SOLICITOR #2: Know what ya mean, Tommy, surely I do. D’ya think they’ll spring for a few pints, though?

SOLICITOR #1: Hope so, my whistle needs a lotta wettin’.

(The front door opens, and in walk Boyle and Joxer. John has described what his friends will look like, so Boyle and Joxer go straightaway to them, after saying hello to O’Reilly, the publican.)

BOYLE (To “Solicitors”): Well, me boys, what have ye been up ta the last couple of days?

SOLICITOR #1: Findin’ a way ta make you some money.

SOLICITOR #2: Unfortunately, we haven’t been very lucky about that.

JOXER: What d’ya mean, ya haven’t been very lucky about it.

(Ray brings a couple of pints over for the pair.)

BOYLE: What d’ya mean, it fell through?

SOLICITOR #1: There’s no easy way a tellin’ ya this, Captain, but the court costs are sky-high, and there’s another heir stepped up, contestin’ the little that’ll be left after the government gets theirs.

BOYLE: Don’t tell me that ALL our money is gone, ‘cause that can’t be true.

SOLICITOR #2: Afraid it’s pretty close to that. Of the 25,000 pounds you were ta get, the government’s takin’ all but 2,000, and this other gent that’s stepped up looks ta have a lock on that.

JOXER: Jeezus, Captain, what’ll we do? We’ve already spent 1,500 of it, and we don’t’ even have the money.

BOYLE: God, Joxer, this is bloody-awful news. I don’t know what we’ll do.

(The Mulligans have been listenin’ in, and look perturbed.)

SOLICITOR: There’s really nothin’ more to be said, gentlemen. I guess tis bad luck that strikes the hardest, when good luck’s expected.

JOXER: Shor, tis truer words were never spoken.

(The Mulligans move toward the table where the four men are sitting.)

DICKY: Alright, you buckos. Ya wanta step outside.

JOXER (“Recognizing” the Mulligans.): Tis fairer that we match up here with you sports than outside I’d guess. Course you’ll have ta pay for the damages, ta be sure.

DONNY: Maybe we should wait a while, Dicky.

DICKY: Waitin’s for girls not men. Let’s get ‘em now.

(A fight breaks out. Old Joxer goes after Dicky, and Boyle dukes it out with Donnie. This goes on for a couple of minutes, until Ray can get safely behind the bar and pulls out a gun. He fires one shot into the ceiling, and everyone stops.)

RAY: Alright, clear out you Mulligans. And if I catch you round here anytime soon, I’ll cut you ta ribbons with me bullets. Sprechen sie Deutsch?

(The Mulligans look dejected, and nod. Then they’re gone.)

BOYLE: Thanks, Ray. I could’ve hurt meself breakin’ their heads together. At least this way, we’re not in trouble with the law.

RAY: The police know I protect meself and me place when I have ta, and don’t fire me gun ta hurt the innocent.

JOXER: Praise Gawd, tis good ya know how ta fire that ol’ thing. Did ya get it in the Easter Uprising?
RAY: No, I bought it from an old IRA man, but he never claimed to be in the Uprising. Course, stranger things have happened and maybe he didn’t want me to know where he got it.

BOYLE: That a .45?

RAY: Yes, tis.

BOYLE: Twas a .45 that killed me son, Johnny.

RAY: I didn’t know that, Captain. In fact, the man who sold me this said it brought bad luck to a boy named Johnny; didn’t say what bad luck. Good luck from bad sometimes. What do ya think?

BOYLE: By Jesus, I’ll bet ‘tis the gun that shot me Johnny. Hand it here a minute. (Ray does so.) How much ya want for this, Ray?

RAY: If ‘tis the gun that did in yur Johnny, ‘tis yurs from this day forward. Ya don’t owe me a cent.

BOYLE: Thanks, Ray. I owe ya. I’ll show it to Mrs. Boyle when the time’s right. (He hides it under his belt and shirt.)

O’MALLEY: How’d it go, boys? It seems there was quite a ruckus from what I could tell outside.

BOYLE: There was, for about a minute. Then Ray fired off his pistol, and that took care of the Mulligans.

O’MALLEY: Sorta knew you boys would come out alright with the hooligans.

BOYLE (Tapping his breastpocket): We came out alright with Charlie, too, thanks to you.

O’MALLEY: Little enough what I could do for you two. After all, Charlie said he never had two better drinkin’ buddies anywhere than he did with you.

JOXER: Yes, Charlie was a darlin’ man, and I mean that.

BOYLE: Yes, he was. Surely, he was. And you really earned your keep, too, Frank.

O’MALLEY: Thanks, boys. And thanks for taking care of my tidy honorarium, too. (He taps his own pocket.) It surely helps a man ta stay in business.

JOXER (A toast): Praise the Lord for business, and good people for the taking and the givin’.

BOYLE: And at least three good buddies who know when ta say when.

(They touch glasses, and say, “Amen,” as the lights go out.)

Scene 5

(Action: The living room of the Boyles, Palm Sunday night. Juno Boyle is kneeling down by the votive light, saying a prayer. No one else is in the room.)

JUNO: Dear God, thank you for doing all that you do for us. I know we didn’t always cooperate with your planning, but we are grateful to you, nevertheless. And forgive us, including Johnny’s informing on Commandant Tancred, for our sins – for we all sin. Forgive even Captain Boyle and Jozer, for their “curvaceous” reasoning. Please help us get through the hard times, and do better in future. I remember when young Johnny used to look through that stained glass window, which was hung in the pantry of our last apartment. He’d look and he’d wonder, probably about you and eternity. I hope he’s found eternity to be a pleasant-enough place. Love is a powerful force, and with Your Love in our hearts, we will rise to the road ahead, and find our way forward, to the bliss of heaven – in this life and the next. In your name -- Amen.

(She makes the sign of the cross, and gets up just as the Captain enters the room.)

JUNO: What time is it, Captain?

BOYLE (Pulling out his old pocketwatch): Four o’clock. Isn’t it about time you start supper?

JUNO: Yes, tis. By the way, when I got back from church today, I noticed ya’d left behind your watch. Any special reason?

BOYLE: No, jest forgot ta put it in me pocket this morning. Don’t know what’s become of me memory lately.
JUNO: Oh, I know you’re not usually far from your watch, though that doesn’t make you early for appointments.

BOYLE: Depends on the appointments, I’d say.

JUNO: Say, whatever became o’ your friends Jim and Bobby? Are they making out okay, now they’ve got their money?

BOYLE (Coughing.) Yes, they’re doin’ alright. I guess money don’t change people sometimes. Me and Joxer still sees ‘em from time to time.

JUNO: What did ya say their family names are?

BOYLE (Hesitating briefly.): Ya know, I never did find out their family names. Must be me memory goin’, like I say.

JUNO (Half-suspicious): Well, why don’t you help me with supper? I don’t think your memory for meals is slippin’ – just when we have liver.

BOYLE: Well, missus, what do ya want me ta do?

JUNO (As she goes to the icebox and takes some things out.): Can you slice some bread? About a dozen slices.

BOYLE (Going to the breadbox and getting a knife from nearby it.): That I can. What’s a husband for, after all?

JUNO: I’ll be nice to see Mary and John and the grandkids, and seeing the Georges, Dave and Rose, too. It was so nice ta chat with them, and ta learn more about Rose’s search for her ancestors.

BOYLE: Yes. It makes me wonder who some of mine were, past me grands, that is.

JUNO: It does me, too, though some ancestors may not be worth knowin’ about, if ya know what I mean.

BOYLE: Surely, I do, mother. I once heard that I had a great-uncle who was so great that he robbed a bank in County Mayo.

JUNO: And I had one ancestor who shot a police officer, and spent twenty years in prison for it. Say, don’t cut those slices so thick -- thinner, husband, thinner.

BOYLE: I guess it’s easier ta cut ‘em thick. Jest wasn’t thinkin’.

JUNO: Captain, the night you and Joxer saved all that money for your butties, did they give you any?

BOYLE: Not much, only a few pounds.

JUNO: How many in a few?

BOYLE (Thinking): Ten, but me and Joxer gave a couple ta Ray, for the drinks and such we had that night. The rest we used in the weeks between.

JUNO: Oh, really. So I should’a seen some of it when I count your money every chance I can.

BOYLE (Thinking fast.): Well, Joxer kept it for us. I didn’t feel that I should keep much money with me. It spends a lot faster with me than with Joxer.

JUNO: And since when do you let Joxer keep money for you? Joxer’d never give it back ta you, if you gave him a few pounds.

BOYLE: I must’a had too much ta drink that night. Don’t really know, come ta think of it, why I would’ve either.

JUNO: Oh, really, I don’t recall you being drunk that night. And I’d know, because I made sure ta kiss you when ya came in.

BOYLE: Oh, it must’a worn off quick then. No other explanation.

JUNO: Are ya sure you’re tellin’ me straight about that night. Wouldn’t be that somethin’ else went on at Ray’s that you haven’t told me about?

BOYLE (Looking away from her and slicing his finger slightly as he finishes cutting bread): Jeezus, Mrs. Boyle, did ya have ta make me do that? (He grabs a handkerchief from his pocket to stop the ‘bleeding.’)

JUNO: Here, let me have a look at it. Gawd, ya hardly knicked it, ya big baby.

BOYLE: Well, it would’a been a lot worse, but I caught meself in time.

JUNO: Let’s get back to what I was asking you about, then. What really went on at Ray’s that night?
BOYLE (Feigning ignorance.): Don’t know what you’re getting’ at, wife.

JUNO: This Jim and Bobby, why didn’t I ever hear o’ those two before your meeting ‘em at Ray’s that night?

BOYLE: Used to talk about ‘em all the time. You must not a been listenin’.

JUNO (Grabbing him by the ear): Oh, I wasn’t, wasn’t I? Me, who ken tell ya everything you’ve said for the last 30 years, give or take a ‘thee’ or ‘the’.

BOYLE (Squirming): Let go, Juno. I told ya about ‘em once, anyway.

JUNO: Yes, the weekend before you helped ‘em at Ray’s with their money and the Mulligans. (Pulling tighter on his ear.) Go on, tell me the truth, Captain, or I’ll lever this ear off your noggin.

BOYLE: Okay, okay, I’ll tell ya. But ya gotta promise not ta hit me or throw me out.

JUNO: I’ll promise nothin’ of the kind, til I’ve heard what you’ve got ta say. Mind me, the truth!

BOYLE (Sitting at kitchen table.): Well, it’s like this. (Coughing.) Joxer and me, we got a little more money from Jim and Bobbie than I said.

JUNO: How much more?

BOYLE: Well, if I said 25, would ya be upset?

JUNO: Depends on 25 what? I said the truth!

BOYLE (weakened, as he holds his sliced finger): Well, I guess if I tell you the truth about the amount, I’d better tell ya the truth about Jim and Bobby, too.

JUNO: Yes, do, husband, do.

BOYLE: There was no Jim and Bobby. Me and Joxer got an… inheritance… from a drinking butty who died in America a couple of months ago.

JUNO: So, how much did ya get from this butty?

BOYLE (Sheepishly.): 25,000 pounds (Noting Juno’s boiling point being reached.) – but it was money you were goin’ ta get some of soon.

JUNO (So angry, she knows if she hits him she’ll kill him, spitting out the words.): Why, why, CAPTAIN BOYLE, sometimes you make me so mad, I could bite off yur head and SPIT it back in yur face! (She grabs a plate and throws it at him, hitting the wall instead.)

BOYLE (Fearing for his life.): Now, wife, better be true to your better nature, or the police’ll be on our doorstep and cartin’ you away.

JUNO: Cartin’ me away?! They’ll be cartin’ you away, dead as a Christmas goose, if you don’t shut that mouth o’ yours. You haven’t made me so mad since the night Johnny was killed, and you and Joxer drunk as can be, laid out God knows where the whole night.

BOYLE (Holding up his hands, and trying to push her back without touching her): Surely, I’ll shut up, woman, surely I will.

JUNO (Only half-composing herself): Now, you bloody fool, you do have some o’ that money left, right? Right?!? How much?

BOYLE: About 15,000. Joxer and me owed some debts and paid ‘em off.

JUNO (Temperature rises again.): 10,000 pounds worth? Who did ya owe that kinda money to?

BOYLE: Well, we only owed about 5,000, but we made a little investment of another 5,000 with some of it, too.

JUNO: What sort of investment?

BOYLE: We bet on a horse, and…

JUNO (Blastoff.): You what? -- why ya dirty, conivin’ son of a….

BOYLE (Holding up his hand.): Ya didn’t let me finish, wife. Calm yourself down a minute…

JUNO: Calm yourself down, Captain Boyle, because you’re headed for the graveyard. (Thinking better of her wrath.) Okay, talk, and I mean the truth.
BOYLE: We bet 5,000 on a horse that Joxer knew had the stuff, and we won 40,000!

JUNO: You what?! Where is it, then, the money?

BOYLE: You’re not goin’ ta believe this, wife, but all 55,000 is in the bank.

JUNO (Trying to catch her breath, as she sits down.): You’re right, I’ll believe it when I see it. You mean, half that money is ours, your and mine.

BOYLE: Technically, it’s mi— (Thinking better of that.) Yes, tis yours and mine.

JUNO: Then, we ken pay back Mary and John the money we owe ‘em, and get a coupla nice things.

BOYLE: Mary and John’s already taken care of. John was the first one that got paid back, and we paid our solicitor a bit, plus there were some drinking debts, well, you can imagine there were a few o’ those.

JUNO: Yes, I can. Anything else I should know about?

BOYLE (Thinking better of talking more.): No, that pretty much covers it. Joxer ‘n’ me are splittin’ the rest, after we give 5,000 to Fr. Murphy for the church. That is alright with you, I hope.

JUNO (Amazed): Surely, I am. Tis the first time in all these years we’ve had any money ta speak of ta give anybody, and the church surely ken use it.

BOYLE: My thoughts exactly.

JUNO (Motioning): Come here, ya big old thing. Let me put me arms around ya.

BOYLE (Half-shy): Are ya sure ya want ta get near the man who nearly stole your fortune?

JUNO: I’m sure. (She hugs him and kisses him once on the lips, largely.) Now, we’ve got ta get supper ready before everyone gets here. Cut up the meat for me, and I’ll warm the vegetables. They’ll be here any minute.

BOYLE (Doing as instructed): I hope my not tellin’ ya til now was alright. I meant ta keep it a secret til Easter.

JUNO: Easter’d been good, but it’s Easter season, and in another week, we’ll have the best Easter service we’ve had since Johnny was a pint-half-spilt. You’ll be there this time, too, right?

BOYLE: If that’s what it takes ta save me immortal soul, I guess I ken be there once a year at least.

JUNO: Yes, at least once a year, indeed.

BOYLE: Well, don’t make me a regular Sunday sheep. I don’t think I ken get out of bed every Sabbath, try as I might.

JUNO: As long as ya get there as often as ya can, I’ll be happy. More important, the Good Lord’ll be happy.

(Lights out.)

Scene 6

(Action. Same setting, two hours later. The group is gathered in the living room, and Rose George is looking at the photo album. Juno and Mary, though, are finishing up putting things away in the kitchen. Mary comes into the living room before Juno, after finishing up.)

ROSE: Yes, Captain, your Johnny looks very much like his nephew, and I’d say he looks very much like the picture of young Sean Fitzgerald that the county clerk gave me in Limerick. Twas nice ta find out, then, that you, John, are my cousin, and Sean is our common ancestor. Is there any chance that you, Mary, are descended from a Fitzgerald, as well? Wouldn’t it be fun if you were, I mean, a distant cousin?

MARY: Tis possible, but I don’t know about our ancestors on da’s side, past me great-grands. Ma, what about your side?

JUNO (Just finished up from the kitchen.): Ancestors named Fitzgerald. Seems ta me, no, but I don’t know much about me great-grandmother’s mother. She might’a had some Fitzgerald blood in her, but I don’t even know where her people were from.

MARY: Is there any way for you to find out, John?

JOHN: Could be my friend in the register’s office could do some digging for us. It’d cost a pound or two, but I expect I ken foot the bill for it, and happily, at that.
BOYLE: Wished I had a better idea about me own ancestors, too. It pays ta know where you’ve come from, so ya can better know where you’re going.

JOHNNY FITZGERALD: I’ve got ta be going ta the lou. Am I excused?

BOYLE: Yes, Johnny, go right ahead, tis jest in the hall. (Johnny exits.) If we had the money, one thing we’d spend it on is a new apartment, or at least this apartment would have its own lou.

JUNO: I think that’s a good idea, Captain. Tis a bit embarrassin’ gettin’ up in the morning ta look at me old face in that mirror in the hall, right before I brush me teeth and perk up.

BOYLE: Same for me, love, same for me.

SHIVAUN: I like that old mirror, Grandda. It has character, and shows who’s a character, too.

(The group laughs.)

BOYLE: Sure enough, I wouldn’t know which o’ yous is less a character than the rest. Shivaun, you truly are a character after me own heart. You must kill the young men.

SHIVAUN: I kill ‘em alright, and they don’t want ta come back right away for more.

MARY: Sure, it’s a long day of long looks that Shivaun can dish out when she wants ta. But she’s also the most popular girl in her high school class, and the boys do thrill when she walks by, so long as she doesn’t have a temper on.

SHIVAUN (Knowing better.): Ma, I don’t have tempers now, do I?

JOHN: Only when you’ve got somethin’ on the stove, like o’ dish a stew or a handsome boy with determination waitin’ ta be won.

DAVID: John, what a wonderful pair of children you have. Rose and I are thinking about having a family of our own, and hope we have a boy and girl like yours.

ROSE: Yes, I can’t think of a better brother-sister combination that we’ve met here.

BOYLE: That’s true, when they’re not squabblin’. Seems they do their fair shares o’ that.

(Johnny returns.)

SHIVAUN: I only squabble with him when he’s asking for it.

JOHNNY: Asking for what? (Kidding her.) I don’t like ta fight, you know that, Sis.

SHIVAUN: You’re a half-pint, half-spilt, and you know it, Brother. I wrestle the life out of you in half a minute, whenever you smart off.

JOHNNY: You’re seventeen years old, Shivaun. If you can’t lick a 14-year-old, I don’t know what you eat for breakfast.

SHIVAUN: If we weren’t entertainin’ company, Johnny, I’d show you what for.

MARY: Now, now, ease up, you two. The Georges are company here, as well as family, and they deserve a little less argument than you two give.

JOHN: I agree. Your mother is making sense and you should listen to her. You might learn something along towards Easter, as it is. You know, Jesus was raised from the dead; maybe there’s even hope for you two.

JOHNNY: Yeah, it’s along towards Easter and the only thing Shivaun wants to see raised is a lump on my head.

SHIVAUN: You’re too smart for your own good, brother. Ma and Da are right. Tis the Easter season, and even you and me can put up our differences for a short time, can’t we?

JOHNNY (Keeping an eye out.): Yeah…. I suppose…. Just don’t set me up for a fall while you’re sayin’ your Easter prayers. I know how you can be when you want to pull wool.

BOYLE: Oh sure, kids’ll be kids, and you two are growin’ up fast. Faster than I’d like to see, but fast nevertheless.

JUNO: Yes, you are growing up fast. You’re both almost grown. It seems like yesterday you both were drinkin’ milk from the bottle. I imagine your parents like ta see you doin’ well in school and progressin’ towards adulthood. Let’s hope you both turn out as well as your ma and da.

JOHNNY: Can I turn on the radio, Grand?
JUNO: Yes, you may, Young Man. But put it on the BBC channel. I want to hear what’s goin’ on in the world.

JOHNNY (Tuning it in.) Right. There it is.

BBC ANNOUNCER: Hitler and his forces continue to conquer territory. Peace in Europe in the foreseeable future seems unlikely, but the Allies will fight on. Meanwhile, Japan continues to devastate and conquer the Far East. War still goes on in China, and the Japanese are building their empire, though millions more will lose their lives, if Japan is to control all of that part of the world. In little Korea, the Japanese have ruled for thirty-five years. All the best produce and people of Korea and Japanese-held countries like it are forced to support the Axis war effort. In the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the Korean marathon gold medalist had to wear a Japanese uniform and salute the Japanese flag. His name had even been changed to a Japanese one. He tore off his shirt with the Japanese flag on it, though, a very brave move. How much more can the world take of German-style “liberation”? The British people, like good people everywhere, listen, learn, and react, hoping that our efforts will defeat the Axis juggernaut. How long before America enters the fray? Many hope soon, though peace now would be an even more welcome attendant on humanity’s best dreams and hopes. That’s the news, and I am Roberta Joseph, for the BBC Worldservice. Thank you, and good night.

(There’s a knock on the door, as Johnny turns the radio off. Mary answers it.)

MARY: Oh, hello, Matt and Jessica.

MATT BRETT: Hi. It’s for Captain Boyle, from Fr. Murphy.

MARY: Thank you, both of you. (Giving them some money.) How’s your families?

MATT: Oh, me ma is laid up with the gout, but da is in good shape. He still works for Mr. McGintey, though it’s not easy work. And me little brother is learnin’ fast.

JESSICA: My parents are doing okay, though money is tight for so many people these days it’s not easy.

JOHN: Yes, I know both your dads’ work for Mr. McGintey, and he’s not an easy man to work for. He pushes people a little too hard.

MATT: Yeah, me da says if it weren’t for the regular money, he’d have quit there long ago. Guess we all ken use the money.

JOHNNY: How’s your readin’ going, Matt? Haven’t seen you round school the last couple days. You keepin’ up with homework.

MATT: Yeah, best I can. Ma’s needed extra help lately. I’ll get back ta school soon as I can.

MARY: Yes, Matt, you don’t want to get behind in your studies. Are either of ya thinkin’ about high school and college.

JOHNNY: Both of us want to go to high school, but I don’t know if my family can afford college. ‘Course, if we can keep up our grades, there are tuition scholarships possible. We could use the help.

MARY: I hope you get those scholarships, and do your families proud. You’re both hard workers, and you and your families deserve the best.

MATT: Thank you for saying so, Mrs. Fitzgerald. I don’t think many people are as nice as you and your family. Sometimes, I think my parents almost wish they were back in Rhodesia.

JOHN: Yes, well the way things are going there these days, I hope you and your family get a better shake here, because as bad as Dublin is, it’s not near as bad as Rhodesia these days.

MATT: I guess you’re right, Dr. Fitzgerald. Life ain’t easy no matter where you are, sometimes.

JOHN: That’s true enough, Matt. Well, we hope you both do well nonetheless.

BOYLE: Yes, we do. Yes, we do.

MATT: Thanks. Well, we’d better be going.

JUNO: Do well, both of you. Do well.

MATT and JESSICA: Thanks. Good night. (The youngsters exit.)

ALL: Good night.

MARY: This message says Father Murphy’d like to see da and you, ma, on Easter Saturday night, just before the service. Do you know what this is about, Ma?

JUNO (Looking knowingly at Boyle): Yes, we do. We’ll be there.
MARY: I hope it’s good news.

JUNO: Better than usual, that’s for sure.

MARY: Can you tell us, ma?

JUNO: I can’t, but your da can. What d’ya think, Captain—are ya game?

BOYLE: I spose I am. (The family gathers round.) It all goes back to me and Joxer drinking with a man named Charlie Waters. Well, ya see….

(Lights out.)

Scene 7

(Scene: The sacristy of St. Bart’s. Fr. Murphy is setting out his robes for Easter Vigil Service, to be presided at later that night. Organ music can be heard in the background – ‘Amazing Grace’. A knock at the door.)

FR. MURPHY: Who is it?

JUNO: Tis the Boyles, Fr. Murphy.

FR. MURPHY: Oh, come in.

JUNO and CAPTAIN BOYLE: Hello, Father.

FR. MURPHY: How are you both this fine evening?

JUNO: Doin’ fine, Father, and a lot better since last Sunday.

FR. MURPHY: I trust, then, that connubial bliss has once again been had by the two of you, after the storms and difficulties of many years.

JUNO: Well, we’ve been together a long time, Father, and it wouldn’t be right for us to think about givin’ up on each other now. After all, the Captain, after years of pub-dwellin’ and little work, has finally struck it rich, and he needs as much care now, as he ever did, if he’s not to blow his winnin’ hand and end up in worse shape than ever.

BOYLE: Yes, Father, me wife is right. Takes a strong man ta admit he’s been weak.

FR. MURPHY: I’m glad for ya both. Let’s hope your luck holds. You’ve a nice family, and tis a great thing to have a family that sticks together, through thick and thin.

JUNO (Motioning to her husband): Give it to him, Captain.

BOYLE: As ya say, wife, as ya say. (Handing Father a check.)

FR. MURPHY: Captain and Mrs. Boyle, this is very, very generous – tis a grand gesture on your part, and true help for our ailing parish. You’ll be happy to know I will use half o’ this for the poor of the parish, as you’ve instructed. And we will also establish an annual tuition scholarship, whose first two recipients will be Matthew Brett and Jessica Flynn. I can’t think of more deserving young people to share the inaugural scholarship.

JUNO and CAPTAIN: Thank ya, Father.

(Another knock at the door. It’s Joxer and his neighbor, the widow Daisy Morgan.)

FR. MURPHY: Come in, come in. It’s fine ta see you, Mr. Daly, and you, too, Miss Morgan.

JOXER: Tis a wonder that I be seein’ so much o’ the insides o’ this church lately, but tisn’t such a bad sight, once ya get used ta it again. The Captain and I went to school at St. Bart’s School, when we were boys. Fr. McGarty was the priest then, and he used to say: “Find the truth and act on it.” We never knew what he meant til now.

DAISY: Yes, it’s about time Joxer Daly became reacquainted with the beauties of the faith again. He’s been a good neighbor for many years, but lately we’ve seen eye-to-eye more than we ever did before.

JOXER: Yes, she’s a fine woman is Miss Daisy. I haven’t known the close company of such a fine woman ever in my life, and it couldn’t a come at a better time.

BOYLE: Yes, Joxer has turned over a new leaf. Thank goodness; twas worried he’d collapse beneath the weight o’ his sins. (Juno looks at Boyle.) Same for me, o’ course.
(Another knock. It’s John and Mary and their kids.)

FR. MURPHY: Come on in. The more the merrier.

THE FITZGERALDS: Hello, Father.

MARY: Tis a fine evening tonight, Father, especially when ya ken get me da and Joxer ta attend services.

FR. MURPHY: Jes doin’ me duty. Bringin’ in the sheep, no matter how lost or forlorn. (Laughter.)

JOHN: Ma and Da, you should know that I’ve seen the Mulligans mullin’ about in the next street over. I don’t know if it means anything yet, but it might. They were pickin’ on Matt Brett’s little brother, Stephen. It’s lucky he knows how ta run.

(Going to the interior door, Fr. Murphy speaks to an altar boy, who is offstage.)

FR. MURPHY: Jamie, please go and tell Office Slattery I want ta see him, and be quick about it.

ALTAR BOY (from off-stage): Yes, Father. (Quick exit.)

FR. MURPHY: We’ll nip the Mulligan pair in the bud. Tis about time they are stopped from maraudin’ in this neighborhood.

JUNO: Yes, innocent people should be allowed to talk about important things and not have ta worry they’ll be clobbered for their money, whether it be one penny or five thousand pounds.

JOHN: Yes, the Mulligans have been bandits on the loose for a long, long time. Ruffians, who don’t know the meaning of the word “community”, except as the ‘two horseman of the Apocalypse.’

MARY: I long for the day when the Irish people can be free – all of Ireland – for the day when outlaws will be jailed and free people - black, white, red, and yellow -- can live peacefully together.

EVERYONE: Amen ta that.

(A knock at door.)

FR. MURPHY: Come in.

OFFICER SLATTERY: Hello, Father. Jaime said ya wanted ta see me.

FR. MURPHY: Thanks for coming, Pat. The Mulligans have started up with these good people in the recent past, and there’s an ugly rumor goin’ round that they’re just up the street and looking for trouble.

OFFICER SLATTERY: What d’ya suggest.

FR. MURPHY: Well, we’ll need the help of Matt Brett and his friend, Jessica. Ya see, we ken send a message ta the Mulligans that there’s money….

(Scene change. Scene 8)

(Actiion: Same setting an hour or so later. Fr. Murphy is in the sacristy. There’s a knock at the door.)

FR. MURPHY: Who is it?

MAN IN HAT: Tis a poor man, Father, in need of some food.

FR. MURPHY: Then, by all means, come in.

MAN IN HAT: Tis jest a poor man, Father. (He looks around and sees no one else is there. Pulling out a gun.) Reach fur it, Father. Tis Dicky Mulligan, and I want the money you’ve got in here.

FR. MURPHY: But Dicky, you know there’s no collection on Holy Saturday. Ya can have me wallet, but he who steals me purse steals a pig’s ear. (He gives it to Dicky.)

DICKY: What? Nothin’ in here. That’s not what I heard from the note the little darkie and his girl were carryin’.

FR. MURPHY: Could be your correspondent was mistaken not the messengers. Musta been a foul-up.

DICKY: Listen, priest, I know ya got a lot o’ money in here. Where is it?
FR. MURPHY: Help yourself. Have a look.

(Even Dicky is hesitant to rummage about a church’s sacristy with a priest present. He points his gun at the priest.)

DICKY: Now, Father Murphy, twill go a whole lot easier when ya show me where that money is.

FR. MURPHY: Like I said, there’s no money here.

(The door is thrust open.)

DONNY: Dickie, the coppers are comin’. Slattery and Shannon and some others. What’ll we do.

DICKY: Git in here. We’re goin’ ta hold this priest hostage. Tie him up.

(Donny sits the priest down. A shout from outside.)

SLATTERY: Are ya okay, Father?

DICKY: Talk.

FR. MURPHY: I’m fine, though a little detained, Patrick. They’ve a gun in here. Can ya give us a little time?

SLATTERY: Not ta worry, Father. I’ve all the time in the world.

DICKY: Donny, trash the place and find the money. (Donny does so.)

DICKY: Now, Father, we’re goin’ ta play a little cat-and-mouse. You tell me where the money is, and nobody gets hurt.

FR. MURPHY: Wish I could, but I can’t, Dicky, ‘cause there’s no money around. Ya ken take a gold candlestick or two, but that’s about it for easy carryin’ off.

DICKY: You don’t fool me, Rocky Murphy. You’ve money round here, and we’re not leavin’ til it turns up.

FR. MURPHY: Suit yourself, but I’m tellin’ ya, no money in here.

SLATTERY: I brought along a friend or two, and I don’t think you Mulligans are up ta all of us. What do you think, Dicky?

DICKY: There’ll be hell ta pay if ya try ta take us, Slattery. And this priest is the leverage we need ta escape, so don’t try anything funny, hear me?

SLATTERY: Yeah, I hear ya. By the way, Dicky, your underwear are pink and your head is bald, just like when you were a kid.

DICKY: What, are ya lookin’ ta have me blow the priest’s head off or something? Why d’ya say things like that, ya fat pig?

SLATTERY: Cause we got ya where we want ya. If ya kill the priest or even try ta, you’ll go ta jail for life, if they don’t hang ya. You and your brothers have never killed anyone, and I wouldn’t recommend ya startin’ now. Capice?

DICKY: Get him up, we’re gettin’ outta here. (His brother stands the priest up. Shouting to Slattery.)

We’re comin’ on out, Slattery, and ya better not try anything, Capice? We want free access to the river, and a boat waitin’ for us when we get there. No tricks either. Got it?

SLATTERY: You may be able to get ta the river, killin’ a coupla innocent people along the way, but I don’t think that boat is a boat ta freedom. But you suit yourself. Our guns are leveled on ya.

DICKY: Hold on, Donny. This may be a shootout we can’t win. Got ta figure somethin’ else out. (Shouting to Slattery.) Who told you we’d be here?

SLATTERY: A little birdie, Dicky, a little birdie. I know me trainin’ says ta talk nice ta hostage-takers, but you and me, we go back a long ways, and we’ve niver seen eye-to-eye. D’ya really think peace is at hand?

DICKY: Doubt it, Slattery. You’re really takin’ chances by not letting us outta here.

SLATTERY: Oh, I’ll let ya out alright, in a pine box, if you’re not careful.

DICKY: Let’s make a run for it, Donny. Untie the priest; he’s goin’ with us. (They do so.) Fr. Murphy, get us outta this church by the other route. (Pointing his gun toward the other door.)

FR. MURPHY: I don’t know if it’ll do ya any good, but this is the other way out. (He leads them through the other door.)
Scene 9

(Scene: Outside the church on its other side. It's darkening now; and there's the light of a small gaslight by the door.)

DICKY: Bring him out here. (His brother leads the priest outside.)

DICKY: Let's head up the alleyway, and out towards the river.

DONNY: Is that smart, Dicky? The cops'll be waitin' fur us there?

DICKY (Vexed.): Do what I say.

DONNY: How about I take the priest that way instead? I hear voices the other way.

DICKY: I said, do what I say.

OFFICER SHANNON: Dicky, me boy, don't move another inch or you're a dead man.

(Dicky sees Shannon and fires a shot. Police revolvers open fire. Dicky's hit and down.)

SHANNON: Get up and around these boys, fellas. Thank God, they only had one gun.

(Donny pulls out a gun and opens fire. Shannon goes down.)

SHANNON: Why, ya little weasel. Get him, boys. (Police open up, and Donny goes down.)

OTHER OFFICER: Are ya alright, Shannon?

SHANNON (Getting up.): Just caught on e in the shoulder is all. I'd look after Dicky and Donny, if I were you, and check all their pockets.

(Dicky and Donny are also only grazed.)

OTHER OFFICER (Looking at their wounds.) Call an ambulance, they can use some mending, though they'll probably both make it ta trial. Don't know if they'll last long in prison, though. Unless they're in the same cell. Thank goodness they didn't hurt anyone else. You're lookin' fine as a fiddle, Father, despite the uproar.

FR. MURPHY: Thanks, Delaney. You fellas did your work well. The long arm of the law is a thing ta be feared. (Heading towards the church door.) I'll be inside if ya need me (The officer makes a motion). No, I'll be okay, Easter Vigil Service will begin soon. And I'd guess the police have taken the measure of the Mulligans tonight.

(Officer Slattery and the Boyle party on-stage again now, the latter now including the Georges.)

JUNO: Looks like Matt did his job well again, as did you officers. Fine work.

DAVID: This is a nasty bunch, just as we've heard. You'll put them away for a good while for this, I'd imagine.

SLATTERY: Yes, we will. Well, well. Looks like you took one for the cause, Shannon.

SHANNON: That I did. Thanks for getting here in the nick o' time.

SLATTERY: Tis a big church, and it can't be gotten round so easily from the outside.

MARY: Yes, let's just hope Officer Shannon heals fast.

SHANNON: Thank you, Mrs. Fitzgerald. Tis a lot more needed ta keep me down than this ol' slug.

ROSE: Thanks for asking us ta services tonight, Mary and John. Say, tis nice ta know you're a cousin o' mine, too, Mary Fitzgerald. My mother's always said I have the ability ta say things that heal more than hurt; and so do my cousins. (Pulling out photos from her purse.) And thanks for the copies of these photos I asked for. (Mary nods a “You're welcome.”)

JOHN: I know you mean that in the best sense, but not all o' Ireland is filled with lovable cousins. For all we know, we may be cousins to the Mulligans, somewhere along the way.

BOYLE: Are ya sayin' we've a common ancestor with the Mulligans. (Scratchin his head.) Hope ta Gawd not, because if we do, then we must all come from the bloody monkeys.

JOHN: Not as far-fetched as ya think, Captain.
JUNO (Winking): The Captain knows his monkeys well, as well as monkeyin’ round, right Captain?

BOYLE: I guess you’re right, missus. Now, since the police’ll handle the rest o’ this here, maybe we ken go home and get something to eat. I’m starvin’ after this little Dublin donnybrook.

JUNO: Ya wouldn’t be thirsty, too, would ya, Captain?

JOXER: Yeah, ya wouldn’t be thirsty, too, would ya, Captain?

BOYLE: Great minds think together, Joxer. And tis true that there’s nothin’ that dries out a man’s throat more than the pressures of Lent. Shall we go, everyone?

JUNO: Yes, but ya’ll be gettin’ wine mixed with water tonight. Nothin’ stronger. Your liver needs a breather, and maybe for the long haul at that, too.

(The ambulance drivers have arrived and are now moving the two Mulligan brothers into the van, with police escort.)

JUNO: Oh, and will ya do everyone a favor, you two? Will ya try ta drink with your meal, not before it or after it? I’ve heard there’s a pair o’ sisters round here that encourages men ta drink before and after meals, especially on funeral nights. Ya wouldn’t know what I’m talkin’ about, would ya, Captain?

BOYLE (Shocked.): How did ya find out…?

JUNO: I’ve known all along about those old sisters. Can’t keep anything secret round this town. Dublin may show its ire a lot, but there’s times when open secrets are the best kind, at least for the last 18 years.

BOYLE: (Pulling at his belt.) Well, as long as you know one secret, ya might as well know another. (He pulls out Ray’s gun. The group is shocked.) Don’t get worked up anyone. Tis the publican Ray O’Reilly’s gun. He gave it ta me. Said it belonged to an IRA man and that it brought bad luck to a boy named Johnny. (Juno is moved. She reaches for it and then cradles it in her arms.)

JUNO: Oh, Captain. ‘Tis the thing that may have brought our Johnny down; but ‘tis the thing that will help keep his memory most alive in a mother’s heart. (She kisses Boyle.)

BOYLE: Could be a very long meal at home tanight, don’t ya think, Joxer?

JUNO: No it won’t. It’ll be a 45-minute meal and not a minute more, and it’ll have ta be fish, because ‘tis the night before Easter. Then early ta bed. Tomorrow we’ll visit Johnny’s grave, after Mass. Tis decent ta be kind to those who used ta be among us and loved. And surely Johnny Boyle was, and is still loved.

MARY: Yes he is, mother.

JOHNNY FITZGERALD (To his sister.): Along towards Easter we’re learnin’ more all the time, right sister?

SHIVAUN: Well, if you’re sayin’ it’s a woman’s prerogative ta have the last word, go right ahead. That’s what we’re here for – that and a coupla other things your girlfriends will teach ya about someday. It has ta do with romance.

JOHNNY (Embarrassed.): Gee, thanks for that.

SHIVAUN (Tapping him gently on the head.): You’re welcome, Johnny Fitzgerald, you’re very welcome.

(As the group exits, the church organist begins to intone, “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”, the melody of which comes from Beethoven’s ‘Song of Joy.’ Lights out. End of Play.)
As Angels Do in Heaven: A Play in Five Acts  
Written & Revised by David Joseph Marcou. 
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For God, my son Matt and his wife, Jessica, my mom, extended family, and all our inspirations, especially the British, Irish, Korean, and American peoples.

“When you look into a mirror, it is not you that sees your reflection; your reflection sees you.” -- A Japanese Poet.

“For when God has all that He should have of thy heart, when thou art wholly given up to the obedience of the light and spirit of God within thee, to will only in His will, to love only in His love, to be wise only in His wisdom, then it is that everything thou dost is as a song of praise, and the common business of thy life is a conforming to God’s will on earth as angels do in heaven.” – William Law (1686-1761).

Main Characters:
BERT HARTER: A moderately tall man with appealing features, brown hair when young and silver hair later, and strong but not-too-bulky build, who is unafraid to say what’s on his mind, though as a photographer he doesn’t always push his luck with that when he’s working. He is very interested in people's lives. He was born in the Elephant and Castle District of London, and thus is a Cockney. He has a good sense of humor, and does not often put down people with it. Neither is he too self-deprecating.
SHEILA HARTER: A woman of medium height, with a pretty face and intelligent mind. She is worldly, as well, but not in a showy way. And she has a good sense of humor.
DAVID LAMONT: A man of medium height with brown, balding hair and nice smile. He knows about writing and photography, admires and respects his parents and family, as well as the Harters, Sean O’Casey, and his students. He is a writer of biographies and dramas. He hopes to win the hearts of many good people, and is somewhat religious.
W.B. YEATS: A tall Irishman with lordliness, intelligence, and accent – one of Ireland's greatest poets. He wears spectacles and a skullcap.
SEAN O’CASEY: A tall man, thin, with a workingman’s face and a good sense of humor – one of Ireland’s greatest literary treasures. He wears spectacles and a skullcap.
GLEN DUNBAR: A man of real worldliness and only semi-circumspection. He knows about agenting, and how to earn money and credit for his clients. He is even scrupulous, mainly, rare among literary agents.
MRS. YEATS: A Beautiful woman of modest height, who knows her man and how to direct his creativity.

Overview: As Angels Do in Heaven is meant to be a five-act production, with Acts I, II, and III done more or less naturalistically, and Acts IV and V done more expressionistically. Some figures from history, plus several fictional characters are dealt with here, and stylistic considerations are essential to their proper rendering. To be sure, some historical figures and events have been fictionalized to a significant degree, especially Stefan Szakall, who is loosely based on the great Jewish-Hungarian picture editor and author Stefan Lorant. Also, the Narrator-part should be performed as a fictional role that fits effectively into all sections of the play. As with Sean O’Casey’s Silver Tassie, there is the need for at least two acting styles in this play, and it is crucial that the actors be disciplined in projecting both realistic and symbolic experience. As for the play segment within Angels, David Lamont is having difficulty with the climax of The Red Tassel, so his director has the cast rehearse two key scenes (one seen “rehearsed,” the other seen on film “in performance”) for David’s sake. Both scenes should somehow echo O’Casey’s work, except Angels and The Red Tassel should mainly be heroic.

Act I: An Author’s Hope.
Action: The Narrator emerges, stage left. He is dressed in a navy blue cardigan sweater and medium gray slacks, with white shirt, burgundy tie, and black loafers. Also, he carries a book and pipe, the latter of which he puffs on, from time to time. His accent is Midwestern American, and his look is that of a common-sense professor of history.

NARRATOR (reading): “Sunday, December 24. I just finished reading over my current project, my play, The Red Tassel. I also just finished a phone call from my agent, Glen Dunbar. After getting nowhere for four years with my manuscript history of Picture Post Magazine, it finally appears we’re making progress with a likely publisher. St. Martin’s Press is interested in signing me to a contract for When the Stars Pulled Faces at the Moon, partly because Stefan Szakall, the founder of that magazine, critiqued it in 1995. Needless to say, I’m very happy to hear all this, at last. Glen is a first-rate agent, and I know he can bring this off. But I must admit, I didn’t know if I was good enough to stay the course. Maybe now I will be able to.” (The Narrator puffs on his pipe three or four times, then speaks outright.) I’ve just been reading through someone’s diary. Now, that isn’t always the best thing to do while it’s author is still alive, but I’ve been granted access to this diary by the powers that be (pointing upwards and then to the just-lit apartment of David Lamont, stage right). Maybe, though, we should listen in to what David Lamont and his agent actually have said to each other about this.

(David Lamont, a pleasant-looking man of about 50 years, is reading, when his phone rings, stage left. We also see Glen Dunbar at his desk in New York, stage right. Glen is about 45, and worldly. Tidbits of seasonal decorations.)

DAVID: Hello, this is David Lamont.
GLEN: Hello, David? This is Glen. Merry Christmas!
DAVID: Merry Christmas to you, Glen! How are you?
GLEN: Well, I think we’re close to a deal with St. Martin’s.
DAVID: So, you think they’ll offer us the moon for it?
GLEN: Well, I wouldn’t say the moon, but close, David. I think we can count on them for a $30,000 advance. You see, there’s a great deal of interest these days in British subjects, and you hit on a theme many people still can identify with – photographs that tell Britain’s story in the middle of the 20th century. Besides that, they like Stefan Szakall because he did a book on the presidents for them. They seem to think of his critique of your manuscript will help them with the editing.
DAVID: That’s excellent! Thirty thousand, eh? Geez, that sounds sweet. It would make our efforts worthwhile. What’s the deal amount to?
GLEN: You’ll get $30,000 up front, with a 20% commission after that, on sales, of which I get half. You will receive 25 personal copies of the book; and I am still negotiating for movie rights. It looks like we may be able to get Marc Weisman to play Stefan Szakall, Deke Andrews to play Tom Hopkinson, and George Newton to play Bert Hardy; we should be set for a while, if that’s true.
DAVID: Sounds too good to be true. Anything else I should know?
GLEN: Well, only that we still need to negotiate a deal with Getty Images for the book and movie rights to their photos. That shouldn’t be a problem, given your previous contacts with them.
DAVID: Let’s hope not. Do you want me to phone Mr. Hawkins, their executive director?
GLEN: I don’t think that’ll be necessary, David. Someone from St. Martin’s will do that.
DAVID: Okay, Glen. Thanks for everything. I hope this all works out.
GLEN: I think it will, David. I think it will. Now, how is your play coming?
DAVID: The Red Tassel is getting there; but the climax is difficult. It’s two scenes of naturalistic style in a mixed style play, and I haven’t been able to justify them properly to myself yet. Hopefully, I’ll be able to…. (Lights fade. Spotlight on Narrator, puffing on pipe.)

NARRATOR: Yes, yes, Mr. Lamont is working on a play. And it’s not a bad play either; but it does need some work yet. He has too much talk in it and not enough action, which is typical of plays these days. Maybe we should have a little more action ourselves now, and stop our talking. Lights! Camera! Action!

(The stage lights are extinguished as the audience sees a short, “archaic” film, of the interior of a working-class bedroom in the Priory Buildings, in London’s Elephant and Castle district, in late 1916. Three-year-old Bert Harter is in bed while his parents are out. A sister is downstairs with Bert’s infant sister, Alice. At first, we see young Bert looking into a mirror placed at an angle in the corner in such a way that the moon’s light can be seen in it. Bert’s face is curious and delighted at once – the perfect child’s face. After giggling and aching at the moon’s “visage” for a time, Bert begins making faces at the moon’s reflection. All goes well until a thin cloud intervenes and the moon reemerges, “making a face” back at Bert. The stunned child begins to cry loudly. In a moment, the child’s sister comes through the door. She is a pretty, lower-class girl, with the ability to calm crying children instinctively. There is a rock er in the far corner of the room, which she puts to good use. Picking up Bert, and cuddling him gingerly, she sings, “Hush, Little Baby.” Bert grows still. He looks up into the dicta’s face now, recovering that trusting sense of love and hope that youngsters know most often with regard to their mother. Marge is the girl’s name. She tells Bert a story next. It is a delicious tale – of courageous men and women, who fight a great battle against the forces of evil and overcome them. It’s akin to the Arthurian Cycle, but derives from even older legends, and involves the death of a dragon. Young Bert listens closely to all that Marge tells him. Then, once the dragon has been dispatched, Bert claps energetically, and shrieks, “Good ‘un, Marge, good ‘un! More! More!” Marge then begins a fairy tale for the boy. It is “Hansel and Gretel”. Marge does the voice of the wicked old woman splendidly, and before the young protagonists are rescued, Bert falls asleep. Just as Marge puts him back in bed, Bert’s parents call up, “Marge, are you up there?” The girl goes to the door and speaks softly to the Harters, as they ascend the stairs, “Yes, I’m ‘ere. I just got Bert to sleep. ‘e must’ve been frightened by something. I sang to ‘im and told ‘im some stories. ‘e’s fine now.” “Good,” says Mrs. Harter. “And I see Alice is sleeping like a doll downstairs. Albert will settle up with you, then. We weren’t at ‘is mum’s as long as we thought we’d be. Still, it was a lively evening. Wouldn’t you say, Luv?” Albert enters the room and intones, “Twas, my dear. Twas.” The three grownups descend the stairs, and soon Marge is gone. Downstairs, lights go out first. Then Mrs. Harter is upstairs checking in on Bert, once she’s put the baby, Alice, in her cradle next to Bert’s bed. At last, the adults are in their own bedroom, upstairs, undressing. Mrs. Harter is pregnant. The couple talk while in bed. Then, they kiss and turn over. Mrs. Harter reaches up to turn off the table-lamp. There is a noise, and Albert says, “I feel lovely tonight, Dear. Let’s do something about it!” They do so, as the moon shines brightly into their room. The film fades. Lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: That’s better. I like 1916 London, despite the war on the Continent, especially when London’s seen from the perspective of ordinary Cockney folk like the Harters. (He picks up another book and puffs on pipe again.) But we must move on to another part of our story. It’s the late 1920’s and the Irish playwright, Sean O’Casey, has just sent an early draft of his drama The Silver Tassie to William Butler Yeats – the Irish poet, playwright, and theatrical impresario – prior to a potential production of it by the Abbey Theatre of Dublin. Yeats is dictating a letter to his wife, to be sent to O’Casey.

YEATS: Take this down, Darling. “Dear Sean: Your play was sent to me at Rapallo by some mistake of the Theatre. It arrived just after I had left and was returned from there to Dublin. I had looked forward with great hope and excitement to reading your play, and not merely because of my admiration for your work, for I bore in mind that the Abbey owed its recent prosperity to you. If you had not brought us your plays just at that moment, I doubt if it would now exist.” That’s a good beginning, I think, Sweetheart. What do you think I should say next?

MRS. YEATS: I believe you should get to the play now, Dear.
YEATS: Yes, you’re right, my Sure-Sighted Beauty. Next, then: “I read the first act with admiration, I thought it was the best first act you had written, and told a friend that you had surpassed yourself. The next night I read the second and third acts, and tonight I have read the fourth.” How do I say what comes next, I wonder.

MRS. YEATS: Be direct, Dear. He will take it better, in the long run, if you’re direct.
YEATS: Yes, I suppose you’re right. Then this: “I am sad and discouraged; you have no subject. You were interested in the Irish Civil War, and at every moment of those plays wrote out of your own amusement with life or your sense of its tragedy; you were excited,
and we all caught your excitement; you were exasperated almost beyond endurance by what you had seen or heard, as a man is by what happens under his window, and you moved us as Swift moved his contemporaries.” (Yeats looks directly into his wife’s eyes, and she returns his look.) “But you are not interested in the Great War; you never stood on its battlefields or walked in its hospitals, and so write out of your opinions. You illustrate those opinions by a dozen of almost unrelated scenes, as you might in a leading article; there is no dominating character, no dominating action, neither psychological unity nor unity of action; and your great power of the past has been the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end.” What do you think, Dear? Am I warming to my subject, or heating it up too much?

MRS. YEATS: I believe you are doing well by your true feelings. And your thoughts are doing well along with them.

YEATS: Good, then take this down next: “The mere greatness of the world war has thwarted it; you has refused to become mere background, and obtrudes itself upon the stage as so much dead wood that will not burn up everything but itself; there should be no room in a play for anything that does not belong to it; the whole history of the world must be reduced to wallpaper in front of which the characters must pose and speak. Among the things that dramatic action must burn up are the author’s opinions; while he is writing, he has no business to know anything that is not a portion of that action. Do you suppose for one moment that Shakespeare educated Hamlet and King Lear, by telling them what he thought and believed? As I see it, Hamlet and Lear educated Shakespeare, and I have no doubt that in the process of that education, he found out that he was an altogether different man to what he thought himself, and had altogether different beliefs. A dramatist can help his characters to educate him by thinking and studying everything that gives them the language they are groping for through his hands and eyes, but the control must be theirs, and that is why the ancient philosophers thought a poet or a dramatist Daimon-possessed.” (Yeats touches his wife’s hand.) I am nearing the end, my Dear.

MRS. YEATS: My hand is still good, William. Carry on.

YEATS: Finally, you can write this: ‘This is a hateful letter to write, or rather to dictate – I am dictating to my wife – and all the more so, because I can not advise you to amend the play. It is all too abstract, after the first act; the second act is an interesting technical experiment, but it is too long for the material; and after that there is nothing. I can imagine how you toyed over this play. A good scenario writes itself, it puts words into the mouths of all the characters while we sleep; but a bad scenario exacts the most miserable toil. I see nothing for it but a new theme, something you have found, and no newspaper writer has ever found. What business have we with anything but the unique? Put the dogmatism of this letter to an age of splenetic age, and forgive it. As ever, W.B. Yeats.” What do you think, Mrs. Yeats? Will it revitalize Mr. O’Casey eventually, or will it thoroughly deflate him forever?

MRS. YEATS: Hopefully, it will revitalize him after it’s deflated him. It’s a good letter, and he should appreciate it, once he’s properly considered it.

(She rises and kisses Yeats, then they move to separate corners of their room as the lights fade. When the lights come up again, the Narrator speaks...)

NARRATOR: Now we must move forward in time to 1982 and the Lenoir Nursing Home in Columbia, Missouri. David Lamont is a 31-year-old student in the Missouri School of Journalism, and he’s interviewing Mary Paxton Keeley for a story on that pioneer, who is now 94 years old. (She is sitting in a rocking chair, with a blanket on her lap. A picture of Harry, Bess, and Margaret Truman sits on a nearby table.) It is a nice day to talk, and David is about to hit upon a subject he will long be interested in.

DAVID: It’s good to know you and the Trumans were friends long before Harry became president. I’ll bet Bess got some of her gumption from you. And your being Margaret Truman’s godmother says a lot, too.

MARY: No, Bess had gumption before Hector was a pup -- long before that, even.

DAVID: Speaking of old times, could you tell me the story of the red tassel?

MARY: Oh yeah, that’s somewhere in the cobwebs of my brain. Dean Walter Williams called me into his office one day and said, “You’re the only woman in the first graduating class, therefore you can choose the color of the tassel.” So I said, like Mark Twain, ‘Any old color will do, just as long as it’s red.” So that’s the way we got red tassels. And my students, when they graduated from Christian College after us, I would let them put the red tassel on their caps.

DAVID: That’s an appealing image and story – very nice. I also heard you’ve a good story about your courage, which was not unlike that of your friends, the Trumans -- a story about flying in an army balloon.

MARY: Not an army balloon -- no. It was just a man that had these balloons and he was trying to see if they’d do to be army balloons. That’s a long-winded story, which I hate to tell you,

DAVID: Tell it to me anyway.

MARY: Okay. I had a hard time going ‘cause A.B. MacDonald, of the Kansas City Star, was city editor and he said, “No, I’m not going to let you go.” The boys had gone up in the morning and I wanted to, too. They came back at lunch-time to write their stories and I said, “I’m going up in that balloon. I’m gonna ask MacDonald.” And they said, “MacDonald won’t let you.” And MacDonald said, “You’re not going up in that balloon. I told your father I’d take care of you.” Well, I didn’t want to be taken care of. And so, the managing editor, who had come over from the Denver Post – he gave me my job to begin with – so I went in to him and said, “I want to go up in a balloon.” And he said, “That’ll be a real nice story....” After lunch, the boys took me out in a car and I borrowed a stocking cap to keep my hair outta my eyes. And I tied a piece of elastic to my dress around my ankles, to keep it from blowing up over my head. It was a kinda dangerous thing to do, but you had to do it, being a woman – first one in it – you had to do these things, to show ‘em you could do ‘em.

DAVID: Do you have any idea how high you got up?

MARY: Well, I’ve been trying to figure since. I never had sense enough to ask anybody how high I went. But we went out once to fly a balloon. You know the story from here, and this fellow that was flying it, took it up to 200 feet – I think it was more than that. Aye, 200 feet high. The people – they looked like ants. And then I got sick, ‘cause I couldn’t see the people. It was like a swing tied under an old apple tree and all that was between you and eternity was your holdin’ those hands onto that rope.

DAVID: Who talked the balloon-owner into letting you go up?

MARY: Well, this man came out and I said, “I’m going up in that balloon.” He said, “You are not goin’ up in that balloon. I’m not takin’ a woman up in the balloon.” And the boys said to him, “Well, you won’t get any advertisin’ if you don’t.” He wanted the advertisin’ – and one of the boys on the paper, the one I borrowed the stocking cap from, was a photographer. And all those years afterwards I found someone that knew that he was workin’ still. Ralph Baird was his name. That was the first time I ever saw him.

DAVID: Did he get a good picture of you that day?

MARY: It was from under the balloon, but it was enough to horrify my father.
DAVID: That sounds like a wonderful experience.
MARY: That’s the most exciting thing I ever did. The wind first blew the little clouds through. Then it blew more clouds. One time, I thought it was going to blow me over, but I stuck….
DAVID: That took a lot of courage, Ms. Keeley. I once knew a photojournalist who did something courageous, but when I first heard his story, I didn’t truly appreciate it.
MARY: And who was this photojournalist?
DAVID: His name is Bert Harter. He’s an English photojournalist, and I met him last year.
MARY: And why was he courageous?
DAVID: Well, besides being a war correspondent in eight or nine wars, he also put down his camera once to save several human lives. He was driving through a town in Germany called Osnabruck, near the end of World War II, and he came upon a smoky scene, which turned out to be a basement fire that had trapped several just-liberated Russian slaves as they foraged for blankets and clothing.
MARY: And what did he do?
DAVID: He sent his driver back for more help. Then he went downstairs to bring up as many women as he could. By the time the driver came back with more help, Sgt. Harter had saved many lives. He then took pictures of the aftermath.
MARY: That does sound courageous. Was he given any sort of recognition for his heroism?
DAVID: I think he received a military commendation; but there were so many heroes around, he didn’t think he’d done anything special. Today, I respect him a lot, just as I respect you. Everything moves so quickly in life, I just wish I could thank people better when they first do things for me. Sometimes I feel like I’m part of some Thornton Wilder play, with life slipping through my fingers at 100 times the speed I can catch it. Do you know what I mean?
MARY: I kinda think I do. Maybe you still can – catch it, I mean.
DAVID: I’ll try, Ms. Keeley. Now, can I take your picture?
MARY: That’ll be fine. Just make sure you show my left profile in them. That’s my good side, you know.
DAVID: Of course, your left profile is okay with me. My London teacher, John Whale, seemed to feel uninterested in any photos of him taken by me, maybe because we resembled each other. But you are prettier than either Mr. Whale or me.
MARY: Thank you, I hope you’re not stretching the truth too much.
DAVID: Not at all, Mrs. Keeley, not at all.

(David begins taking her picture. Then, he asks if he can move her wheelchair toward the window. She nods “Yes,” and the final view of her is smiling up at David’s camera from just in front of her window – a window with pictures of ducks on it – and the table with the Trumans’ picture nearby. Lights out on them; lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Next you see the study of a man after my own heart – the study of Prof. David Krause, drama critic and scholar. It’s December 1957, and the good professor is working on an essay that has been getting away from him until now. But tonight, he is on the money as never before.

(Prof. Krause picks up what he’s written last and begins to read it aloud…)

PROF. KRAUSE: Now, this should be better: “Among the important discoveries O’Casey made in his new experiment, he found that it was not only possible but necessary to combine realistic and non-realistic techniques, as he had already combined comic and tragic material in his previous work. He found that he could set a larger theme in a framework of reality and at the same time develop it allegorically through the methods of Expressionism. He found that he could bring a sharper tone of moral passion to his theme by projecting it through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project and through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heenan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical project

(Lights go down, except for a spotlight on the Narrator. He has yet another book in his hand now. And he speaks between glances at it and his own thoughts. The next action occurs on film.)

NARRATOR: It’s the night of January 11, 1941, during the Nazi blitz over London. Bert Harter, soon-to-be-legendary British photojournalist, is spending his nights with a fire-fighting unit there. He is on the last night of an otherwise dreary, non-essential coverage, when the call comes out that the Nazis have hit a nearby part of the city. Bert is at his mother’s house on Lancaster Street, from where a driver takes him immediately out to the fire, and he goes to work there.
BERT (to his driver): There’s the ware’ouses that were reported burning. Let’s stop ‘ere and scramble round a while.
DRIVER: Yessir.

(They get out and head for the warehouses. Bert joins up with a fireman, and they head down into the cellar while the driver waits. Bert begins taking pictures downstairs. Before long, though, the ceiling above collapses, and Bert and his partner are trapped.)

BERT (looking for an exit): We’ve got to find a way outa ’ere. Dammit, we’re too young to die.
FIREMAN (looking, too): Yessir, we certainly are.

(They dig through the rubble lying all around them. After a minute or two, with the fire getting closer and closer, Bert finds a hole.)

BERT (motioning in his direction): ’ere we are, Mate. You go first.
FIREMAN (moving toward the hole): No sir, you go first. I’ll be right behind you.
BERT: Okay, if you insist.

(Bert scrambles up through the hole and into a dark tunnel running along under the warehouse. A few warehouses along, the pair emerge, near fire-fighters who have been digging for them.)

BERT (coming up behind the diggers with a big grin on his face): Lucky us; you can stop digging. (The diggers are happy to see the two men.) We’ve only got a few holes burnt in our clothes. Thank God we didn’t get stuck in there.

(The film fades out as they talk. Then, the Narrator speaks.)

NARRATOR: Our scene shifts to an area north of the River Thames in the City of London, later that night.

(As the film restarts, Bert is photographing on the ground, but motions to a fire-fighter, signaling he will go atop one of the buildings. The fire-fighter signals okay, and Bert begins climbing a fire-escape. As he goes higher, he swears to himself, then shouts down to the fire-fighter, “Christ, this is off the ground a bit.” Soon, he is on top of the building, when a strange scene comes into his viewfinder. It appears a fire-fighter has become stuck up there, and he is not moving. Bert takes a picture, then before he can move in to see what the man’s real condition is, two fire-fighters grab the immobile man and head downstairs with him. One of the rescuers shouts at Bert.)

FIRE-RESCUER #1: Get off the building, Sir! It’s about ready to go down!
BERT (shouting back): If you say so! I’m on my way down, then!

(As Bert’s foot hits the pavement, the building begins to collapse and the film fades. The Narrator speaks.)

NARRATOR: Mr. Harter is now near his mother’s house on Lancaster Street, on the same night, but doesn’t realize where he is right away.

(As the motion picture restarts, Bert is flipping through his film cases to see if he has any more films to use. He finds none. However, he suddenly realizes he is just around the corner from his mum’s house, so he heads there. Once at that site, he finds his sister Lily running about frantically, trying to put out incendiary-bomb fires. He decides to help her.)

BERT: Lily, you can use some ’elp, it looks like.
LILY: Bert, it’s good you’re back. The damn Gerrys ‘ave been bombing us bad ’ere. Grab a bucket, then!
BERT: Lily, you can use some ‘elp, it looks like.
LILY: Bert: it’s good you’re back. The damn Gerrys ‘ave been bombing us bad ‘ere. Grab a bucket, then!
BERT (getting busy): Be careful, Sis. It’s going to be a long war, and I want to make sure we both make it through till the end.
LILY (pouring water all around): You and me both! Let’s beat the Gerrys ‘ere first. Then we can beat ‘em on their home turf.
BERT (pouring water himself): That’s the spirit, Sis. Let’s do our business, then!

(The film fades. Lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Mr. Harter’s heroics pay off. We next see him in the offices of Picture Post Magazine, in Shoe Lane, just off Fleet Street. It’s February 1, 1941, and Bert is enjoying the acclaim of Editor Tom Hopkinson and others on the staff. (This action occurs live on stage.)

TOM: Way to go, Bert (shaking his hand). First photographer credit in our paper’s history. Sterling work, to be sure.
REPORTER #1 (holding up the most famous two-page spread in the magazine’s history): Yes, let’s read these captions: “The Height of the Blaze: Eighty Feet up in the Air a Fireman Strikes at the Heart of the Fire. Stark and grim is the climax of the fire fight. Blazing walls are crumbling. The fire is bursting through. Overhead, guided by the flames, the German bombers are circling. One after another they release their load of death. Unmoved, unflinching, the firemen run out their ladder. One man mounts, higher and higher, till he is alone above the flames. There, eighty feet up, he strikes at the very source of the fire.” Then this (pointing), “The Man on the Ladder: In Clouds of Smoke and Steam He Faces the Fire Alone. All night long they have fought the fire. They have fought it in the streets streaming with water. They have fought it within buildings blazing like a furnace. On to the flames they have poured a hundred thousand gallons of water, concentrated at colossal pressure. And still the fight goes on. From our rule of anonymity we except these pictures. They were taken by A. (he adds, “for Albert”) Harter, one of our own cameramen.” Let’s hear it for Bert Harter! Hip-Hip-Hooray!

(Shouts of “Hip-Hip-Hooray!” break out throughout the news room. Bert’s face turns red as one of the women staffers plants a kiss on his lips. Then he has something to say himself.)

BERT (genuinely moved): I don’t deserve any special recognition. Just doing my job out there. And I was lucky; the Good Lord seems to want me to finish out this war. In any case, thanks go to all of you. I hope I can continue to earn your respect.
TOM: Well-said, Bert (shaking his hand again, and this time speaking only to Bert) – there may be a promotion in all of this for you, but we’ll talk about that later.
BERT: Thank you, Tom. I’ll do my best work for you.
TOM: Yes, Bert, I expect you will.
NARRATOR: Things are definitely looking up for Mr. Harter. He opens his mail on March 3 at his mother’s house.

BERT: Lily, I’ve been promoted! -- to a staff position with the Post, with eight pounds a week guaranteed, and the chance to make a lot more if I’ve more pictures in the paper! Mum, Dad, and Dora will be pleased. Maybe Dora will even quit nagging me about the picture business now that I’ve struck it rich.

LILY: I don’t know about that, Bert. But I knew you ‘ad it in you. Let’s celebrate with a pint between us. (Opening a bottle and pouring.)

BERT: Sounds good to me. Cheers, Sis. (Clinking glasses and drinking.)

LILY: Cheers. Now, we’ve let Mum, Dad, and Dora know. Let’s get on the phone, then, to Dora, Mister. No time to spare. We’ll tell Mum and Dad when they come back from shopping.

BERT: Yep, Sis. No time to spare. (Hesitating.) Gosh, I wonder what Dora will think….

(Narrator out. End of Act I.)

Act II: Where Hell Leaves Off, History Begins.

Action: The Narrator emerges, stage right. He is carrying a photo album. He pages through it briefly, then speaks. The action in the next two scenes takes place on film, except for the Narrator’s part.

NARRATOR: It is early April, 1945. Sgt. Harter is in Osnabruck, Germany, by a bombed-out department store. German police -- who have been allowed to continue working by Allied authorities, after the area was taken over by our troops -- have thrown strips of burning paper into a basement, where some liberated Russian slaves have been foraging for blankets and clothing. The strips of paper start a fire, and Sgt. Harter and his jeep driver, Private Harry Flower, have just discovered it. No one else has been checking to see if anyone is trapped in that basement, so when the two Brits arrive, Sgt. Harter goes into the basement. He is about to discover what is happening to the unfortunate below, as he follows their cries for help.

SGT. HARTER (grasping at walls in the smoke): Whoa! (Bumping into a screaming woman.) Ma’am, I’m here to help you out.

NARRATOR: He grabs her, thank God.

SGT. HARTER: Let’s get you out of this hellhole, okay?

NARRATOR: Coughing on the smoke, he carries the woman up a metal ladder and throws her onto the pavement above.

SGT. HARTER: Private! Get this lady breathing decently; then go for more help. There are a lot of people trapped down there.

PVT. FLOWER: Okay, Sergeant. Anything you say.

NARRATOR: Pvt. Flower begins to breathe into the woman’s mouth, trying to restore her. Sgt. Harter goes back down the ladder.

SGT. HARTER: I’m here. Where are you?

SECOND WOMAN: Here, we are here!

SGT. HARTER: Where?

NARRATOR: Feeling his way along the walls, he eventually finds the room where she is and grabs her, carrying her now back along that smoky hallway.

SGT. HARTER: Good (as he reaches the ladder). I’m getting you out of here, Ma’am. Private, are you still up there?!

PVT. FLOWER: Yes, Sergeant, but I’d better head back for more help if there are many more of them.

NARRATOR: Sgt. Harter looks at the condition of both women, who are breathing okay.

SGT. HARTER: All right, Private, head out. But get back here in a hurry!

PVT. FLOWER: Will do, Sir. (He jumps in the jeep and is gone.)

SGT. HARTER (going back down the ladder): Who else is down here?

NARRATOR: The flames and smoke are intensifying, but he hears another voice, this one not so close.

SGT. HARTER: Where are you, Ma’am?

NARRATOR: This lady doesn’t speak English, so the Brit has to follow the trail of her whimperings.

SGT. HARTER: I’ll get you out, Ma’am.

NARRATOR: Sgt. Harter follows the wall along, without being able to see a foot in front of him. The woman is still whimpering. He stumbles, gets up, feels the wall again, hears the whimpering once more, looks in one room, then finds her in the next, and picks her tiny body up gently.

SGT. HARTER: There, there, now, Lady. We’re getting out of here alive, you and me, and maybe some of these other people, too.

NARRATOR: He struggles along the smoky wall with her, almost stumbles, coughs twice, then bumps into the ladder again. Just soon enough, he is up the ladder with the woman, and they both gasp for air. Private Flower is just getting back now with some Pioneer Corps troops they had seen a few minutes before.

PVT. FLOWER: Sgt. Harter, I’m back, and I’ve brought some more help.

SGT. HARTER: And not a moment too soon, Private. Thank God for small favors. There are more ‘em downstairs, and the smoke is terrible. (The fresh rescue-troops move in.) Now, if nobody else minds awfully much, I think I’ll take a few pictures.

NARRATOR: The Sergeant gets his camera out of the jeep, and shoots a picture of a beret-topped Pioneer, carrying a rescued woman out of harm’s way. And he keeps snapping pictures, almost feverishly at first, free at last to do the work he’s paid for. This film segment ends happily, unlike the next….

(Stage lights out, then up again.)

NARRATOR (on other side of stage): Our film footage begins again in a slightly different time and place. I say “slightly”, to be kind. It is a thoroughly terrifying time and place. It is April 19, 1945 – the day after Allied forces liberate Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.
– the same camp where young Anne Frank met her death. Bert Harter has been allowed in to photograph the ghastly sights that await him. He enters the gate in a jeep that seems as marvelously timeless as Bergen-Belsen is heaped in horrid history. At the gate, his driver is instructed where to park, and then Sgt. Harter gets out, to document the thousands of murders that have taken place there over the past few years. The British Lieutenant who shows him round, has arrived the day before and is an expert regarding the cruelty of war – he knows all about genocide, too much about it, in fact. They go immediately to an exposed area, where hundreds of bodies are stretched out, one by one, on their backs mainly – remnants of what used to be decent men, women, and children. Sgt. Harter is sickened, but does not vomit. Instead, he solemnly asks if he can begin snapping pictures. I’ll be quiet a while. This story is really in the pictures and their taking.

SGT. HARTER (sadly pointing): Lieutenant, is it okay if I begin ‘ere?
LIEUTENANT: I can’t think of a better place, Sergeant.
SGT. HARTER: All right, then, ‘ere it goes – for the ‘istorians and the Allied war tribunals.

(Sgt. Harter takes individual pictures of three nude corpses, then begins composing stills that show the depths of the misery. An entire field of corpses, followed by a huge ditch, filled with decaying bodies, then along a ridge at the top of the ditch – still more corpses. Mainly they are naked, but a small handful are “dignified” by their tattered clothing. Sgt. Harter continues taking pictures, though it gets harder and harder to “compose” scenes, when so much reaches beyond the tragic. He pauses occasionally and mutters to himself. Finally, he speaks to the Lieutenant.)

SGT. HARTER: Are there any survivors?
LIEUTENANT: Yes, they’re over here.

(Responding to the Lieutenant’s pointing, Sgt. Harter moves along another ridge, by the camp’s buildings. There he sees the raggedly dressed survivors, infested with vermin, and begging for food and drink.)

SGT. HARTER: By God, this is terrible! I thought Osnabruck was bad, where I found people burning up in a basement. Who could’ve done this sort of thing?
LIEUTENANT: God only knows. Go ahead, then, Sergeant, take a few shots here, too.

(Sgt. Harter resumes photographing. He has some chocolates in his pocket, so he gives some to a child and the woman looking after him. He learns the boy’s parents were both killed here. Sgt. Harter is too upset to photograph the child in his need, but when one man reaches up toward the photographer at one point, the Sergeant takes his picture. The former prisoner is surprised, but thankful, too, because the photographer gives him some chocolate.)

SGT. HARTER (to Lieutenant): I can’t do this anymore – at least not out ‘ere – it’s too awful! Is there anything else I can photograph?
LIEUTENANT: I know what you mean. Let’s go inside, by the bloody Gerrys!

(They move across another field, then into a hut. The Lieutenant points the way.)

LIEUTENANT: They’re in there... fire away!
SGT. HARTER: Thanks, Lieutenant, I will.

(The action imitates the description given by the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Sgt. Harter moves into the room the German soldier-prisoners are in. Allied orderlies are just bringing food to them, and the British photographer can’t stomach this. He takes a plate of food and throws it into one of the prisoners’ faces. Nobody notices, apparently, except the frightened German hit by the sudden attack. There is strong light coming in through the window, but because the Germans know better, they stand with their backs to the light, and Sgt. Harter notices, apparently, except the frightened German hit by the sudden attack. There is strong light coming in through the window, but because the Germans know better, they stand with their backs to the light, and Sgt. Harter can only show partial profiles and silhouettes. Before long, he’s had enough of this, so he moves back outside, where the Lieutenant is waiting for him.

LIEUTENANT: Seen enough, Sergeant?
SGT. HARTER: Yessir, seen plenty of enough!
LIEUTENANT: Good, then we’ll get you a meal and you can be off.
SGT. HARTER: No thanks, Sir. I couldn’t eat now. I’ll wait till I get back to my unit, if that’s okay.
LIEUTENANT: That’ll be fine, Sergeant. I hope you have some good pictures. People a hundred years from now probably won’t believe this happened if you and others like you don’t document what went on here.
SGT. HARTER: I understand, Sir. I did my best, but it’s too much death and dying ‘ere. I wonder if anyone can do it justice but God.
LIEUTENANT: I agree, Sgt. Harter. God will be the only one to do this justice.
SGT. HARTER: God ... and, maybe, a good war crimes trial!
LIEUTENANT: Yes, the Gerrys don’t have a lot to look forward from this place. I pity the poor bastards who lived a short auto ride from places like this and didn’t know what was going on in them.
SGT. HARTER: I know what you mean, Sir. Maybe ordinary Germans didn’t do this, but a damned dictator and his ‘enchmen.
LIEUTENANT: That’s true, Sergeant, that’s very true. Now, are you ready to push off?
SGT. HARTER: Yessir, I am.
LIEUTENANT (pointing): Then there’s your driver. If you have any follow-up questions, just phone me and I’ll be glad to help out.
SGT. HARTER: Thanks, Sir. You’ve been a great ‘elp already.
LIEUTENANT: Then you’re off, Sergeant. Have a good day. And send us some prints. We need documents, too, you know.
SGT. HARTER: Yes sir, I’ll send you plenty.
LIEUTENANT: Good day, then, Sergeant.
SGT. HARTER: Yessir, good day!

(They salute each other, and Sgt. Harter rejoins his driver. As the pair get in, the Sergeant looks back one last time and speaks to no one in particular, except perhaps to God.)
SGT. HARTER: What a bloody awful war this has been… what a bloody awful war,…

(He sits, salutes to what’s left of the survivors, and turns around as his jeep creeps off into the distance. The lighting is gorgeous, as the sun gently touches the horizon. The jeep moves more deliberately off now; the film fades. The Narrator speaks next, and new action occurs on stage.)

NARRATOR: The next setting is St. Martin’s Press, mid-February, many decades forward. That publishing house’s president, Patrick Murphy, is speaking with one of his attorneys.

(There is a knock at the door; then, a receptionist enters.)

RECEPTIONIST: Mr. Murphy – Mr. Dunbar and Mr. Lamont are here to see you.
MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Rose. Please show them in.

(Rose goes, then returns with the agent and his client. Glen Dunbar approaches Mr. Murphy.)

MR. MURPHY: Hello, Glen. How are you? Gosh it’s been a long time. The last time you were here was when Norman Mahler was hot about World War II. Thankfully, there’s still interest in that subject. And this must be Mr. Lamont. How are you?
DAVID: Fine, Sir. It’s good to meet you at last.
MR. MURPHY: And we’re glad you stuck around long enough to negotiate this deal. We’ll be happy to include your Picture Post book and The Red Tassel, too, in our collection of trade-books.
DAVID: Good. And are those our contracts, Mr. Murphy? (Pointing at documents on Mr. Murphy’s desk.)
MR. MURPHY: Exactly, David. Here, you and Glen can have one more look at them – before you put your John Hancocks on them.
GLEN: Let’s hope all the details are as we agreed.
MR. MURPHY: I’m sure you’ll find everything in order. We don’t botch the details once we get a good author and agent this far.

(David and Glen take a close look at the contracts. They discuss one or two points quietly; then they agree that everything looks in order.)

GLEN: David and I have looked these over and they look good. We are especially happy you have agreed to a $20,000 advance on The Red Tassel, because you are including it in your First Plays of the New Millennium Series, along with the $30,000 advance for the Picture Post book.
MR. MURPHY: Then you can sign here – David first, then you, Glen.

(The pair happily sign. They shake each other’s hands; and then they shake Mr. Murphy’s and his lawyer’s hands. The lawyer, Jack Pleasance, speaks.)

JACK: If I may be so bold, I think everyone here has made a good deal out of the two manuscripts offered. You, Mr. Lamont, have a good financial and artistic arrangement with both publications, as do you, Mr. Dunbar. And Mr. Murphy has the writer and agent he needs to put across these two projects to the public. It’s a good deal all the way around.
MR. MURPHY: I agree, Jack. Now, would everyone like a drink? I’ve got some very good Brandy in my personal bar. I’ve heard Wisconsin loves Brandy. Is that true, David, or have I been misinformed?
DAVID: That’s true for Wisconsin and for me, Mr. Murphy. I’ll be glad to have one. And I know Glen loves it, too. (Glen nods.)
MR. MURPHY: Good. (He phones his receptionist for the refreshments.) Now, if it’s okay with you, I’ll have two of our editors speak with you about the initial handling of your manuscripts. Just some preliminary stuff… nothing difficult.
DAVID: That’s fine with me.

(The receptionist enters and begins offering glasses to the four men. Mr. Murphy offers a toast – “To the best interests of this excellent publications team!” – and as the editors enter, the lights dim. Lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We now enter the office of the Irish Statesman Newspaper, in the Dublin, Ireland of 1928. The staff is gathering round to determine what will run in the next issue of the paper. Foremost on everyone’s mind is what Sean O’Casey has written by way of response to W.B. Yeats’ negative letter to him about The Silver Tassie. One of the reporters, given to dramatics himself, has gotten a copy of it and is beginning to read from it.

REPORTER #1: Oi’m jest r-r-reading the bist par-r-rts of this, me boodies, an’ (shifting accents) I’m reading it in plain English, because The Silver Tassie will probably be produced not at the Abbey Theatre, but rather in an English theatre – far from our homeland (one or two boos now), thanks to W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. Mr. O’Casey writes, to Mr. Yeats: “You say – and this is the motif throughout the intonation of your whole song – that ‘I am not interested in the Great War.’ Now, how do you know that I am not interested in the Great War? Perhaps because I never mentioned it to you. Your statement is to me an impudently ignorant one to make, for it happens that I was and am passionately interested in the Great War…..

“You say ‘You never stood on its battle-fields.’ Do you really mean that no one should or could write about or speak about a war because one has not stood on the battle-fields? Were you serious when you dictated that – really serious now? Was Shakespeare at Actium or Phillippi; was G.B. Shaw in the boats with the French, or in the forts with the British when St. Joan and Dunois made the attack that relieved Orleans?….

“But I have walked some of the hospital wards. I have talked and walked and smoked and sung with the blue-suited wounded men, fresh from the front. I’ve been with the armless, the legless, the blind, the gassed, and the shell-shocked; with one with a head bored by shrapnel who had to tack east and tack west before he could reach the point he wished to get to;… Did you know ‘Pantosser’ or did you ever speak to him? Or watch his funny, terrible antics, or listen to the gurgle of his foolish thoughts?….
“You say: ‘You illustrate these opinions by a series of almost unrelated scenes as you might in a leading article.’ I don’t know very much about leading articles, though I may have possibly read them when I had the mind of a kid… [D]o you know what you are thinking about when you talk of leading articles? Surely to God, Mr. Yeats, you don’t read leading articles!

“I have pondered in my heart your expression that ‘the history of the world must be reduced to wall-paper,’ and I can find in it only the pretentious bigness of a pretentious phrase….

“[A]nd I’m afraid I can’t make my mind mix with the sense of importance you give to a ‘dominating character.’ God forgive me, but it does sound as if you peeked and pined for a hero in the play. Now is a dominating character more important than a play, or a play more important than a dominating character? In The Silver Tassie you have a unique work that dominates all the characters in the play….

“It is all very well and very easy to say that ‘dramatic action must burn up the author’s opinions.’… [N]ow was there ever a play, worthy of the name of play, that did not contain one or two or three opinions of the author that wrote it? And the Abbey Theatre has produced plays that were packed skin-tight with the author’s opinions – the plays of Shaw, for instance.

“Whether Hamlet or Lear educated Shakespeare, or Shakespeare educated Hamlet and Lear, I don’t know the hell, and I don’t think you know either.” (Cheers from the staff at last, who have been listening intently.)

“Your statements about ‘psychological unity and unity of action… Dramatic action is fire that must burn up everything but itself … the history of the world must be reduced to wallpaper in front of which the characters must pose and speak… while an author is writing he has no business to know anything that isn’t a part of the action…’ are to me, glib, glib, glib ghosts. It seems to me they have been made, and will continue to be spoken forever and ever by professors in schools for the culture and propagation of the drama. I was nearly saying the PLAY….  

“You say that after the first and second acts of The Silver Tassie there is… nothing. Really nothing? Nothing, nothing at all? Well, where there is nothing, where there is nothing – there is God…

“I shall be glad for the return of the script… and a formal note of its rejection. Best personal wishes. Sean O’Casey.”

REPORTER #2: Pr-r-retty pointt stuffe, I propose.

EDITOR #1: Very potent stuff is right! Let’s hear it for Mr. O’Casey. Hip-Hip-Hooray! (Everyone joins in.) Hip-Hip-Hooray! Hip-Hip-Hooray!

CHIEF EDITOR: Do we have a good letter for today’s edition, then, Me Boys?

EVERYONE: Yes we do, Sir!

CHIEF EDITOR: Then, let’s get this paper out. Everybody to their places. (They all move back to work.) Now let’s get cr-r-rackin’.

(The place is suddenly alive with work, as the hum of the printing presses begin to be heard in the background. The lights die down gradually in their area and come up again on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We’re next in the New York apartment of Glen Dunbar, a while after the publication of The Red Tassel. David Lamont and Glen are reading through the script, readying it for a Broadway producer. David, in particular, is suffering from creative anguish. Glen is trying to calm him.

GLEN: I doubt it’s that important who gets shot in the section leading up to the hero’s climactic action.

DAVID: But it is important. I doubt anything could be any more important than this section of the play. It’s critical to the audience’s understanding of the importance of a military reporter, who earned his red tassel at Mizzou, also winning the Congressional Medal of Honor for drawing fire away from his comrades and taking out a machine-gun nest and six Gerrys. He does what he does because his best friend, who is also from Mizzou, has been shot and may be near death due to that machine-gun nest. My God, it may be the best piece of writing I’ve done so far.

GLEN (debating for the sake of creative argument): Okay, it’s good, I’ll give you that. But why isn’t it just as good to have them take out Pfc. Oliver, or another reporter for that matter, even if he isn’t from Mizzou? Your early expressionistic parts make that relevant.

DAVID: I know his best pal is not a reporter, but it’s the whole thing with Mizzou and what the J-School there instills in its graduates – a belief in team-play, loyalty to the American cause, and fair competition among its students. The guy who gets shot was formerly a J-School student and he got caught in-between-things en route to the Army. His future is critical to my hero.

GLEN: Okay. Let’s read through the action again, SLOWLY.

DAVID: All right, but only if you promise to ask the director to stage the two climactic scenes for me next Tuesday.

GLEN: Deal! Now, can we read?

DAVID: I’m reading, I’m reading.

(He begins reading through the crucial section, and the lights go out on Glen’s apartment, and up elsewhere.)

NARRATOR: Now we’re in the home of Stefan Szakall – legendary picture editor, Hitler nemesis, and founder with Edward Hulton of Picture Post Magazine in 1938. It is August 1995, and Mr. Szakall is 94 years old. He is reading through some of his old articles at his cottage in Lenox, Massachusetts, when the phone rings. It’s David Lamont. Lights up on David’s desk in Wisconsin.

STEFAN (speaking with a Hungarian-Yiddish accent): Hullo.

DAVID: Mr. Szakall? It’s David Lamont in Wisconsin.

STEFAN: Oh, hullo, Mr. Lamont. How you doing?

DAVID: I’m fine. How are you?

STEFAN: Just so-so. Moi health isn’t bad for a 94-year-old man, but I am 94, not 44.

DAVID: You sound good, in any case. I’m calling because I’m wondering if you have had a chance to look at my manuscript.

STEFAN: Yes, the monuscreent. I’ve read it, and my assistant is typing up my comments to send you soon.

DAVID: Any general thoughts now?

STEFAN: Well, you know, the parts about Tom Hopkinson may depend too much on his self-glorified memories. He talks about a letter I supposedly sent him where he claims I gave him credit for his stupendous work on Picture Post. He never did anything before I made him my assistant. Ten years before I began Picture Post, I ran Munchen Illustrierte. He was in advertising, before I brought him over to work with me.

DAVID: Yes, I may have used his autobiography too much. Let me know in your critique all of what you think, and I’ll make the necessary changes.
NARRATOR: It’s a bright, fall day in Wisconsin, circa 1995, with David Lamont walking near his apartment. As he passes the park, he notices an elderly woman having trouble with her bookbag. It’s fallen from her hands and spilled the contents into the sharp breeze blowing down the street. David crosses and helps her.

ELDERLY WOMAN: Mine is Jean – Jean Bell. Glad you were around to pick these up.

DAVID: Yes, good-bye, Mr. Szakall.

NARRATOR: David checks over the notes he has jotted down, not only from today, but from all their recent talks. He reads two notations aloud.

DAVID: “Bert Harter was a second-rank photographer. He was good, but he was not as great as some others…. The truly great photographers were Salomon, Brassai, Munkasci, Eisenstaedt, Mann, and a few others.” And then, “Poor Tom, he died penniless and without much attention. That’s what happens, if your writing is not correct. You can write all you want, if it’s not correct, and nobody will pay attention. As for me, I wrote one book at first, and I earned a million dollars.” (David questions Szakall to himself.) Szakall thinks everyone who came after him at Picture Post was not equal to the photographers he worked with in Germany and then brought to Picture Post, and he did sell a million copies of I Was Hitler’s Prisoner, but somehow still (gazing out toward the audience), I think these were all great journalists. And in addition to his lack of respect for Mr. Harter and Tom Hopkinson, he doesn’t even mention Henri Cartier-Bresson, arguably the greatest photojournalist of all. Also, Tom Hopkinson was knighted, as was Edward Hulton – and Bert Harter won the Missouri Press Award during the Korean war, plus numerous other awards, and he also saw his pictures used in Edward Steichen’s Family of Man Exhibit. But as for his part, no one can dispute that Stefan Szakall was anything less than the greatest pioneering figure magazine photographers had before 1940. Once he sends back his comments on my manuscript, I’ll have a minor coup on my hands.

(Lights dim in that area, as David reads more. The Narrator speaks from another part of stage.)

NARRATOR: It’s a bright, fall day in Wisconsin, circa 1995, with David Lamont walking near his apartment. As he passes the park across from that apartment, he notices an elderly woman having trouble with her bookbag. It’s fallen from her hands and spilled the contents into the sharp breeze blowing down the street. David crosses and helps her.

DAVID: Jean, I teach a writing class or two at the technical college -- non-credit classes. But we seem to enjoy each others’ company, and this is excellent, Ms. Bell.

JEAN: To tell you the truth, I’m a student there myself right now; and I know our teacher is leaving soon. Maybe I could put in a good word for you.

DAVID: That'd be helpful. We’ll be in touch, then, as soon as I talk with the director there.
JEAN: And I'll put in a good word for you as soon as I can.
DAVID: Thanks, Jean. I'd better be running now, but I'll phone you soon. Maybe the “Renaissance” lives, after all.
JEAN: Yes, maybe it does.

(They shake hands and then David is off across the street. Jean heads through the park, as the light fades. Lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: It’s almost dusk near Inchon, South Korea, Sept. 15, 1950. U.N. forces had been bottled up in Pusan, on the southeastern edge of the peninsula, but Gen. Douglas MacArthur has just launched a risky counter-attack at Inchon, on the northwestern coast of South Korea. The tides are treacherous there, and good for attack on only two days each year. This is one of those days. Leading the armada is the press boat, marked with huge letters “PRESS”; that’s a fluke, and the wrong beach is being assaulted, too, but the U.N. moves in. At the great sea-wall, Bert Harter and his partner, the writer James Cameron, jockey for position. Neither wants to be the first one over the sea-wall, but the light is fading and Bert needs pictures. The only photographer on board with small-format equipment, Bert will be the only one to get dramatic still-pictures from the attack. As it turns out, he is also the first man over the sea-wall. Once over, tin helmet and all, he comes back and sits atop the wall, to get pictures, risky as it is.
BERT: Jesus H. Christ, they’re shooting at me!
JAMES: Yes, God Almighty is going to have a field day before this thing’s over. At least your mouth hasn’t been shot off yet, or your eyes!
BERT: Probably. But we’d both look a damn sight funnier if you missed my mouth and eyes. (Another bullet comes close. Bert ducks, then another bullet comes even closer, and he is over the wall and onto land.) Come on, Jimmy. Get your arse over ‘ere – now!
JAMES: Okay, Bertie, I’m coming over, too. (He leaps over the wall, and lands with a thud.) Ouch, that hurt!
BERT: There’s a ‘ole lot more ‘urin’ comin’, I expect, so lace up your boots and let’s get crackin’.

(Narrator is puffing on his pipe again.)

(Lights are extinguished at the End of Act II.)

Act III: Time for an Interview and Beyond.

Action: Lights. Narrator is puffing on his pipe again.

NARRATOR: It’s November 1981 in Surrey, England. David Lamont has just been driven by Bert Harter to Mr. Harter’s 300-year-old Kentish farmstead. Mrs. Harter, Sheila, has met them in the yard, and the three of them enter the house, Sheila first. The living room is decorated with smart leather chairs and couch, no sign of Bert’s photos yet. The legendary photojournalist asks David if he would like a beer, or some tea or coffee. David opts for coffee and Sheila brings some brownies with it. The three of them begin chatting about who they know in London.

DAVID: I attended Missouri’s School of Journalism and my teacher here is John Whale, of the Sunday Times.
BERT: John Wall. Is that who you said?
DAVID: No, John Whale… W-H-A-L-E. And I got your name through Ms. Sally Soames, a photographer for that paper.
SHEILA: Yes, Sally Soames. You know her Bert. She’s done many things we’ve liked, and she’s had work done in our lab, too.
BERT: Oh, yes, Sally. I do remember her.
DAVID (opening his notebook): Now, Mr. Harter, where did you work before you retired and who were your editors?
BERT: I worked for Picture Post for almost the complete span of the magazine, and my chief editor was Tom Hopkinson. He lives in Wales now – Cardiff, I believe.
DAVID: And when did the magazine run?
BERT: From October 1938 to June 1957.
DAVID: What kind of pictures did you take there?
BERT: Mainly people pictures – famous people, ordinary people, all kinds of people.
DAVID: Who were some of the more famous people you photographed?
BERT: Well, the Queen, for one, also Marlene Dietrich, the singer Johnny Ray, and the American boxer Sugar Ray Robinson. Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner. Many famous people.
SHEILA: Don’t forget your Indian pictures, Dear.
DAVID: Indian pictures?
BERT: Yes, I took pictures of Prime Minister Nehru, and his family. One of just ‘im was used on the cover of the Post, and it’s quite famous – my picture of Nehru smelling a rose.
DAVID: Do you have your pictures stored here?
DAN: Well, maybe you'll get another chance. Life is funny sometimes: Where God shuts a door, He opens a window.

JIM: Really? I guess I hear ya. I wish I could write better. If I could, I would have graduated from J-School, too.

DAN: Yah. But Chris also knows how to compromise when the time comes. I think she'll eventually meet Matt half-way. Whatever that is, it will work out. It's her gift.

JIM: Sounds like you've got World War III brewing at home already.

DAN: Marge is good for you. You see, Jim, someday I'm going to write a book about this period in our lives. It sounds crazy, but I cherish these times – except for the combat.

JIM: Marge can be like that, too – and she's supported me even when I've lost a job or run out of money. Can't ask for two better gals than we have.

DAN: Jim, do you know what I'm going to do when I get home? I'm going to buy Matt the best bicycle Madison, Wisconsin ever saw – a red, 3-speed Schwinn with a light, horn, and basket. He'll love it.

JIM: Yeah, Johnny probably will need one, too, someday, to go along with his mutt. But first I've got to get him out of diapers. Marge is probably up to her elbows in them by now. Jeez, it even makes me homesick thinking about diapers. War is hell.

DAN: We've got some of them upstairs. I'll get an album. I'll be right back.

NARRATOR: (getting up) We've got some of them upstairs. I'll get an album. I'll be right back.

DAVID: Thank you. Now, Mr. Harter, who did you work with besides Mr. Hopkinson?

BERT: Oh, I worked with a lot of good journalists: Bob Kee, Bert Lloyd, Jimmy Cameron, and several editors, too, after Tom 'opkinson left.

DAVID: And who was the best writer you ever worked with?

BERT: Well, that's 'ard to say, there were so many good ones. I enjoyed working with Bert Lloyd quite a bit. He was a communist, but he knew how to report a story. And Bob Kee and I did a number of good stories together – one was on coloured people in Liverpool.

DAVID: Do you have any of those pictures here?

BERT: Well, some of them are in my book. It was edited by Tom 'opkinson and you can buy it cheap enough in the Limpfield bookstore.

DAVID: Yes, we came through Limpfield from Oxted, didn't we?

BERT: Yes, we did.

DAVID: I think I'd like a copy of that book. Can we stop there on the way back to Oxted?

BERT: I believe we can. Oh, and don't call me Mr. Harter. Call me Bert; it sounds nicer.

SHEILA: (pointing to the album): This is a good sequence, Bert – the shopgirl in Birmingham right after the war.

BERT: Yes, “Millions Like ‘er” was the title, if my memory is accurate.

DAVID: I think I've seen this picture before, of the girl and boy by this window and door frame.

SHEILA: That's one of the better ones you took of her, Bert. It could be known in America, too.

BERT: Yes. (Turning pages.) Here's my pictures of Sugar Ray Robinson in Paris.

DAVID: Yes, I'm interested in those, too. (He points to an image of a Frenchman admiring Mr. Robinson and his car.) Do you remember taking this picture?

BERT: Sure. I was driving around with Mr. Robinson, and he said, “Let's stop and meet these people.” Well, we did and I got a couple good pictures. The French people really admired the champ, especially ordinary folks.

DAVID: Do you have your picture of Nehru smelling the rose?

SHEILA: I don't think we have a copy of that here, Bert. We might have one at the printing firm.

DAVID: Oh, that's okay. Don't worry about it. But that's how I became familiar with your firm's name – Sally Soames gave me the directions to Grove Harter Ltd. Do you still own that firm?

BERT: Yes. I do all my printing there, and we take on many printing projects from local photographers.

DAVID: I wonder if I might be able to obtain a few of your prints for publication.

SHEILA: Bert and I already have discussed that. Just give us your list of those you will need, and we'll get some ready for you.

BERT: As soon as you've seen my book, you'll have a better idea about that. Maybe you could phone us later.

DAVID: Yes, that would be fine.

(Lights fade as the three talk. Lights up on the Narrator, again with a book.)

NARRATOR: The next setting is a Broadway stage during rehearsal, two decades later. Some of the actors for The Red Tassel are running through the first scene David Lamont wants to see rehearsed. Another excerpt from David's diary is in order here. He writes on the day before this scene is staged for him: “I've got to cement the idea in this scene that Dan Montana and Jim Glendenning are not only friends, but comrades, people who will do anything to protect the life and rights of their buddy. If this doesn't shine through, then the total effort will be wasted. The opening scene set in a highly symbolic place, the newsroom of the Columbia Missourian, can help this, but because these scenes are expressionistic, the scene just before combat is crucial, because it is naturalistic and REAL.” (Narrator looks up at audience.) The stage is partially lit and five U.S. soldiers are dug into a hillside in Italy. On two sides are Gerrys – three or four rifles on one side out of sight, and across the way, a machine-gun nest manned by six Gerrys – who have been raining down fire on the Americans. There is a lull in the fighting, and the Americans talk and smoke a cigarette. Our hero is Corporal Dan Montana. He has earned a red tassel from Mizzou's J-School and is an army reporter, but he works with a rifle and grenades here. He is talking with Jim Glendenning, another Mizzou product, who dropped out of the J-School and is having trouble finding a career, other than the army. Jim and Dan talk about their sons, Johnny and Matt, respectively.

DAN: Jim, do you know what I'm going to do when I get home? I'm going to buy Matt the best bicycle Madison, Wisconsin ever saw – a red, 3-speed Schwinn with a light, horn, and basket. He'll love it.

JIM: Yeah, Johnny probably will need one, too, someday, to go along with his mutt. But first I've got to get him out of diapers. Marge is probably up to her elbows in them by now. Jeez, it even makes me homesick thinking about diapers. War is hell.

DAN: Chris also knows how to compromise when the time comes. I think she'll eventually meet Matt half-way. Whatever that is, it will work out. It's her gift.

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DAN: Chris is probably throwing fits with Matt's music teacher. My son doesn't like playing piano. He wants to play guitar, but Chris won't have it.

JIM: Sounds like you've got World War III brewing at home already.

DAN: Yah. But Chris also knows how to compromise when the time comes. I think she'll eventually meet Matt half-way. Whatever that is, it will work out. It's her gift.

JIM: Marge can be like that, too – and she's supported me even when I've lost a job or run out of money. Can't ask for two better gals than we have.

DAN: Marge is good for you. You know, Jim, someday I'm going to write a book about this period in our lives. It sounds crazy, but I cherish these times – except for the combat.

JIM: Really? I guess I hear ya. I wish I could write better. If I could, I would have graduated from J-School, too.

DAN: Well, maybe you'll get another chance. Life is funny sometimes: Where God shuts a door, He opens a window.
Dan tosses Jim something from his pocket and says, “Here, hold onto this for me.” It’s a red tassel. The director breaks in.

DIRECTOR: Stop, people, stop. This reading has no life. I know it’s not exactly “D-Day” here in sunny Italy, but soon we will be opening. You’d better put a little more D-R-A-M-A into it!

(The other actors “chill,” while the actors playing Dan and Jim move closer to the director. The Narrator says, “This fellow is Jake Ladou, notorious Broadway director.”)

JAKE: Listen up. I want you both to bond at this point. After all, God doesn’t open a window to just anybody! (Looks toward the audience area.) What do you think, Mr. Lamont?

DAVID: I think it needs work, but I like the chemistry they are beginning to show. If they can improve on it for opening night, I’ll be the first to applaud all of you.

JAKE: And I’ll happily follow your lead.

(Lights dim, then up on Narrator. The following action imitates his speech, on film.)

NARRATOR: Next, it’s opening night in the same theater, and The Red Tassel has moved along well so far, but it’s time for the climax. The scene opens at nighttime, with a three-quarter-moon shining. Dan is trying to get some sleep with his other buddies, while Jim is the sentry. Suddenly, the machine-gun nest opens fire. Jim returns fire, as his pals wake up. Before they can return fire themselves, Jim gets hit in the chest, upper right side. Dan tries to stop the bleeding, and has a bit of success, but Jim needs surgery soon. Dan is in charge of what’s left of the platoon, and he decides to try something gutsy.

DAN: You guys cover me. I’m going to try to get close enough to lob a few grenades at that machine-gun nest. We’ve got to move Jim out, and they won’t give us a chance for quite a while otherwise. He needs surgery soon, so everybody take a position, rifles at the ready, and when I get clear of you, keep the Gerrys plenty busy.

(Dan moves into better position and gets a clear view of the remaining machine-gun personnel. He decides to let go with one grenade only. He does so, but is off-target. Luckily, the Gerrys haven’t spotted him this time. One of Dan’s pals takes out one of the two remaining enemy soldiers. Dan takes advantage, to move in closer. He gets hit again, this time by one of his own men. He knows it’s now or never: he flings his last grenade. Bulls-eye!)

DAN: No more Gerrys on this side! Got the machine-gun nest, Guys. Check to see if the Gerry riflemen are still behind your position. If not, then move in for a search over here. I’ve been hit.

(U.S. SERGEANT: Soldiers, halt! Friend or foe?)

PVT. GLOVER: Hold fire, Men. They’re stuck over there. They don’t know where Dan is and he’s got a chance now. Let’s be ready to fire again. Now pray a little, too.

(U.S. SERGEANT: We’re Americans from the 101st. Joe Dimaggio is a Bronx Bomber, and Henry Wallace is Vice President, behind FDR. Also, we’ve got two wounded men here, Sir. One is pretty bad and needs surgery right away. His best buddy is a hero.)

DAN: Thanks, Sarge, for stopping long enough to help out. Didn’t expect to see any more relief Yanks around here for a while.


DAN: I think it’ll be fine, with the right surgeon getting rid of the bullet. Can’t say as I look forward to that; but I don’t need a handicap either.

SGT. MARTIN: I understand. (Looking at Jim Glendenning now.) How are you, Trooper?

JIM: I can’t say as I like the ventilation. It would be a lot nicer if it came from a fan in Missouri — summertime with the family, you know.

SGT. MARTIN: I can understand your interest in hometown summers. I’m from there myself — St. Louis, in fact. How about you?

JIM: I’m from Jeff’ City. Still live there, in fact.
DAVID: He was 82, Dad. He had a good life. But he will be missed by a lot of people.

JON: That's too bad. How old was he?

DAVID: Well, I just got bad news: Bert Harter died in July. His widow just sent me her letter. I hadn't heard from them since June. I should have phoned them in the meantime. In any case, a great man and photographer has passed.

JON: Hello, David. We're fine here. What's up?

DAVID: Dad, hello, it's me. How are you?

JON: Hello, Lamont residence.

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NARRATOR: The setting is David Lamont's apartment in Centralia, Wisconsin, the 1990s. He has just received a letter from Sheila Harter. He opens it up, thinking it will have something to do with his Picture Post manuscript, which he had recently written about to Bert Harter, after hearing from and reading Stefan Szakall’s comments. After the first two lines, though, he knows something else is up.

NARRATOR: Now we’re in the home of George Bernard Shaw, 1930. He is re-reading some of his letters. In particular, he holds a copy of his letter to Sean O'Casey regarding The Silver Tassie. Shaw is still an active man of letters, and a good friend of O'Casey's.

NARRATOR: The Silver Tassie was a great play about what the world needs to do to find its sanity again. My God, mankind deserved such a play after what it did to one another during the "Great War." Sean knows his stuff, and he even thinks like I do politically; that's very rare these days, but maybe it won't be for long. Time's are a-changing, and the wheel spins us round to another part of history. I don't really believe in the Elizabethan wheel, but how else can you explain some of the round-headed malarkey the world goes to war over, every so often.

(Pvt. Glover and the Sergeant talk alone again.)

NARRATOR: The audience more directly now: "Dear Mr. Marcou: Thank you for your recent letter. Unfortunately, Bert will not be able to reply reading softly to himself)

G.B. SHAW: I like this beginning. Of course, I like Sean’s play, too. Let’s see what I wrote: “What a hell of a play! I wonder how it will hit the public. Of course the Abbey should have produced it, as Starkie rightly says – whether it liked it or not. But the people who knew your uncle when you were a child -- so to speak -- always want to correct your exercises; and this was what disabled the usually competent Yeats and Lady Gregory. Still it is surprising they fired so very wide, considering their marksmanship... If Yeats had said 'It’s too savage; I can’t stand it,' he would have been in order... Yeats himself, with all his extraordinary cleverness and subtlety, which comes out when you give him up as a hopeless fool, and -- in this case -- deserts him when you expect him to be equal to the occasion, is not a man of this world; and when you hurl an enormous chunk of it at him, he dodges it, small blame to him. However, we can talk over it when we meet. Cheerio, Titan." (To the audience more directly now.) Yes, I like this letter. I suppose it gave Sean as much cheer as he told me it did when we met. And The Silver Tassie was a great play about what the world needs to do to find its sanity again. My God, mankind deserved such a play after what it did to one another during the "Great War." Sean knows his stuff, and he even thinks like I do politically; that’s very rare these days, but maybe it won’t be for long. Time’s are a-changing, and the wheel spins us round to another part of history. I don’t really believe in the Elizabethan wheel, but how else can you explain some of the round-headed malarkey the world goes to war over, every so often.

(Re-reading softly to himself): "Dear Mr. Marcou: Thank you for your recent letter. Unfortunately, Bert will not be able to reply to your questions. He passed away on 3 July from a heart attack. He is very much missed here. In fact, there will be a Remembrance Service for him in November that you may want to take note of. Many of his friends and admirers have already expressed their sympathy to me. Bert was greatly loved, and there were many obituaries in the papers here for him. I hope you will understand our situation. And thank you again for writing. Yours sincerely, Mrs. Sheila Harter.”

(Pvt. Glover and the Sergeant talk alone again.)

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DAVID: Dad, hello, it's me. How are you?

JON: Hello, David. We're fine here. What's up?

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JON: That's too bad. How old was he?

DAVID: He was 82, Dad. He had a good life. But he will be missed by a lot of people.

JON: Yes, I expect he will be.

DAVID: Say, could you do me a favor? Could you bring over the box with my old letters – the one I used when I was writing my Picture Post manuscript. I want to look through my letters from the Harters.

JON: Sure, Son. Glad to. We'll be seeing you this weekend. We can drop it off then.

DAVID: Sounds good, Dad. Thanks a lot. I'll plan on seeing you this weekend.

JON: Okay, Son. See you then. And I'm sorry about Mr. Harter.
DAVID: Thanks, Dad. See you then.

(Lights fade on David and on Jon, and come up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: The setting is again David Lamont’s apartment, but this time, a few weeks later. He's going through his old letters from the Harters. He comes upon one from 1985, when Bert Harter’s printing firm was printing some of David’s best photos.

DAVID: “Dear Mr. Marcou: Enclosed are the prints you requested I have my man do for you. I hope they meet with your approval. I am also enclosing another price list, for future reference. If you want more pictures printed, please let us know. We are always glad for your business. It was good to hear you enjoy my autobiography; it has some good photos in it, and the gist of my story, too. Hope you’ll have your own books someday; they can give a person great satisfaction. These days I’m lecturing a bit on my photography, and I will hold a one-man show again one of these days. I still take pictures. Thank you for the printing work, and let us know if we can be of service again in the future. Yours sincerely, Bert Harter.”

NARRATOR: David goes over to another box, and looks in it. There, he has all of Bert Harter’s prints from David’s request in 1981, plus the 100+ prints of his own work that Mr. Harter’s firm made for him while Bert was alive. He looks at two prints closely.

DAVID (speaking to audience): What is it in a photograph that compels? Is it the subject, the composition, the lighting, the texture, the mood, the frozen, passionate action? It can be any or all of these things. My photo of Patrick Clark (showing audience), a little boy with spina bifida sitting jauntily on a jukebox, reminds me of Mr. Harter’s street urchins (showing it, too, to audience). Just look at the expressions of the three boys’ faces. They are vulnerable and yet cock-sure of themselves. Thank God He and this world offer us all the chances to make the most of our limitations and strengths, lasso a star, and ride it. It doesn’t make any difference if you’re Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Muslim, black or white, red or yellow, male or female – everyone has chances to do something good with their life. If we throw our chances away, so be it; but we each have our chances. Bert Harter showed me that and a lot more. He showed me the way, whether he knew it or not. Someday, when I’m married and have my own kids, maybe I’ll show them the way, too. It’s no accident Bert Harter won the Missouri Press Award for his Inchon report – my school, my major, too.

(David looks at his photos again, enjoying the memories. Then he looks up. His eyes glisten with emotion, and he comes to know a sense of peace.)

DAVID: You know, it’s People who help make the realization of our chances great or small, cherished or uncherished; and in my life, there have been enough People who have looked my way when it counted that I can say God knew what He was doing when he made People. God knew what He was doing, and he still knows what he is doing. And pictures can tell us that, pictures and the prayers we see answered every day by God and People. Prayers make People decent and, yes, even young again. My favorite people – Sean O’Casey and Bert Harter – prayed, too. And both men were decent and young all their lives.

(David says a prayer, makes the Sign of the Cross, puts his letters and pictures away for now. Lights fade, then up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We’re in a New York restaurant, early in the New Millennium. David’s play, The Red Tassel, is a popular and critical success on opening night. Broadway audiences have wanted to see old-fashioned heroism again; and David’s Mizzou-World War II themes have paid off for him. He's eating a late-night dinner with Glen Dunbar, enjoying the reviews.

GLEN: Jeez, it feels good to have gotten this far with everything, David. Look what the Daily News critic says, “This play has enough heroics for anyone interested in living the complete life… grand theatrics… superb acting… excellent direction… one for the books.” Y’know, you did a professional job of writing on two projects, and I did a neat job of agenting both of them. How about a toast? (They pick up their wine glasses.) To a future of heroic literature in an all-too-often anti-heroic age!

DAVID: Yes, to continuing heroic literature in our future!

(They drink up, then back to their dinners. Two young women come by. They are very interested in these new celebrities and have copies of the play in hand for signing.)

WOMAN #1: Mr. Lamont, we saw your play tonight and we were wondering if we could have your autograph?

DAVID (pleased, but half-embarrassed): Sure, Ladies. I can give you my autograph. But it may be bad luck to sign your plays on opening night.

WOMAN #2: That’s okay, we’ll take our chances.

DAVID: If you insist, then I’ll be happy to.

(He signs both books. The women giggle, thank David, and say good-bye. David resumes his dinner, with dessert. He glances at the audience, as his agent speaks.)

GLEN: Those young ladies weren’t bad-looking. What do you say we call up one of my girlfriends and see if she has a friend who might care for a drink or two tonight?

DAVID: That’ll be fine with me. But let’s try to be in “early” – say, by four in the morning!

GLEN: Sounds like a plan.

(They finish dinner and leave a tip, as the lights dim on them and come up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We’re at the Centralia Public Library, a year or two later. Jean Lee Bell and David Lamont have met in the reference section. Jean is 95, but still gets around with the aid of her assistant, Jinny Yi. David hopes to market his poetry and Jean is helping him find a publisher. They’ve finished their research and sit down near the periodicals to relax. David holds Jean’s book of poems, published by Houghton Mifflin, The Shining Spirit. Jean (to her assistant, Jinny, please go get my cane. I left it in one of those aisles. (Jean points and Jinny, a beautiful Korean-American woman of 20, smiles, nods, and moves off.) David, would you mind reading two of my poems to me? I can’t quite see to read them myself and I feel in the mood to hear them again.
DAVID: Sure, I’ll be happy to do that. Which ones?
JEAN: “To Those I Love” and “For Those Who Wait.”

DAVID: Okay, I have them right here. (He clears his throat and begins.) “To Those I Love”:  
Because I love this world – and life – and you,  
And every flower and tree and beast and bird,  
Because I thrill at every lovely view –  
Beauty of music, and the written word;  
I shall meet Death as yet another friend  
And take his hand, exploring pathways new  
To find a new beginning – not an end,  
And in that new world wait to welcome you.

That’s a lovely poem, Jean. I really think you deal with the subject of life beyond death as well as any writer I’ve ever read.

JEAN (smiling): Well, I seem to know a little bit about life, and I just extend that view into the hereafter as best I can.

DAVID: Well, you give great comfort to many people, and you take so little credit for it yourself.

JEAN: I just like to see others enjoy my work. That’s the greatest reward I can have. You should know that. Your own success has meant a lot to many people, like your students. We get inspiration from you and you probably get inspiration from us old fogies, too. It works two ways.

DAVID: Old fogies? I do know the first time I taught in the Senior Citizens Center, I realized my time there would do me a lot of good. Maybe it’s even rubbing off on a few of you.

JEAN: Yes. God knows when and where we can do the most good, and if we take advantage of the chances He gives us, then we can achieve great things. But I don’t have to tell you that anymore. Now, are you going to read my other poem, or am I going to pass before you get inspired to do that?

DAVID: I’ll be happy to. Do you want this in my naturalistic or expressionistic voice?

JEAN: Plain old English will do.

DAVID: Then, “For Those Who Wait”:  
Should Death decree that I must wait my turn  
And live beyond the span of useful years,  
With wind and soul imprisoned in the urn  
Of wasted body, shed no bitter tears;  
Rememb’ring all the good and fruitful days,  
Wait patiently with me for my release  
Knowing that God in his mysterious ways  
Will never let the shining spirit cease:  
In his good time I shall again be free  
To live, and love, and serve in other guise;  
This worn-out earthly carcass is not me –  
I’ll live again the day this body dies!

JEAN: That’s what I needed to hear. Thank you, David, thank you very much.

(Jinny returns with Jean’s cane, and lights dim on the three. Then, lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We’re now at the Harry J. Olson Senior Citizens Center on a Thursday morning, a year later. David Lamont is teaching his Writing for Publication Class.

DAVID: I’ve just been reading a little more about the 1995 Nobel Laureate in Literature, Seamus Heaney. I’d like to read from one of his poems. It’s called “Lines to Myself”:  
In poetry I wish you would  
Avoid the lilting platitude.  
Give us poems humped and strong,  
Laced tight with thongs of song,  
Poems that explode in silence  
Without forcing, without violence.  
Whose music is strong and clear and good  
Like a saw zooming in seasoned wood.  
You should attempt concrete expression,  
Half-guessing, half expression.  

Now, what do you all think we should do about this writing?

(The Narrator has, by now, moved off-stage. The class, each wearing a brooch of wings, stands and smiles. They bring their assigned writing to David’s place at the table and hand it in. Then they resume their seats and take out more writing. They leave it out on table, as Bette Midler’s “God Is Watching Us” plays. Then, the group rises, moves into the audience, and pins wing-brooches on audience members. The lights eventually fade, and a half-moon is seen above the stage. The cast seen thus-far, except for the Narrator, emerges as everyone “passes” to the lobby for refreshments, at the End of Act III.)

Act IV, Scene 1: Heaven Has No Fury Like a Human Scorned.
Action: The setting is Heaven in the ageless realm of life yet to be lived. There is the meeting of souls forever, once physical life has ended on Earth. The first souls we see are those living in “Purgatory,” that waiting room in Heaven for those who have sins to work off, before they receive their wings. Lights up on Narrator.

NARRATOR: We now see Bert Harter and Dora, both in Heaven but not longing for this meeting. Bert and Dora divorced on Earth. Here, they are two souls trying to win their wings. Dora, the mother of Bert’s two sons, speaks to Bert first.
DORA: Hello, Bert. How are you doing? Or should I say, how did you come about this impasse?
BERT: Impasse? Why, Dora, this is no impasse, this is as close to ‘eaven as we’ll ever get.
DORA: So, you think this is Heaven? Whatever gave you that idea?
BERT: You’ve got a point; after all, if you’re ‘ere, how could it be ‘eaven?
DORA: Touche, Governor! You certainly haven’t changed much since your time on Earth.
BERT: Neither ‘ave you!
NARRATOR: Enter Sheila, Bert’s second wife, to whom he was married 31 years. Sheila senses what is going on, and intervenes.
SHEILA: Why, Bert, aren’t you glad to see Dora? You always said you wish you had a chance to settle up with her in the hereafter. Now you can.
BERT: Dear, I don’t suppose you’ll remember this, but I settled up with her on Earth, and I don’t expect we’ll see too much more darkness between us ‘ere, this being ‘eaven and all.
DORA (sarcastically): Yes, Luv, I don’t expect Heaven and its Maker will sit still for us “Lovebirds” quarreling now.
SHEILA: I don’t want you to get back together; I do want you to try to be on the same team. After all, we all need our wings here, and it’s our choice whether or not we get them.
BERT: Well, you’ve a point, Sweet’eart. I’ll cease fire on Dora, if she’ll do the same for me.
DORA: Ditto here, Darlings.
SHEILA: Okay, now shake hands and draw apart for more of the Lord’s work.

(They shake hands, look into each other’s eyes, then draw apart as Sheila instructed. The three of them move into the background, as two other souls come onto the stage. W.B. Yeats and Sean O’Casey are talking. As they move forward, the audience begins to hear what they’ve been chatting about. O’Casey’s Irish accent is pronounced. Yeats, on the other hands, speaks with more British lordliness, though occasionally he slips into a brogue, too.)

WILLIAM: Your Juno was superb, as was The Shadow of a Gunman, but I still think The Silver Tassie needed more thought, or less tr-r-rouble. Do you agree that the center could not hold, but that the unique on the edge did?
SEAN: Yaes, yaes, ya may ha ve a pint, I’ll give ya that. For your par-r-r-rt, your Cuchulain soycle was br-r-rilliant. Never have I seen a more cour-r-r-rageous male defender of Ir-r-rish ways (only semi-sarcastically), albeit a ver-r-r-teee-r-ragic one.
WILLIAM: Yes, that cycle was given little shrift by the critics abroad, but I dare say, in I-e-e-r-r-lan-d it played to all the r-r-right people.
SEAN: Yaes, if I had only written poet-tree like yours, William, they would still be singin’ me praises in London and Nyy-u-u Yo-r-r-ik, not to mention Doooblin and Belfast.
WILLIAM: Aye, Sean. And if I’d had your command of everyday details of Irish life, and your poetry of the commonplace, I would have won thr-r-r Nobler Pr-r-rizes, instead of jest one.
SEAN: Aye, and I wish I had won jest one of those pr-r-rizes meself – I could have donated the prize to the workers of the world.
WILLIAM: Aye, you were the BEST worker of the world.

(They continue on and become part of the background, too, as a French tart and a British hobby appear. What they are doing in this place will soon be discovered.)

BOBBY (treating her better than perhaps she deserves): Minny, you cannot be trolling for victims here. And I will not put a man in jail for having sex with you, when you’ve agreed to it, if he didn’t pay for it. It wasn’t prostitution then. And why you’re involving a decent-enough chap like Mr. Harter is beyond me.

(Bert looks amazed in the background, and comes forward.)
BERT: What is this woman claiming I did, Officer?
BOBBY: She claims you didn’t pay her two pounds for sex with her, Sir. Now I know who you are, Mr. Harter. You’re a friend of civil servants everywhere for the way you reported for the Picture Post, and I’m not going to have her land you in trouble simply for your having sex with her. (Whispering to Bert.) You didn’t pay for it, did ya, Sir?
BERT: That’s preposterous. I’ve never paid a penny for any sex with ‘er or for any woman’s body, saving what I’ve spent on dinner and flowers, that is. Thanks for understanding, Officer.

(The Bobby has had to restrain Minny, part of the time. She’s mainly been throwing Bert some awful looks and saying things like, “So you, you, Beeg Shot, you don’t have to pay for Me-e-ennee? Who du you theeink you are?” She is livid.)
MINNY: You Cheep Boom, (mockingly) Baert Haerter! Jacques weel take care you!
BERT (whispering to the Bobby): She keeps talking about this fellow Jacques. I expect it’s ‘er pimp. In any case, I’ve never seen ‘im. Apparently, ‘e brought ‘er ‘ere from Gay Paree and ‘as abandoned ‘er.

(Dora moves forward and challenges everyone to “start talking.” They begin to, and move around a bit in a limited area.)
DORA: Yes, Bert, you had sex with Meennee, and you had sex with that stupid girlfriend of yours, Maureen, and you had sex with me, at least early on. You damned womanizer! Why don’t you just own up to your faults and confess your sins. We’re in Heaven, after all.
BERT (a bit miffed, whispering): Now, Dora, we may be in ‘eaven, but we don't need to air all our dirty laundry, do we?

(Shelia moves forward now.)
SHEILA (looking at Dora and the tart): Bert, don’t let that tart play you for a fool. I know your past with women wasn’t perfect, but you were true to me over the years and that counts for something.

DORA: Bert couldn’t let a good-looking woman pass him by without a quick how-do-you-do, and you know that.

SHEILA: That’s gossip, pure rumor, and idle nonsense. In short, you don’t know what you’re talking about, Dora!

BOBBY: Ladies, Ladies, hold onto your hats a minute. Now, first of all, I’m not arresting Mr. Harter for anything, especially considering our surroundings. What’s more, I’m asking you to all calm down or I will have to arrest the Ladies. (The women begin to calm down, after Minny has let loose with another “Beeg Shot!”)

BERT (gratefully): Thanks, Officer. Couldn’t interest you in a picture or two? I’ve me equipment just over there (pointing off right).

BOBBY: No, Sir. I’d probably break your camera. (Laughing now.) But I expect the “Cat-Fight Twins” would make a good one.

BERT: I know what you mean, Officer. Well, thanks for your kindness. I’ll be pushing off now. (They shake hands.)

BOBBY: Okay, Bert. It was an honor.

(Bert moves into the background, as Sheila takes his arm and talks to him about what has just transpired. Meanwhile, the Bobby moves off left with the French tart in tow. Next, a young man and young woman enter. They are followed by David Lamont, aged a bit, carrying a notebook.)

YOUNG MAN: I bet that Lamont character is going to write about us, once he’s out of this loony bin.

YOUNG WOMAN: I bet he will, too. Let’s find out what he’s up to. (Moving back towards David.) Hey, David, what’ve you got in that notebook? Anything you feel like sharin’?

DAVID: No thanks. I’m just jotting some song titles and singers down right now. I love the music they play here. It reminds me of college all over again, and, well, beyond college.

YOUNG WOMAN: So, which college did you go to?

DAVID: Well, I graduated from three, but I’d started on a master’s program at Missouri, and wanted to get back there, before I came here.

YOUNG MAN: You mean you have three degrees and you wanted a fourth?

DAVID: Yes. I wanted to earn my master’s in Journalism to go along with my other degrees. Also, I was a master’s candidate in Theatre for two years, but I didn’t write my thesis.

YOUNG WOMAN: My, weren’t we ambitious?

YOUNG MAN: Yeah, that took some studyin’ and some trashin’ and even some downright bullshitin’, didn’t it, Man?

DAVID: In a manner of speaking, I suppose it did. Why? Does it bother you that I liked to study life?

YOUNG WOMAN (careful now): Of course it doesn’t. What do you mean by that, anyway?

DAVID: Oh, I was just thinking that it’s possible to take someone else’s education for granted, until it becomes your own.

YOUNG MAN (careful himself): That’s cool, Man. My education is important to me, too, but it’s on hold while I’m with Lou.

YOUNG MAN: How do you know our names?

HAL: That’s right. How do you know our names?

DAVID: Oh, I keep up on developments here, even if this moral-phrenia of mine acts up occasionally. It’s a beautiful illness to create worlds within, but it sure delayed a constructive love-life for me a while.

HAL AND LOUISE: Cool, David. You’ve got “THE ILLNESS”, too?

DAVID: Right you are.

(David laughs as the three of them move into the background area to continuing their conversation.)

NARRATOR: Next, we see another man with a notebook. His name is Stefan Grunwald, known as a “Jew boy” in war-torn Europe, circa 1940. Later, he was a notable American book publisher.

STEFAN G.: Now, let’s see how this sounds:

My past often grabs me like a furious pack of howling wolves.

Red and Black swastikas;

the dead eyes of my grandmother;

helpless children’s exploded brains;

the acrid smells of burning ovens;

grown-ups in putrid mass graves;

pervade my screams—filled nightmares, spilling terror/fear/confusion into the every-day where function I must.

Forty-years of childhood—youth—adolescence—manhood, spent running from the wolves.

No platform, peace, security.
Four decades of painful illusions.
And yet, I HAVE SURVIVED IT ALL.
I’ve tamed the pack, made it docile.
I trained the beasts into guardians,
of my heritage around the world.
There are many like me.
Beware Anti-Semite!
Neither touch my children nor people.
If ever you do, I’ll sic my pack of well-trained ferocity on you.
My fellows will unleash theirs’ too.
We’ll overtake you with our brains,
sharpened by pain and sorrow.
We’d rather smother you with culture,
love, and kindness, our classic heritage.
But if that won’t do we’ll sic…

(He looks at the page closely again, he has been speaking partly from memory. Then he speaks to himself again.)


(The others join in, shouting “Well done, Stefan, well done!” and clap loudly. Then they all come forward, towards the audience and begin doing a little dervish-jig. Stefan leads them.)

STEFAN G. (singing and dancing):

There once was a Jew who did things by night,
And as he fled others, he played it right.
Then, one day, the Nazis came to get all of them;
He escaped, and they carted off others, not him.
Before long, a few were roasting in Hell.
But this Hell offered a different kettle.
It kept them paying long after the day –
When ordinary men could make them pay.
But if the kettle was not always theirs, at least
Judgment Day was a good remedy for feasts.

(Everyone continues dancing as Stefan repeats the limerick. As the lights are dimmed, a new tune begins to be played: “Don’t Know Much” can be heard, and the figures who have acted the previous scene fall gradually back into background, as angels come forward with wing brooches for them. Lights dim. “Don’t Know Much” plays until next scene begins. End of Act IV, Scene 1.)

Act IV, Scene 2: Going to Hell, Photogenically, So to Speak.

NARRATOR (softly): We’re now in Hell, on a “good day.” It may or may not be a place most people would like to frequent, but neither is it as bad a place as some might expect – not now, at least. Unlike Heaven, where new residents are expected to earn their wings, Hell on a good day is a little like Earth on a moderately bad day. But then even Heaven, before one sees God, can seem the same. You will see more of Heaven and Hell in Act V, and you may be in for a surprise in both places then. But for now, it’s clear the Devil shows his face to all in Hell before long, if not from the very start. And his face changes dramatically, depending on his needs, and is not always a beauteous face. God, for His part, never deviates from His plan, in Heaven or on Earth; and He could exterminate the Devil at any time, plus Hell, too. But He chooses to allow Satan to do his dirtiest while “life” in Hell continues. Right now, we see Adlif Hitler and Attila the Hun talking together. They’ve just finished putting hay into the Devil’s Barn and are a bit tired. They sweat profusely, but still are filled with enthusiasm. They’ve Midwestern American accents.

HITLER: By the Devil, it feels good, Attila, to finish haying. My father used to say: “Finish what you start. Every job you start, you should also finish.” I now see what he meant.
ATTILA: Yes, it feels great, Adolf, to finish what you start.
HITLER: We should have a beer to celebrate. What do you think?
ATTILA: Of course we should. Let’s drink a Special Import.
HITLER: Yes, that sounds good to me, too.

(They go into the Devil’s House just as the Devil and his chief assistant, the Emperor Nero, emerge. They also speak with Midwestern American accents. Nearly everyone else here speaks with their accents from life, at least for now.)

DEVIL: How have you been, my good friend Nero?
NERO: Excellent, Great Leader. I have just completed a novel for you. It’s a romantic novel, of course. It has a beautiful virtuous maid in it who is corrupted by a vile, low-born man, and she eventually comes to see the light by marrying a President of the United States. It’s a spell-binder, I think, and I know you will like it. And I’ve included a juicy part in it for you, Great Leader.
DEVIL: It does sound appetizing, Nero. What is my part?
NERO: You persuade the virtuous maid-gone-bad to marry the President. It’s perfect for a leader with your range. You really do lift her out of her misery.
DEVIL: I am deeply honored. Come, let’s have a drink to celebrate. How does a Special Import sound?
NERO: Sounds like a plan.
DEVIL: Good, let’s have at it. And then I will read your novel – which will win a Subterranean Wurlitzer, I’ll wager, if there’s still a Devil in Hell, that is!

(The pair laugh at the Devil’s joke and move inside the Devil’s House. Next, two beautiful-looking young women come strolling up the Devil’s Path, which runs alongside the Devil’s House. On Earth, one was the black model named Naomi Campbell; the other was the singer Madonna. They are giggling over something Naomi has said.)

MADONNA: Jeez, Campy, that was decent of ya. My father could be “radical,” but when I saw him last, he just looked tired and gray. He was old enough, in the end, to get to “that other place” on staying power alone. Now me, I don’t recall how or when I “died,” but I’ll bet I was givin’ the boys Hell even then.
NAOMI: I’ll bet you were, too. Today, we’re in the Devil’s Hell, and we still give it to the boys. What could be fairer?
MADONNA: Yes, I guess it just goes to show that a couple of young fillies like us can sport about when we need to.

(Two handsome young men come down the Devil’s Path now, one dark-haired and stocky, the other blonde and tall. Madonna points in their direction and whispers to Naomi, “I’ll bet I can catch me a good night awake; just watch and see.”)

MADONNA (to the tall one): “Hey, Blondie, where have you been all my life?”
TALL MAN: Hi there, Beautiful. Say, you’re Madonna, aren’t you? My name is Felix. I used to see you on television all the time. How are you doing?
MADONNA: Well, Felix. It’s good to see that God hasn’t taken all the good ones yet. We get our share down here, don’t we?
FELIX: Yes, we do. Would you like to walk with us to the beach?
MADONNA: That would suit me fine, Big Fellow. Let’s get going.

(Narrator: Next, a shy, young photographer appears. He looks younger than when he actually died on Earth, but in the Afterlife, that doesn’t matter. His name is W.E. Smith, but of course, he’s not the famous W.E. Smith.)

(W.E. Smith is taking pictures of the scenery, mainly, but when he gets to the Devil’s House, he stops in awe. He sizes up the place with his camera and shoots some stills. He’s using a Nikon, and it seems to be working well. However, an attractive, middle-aged woman comes out of the Devil’s Barn, and he looks toward her longingly.)

NARRATOR: That’s Bette Davis. My wasn’t she something when she was 45?
MS. DAVIS: Hello there, Young Man. Looking for a good picture? I’ll give you one. (She stops by a gardenia bush near the house, and smiles seductively with hands on hips). There, will this do?
MR. SMITH: Yes, it will Ms. Davis. Yes, it will indeed.

(Mr. Smith motions for Naomi to go with “Ben,” Felix’s pal, and they move off, stage right.)

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MR. SMITH: Yes, it will Ms. Davis. Yes, it will indeed.

(He shoots away. She eventually sits down in her red shorts and yellow top, after posing in many suggestive positions. Mr. Smith sits down with her.)

MR. SMITH: Ms. Davis, I’ve been a fan of yours since I was a kid.
MS. DAVIS (chuckling and lighting a cigarette): You don’t think you’re a kid anymore? Can you prove it?
MR. SMITH: Well, I’ve always been a big fan of yours, especially when you played in Of Human Bondage and Rosemary’s Baby. What do I have to do?
MS. DAVIS: Why don’t you smoke a cigarette with me?
MR. SMITH: Well, I guess that’s something I’m capable of.
MS. DAVIS (looking into his eyes deeply, as she hands him the pack): Here, have one, then.
MR. SMITH (grabs a cigarette, as she lights it, and smokes): This isn’t bad. (He looks longingly into her eyes.)
MS. DAVIS: Would you like something stronger, Sonny?
MR. SMITH (dropping his cigarette in his lap): Oh, God… no, I mean, I wish we could talk longer, but I’ve got to be taking pictures, and you’re just toy ing with me.
MS. DAVIS: Want a bet? Come on down to the beach with me, and I’ll give you some real pictures. Come on. You’re in Hell -- you might as well enjoy it.

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MR. SMITH: Oh, I’m afraid I can’t stay, Ms. Davis.  
MS. DAVIS: You must be looking for eternal happiness or something, right?  
MR. SMITH: Something like that. At any rate, I’ve got to go. Thank you for the pictures. I won’t forget them.  
MS. DAVIS: I’ll just bet you won’t. I’ll just bet you won’t.  

(Mr. Smith moves off toward the beach, alone, and Ms. Davis goes into the Devil’s House. Soon, a group of men and women emerge from that house, dressed in Renaissance costumes. Their leader – a tall, handsome, middle-aged man named Tank – addresses them.)

TANK: I was named for Henry VIII and my uncle Tim, and because he is tied up on the beach today, the King asked me to help celebrate his divorce from Anne Boleyn in the “here and now.” (The group begins to chuckle.) Yes, he’s still celebrating that infamous day. My goodness, what will we do next with our great King?

(One of the women, a pretty red-head, pipes up.)

RED-HEAD: What will we do with our great King? It should be: What will he do with and to us? (They all laugh. Then Tank intones something more solemnly.)

TANK: Hear me now! We must be cautious about what we say, even here. Not only King Henry could become angry, but so could our real Master – the Great Personage who waits within.

(Tank points back toward the Devil’s House. Other group-members agree verbally and with their gestures.)

TANK: Let us go back inside, then, for our Master does not like our comings and goings much; and we owe our upkeep to Him, “above” all else. Even the great Henry knows that. Go, then, back to where you came from And be glad of your place in this scheme of things! (Shouts of “Amen!” erupt from the group, and they continue to use that word – speaking like they have hot peppers going down their gullets.)

NARRATOR: Next, a teenage boy and girl come in from the Devil’s Field. A young man, named Jimmy Hendrix -- not the famous Jimmy Hendrix -- has a guitar in-hand; and a young woman, named Janis Joplin -- not the famous Janis Joplin -- is humming along with the tune he is playing.

JANIS: Gee, Jimmy, that’s a grate piece. All it needs now is some lyrics. Do you have any ideas?

JIMMY: Why, Janis, I’m leaving that to you.

JANIS: Then let’s get to work. (They sit down by the gardenia bush.) Let me see, how does this sound? You can play along…

(Jimmy plays his tune – an unearthly sounding melody that might wear on some, but Janis finds a way to coax a kind of poetry from it.)

JANIS (singing): There once was a man of delight –  
Who sang his songs all through the night.  
He came with his horse and his maid,  
And he lasted long while others paid.

His price was strong and profound,  
And when he was done, there was sound.  
His name was Jimmy, and his maid’s Janis.  
Their claim to fame lives on at best,  
Because the Master keeps them singing,  
And knows notes that set bells a-ringring.

JANIS (satisfied): There, how does that hit you?

JIMMY: Great, Jan, Great! Want to record it and send it to New York?

JANIS: It may be too good for New York. But when we make it as musicians, then we can bring it on home to the Master, for He knows all we need to be or have – AND HOW!

JIMMY: Then let me get my tape recorder for a few more stanzas. We’ll have it made in the shade by the time this thing gets to New York.

JANIS: Jimmy, slow down, slow down. I want to enjoy your flame, wherever it glows. So let’s go back into his field for now. We can record our posterity later, don’t you think?

JIMMY (thinking aloud): Maybe you’ve got a point, Little One. Yeah, let’s try our hands at other things a while. And his field is awfully inviting. Yeah, let’s trip for an hour or two. I can dig it.

JANIS: That’s what I want to hear. New York can wait, even here, can’t it?


(She smiles affirmatively, and they head for the field again. Just as the young lovers leave, they see Adolf and Attila heading outdoors. The dictators are joined by Benito Mussolini now. The youngsters laugh, and then shoot into the Devil’s Field. Benito, gets a special kick out of this.)

BENITO: Hey, those kids are great. Ever hear that kid Hendrix play guitar? He’s a wizard. Some might even say he’s a god! (The dictators laugh.)

ADOLF: He’s okay as kids go, I suppose. But the one I like is Janis. She’s a good-looking little girl. I wouldn’t mind finding her in my field. (They laugh again.)

ATTILA: Wow, that Special Import hit the spot! It makes me feel like a kid again. Should we get another couple soon?

ADOLF: In a minute, Tillie. I’ve got an idea how to create a little excitement in the meantime.

(He whispers to the other two. Attila heads to the beach. In a flash he’s back with W.E. Smith.)
ADOLF: Mr. Smith, how are you today? (Mr. Smith looks surprised but interested.) We’ve got a job for you, and the payment in fun for all will be worth the effort.

(They begin to talk as lights dim. Lights up on Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We are at the edge of the field the dictators have used themselves before. Jimmy and Janis are there, kissing and embracing. They are silhouettes in the dusk. But W.E. Smith has a flash on his camera, and the dictators are fully aware of it.

(As Mr. Smith approaches the lovers, the dictators sneak up behind them. Signaling Mr. Smith with a low whistle, the trio stand up and scream, “Love her, Jimmy, love her!” just as Mr. Smith takes a picture. Before they know what has happened, the lovers are apart and looking at one another, bewildered for only a moment. They know their picture has been taken, but it really doesn’t faze them now. They go back to love-making. The lights go down, then come up next as Mr. Smith is emerging from the Devil’s House. The dictators are waiting.)

MR. SMITH: It’s done. (Holding up three prints of the same image.) They’re all yours!

ADOLF (grinning): This is better than I thought it would be. What an embrace! By the Devil, we can hang these in our trophy cases, Boys. The next time Jimmy and Janis see these, they’ll be famous.

ATTILA: Yes. This is great, Kid. Good work!

MR. SMITH: Thanks, I did my best.

BENITO: That’s all anyone can do, Kid. Ha, ha! The Master will love these. Now, let’s say we get that Special Import!

ATTILA: Sounds like a plan to me.

ADOLF: Good, then let’s go for it, Guys! Last one in is a rotten apple!

ATTILA: Shit! That’ll be me. It always is!

(The trio race for the front door, while Mr. Smith is left standing. He pulls a picture from his pocket – a 5X7 version of the 8X10s he has just given to the dictators. Mr. Smith smiles decadently, which would have been out of character for him previously. He replaces the picture in his pocket, and then he too races for the door to the Devil’s House. Inside, merriment is heard, and out in the Devil’s Field, Jimmy and Janis are playing and singing their song. Lights go out as that song’s tune takes over and plays like an anthem. Hell on a good day is closing shop. The next time you see Hell, it will reveal a different side of itself. The next time you see it, in fact, it will be totally decadent. W.E. Smith has prepared the way for that as much as any dictator ever could. End of Act IV, Scene 2.)


NARRATOR: We are back in Hell, but this time on the ugliest of days. The Devil is directing traffic, counting up all his newest victims. They have been lined up in rows, as you can see, ten abreast and naked, except for barest essentials. They come in all colors, and they are mainly beautiful to look at -- just don’t touch. However, a few less lovely scoundrels have slipped in, too. Satan begins cracking his whip as he finishes counting and begins commanding. His victims sway back and forth in the heat, and oh what heat! Nero isn’t around. No nut cases here, just raw, undifferentiated EVIL personalities -- except for one, unique soul. That man stands out near the front: He looks like a cross between a middle-aged Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton, and is played by the actor who played W.E. Smith. He is not Mr. Smith, though. This character cringes, and the Devil doesn’t pick up on his weakness immediately, but the man’s fear soon calls him into focus. Now, the Devil looks like Herman Goering, not like the middle-of-the-road bureaucrat that ran things the previous scene. Now, his English has a full German accent.

THE DEVIL (larger than life): Vat’s yor naem?

THE CRINGER: Leland, Sir – Leland Heartland. I’m not Jewish, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or a Woman. I am too much a white male from the Midwestern United States. I came here as part of a deal. My son and his wife were sent upstairs, and I took their place down here.

THE DEVIL: Vell, Lee-Land Haht-Land, I would like you to cum un sie here. (He cracks his whip, and Leland obeys, instinctively.) LELAND (frightened as ever): Is this okay, Sir?

THE DEVIL: OKAY, OKAY -- Vat is this OKAY SHEET? (Leland gets down on his knees now.) Yaes, zat is better! (He cracks whip again.) NOW, Lee-Land Haht-Land, why do you think my min-eons have brought you here?

ELAND (guessing; hoping against hope): Because I am a human sacrifice, Sir?

THE DEVIL: (laughing heartily, full-throated): Yaes, Lee-Land Haht-Land, you are a S-A-C-R-I-F-I-C-E. Zer is leetel doubt about zat. You will pay the price here because you were a FOOL on zee Earth. And do you know vat a FOOL must do for me here?

(Screaming.) Do you, FOOL?!

Leland: I don’t know, Field Marshal Goering, I mean Sir. (Leland feels the whip now.) Please, Sir, tell me!

THE DEVIL: YOU MUST EARN MY RESPECT! Get eet, FOOL? You must work HARD for my respect. And I do not make that easy for you. In fact, FOOL, I make eet VERY, VERY DIFFICULT for you. Right everyone?!!!

MINIONS (as if just awakening): Yes, yes, Master, you make it very, very difficult for us. (He cracks whip.) Yes, Master, you are great and we are weak. You control everything about us, even our consciences. We have no choice but to worship you and do your bidding.

THE DEVIL: Zat is KORREKT, Mein Mice!!! You will do vat I say, and YOU WILL WORSHIP MEIN POWER!!!

NARRATOR: Cracking his whip, his minions bring in a cross between Bette Davis and Madonna, with a form not undesirable at all. Even Leland Heartland notices her. Perhaps he notices most of all. Again the whip cracks, and the woman-slave begins stripping her clothes off. She does so most tantalizingly, brushing her discarded clothes against Leland’s face, by his mouth, and across the front of his pants. Leland tries to resist, but this proves futile, and soon he is wanting this woman more than he has ever wanted a woman his entire middle-aged life.

(A large, Roman-clad warrior enters with sword, goes directly to Leland, and kicks him hard in the genitalia. He then stands over Leland threateningly with the sword. Leland screams horribly and falls down, holding his private parts. The Devil takes the others’
minds off it by cracking his whip. Now, another warrior appears. He’s apparently Japanese — short, strong, and ugly, with a gun in hand. He says Leland has but one chance to survive. The Japanese warrior stands before Leland and raises the barrel to his temple, pulling the trigger with no shot ringing out. He hands the pistol to Leland, who hesitates, until, that is, the Devil cracks his whip again. Leland sadly puts the gun to his own head, and when the Devil cracks his whip again, Leland pulls the trigger. Nothing. This goes on four times more; with the sixth “shot,” Leland learns the Devil is “only” tormenting him. There are no bullets in the pistol. Six empty chambers. Leland soon wonders if he doesn’t wish there would be a bullet in one of the chambers. The Devil is growing bored, so he cracks whip again, screams “Go!” and his victims disappear, save Leland. Instinctively, Leland feels a break in the action and moves to the edge of the stage, right.)

NARRATOR: The Devil hasn’t given up entirely on his games, and soon another beautiful maiden is brought in. She is for the Master himself. He directs her to lie down next to him, and he immediately puts his hand down her blouse. (She giggles, and the Devil pulls her close to him.) In the darkness that envelops them, we can hear the sounds of love-making. They are horrid yet tempting — not out of the realm of practice of many lovers on Earth. Leland rests a bit, though he seems to know he will get little rest in this place, so he takes advantage of every minute to face his fears and prepare for the worst. Once the “love-making” is done, the Devil emerges, alone. He is a master of this one-to-one game, on Earth and in Hell. He moves without whip now. Before long, he snaps his fingers and Pol-Pot, the Khmer Rouge murderer, and Adolf Hitler, the REAL Adolf Hitler, emerge from the shadows. They go over to Leland and drag him into the middle of stage. Then they kick him where his genitals used to be, mercilessly. Leland vomits, spewing out all the hatred he has in him, and is purified. But the Devil and his henchmen don’t comprehend that fact. They pull him up on his feet and make him stand, as a handsome young man in black enters. He has a white-covered book with him, and after clearing his throat and putting on a white jumpsuit and white gloves, with white top hat and shoes, he reads.

YOUNG MAN: This is Stefan Grunwald’s poem “To My Baba”:

I met you only once; You were on flight from Europe to these shores.
Of the most precious things
you took along
were two white pillows
with which you and your husband
had started many years of marriage.
Aside from that I knew you not.
However, like echoes from the past
through your daughter Irma, and
granddaughter Ruth, my mother,
come aspects of yourself
that shaped my life in many ways:
kindness and empathy;
strength and conviction;
a life centered in family,
friends and children;
good cheer and humor
in times of hardship;
caution in days of brightness.
A tough woman you must have been,
because your lineage does reflect that down to me.
All those aspects, no doubt will make survivors
of my children too.
Baba, Baba, no sweeter words we have except perhaps for Mama, mama dear.

(The handsome young man takes off his white clothes and resumes his black tie and tails, black top hat, walking stick, shoes. He exits carrying his white things. The Devil gets back to Leland.)

NARRATOR: The Devil snaps his finger, and as if by magic, a scene from Heaven appears. It reveals Leland’s son, his daughter-in-law, and his grandchildren — two boys and a girl. They are playing splendidly together and singing songs. They sing snatches of “Deep in the Heart of Texas” and “This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land.” Next, an even more wondrous thing occurs. Out of a cloud-bank above, descends Diane Lynn, Leland’s wife. She had preceded Leland in death, but she has never been forgotten by him. He has pined for her since the day he was born, and she for him. Now their eyes meet, for an instant; then the Devil steps between
them, and Diane Lynn vanishes in a puff of smoke. The Devil knows his own power, and he thinks to tempt Leland even more. He states his case.

THE DEVIL: If you ever wish to see Ms. Diane Lynn again, unobtainable as she seems, you must do vat I say. Do you understand?
LELAND (mesmerized): Yes, I understand. I will do as you say.

(The Devil steps backward next, revealing a church’s interior.)

NARRATOR: Hell may seem an odd place for such a site, but stranger things have happened on Earth and even something this sinister is not beyond the Devil in his domain. At the front of this church stands an Anglican priest and a small urn with ashes. They belong to some famous personage, given the turn-out for his Remembrance Service. It is November 1995 by Earth-years; and the people in the church pews include many respected journalists, authors, photographers, and teachers. Some would think this Remembrance Service might even be for Bert Harter, for he died in July that year, and his family did hold a service for him, a few months later. Regardless of whose ashes are in the urn, the Devil wants to be sure they do not belong to one of his victims, for he likes corpses for Hell, not ashes, and he fully expects to add another victim to his list soon. Suddenly, along fringes of the stage, the Devil’s minions gather. They are marching to an oddly appealing, tawdry tune. And they're singing words Leland can't abide.

MINIONS: Onward Devilish minions,
    Forward toward all wars.
    Pestilence has been seen since
    You boarded up the doors
    That now repulse the innocence
    Of my father’s salvaged whores.
    I come toward your winces
    And reveal only me and more –
    The Devil made me do it, then;
    And he is great forevermore!

(They repeat song, marching back and forth across stage. Then, they relent and exit, stage left.)

NARRATOR: Leland has been trying to plug his ears against all this nonsense, but he hears most of what they sing, and is appalled. The Devil senses victory, and moves closer to the downtrodden Midwesterner. His trick just might work, he thinks, and gives it the old college try.

THE DEVIL: So, Mr. Lee-Land Haht-Land, how do you feel now? Wasn’t zat Remembrance Service tempting to you? I caught you fresh from the grave, and yet you know you could have a service like that – if you only renounce Heaven completely.
LELAND: How would or could I renounce Heaven in any other way than like I’ve done so far?
THE DEVIL: You could renounce your true love – your family. (Leland shrinks from what comes next.) I can let you have that memorial service of all memorial services, thus winning you eternal honor on Earth, perhaps even with good standing in your family – or I can return you to the Hell you’ve already seen, complete with the unobtainable Ms. Haht-Land. Ha-Ha. What do you want me to do? It’s your choice.
LELAND: I don’t love my family, but I would indeed like that memorial service. What if I curse my family with a Grunwald lyric? Will you then set me free to find the remembrance I need?

(Not thinking at his best, the Devil hesitates, then decides.)

THE DEVIL: If you curse your family with a Grunwald lyric, then I will indeed set you free, as you call it. (He motions for Leland to begin.)
LELAND: Then I choose this lyric. I learned it in school.

Four decades of painful
    illusions
    And yet, I HAVE SURVIVED
    IT ALL.

    I’ve tamed the pack, made
    it docile.
    I trained the beasts into
    guardians,
    of my heritage around
    the world.
    There are many like me.
    Beware Anti-Semite!
    Neither touch my children
    nor people.

    If ever you do, I’ll sic
    my pack
    of well-trained ferocity
    on you.
    My fellows will unleash
THE DEVIL: (thinking he has Leland now): But you are not a Jew! You are a white male from the Midwestern United States. What say you to this? 

LELAND: I say that I can still sic my pack on you, Anit-Semite!

(Now come the angels in all their splendor, Cherubim and Seraphim, singing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Satan relents.)

THE DEVIL: Begone, then, FOOL! If this is vat you vant, then good riddance!

(Lights dim as Leland finds Diane Lynn and flees towards Heaven. End of Act V, Scene 1.)


NARRATOR: We’re in Heaven on an excellent day. There is a Remembrance Service for Bert Harter, not in a building, but rather with all his old friends and family having “passed” by now, to the Lord. These immortal souls include a few of Bert's ancestors and immediate family, but also select members of the Royal Family of Britain, Sheila Harter, Dora Harter, Mr. and Mrs. James Cameron, Sir Tom and Lady Hopkinson, Sir Edward and Lady Hulton, Prime Minister Nehru, other old pals, teachers (including John Whale and his wife, Judy, who influenced Mr. Lamont especially), and others. Included are many from the photo community: Stefan Szakall, Munkasi, Erich Salomon, Bob Capa, Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Edward Steichen, John Thomson, Felix Mann, Kurt Hutton, Gerry Grove, Charles Keeble, Sally Soames, Henri Cartier-Bresson, the real W.E. Smith, and numerous photo-subjects of Mr. Harter's - black, white, red, and yellow. At back are Ms. Minny, and Leland and Diane Lynn Heartland. All wear a wing-brooch on lapel. The service has begun, with Seraphim and Cherubim singing “The Bread of Life”. No one is conducting service: A few of the “Passed” simply go before the group to praise Mr. Harter, seated in a chair of honor in-front, and to thank the Lord. God watches from on high, and is pleased. Speaking first is Sir Tom Hopkinson, who was Mr. Harter’s best editor, for Picture Post. He's dressed in white, but not expensively so. God also is in white, an older version of the Jesus in trun in much art. There is a good selection of colors and styles among the others’ dress. Sir Tom shows slides of Mr. Harter’s best images, with yours truly filling in parenthetical expressions.

SIR TOM: Now, as you all know, Bert Harter may have been a little rough-and-tumble on Earth. (Everyone smiles at this, as a slide of Mr. Harter’s two Gorbals street urchins comes up.) But he was also soft as a lamb when it came to the important things. (A slide of Mr. Harter's granddaughters running in a country lane comes up, followed by his portrait of Lizzie, his Jack Russell Terrier, playing with a bone.) He was a good husband to Dora for a time, and to Sheila for all time, and he was a good father to his sons, as well. Now, Sheila loved one of Bert’s pictures more than the rest – a view of the Hercules bicycle factory. (That slide comes up, with a sigh of primordial remembrance coming from the throng), for you all know that Bert started his career taking pictures of the cycling club he belonged to – Norwood Paragon… (Cycling pictures come up.) Also, he let the quality of mercy shine through his pictures. (Views of his parents and sons are followed by photos from the Family of Man Exhibit – of a newly-released convict with a loving prostitute he’d just slept with.) Of course, not everyone he photographed had earlier been accorded the same heroic quality of mercy. Bert Harter showed them… (Photos of Osnabruck and Bergen-Belsen are shown. Survivor-photos are included.) Bert was no heartless slouch; he surpassed most photographers in the level of compassion he showed toward his subjects. (Mr. Harter’s most telling view of South Korean prisoners of conscience, squatting, comes up.) Then, too, he could be delicate without being sentimental… (His view of Prime Minister Nehru smelling a rose, followed by his view of Sugar Ray Robinson meeting People in Paris.) And he could get where nobody else could get. (His “join-up” of Queen Elizabeth II entering the Paris Opera in 1957 comes up.) In wars, too, he was adept at getting where others would not or could not go… (A slide of his history-making double-page fire-fighting spread from 1941 comes up, followed by his best view of U.S. First Division Marines landing on the sea-wall at Inchon in 1950. Sir Tom has warmed to his subject well, and he closes on a personal note.)… To be sure, Bert Harter touched us all with his work, but it is his Christmas cards for which I will always remember him best (some are shown now), because even after he retired in 1964, he kept those pictures coming. And each Christmas, my wife and I received our personalized photo postcard from Bert and Sheila; we were always moved by those pictures – from his timeless view of the street urchins, to a look at a plaque of the Lord on a river bank in a friendly locale, taken just a little before Bert’s passing. (You see the last two now.) All of these were excellent! That’s why the work of Bert Harter was and is a matter for the heart and the head. His work shines forth for all time as a beacon to the unfortunate, the so-called ordinary or everyday souls, and the misunderstood, as well as to all the other decent, law-abiding People everywhere. He did his job for me; but more importantly, he did his job for us all!

NARRATOR: Finished presenting, Sir Tom returns to his seat with his wife. There's applause, and Mr. Harter bows to throng, and the Lord. Next up, James Cameron, Mr. Harter's Korean War partner. JC wears a grey-tweed suit, looking semi-sardonically dapper. JAMES (satirically): I never thought I’d be in this place – of all places (the throng is amused) – telling about my experiences with Bert Harter, but here I am. (Smiling humbly:) I used to say Bert Harter was the sort of fellow you either learned to work with or took out and shot. But Bert was as regular a fellow as I’ve ever met, about the everyday features of life. On the other hand, he was like a rock at Inchon compared to me, and he was as good as gold when it came to Sheila, his two sons, and all his work. Bert believed in photography so dearly, because he held People to be of great value. He loved People, and made great images because People also loved him. Even his first wife, Dora, he held in high regard, most of the time. Forget about what you saw in purgatory, because that represented a very bad Earth Day between them. She was the mother of his sons, and he was always grateful for that. His sons gave loved him. Even his first wife, Dora, he held in high regard, most of the time. Forget about what you saw in purgatory, because that represented a very bad Earth Day between them. She was the mother of his sons, and he was always grateful for that. His sons gave

BET: I want to thank you for coming today. I never expected when I started out in life to win such high honors; but I am grateful for all this Heavenly attention. (He smiles and signs come from crowd now.) I began my life in a somewhat lowly background, but with a
lot of love, and I'm proof now, that every child can grow up to be a useful, caring adult. I love my profession, and I love my family and friends, as well. In fact, I love all People. I know all People are God’s children; and I know, too, all People can achieve Heaven, in one way or another, if they work at it, and if our Lord (looks up to Him) so desires Goodness for them. You know, I used to think God didn’t really matter to most people, and the only thing they craved was “love.” Well, today I realize that God IS Love. I also know He will share that Love with anyone who asks Him properly for it. I pray now for those souls in limbo, those who have not earned their wings yet, and even for those souls who will never see God, the unfortunates who are down below. God hears my prayers (looking up to God again), and I am ever grateful. And just this morning, another soul earned his wings and became one of us. His name is David Lamont, and I have known him since we met in 1981, when he took my picture and began writing about my life. David (Bert motions to audience), will you please come forward now?

(David emerges and is welcomed with open arms by Bert. They hug, then Bert speaks again.)

BERT: David is another good friend I would not want to have to do without. He has retold my story over the years on Earth, and now he would like to share something with you that he shared with Sheila just after my passing. David, please go ahead.

DAVID: Thank you, Bert. I want to share one story with you and then introduce a student of mine, Ms. Jean Lee Bell. First the story. When I met Bert Harter in November 1981, I didn’t know what to expect. He could have been shy; he could have been arrogant; he could have been arrow-straight or flexible, or both at once. What he was, was amiable. He loved sharing his stories with me, and allowing me to make some photo-portraits of him (the latter are shown); and he didn’t mind preparing his own photos for me to take with. Moreover, he continued to share his stories with me and my son, whose still on Earth with his family, through personalized Christmas cards, which Sir Tom has already mentioned. In January 1995, a few months before he passed, Bert and I spoke by phone. We hadn’t talked in a long time, but we had kept in touch through the mail and via phone conversations between Sheila and me. However, when I spoke to Bert that January, he told, “I don’t do lectures any more. My eyes aren’t good enough for reading notes and things. I do still take a picture now and then.” He added he still always looked for photos, and “Most of the time, I see photographs.” That day, he also said he was glad I liked the picture of the Lord’s statue Sir Tom already alluded to. What he didn’t say directly, but seemed to know, was that he would be passing soon. And when he told me twice, “It was good hearing from you, David,” I knew that was a unique phone call. It was the last time I’d speak with Bert on Earth. Well, thankfully, I can say we haven’t given up our friendship because we passed to Heaven. Today that friendship is stronger than ever; and I’m happy to see not only Bert and all of you here, but I’m also happy beyond expectations to see our God here. Thank you, Lord, for showing us all the way to your heart through Bert. (Bert shakes hands with and hugs David again.) And thank you, Lord, for giving us all the best life we’ve ever had!

(As one body, the group stands and applauds. They appreciate all that’s been said. Next, Bert’s sons, Terry and Michael, move forward as do Sheila, the Camerons, and the Hopkinsons. Together the group bows, while the larger group offers their approval. Chairs now magically await the smaller group, and they sit together in front. David still holds the floor.)

DAVID: Now, I’d like to ask the best poet I’ve ever known personally to come forward – my student, Jean Lee Bell. (Jean emerges.) Jean shared the next two poems with me soon after I met her, and I sent them ahead to Sheila, when I learned Bert had passed. Jean will read them now.

(David motions to Jean to stand where he’s stood; and she does.)

JEAN: Thank you, David. The first poem I’ve been asked to share is “To Those Who Love Me”:

If one day I should walk these dear loved woods,
Or sit beside the brook to hear its song,
And Friend Death comes to share my happy mood—
To talk of life as we might stroll along;—
Were he to bid me choose if I would Go
With grateful heart I’d give my answer there—
Of all that gives my world its lovely glow,
With grateful heart I’d give my answer there—
Go gladly to the paths beyond my wood.

(Deafening applause. David shake his student’s hand and kisses her on cheek. Bert also hugs Jean. All faces look to Christ’s. He says loudly, “It is Good!” On balcony opposite Him, a female appears, Mary. Christ extends his arms, saying, “Mother” She bows to Him. The throng looks to her; angel sings “Ave Maria.” The throng sits. After the hymn, applause, which Mary acknowledges. Then, “Joy to the World” is played instrumentally, softly, as the throng mingles.)

SHEILA: It was good to receive your poems when I did. They helped me through a difficult time.
BERT: Yes, thank you for sending those poems to Sheila. And thank you for reading them here. David, this student did right by you and all of us, didn’t she?
DAVID: Yes, she did!
JEAN: You’re very welcome. I only wish we all had met on Earth a while; it would have been good to share our stories and writings then. Of course, we have plenty of time now!
DAVID: Yes, we have all the time in God’s New World now. I can’t wait for my wife and kids to meet us here, too.
NARRATOR: They all laugh at this remark, because David’s wife and family are temporarily in “Purgatory.” Won’t that be exciting when they, too, are admitted to the Big Show. And this particular show was a fairly big one, and a good one. Enjoy yourselves, then, and keep visiting this theater and taking in plays like the one you’ve just seen. We're all grateful for our audiences' interest, aren’t we troupe? God bless us all! Amen and Good Night to everyone!

(Cast bows as Jim Brickman’s “Angel Eyes” plays, then his “If You Believe.”. Our Play’s End.)
**Author's Note**: This play is an historical drama in the sense that Shakespeare’s chronicle plays were – they deal with some real, some imagined historical figures and events – and very little of the historical dialogue was spoken in just the way it is re-presented here. The method is a combination of the descriptive and the telegraphic, and not all the stage directions and character descriptions are precisely detailed, because each production will need some latitude to achieve this drama’s goals. But the key thing *Bloody Math* shares with the bard’s chronicle plays is, hopefully, the emotional truthfulness connected with its ideas, language, characters, and action. Historical events can contain a great deal of drama in and around them – as the bombing at the University of Wisconsin’s Sterling Hall did in August 1970. And yet, it takes a good writer to re-present relevant figures, events, etc., so they will honestly enlighten new generations about the contexts, impacts, and relevance of what went before the present age. It is my fondest hope as the writer of this historical drama, which is an American tragedy, that viewers will learn from the mistakes of many people in 1970 Madison, including the crimes of this drama’s domestic terrorists, the New Year’s Gang, and, perhaps, related mistakes of some of the authorities, so we all can live better lives, in future. --djm.

**Cast of Characters:**

Karl Armstrong: The eldest son in his family and New Year’s Gang (also called Vanguard of the Revolution) leader.

Don and Ruth Armstrong: Karl’s parents.

Dwight Armstrong: Karl’s younger brother and comrade-in-arms.

Lynn Schulte: Karl’s former girlfriend and driver.

Leo Burt: *Daily Cardinal* senior reporter recruited by the New Year’s Gang.

David Fine: *Daily Cardinal* freshman reporter invited into the New Year’s Gang by Leo.

Joe McGrew: UW history student, in-between his sophomore and junior years.

Dave McGrew: Joe’s dad.

Dan McGrew: Joe’s brother.

Brant More: UW Business student between his sophomore and junior years, and Joe’s roommate.

Paul Soglin: Antiwar protest leader and, later, mayor of Madison.

Jim Rowen: *Daily Cardinal* reporter and antiwar activist who exposes classified work at the Army Mathematics Research Center on the UW-Madison campus.

Susan McGovern Rowen: Jim’s wife and daughter of 1968 Democratic Presidential Nominee George McGovern.

Alan Hunter: President of the UW chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Detective George Croal, aka “Chester White”: Trainer of “counter-affinity squads” for Madison Police Department.

Chief Ralph Hanson: Head of University Protection and Security (P&S). “Duroc”, an undercover policeman, who does not speak in this play.

Harvey Goldberg: UW social historian and pied piper of the Madison Left.

George Mosse: UW cultural historian and a defender of liberal values.

Heinz Barschall: UW physicist-Manhattan Project vet, whose life-work is tied up in Sterling Hall.

Robert Fassnacht: UW low-temperature physicist at Sterling Hall.

Stephanie Fassnacht: Robert’s wife.

Joe Dillinger: Robert’s close friend and colleague.


Various supernumeraries – of all races, backgrounds, and persuasions.

**Settings:**

Act I-Scene 1: UW Memorial Union’s Great Hall, September 1969.


Act I-Scene 3: A meeting of the UW Board of Regents, Bascom Hall, January 1970.

Act I-Scene 4: The interior of Sterling Hall, August 1, 1970.


Act II-Scene 1: A Farmer’s Union Co-op in Baraboo, Wisconsin, Wednesday, August 19, 1970.


Act II-Scene 3: The apartment of Robert and Stephanie Fassnacht, Saturday night, August 22, 1970.

Act II-Scene 4: Central Wisconsin testing area, very late the night of August 23-24, 1970.

Act II-Scene 5: Madison Police Department, a few minutes later on the night of August 23-August 24, 1970.

Act III-Scene 1: The Lakeshore Dorm room of Joe McGrew and Brant More, 1:30 a.m., Monday, August 24, 1970.
Act III-Scene 2: Physics lab of Robert Fassnacht, Sterling Hall, 3 p.m., August 24, 1970.
Act III-Scene 3: University Avenue, a couple of blocks from Sterling Hall, a few minutes later.
Act III-Scene 4: Dave McGrew’s car, going from Lakeshore Dorm toward La Crosse, 1 p.m., August 24, 1970.
Act III-Scene 5: UW’s Library Mall, Madison, Summer 1989.

PROLOGUE: The debate in the late 1960s over U.S. involvement in Vietnam was initiated by some reporters and a few unhappy troops, and “clarified” by the protests of college students and more “ordinary” citizens. One university that saw much protest violence then was the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Sporadic protests began there soon after U.S. troops were sent to Vietnam in 1965. By 1969-70, the “pot” had been stirred, heated, and thrown at the political establishment, often. A key issue at UW was the role of the Mathematics Research Center in military research. Sterling Hall was where that research occurred, and was to become the site of one of the worst incidents of U.S. campus violence during the war. Noted conservative writer George Will later called that bombing “the Hiroshima of the New Left.” Your author was a UW-Madison undergraduate from 1968 to 1973. He took part in only one protest, and grew alienated from such action by the property damaged by protesters, and the threats to human life.

Act I-Scene I-Action: The setting is the Great Hall of UW’s Memorial Union in September 1969. This is the first “monster meeting” of the fall season, and it’s taking place in the third-floor ballroom, which is fitted out in the style of the Doges Palace. The speaker’s stage is located at stage-right, and the speakers have not yet begun their work. There are faculty members and students among them. Meanwhile, among those gathering, in the first row of seated spectators, is Jim Rowen, a Daily Cardinal reporter who is from a wealthy East Coast Jewish family, and who’s recently been writing a series called “Profit Motive 101,” dealing with the military business of the UW. Rowen is slightly built, but with a big Afro hairstyle that is appealing, and a shade morose. He, like most of the others who have gathered there, is wearing blue jeans and jacket. The other students are in varied dressed-down styles. Jim Rowen’s pretty wife, Susan McGovern Rowen, sits next to him, along with David Fine, a small young man and freshman Daily Cardinal reporter who looks like a semi-appealing character from Oliver Twist. Leo Burt, another Daily Cardinal reporter, is also sitting with them. Leo is a tall, lean, well-built man with a slick moustache and wire-rim glasses. His hair is slightly wavy but not out of control. Jim is currently talking with Leo and David, while Susan mainly listens.

JIM: I’ll bet there will be plenty to write about for tomorrow’s paper. Leo should be able to produce great rabble-rousing stuff from this. What do you guys think?
LEO: I’m going to give it a good shot. The demands to be discussed here today should put our readers in the knowledge of things, no this. What do you guys think?

JIM: I guess other people are about as relia ble as the weather – mainly unpredictable, especially in the Midwest. (heaven, even as hell is cutting loose all around. I hope I can depend on God, but it’s other people that you can’t always tru st.
LEO: That’s what I’m frightened of, the other people part. I can depend on myself, like I have on varsity crew, stroking towards success, we can’t ask for much better men than you three.

DAVID: Yeah, better than most, anyway. My God, I’ll bet there’s a story about all of us soon to be written. Fame is fickle, but the cause is great.

JIM: You’re right about fame, my friend. She’s very fickle. A lot of what she does for you depends on you, the gods, and other people.

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DAVID: Yeah, better than most, anyway. My God, I’ll bet there’s a story about all of us soon to be written. Fame is fickle, but the cause is great.
Center; then, we must remove all ROTC facilities from campus; and finally, we must remove from campus the Land Tenure Center, the U.S.-funded agrarian project in Central America that is helping spearhead U.S. imperialism in that region. Now, I don’t think I have to tell anyone here what the elimination of those organizations from our campus would mean to the antiwar movement in this country. It would have a snowball effect on the antiwar movement everywhere. I say this not out of a sense of bourgeois vanity, but because I know that our movement is gaining great momentum. The world is rallying around our socialist ideals, and it’s the time the administrations of this university and country see that. (More cheers and applause.) I have been around long enough to know our struggle won’t be easy. The capitalist thugs who run society have known no limits, until now. We are making decisions and taking actions to disturb the capitalists. (Laughter from crowd, and cheers.), but we will establish our Revolution as no Revolution before or since. (More applause.) We must move forward, though, so I’ll say Happy Revolution to you all, and give the podium over to our next speaker today. He is no stranger to any of you. He is a colleague and friend, though a little less socialist than me. (Laughter in audience.) In any case, I give you Prof. George Mosse, cultural historian beyond compare. George, what do you have to say today?

(Prof. Mosse walks to the podium. He is a medium-tall, somewhat stockily built man of about 60, who wears glasses, is bald, and looks like a friendly, yet shrewd, owl. His accent is a bit German-Jewish. The crowd applauds.)

PROF. MOSSE (Shakes Prof. Goldberg’s hand): Thank you, Harvey. I think if I can suggest a few things now, this meeting’s issues might become more clarified. (Gathering his thoughts.) First of all, as all of you already know, things are heating up on this campus. To be sure, the war in Vietnam has had a lot to do with that. But I suggest that you must not be carried away by the events around you, for while it may be tempting to take violence into your own hands, and while it may be true truth can be radical sometimes, it is also true that reality is a matter of degree. (The audience is very attentive.) Now, what I mean by this is that while it may be horrible that U.S. aggression in Vietnam is taking so many lives, perhaps even many innocent lives, it is also true and real that the vast American public is not spoiling for a civil war at home. You should know about civil war and its effects, after watching the battle footage on the network news programs, coming out of Vietnam. No one really wants that war, on this campus, but it is also true that people here differ over the ways to bring that war to a close. Do we want peace both in Vietnam and at home, or do we want continuing divisions over the causes and rationales for the war?

(Some of the crowd begin to whisper; others simply talk. While Prof. Mosse has been speaking, a handful of young men and women dressed in combat fatigues aggressively enter from the back. They charge up the center aisle carrying National Liberation Front flags, and bump Prof. Mosse out of the way. A bare-chested young man with long, Icelandic blond hair grabs the microphone and prances, Mick Jagger-like, at the front of the stage, while his cohorts strike fierce karate poses, daring the audience to interfere. Someone cries out.)

A VOICE IN THE AUDIENCE: It’s Jeff Jones! It’s the Weatherman!
OTHERS IN AUDIENCE: Get off the stage! Get off there!

(Jeff Jones is not moved.)

JEFF JONES (with an unconvincing ghetto accent): Look around this stage. What do you see up here? You don’t see no motherfuckin’ students at no motherfuckin’ university. Everybody up here on this stage is a stone communist revolutionary!

(Turmoil among audience members ensues.)

ONE AUDIENCE MEMBER: Shut up the bleep, Jones! Ya don’t know what yur talkin’ about!
ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah, just shut up! We don’t need any of your crew speakin’ on our behalf.
A JEFF JONES SUPPORTER IN THE AUDIENCE: Hey! Give the man a chance to dish, will ya?

(The rest of the audience begins to quiet down.)

JEFF JONES: That’s better. Now, those among you who still have guts enough for a good fight, let’s show the A-holes of this world what we’re made of.

(In response, the members of the audience simultaneously turn their chairs around and face the other way. Jeff Jones finds himself talking to the back of their heads.)

JEFF JONES: Hey, what’s up with you beggars? Give me your ears or I’ll give you my middle finger!

(Not a chair turns back to him.)

JEFF JONES: Okay, if that’s the way you want it. Keep in mind that you can follow us. We’re going to trash the Army Mathematics Research Center! (He begins to chant, and the handful of followers repeats the chant.)
THE WEATHERMEN (Marching through the center aisle, and out, stage-left.): Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win. Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win. Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh… (They are gone.)

(Another remarkable person is in the crowd. He is Mark Baganz, aka “Duroc,” a tall, scruffy looking sort, who is an undercover policeman. He sits directly behind the Daily Cardinal crew. He has a small notebook he writes in, as a new speaker moves to the podium – Students for a Democratic Society leader Alan Hunter, a good-looking young man, if a bit seamy, who is fired up now.)

ALAN HUNTER (First bashing the crowd. Then…): Yes, my friends, you don’t need a rectal thermometer to know who the A-holes are. (The audience applauds vigorously. Whistles and laughs can also be heard. The Daily Cardinal reporters take more notes.) Remember where our local SDS people stand on all this: The UW SDS does not want violence. We don’t feel, now, that we can
follow the violent policies of the Chicago office, much as we admire many of its personnel. (More applause.) What we need to do now is take up the agenda we came here to decide on today – the issues surrounding the demands we will be making of the university administration and the Board of Regents. (A few jeers can be heard now.)

A VOICE IN THE AUDIENCE: Tell Harrington we’re sick of him!

ANOTHER VOICE IN THE AUDIENCE: Yeah, and tell the Board we’re bored with them.

(Laughter now.)

ALAN HUNTER: I will, if you will debate the list of proposed demands – there are six -- and decide which ones we need those people to listen to. I recommend Prof. Goldberg’s list of three as starters.

A WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE (who obviously knows Alan Hunter well): Yes, my dear Alan. Let’s get around to the proposals. (She licks her lips at this, and the audience laughs.)

ALAN HUNTER (Half-embarrassed): Any… thing you say, Patricia, anything you say… Where was I now?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You were at the Nitty Gritty last Saturday night, with your favorite broad, making passes like there was no tomorrow.

(The audience again laughs.)

ALAN HUNTER (He relents): So I was, and so may we all be, if we are lucky this Saturday night….

(Appause and whistles follow, and the lights go out.)

Act I-Scene 2-Action: The basement physics lab where Robert Fassnacht works, in Sterling Hall, October 1969. There is a rack of hanging ball bearings on his desk, a large blackboard with equations written on it behind the desk, and several devices of a testing nature in front of the desk. A radio on the desk is playing the Peter, Paul, and Mary tune “Leaving on a Jet Plane.” There is also a phone on the desk. Robert Fassnacht, a tall, handsome researcher of 33, who sports short hair and wears glasses, enters through the door, stage-left. He is chatting with Heinz Barschall, an older nuclear physicist and colleague. Barschall speaks with a slight German accent.

HEINZ: So you see, Robert – the research that I was working on with the Manhattan Project is coming to a head at last. I just hope I have found the correct answers to my physics dilemmas by the end of next year. I’m not going to be around too much longer, and I need to prove my legacy soon.

ROBERT (Smiling): Oh, it’s possible you might just be around longer than me, Professor. You know, though, my own research is coming to a head, too, and it could be that I’ll also find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow by the end of next year, right here in this lab. (He turns off the radio.)

HEINZ: Let’s hope next year proves to be our best ever. I know my family will be pleased to see me stop my 12 hour-workdays, and come home at a decent hour at night.

ROBERT: Yeah, my Stef and the kids could also use a more regular family man at home.

HEINZ: What do you think about all the commotion these days about our work here, or should I say, rather, the work of the Mathematics Research Center?

ROBERT: Yes, the protesters have been around a lot lately. I hope things don’t get out of hand. You know, I sympathize with their attitude toward the war. We shouldn’t be over there fighting in Vietnam. There are plenty of problems for this country to deal with at home. Still, I hope the protesters don’t get much more violent than they already have been. Broken windows and teargas is one thing, bloodshed is another.

HEINZ: Yes. But there is plenty to complain about, even at home. Why, I’ve read that despite the war on poverty President Johnson began, there are still so many poor people in America, it’s a national disgrace. When will we ever find a solution to poverty?

ROBERT: I don’t know. And I don’t know either how SDS figures to unite the two economic halves of America with the demands they are pressing. More violence isn’t the answer. Can’t they do anything but stir up the waters of discontent here? Surely, Sterling Hall should be a center for research and not a target of abuse – even if we do have a military component in the building.

HEINZ: Yes, I agree, I agree…

(A third man enters, quickly. He is Joe Dillinger, Robert’s friend and colleague, a middle-aged man of average height. He is anxious.)

JOE: Heinz, Bob, we’ve got a situation on our hands. The math symposium being held upstairs has been raided by SDS. About a dozen of them turned off the lights up there, and threw bags of red paint on our guests. They were shouting “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh.” It was terrible! Be prepared for anything…

(Noises can be heard in the hall.)

SDS MEMBERS: Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh! Down with military imperialism! One-two-three-four, we don’t want your fucking war! One-two-three-four, we don’t want your fucking war! (They enter Robert Fassnacht’s lab. One of them speaks for the rest. His name is Mark, and the others pay attention to him.)

MARK: You motherfuckers are still at it, so here’s what we’ve got to say. Tear down this building and start your lives over. You’re the enemy of the American people now. Your research is killing innocent people in Vietnam, and we won’t stand for it.

ROBERT (Taken aback, yet prepared all the same.): But the Physics Department’s research has nothing to do with the military or with Vietnam. In fact, I don’t think most of the research in this building has anything to do with Vietnam whatsoever.

MARK: Oh yeah, well if that’s the case, then why is Jim Rowen still writing articles about you guys?

ROBERT: Jim Rowen is writing articles about Army Math, which is only a very small part of the research done in this building. And whether or not you are opposed to the war in Vietnam, it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see that universities have a key role to play.
in the solution of most of our problems, Vietnam included. After all, you do have a right to protest the war in this country. I just don’t think you have to be quite so militant about it.

MARK (Only a little mollified): Well, what you say makes some sense, but we also know that this university, and others like it, harbor certain ideas about capitalism that are anathema to the best interests of our people.

HEINZ: I grew up in Nazi Germany, my friend, and I can assure you capitalism was not our enemy there – national socialism was!

MARK (Gearing up again): Hey, shut up old man. Where do you get off talkin’ ta me that way?

HEINZ: As a man who had something to do with Allied victory in World War II, I feel I’ve begun to pay my debt to society. What about you, young man?

MARK: World War II, eh? What about Vietnam, where do you stand on that?

HEINZ: I feel that the people of Vietnam do not need to be run into the ground by the communists, which they may very well be, if we leave there too soon.

MARK (Trying to be shrewd): I don’t think you’re right, old-timer, but I guess you’ve done a few good things for The People, nonetheless. (Setting the hanging ball bearings into motion.) But I’ve still got a strong feeling my friends and I are not going to sit by while part of this building is used for military research. The war in Vietnam is a catastrophe for the American people, just like it is for the Vietnamese people. Can’t you all see that?

JOE: I understand where you’ve coming from, my friend, but it still makes sense to reason with people honorably, and not go about throwing red paint and epithets around like there’s no tomorrow. You know, there have been men like Washington and Lincoln who have made great sacrifices for people like us to be able to say what’s on our minds, don’t you think?

MARK: I don’t agree with you completely, Professor, especially on Vietnam, but I do respect you guys a little. At least, it may be that you’ll be survivors after the Revolution, too, and we may be able to put you to work then, for us.

JOE: Yes, the Revolution, that is a possibility. Meanwhile, why don’t you go back upstairs, so I can get somebody to begin cleaning up that mess you left. (Smiling semi-shrewdly now.) My goodness, it wouldn’t be college if students weren’t making some kind of mess, would it?

MARK: Hey, don’t get smart, Professor, or you’ll be drinkin’ your own blood.

JOE (Combatively, despite what his words say): Now, I didn’t mean anything by my remark.

MARK (Tyrannically): Just so long as you didn’t…

(Mark leads his band of SDS-ers out the door, but says one last thing.)

MARK: In any case, I hope the Revolution makes survivors of us all. There’s a lot to be said for that, too -- (Pointedly:) surviving, that is...

THE OTHERS, INCLUDING THE OTHER SDS-ERS (Moving into the hall): Yes, that’s true. No doubt about it.

(After a moment, Robert moves back into the lab, alone.)

ROBERT (PUSHING THE BALL BEARINGS AGAIN, SO THEY CLICK HARDER): Many things begin with the smallest of gestures, and build to a momentum that keeps going. Even protests like this one may bear fruit for many good people. Speaking of food, I wonder if Stef has supper ready yet. I think I’ll give her a call.

(He phones home. Lights out.)

Act I-Section 3-Action: A meeting of the UW Board of Regents at Bascom Hall, in January 1970. Seated at the head of the table is regent president Charles Gelatt, of La Crosse. He is a thin, wiry man of average height, great business acumen, and is as shrewd as a pack of carpenter’s nails about nearly everything. To his right and left are the other regents, Messrs. Ziegler, Nellen, Pellisek, Walker, Renk, Sandin, Pasch, and Fish. Paintings of university chancellors line the walls. The men are engaging in “small talk,” as they pass the latest copy of the Daily Cardinal around the room. Another man enters. He is Robert Taylor, the university’s public relations man. He is a small, careful individual with a pug nose and mouse-brown hair, an unobtrusive administrator who just may endure long after the tigers have gone. He seats himself next to Mr. Gelatt, and whispers to the regent president.

MR. GELATT: Excuse me, gentleman, but Mr. Taylor has brought it to my attention that there is a controversial new editorial included in our always controversial student daily. It was written by Mr. James Rowen, and I’ve asked Robert to read it to you. Go ahead, Robert.

ROBERT: Thank you, Mr. President. It’s entitled, “The End of the Road,” and Mr. Rowen, after saying that “All in this society are children of violence,” summarizes the peaceful protests that have seemingly failed here. He criticizes the National Guard and the war, too. Then he talks about the recently revealed My Lai Massacre, which you’ve all heard about by now. His conclusion is the key part of this editorial: “There are some, perhaps many in the movement, who see one and only one way of renewing and strengthening the fight for change. Several of those people, whoever they are, were responsible for the fire bombings of the Red Gym, the Primate Lab and the State Selective Service headquarters in the last four days. They call themselves the Vanguard of the Revolution. They are indeed. They have chosen to initiate direct action. They have chosen to show to those both in and outside the movement that the immobile and repressive position taken by this nation can only be countered head on in the streets with bombs and guns. It is a new phenomenon on this campus, that the very men who have passed the repressive laws, called in the National Guard, summoned Dane County Sheriffs and refuse to listen at all to calls for a change, are now very much against the wall, trembling not only for the safety of their institution but for their own safety as well. We can have no sympathy for them. They’re receiving the inevitable product of their actions. And if acts as those committed in the last few days are needed to strike fear into the bodies of once fearless men and rid this campus once and for all of repressive and deadly ideas and institutions, then so be it.”

MR. GELATT: Well done, Robert. Now, gentlemen, I don’t know about you, but this sometimes fearless middle-aged man has had fear struck into his body and soul, no doubt, by Mr. Rowen before… (The group laughs a bit.) But this new attack utterly chills me. (The others laugh more loudly as Charles Gelatt’s right hand shakes, voluntarily. Then…) I guess the only antidote is to strike a little fear into the movement. (The group listens up.) We should, in my humble opinion, put a little more pressure on our good friend, President Harrington, either to persuade his socialist friends that “the movement” has gone too far -- and the use of more troops could
be one vehicle to convince them of that -- or we should persuade him to resign. I doubt there’s a good middle way. What do you think?

MR. FISH: You know, Charles, that we may be able to force Harrington out, but it won’t stop the student’s support of violence by a long shot. For right now, Harrington’s the man who can steady the waters. In other words, he still has possibilities for us.

MR. NELLEN: I don’t agree. It seems to me that Harrington is the fish that must go, begging your pardon, Mr. Fish, and we can’t allow him to tangle our lines much longer.

MR. PELLISEK: I agree with “Doc” Nellen. The sooner we fire Harrington, the better.

MR. GELATT: Well, we can’t just fire him. Perhaps we can ask him to leave in his good time -- with us giving a little perspective and meaning to him, about what that good time will be. The violence is getting worse, and he is not coming out as strongly against it as he should.

MR. FISH: But as I still see it, we can’t force him to leave anytime soon, if we are to use him for leverage. He could be invaluable to us for a while, then.

MR. SANDIN: I agree with Mr. Fish. It’s not right to get rid of Harrington, unless and until we have no other option.

MR. GELATT: It may be that events like the firebombing of the Old Red Gym will eventually cause more counter-revolutionary fervor in this community than revolutionary. For now, there’s a whole lot of revolutionary heat coming from the students and their teachers, though, and I fear there will have to be some sort of strong act of violence, whether it comes from our side or theirs, that will make the difference in the solution of the issues that confront our university. I hope I’m wrong about that, but we’ll have to see. Now, what other business do we have before us today?

MR. TAYLOR: There are still the Three Demands made by SDS, Mr. President. They have been pushing us with all sorts of propaganda in the press, trying to link organizations like Army Math to the war. Of course, you all know that. But what can we do about the demands?

MR. GELATT: How much progress are we making regarding the Army Math demand? How are the media reacting?

MR. TAYLOR: Well, there has been the odd supportive piece in the city dailies, but I’m afraid Army Math is still a large impediment, rightly or wrongly, to the solution of our protest problems on campus.

MR. NELLEN: It would be nice if a few of “The Vanguard” could be persuaded to visit Sterling Hall with us, and find out what really goes on in there. What is it, about two percent of all the research done in that building depends on military interests? My God, talk about nit-picking…

MR. FISH: I’m afraid they don’t want to deal with that, Doc. Jim Rowen has really stirred up a hornet’s nest with his “Profit Motive 101” series. Rightly or wrongly, his articles stand in the way of our pursuing reconciliation with the movement regarding Sterling Hall and Army Math.

MR. GELATT: It’s my opinion that Robert should see if we can arrange to meet with the radicals’ leadership, and check out Sterling Hall together. What can you do about that, Robert?

MR. TAYLOR: I’d be happy to, Mr. President, except I broached the idea with them on my own last week, and it was no go from them.

MR. GELATT: In that case, maybe I’ll have to sponsor a symposium on how to be a true radical. I doubt I’d make as much money as some of these kids’ parents, but you never know.

(Laughter.)

MR. GELATT: I guess it’s true that the more money you, or your parents, make, the more say you have in things. I shouldn’t be complaining so much about that aspect of life, I guess, even if I am rich enough to speak my piece about many things…

(More laughter.)

MR. GELATT: This still is a democracy, though, that we live in, gentlemen, and whether you’re rich or poor, everyone should have a voice. Let’s move on to further business, then.

(The group does so, as the lights go out.)

Act I-Scene 4-Action: The interior of Sterling Hall on August 1, 1970. Karl and Dwight Armstrong, and Leo Burt, are casing the building. Karl is a tall, good-looking bald man in his mid-twenties, with a beard and sideburns. He often laughs at life, but gets intense over political issues. His brother, Dwight, is also large, but still has a baby face. Just as the three comrades get off the elevator downstairs-right, at the basement level, an old acquaintance of Karl’s starts to enter the elevator. He and Karl recognize each other immediately, even though Karl doesn’t recall his name.

KARL (Lamely.): Well, if it isn’t my old Physics TA.
TA: Yes, and you’re Karl Armstrong.
KARL (Surprised.): How do you remember me?
TA: I just do. You were a memorable student, even though you didn’t speak up much. And you are a rather large man, too, which is memorable in itself.
KARL: Yeah, I guess so. (Shaking hands.) How have you been?
TA: Same-of-same-of, you know, still hanging around this place. By the way, in case you forgot, my name is James Bensinger.
KARL (Lying.): I know. Are you a professor yet, or what?
JAMES: Yeah, I’ve not got tenure yet, but I’m faculty, nonetheless. What about you?
KARL: I guess I’m in-between things. I find something to do here, and then I move over there. It never ends, I guess.
JAMES: I know what you mean. Any prospects for the future?
KARL (Shrewdly.): You might say so. I’ve got my eye on a big venture, if I can find the makings for the deal and get things off the ground.
JAMES: Good, I hope things work out for you and your friends.
KARL: Thanks, I hope so, too.
KARL: We'll figure that out when we need to. I trust in God about some things, even though I'm not religious.

LEO: Where are we going to get the materials to bring this place down, then, Karl?

KARL: It's a cinch, you worry more than I do about that, don't you, little brother?

DWIGHT: I guess. Just so we don't get caught anytime soon, that's all I care about. You know, bigger fish than us have been caught can't control us, then who can they control? No one. Capice?

KARL: Brilliant, my friend Leo. Brilliant!

LEO: You don't, you let it cover you.

KARL: How do you cover up a hole in the ground?

KARL: Yeah, it would take a pretty big load to bring this place down.

DWIGHT: I suppose we could just drive a truck up outside and leave it sit there, plumb full of explosives.

KARL: Then, move it, people, move it!

LEO AND DWIGHT: Got it. Elevator's over here.

KARL: Hard ta say. (Looking.) I expect it would be impossible to get a bomb through this maze, even if we find where they come out.

KARL: (Karl points the flashlight upstage-right.) Hey, this room’s marked “Accelerator Room” and this one “Low-Temperature Research Lab.” I know Army Math is upstairs, but I don’t know how we can get a bomb up there, much less down here. But there’s got to be a way to do some damage…

DWIGHT: I suppose we could just drive a truck up outside and leave it sit there, plumb full of explosives.

KARL (Thinking aloud.) That’s not a bad idea, little brother. But what sort of explosives should we use?

LEO: I’ve heard fertilizer with gasoline works pretty good for some things. Farmers use it all the time for potholing.

KARL: I hope we do.

DWIGHT (Only half naively.): Why is it you said you want to bring this place down anyway, big brother?

KARL (Warming to the subject.): It’s both simple and complex, little brother. Like a lot of other people, including Leo and his friend, David Fine, I think the war in Vietnam has got to end, and soon. I’ve been dreaming that for a long time, and I can’t see any other way around it, except through this bombing. It’s been my biggest dream lately. I just feel in my gut that it has to be done. There’s a lot of shit that has gone by the by, of course, but people like us can help peace along by persuading the U.S. Government that most people in this country are sick of the war. And we make the people sick of the war by making them sick of the U.S. Government. If the Feds can’t control us, then who can they control? No one. Capice?

DWIGHT: I guess. Just so we don’t get caught anytime soon, that’s all I care about. You know, bigger fish than us have been caught for bigger things than this.

KARL: It’s a cinch, you worry more than I do about that, don’t you, little brother?

LEO: Where are we going to get the materials to bring this place down, then, Karl?

KARL: We’ll figure that out when we need to. I trust in God about some things, even though I’m not religious. (Laughing.) Know what I mean, guys?

LEO: I hope we do.

KARL (Swinging the flashlight back toward the elevator.): Now, let’s get out of here, before the security forces move in. Got it?

LEO AND DWIGHT: Got it. Elevator’s over here.

KARL: Then, move it, people, move it!

(The three men move into the elevator, as the lights go out.)

Act I-Scene 5-Action: The Nitty Gritty bar in early August 1970. It’s a bar the Madison counterculture has learned to love. In the background, the Beatles’ song “Revolution” is playing on jukebox, and on TV in the back corner, there’s news footage from the Vietnam War. At tables in one room, away from the wet-bar, Karl and Dwight Armstrong, Leo Burt, and David Fine are sitting. They’re discussing their bomb plot.

DAVID: So you want me to case the joint from the outside, right Karl? When do you think we’ll be doing this?

KARL: It’ll have to be before the students get back the week of the twenty-fourth.

DAVID: And you want me to case the place between the hours of 2 a.m. and 4 a.m., on a Monday morning, to see if that will be good for us to go.

LEO: You will be great at it, kid. You’ve got the weasel element in your favor.

(They all laugh, gallows-like.)

DWIGHT: I’d guess we better do what we can to cover this thing up, too, or we’ll be in deep doo-doo in short order.

KARL: How do you cover up a hole in the ground?

LEO: You don’t, you let it cover you.

KARL: Brilliant, my friend Leo. Brilliant!

(A buxom, beautiful blonde enters. She’s Lynn Shultz, Karl’s old girlfriend and driver.)

KARL: Well, look at this. (He gets up and goes over to the blond.)

LYNN: (She doesn’t make any move toward him.): Hi, Karl. What have you been up to?

KARL: I’ve been thinking of you, from time to time, and I’ve been planning more work – for the cause and all.

LYNN: I guess that’s good for you. As for me, I’m waiting for my boy friend to show up. He should be here any minute.

KARL: And who’s your boy friend?

LYNN: Sandy Nelson. He hangs out with another guy who runs Golden Freak Enterprises with him, Pete Bobo. You know, they do rock concerts.

KARL: Oh yeah, I guess I’ve heard of them. (Motioning to the others.) You know my brother, Dwight. The other two are Leo Burt and David Fine; they work for the Daily Cardinal. (They all say “hi,” and Lynn takes a seat with them.)

LYNN: You boys into something big with Karl?

DWIGHT: You can say that, but we’d deny it.

LYNN: Haven’t changed a bit, either of you.

KARL: We’re just cashin’ joints now. Bigger things will have to wait, don’t you think, boys?

THE BOYS: Yeah, they’ll have to wait.

LYNN: I hope I won’t be seeing your faces on a Ten Most Wanted List anytime soon.
KARL: Ya never know about that, my sweet, ya just never know.
LYNN: All I know is that you should never have tried that night-flying stunt with the Molotov cocktails over the Badger Ordnance Works on New Year’s. They still blame it on the New Year’s Gang, and you probably still like that.
KARL (Smiling widely.): Yep, I do.
LYNN: Is this the New Year’s Gang then?
KARL: Yes, it is, honey.
LYNN (Figuring as much, and fingering her throat.) Have you done anything legitimate since we were going out together?
KARL: A few odds and ends, some railroad work for one thing, but mostly illegitimate. Sold some pot, and that sort of thing.
LYNN: Aren’t you ever going to learn, Karl? You’ll keep this thing up until they put you away for life, or worse.
DWIGHT: He oughta be put away for life, there’s no doubt about that.

(The guys laugh.)
LYNN: Leo Burt and David Fine, eh? I don’t read the Cardinal much, but I must have seen your names there before. Are you guys for real – I mean journalists, that is?
LEO AND DAVID: Yes, ma’am, we are.
LYNN: What are you going to do after Karl gets you into trouble?
LEO: Haven’t gotten that far yet, but we’ll think of somethin’. DAVID: We can always find good-looking blonds to do the hard parts for us.
LYNN: Well, at least you guys still have your wits about ya.

(Lynn looks at her watch.)
LYNN: I wonder where my guy is.
KARL: I used to be your guy, sweetheart. Could be again.
LYNN (Looks into his eyes, then thinks better of it.): I don’t think that would be such a good idea, Karl. We had some good things going once; but we were unlucky at others.
KARL: Just thought I’d try, just thought I’d try.
LYNN: Say, if my guy stood me up, I’m going to be real unhappy about it.
KARL (Changing the subject.): Still working at Ray-O-Vac?
LYNN: Nope. Now I’m with Golden Freak. I travel a lot with my guy and Pete. We just hit a slow spell, so we stopped off here to touch base with some contacts.
DWIGHT: When do you leave again?
LYNN: Tonight, as soon as the two of them get here. Hope they haven’t forgotten me. I may not be the brightest bulb in the pack, but I’ve got some good things going for me yet. I can provide them with one or two things they need.

(Leo and David are embarrassed.)
LYNN: Didn’t mean to put a damper on things; just speaking the facts.

(The bar’s owner, who knows Karl, comes over. Marshall “The Marshall” Shapiro is a short, dark-haired man, with black moustache, who is currently playing both sides of the fence. People can be seen smoking “grass” -- also known as dope, pot, maryjane, weed, etc. -- in the room, but he has to keep a medium-tight rein on those smokers. Usually, he looks the other way, as long as it’s not “hard stuff.”)

THE MARSHALL: Hey, Karl, it’s good to see ya – and you, too, Lynn.
KARL: Marshall, I hope your live band will be playing some good stuff tonight. I’m always up for good music.
THE MARSHALL: This band will do the job, believe me. What have you been up to, Karl?
KARL: Not much to speak of, just sizing things up for future activities. (Making small-talk and lying.) Know any good jobs around here, these days, I’ve been out of work a while.
THE MARSHALL: I might need some help around here. I’m short a bouncer. Can you still throw around your weight like you used to?
KARL (Reaching for his back): I can and I can’t. My back has been bothering me lately. Don’t know if I can keep up with the youngsters around here any more. Know what I mean?
LYNN: Yeah, you never know when a “youngster” will attack you in here.

(Laughter. The lights dim, and a strobe light comes on. The live band has started up, and they play the Doors’ “Light My Fire.” Couples start dancing all around them, and Karl stands up next to Lynn.)
KARL: Excuse me, Marshall, I’m feeling my oats. (Looking at Lynn.) Care to dance, my sweet?
LYNN: Oh, why not? It’s better than waitin’ on forever.

(They begin to dance, and are enjoying it as the others watch and the lights go out.)

Act II-Scene 1-Action: A Farmers Union Co-op in Baraboo, Wisconsin, Wednesday, August 19. Karl and Leo pull up in the Armstrong Family's yellow Corvair, with a U-Haul trailer attached. They are looking to buy some ammonium nitrate, fertilizer, for their bomb. In his clean shirt and bell-bottoms, with sideburns trimmed and beard gone, Karl looks like any young farm-hand stepping into the office. The owner – a polite, soft-spoken man named Ron Grotzke, is impressed by Karl’s smile. There is a radio on his desk, turned off.
KARL: I work for a guy who owns a sod farm, and he needs a ton of ammonium nitrate. Got any bagged?
RON: I’m sorry. We had a new bagger put in this summer, and it isn’t working yet.
KARL: Know where I can get any?
RON: There’s a list of co-ops in the area that you can check out on my desk, over there. (Pointing.)
KARL (Also pointing.): Can I use your phone?
RON: Sure, help yourself. If you need the restroom, too, it’s right next to the phone.
KARL (Smiling.): No, I’m set, except for the fertilizer. (Just then, plant manager Roger Stieve enters the office.)
RON: Roger, do you know anyplace close-by that has plenty of bagged ammonium nitrate on hand?
ROGER (Looking at Karl.): Can’t say as I do. (An idea occurs to him.) Why don’t you buy bulk?
KARL: I hadn’t really thought about that, but I guess it would do. (Pointing.) Do you think we could get 1,500 pounds of it in that trailer?
ROGER: It would fit in there with no trouble at all.
RON: Roger, do you think we can get another 200 pounds in?
ROGER: Plenty of room. (Getting his paperwork together.) Whose name do you want on the slip?
KARL: Do you want my name or my boss’s name? (Roger doesn’t answer.) Make it out to George Reed.
ROGER (Figuring again.): Then your bill comes to $48.97 for a little more than 1,700 pounds of ammonium nitrate.
(Karl hands him the $50. Roger gives him his change.)
ROGER: Here’s your invoice.
KARL (Looks at it strangely, knowing it’s evidence of a crime and may have to be destroyed.): Oh, yeah.
ROGER: Now, we’ll get that fertilizer for ya, toots-sweet!
KARL: Maybe I will take you up on that restroom offer, after all. Leo, help him with the fertilizer. I’ll be out in a minute.

Act II-Scene 2-Action: The East-side Madison home of Don and Ruth Armstrong, Karl and Dwight’s parents, on Saturday morning, August 22, 1970. Don -- a big, working-class man of rugged good looks -- is sitting at the kitchen-table with Karl, while Ruth puts the breakfast dishes away. Ruth is a small, but pretty woman, who is humming “Amazing Grace”, as she works.
DON: Karl, pass me the paper. I need to check the scores.
KARL (Handing it to him.): Sure, here you go.
DON: Now, why do the Yankees have to keep winning? I hate baseball, but I hate the Yankees most, among all the teams that play that damned sport.
KARL (Half-sheepish, half-mocking.): Don’t know, Dad, they just do.
DON (Still miffed.): Karl, you’re behind on your share of the Corvair payments, two months’ behind. Got any money?
ROBERT: Yes, I do. You were wearing a beautiful red dress, and you had your hair up so perfectly. It was love at first sight. Remember that? -- when we'd take walks by the lake, and eat ice cream later at Babcock Hall?

STEPHANIE: I guess. In any case, it's nice that you're home early tonight. (Kissing him.) Thanks, Mom, I can't say that enough.

KARL: I'll have it back to you before you miss it. (Still busy.)

RUTH: Yes, Karl, give me a hand with this cooler, and take it out to the car, will you, dear?

KARL: But I'm broke. I promise, Mom, if you let me have the Corvair, I'll apply for that job you were telling me about – first thing Monday.

(Ruth lights up a newspaper on the table.)

KARL: It looks like the establishment is killing us again. With headlines like “No Limit on U.S. Cambodia Strikes, Air Plan Announced in Saigon” and “Guard Gets New Hard-Hitting Rifles, More Firepower for Riots,” what's next? God, isn't Nixon a devil?

RUTH: Well, I hope you find another place before you leave the present one.

KARL: (Teasing her.) Yes, Mom, I'll do the best I can. You know I keep my back covered whenever I can.

DON (Coming back into kitchen, speaks to Ruth…) Say, honey, we've got to get moving. (Still busy.)

RUTH: I'm almost ready. Thank goodness, I packed most of the things we'll need, last night. Just give me ten more minutes. (Still busy.)

DON (Moving back into the other room.): Yes, dear.

KARL (To himself.): Jesus, I hope they head out soon.

RUTH: Karl, give me a hand with this cooler, and take it out to the car, will you, dear?

KARL: Sure, Mom, sure. (Again, to himself.) Can't wait until Sunday night!

(Lights out.)

Act II-Scene 3-Action: The home of Robert and Stephanie Fassnacht, Saturday night, August 22, 1970. The children are in bed, upstairs, and the young couple is just sitting down to a romantic night together. Stephanie is a beautiful, intelligent blond -- pride of the Physics wives. Their apartment is a tastefully decorated unit, with a stereo downstage-right, and couch and chair, upstage-center. Family photos are on the wall, and a lamp is next to the couch. Cat Stevens’ “Peace Train” is playing.

STEPHANIE: Thank goodness, you were able to get some time off tonight. I know Prof. Dillinger wants you to finish up the current phase of your research on low-temperature superconductors, but we do deserve a little time to ourselves, too. (Leaning up against him as they sit on the couch.) Why don’t you ask him for every Saturday night off?

ROBERT: I would if I could, but I can’t. Joe is doing me a big favor by letting me work on this project. It’s pretty much my baby, and I want to do it right. (He strokes her cheek.) You can understand that, can’t you, honey?

STEPHANIE: I guess. In any case, it’s nice that you’re home early tonight. (Kissing him.) It’s just like it was when we were courting. Remember that? -- when we’d take walks by the lake, and eat ice cream later at Babcock Hall?

ROBERT: Yep, it was nice. And once I finish this project, we’ll do it again.

(The stereo plays “Cherish” by the Association, as soon as “Peace Train” stops. Stephanie stands and motions for Robert to dance with her.)

ROBERT: I’ll be happy too, dear. C'mon, this is one of our favorite songs.

(They dance for a moment without talking. Then, Stephanie speaks.)

STEPHANIE: You know, the first time I heard this song, you were sitting on the edge of the dance floor at my first dorm party. I didn’t even know you, but I did somehow, and when I asked you to dance, it was like magic. It was the first time I’d ever asked a guy to dance. Remember?

ROBERT: Yes, I do. You were wearing a beautiful red dress, and you had your hair up so perfectly. It was love at first sight.

STEPHANIE: Yes, for me, too, it truly was.

ROBERT: You do know, of course, that every male professor in Physics would love to be married to you. I don’t know how I lucked out. Some of the guys have even said that Kathy Boyer would like to marry you, too, but I’ve heard that Kathy likes ‘em more muscular. (They laugh.) I guess it all depends on what you make of a beautiful relationship.
STEPHANIE: It wasn’t something I thought much about, but when I saw you that night, I just knew. We are meant for each other. (She begins to cry.) Gosh, I hope we stay together a long, long time, sweetheart.

ROBERT (Putting his hand under her chin.): And why wouldn’t we be able to?

STEPHANIE: I don’t know. Sometimes I think that nothing will ever be able to split us up; other times, I just can’t quite believe it’s true that we are together. Do you know what I mean?

ROBERT: Maybe. But don’t think about us not being together. I only think of us BEING together, these days. I can’t stop thinking about it, in fact, because I miss you so much when I’m at work. And yet, I know that my work will make so many good things possible for our children and us, so we can be happy with our lives, well, forever.

STEPHANIE: I hope you’re right, honey. I truly do.

ROBERT: In any event, we’ve got some dancing to do, so let’s enjoy the music and the mood, OK?

STEPHANIE: All right, sweetheart, I guess you’re right.

ROBERT: Of course, I am. If we weren’t going to be together forever, we wouldn’t be enjoying this dance so much now, would we?

STEPHANIE: You’re right, Robert. I do worry too much about life, these days. Maybe it has to do with the riots and the controversy over Army Math.

ROBERT: That may be true, but, for tonight at least, let’s pretend there is no such thing as Army Math, or the riots, OK? By the way, I met a very decent young man at the gym today, a fellow named Joe, Joe McGrew. He is a history student, and one who doesn’t think much of the riots.

STEPHANIE: Really. I don’t think much of the riots either.

ROBERT: I mainly agree, dear. Now, let’s dance.

STEPHANIE: Yes, dear, let’s forget about everything, except this dance, and…

(Act II-Scene 4-Action: The conspirators are at work, north of Madison, very late on Sunday night, August 23-24, 1970. The four men have just finished adding sticks of dynamite, packed in clay, to each oil-drum they had earlier loaded with fertilizer and gas. A van they had stolen from the campus earlier is loaded and seems set to go.)

KARL (Starting the van’s engine, but without being able to move it.): We have no transmission.

DAVID AND LEO: Oh shit, what are we going to do?

(They stop talking and draw close again, dancing to “Cherish,” as the lights go out.)

LEO: What do we do now?

(Act II-Scene 5-Action: The offices of the Madison Police Department, at the same time as the four conspirators are moving towards Madison with their load of deadly fertilizer, a little past midnight on Monday morning, August 24, 1970. P&S Chief Ralph Hanson is visiting with Detective George Croad, aka “Chester White,” who trains the counter-affinity (spy) squads of the MPD. Ralph Hanson is
a balding, handsome man who speaks with a Yankee accent. George Croal has less classical looks, but is just as shrewd, in his way, as his friend. The two men are sitting at adjoining desks, with a police/fire scanner overhead, on a shelf.

GEORGE: So, the Guard commander said a few minutes ago that everything looks shipshape, the university is asleep, and we don’t even need a special patrol out tonight? What are we becoming, Ralph, a couple of doddering old men?
RALPH: I guess it goes without saying that we may, I say may, just be doing something right for a change. The university administrators have been laying off the heavy talk and the students are on break, so I hope we can take it easy for a few days.
GEORGE: I hope so, too, Ralph.
RALPH: Say, what do you think about us turning on your own personal scanner, and seeing if there’s anything out there to have a look at.
GEORGE: Not a bad idea.

(george stands and turns the scanner on. he sits down. static is heard first; then a call comes in.)

VOICE ON SCANNER: Officer 117 calling.
DISPATCHER’S VOICE: Come in, 117.
OFFICER 117: I’ve got a bar fight at Chesty’s, just off University Avenue. Quite a few of them are going to it inside. Can I get some backup over here. It’s almost bar-time, and we’ll have to close them soon, anyway.
DISPATCHER: I’ll send over three squad-cars. Will that be enough?
OFFICER 117: Should be. I’ll call again, if I need more.
DISPATCHER: Just let me know, if you do.
OFFICER 117: Ten-four, then, over and out.

(george stands again, and turns scanner off.)

GEORGE: Remember when you and I were young coppers, Ralph. You in New England, and me, here. Did ya ever think we’d be protecting the good citizens of Mad-town from the likes of molotov-cocktail-throwers, armies of bar fighters, and all the other crap?
RALPH: No, frankly, I didn’t. I just wanted a cushy enough job so I wouldn’t have to worry the wife too much. But ya never know around this town. Boy, it can heat up fast.
GEORGE: Yeah, we’ve seen more tear gas than you could shake a stick at.
RALPH: What do ya suppose the FBI is doing with all those files on our “radical-friends,” these days?
GEORGE: I’d guess they’re using ‘em as dart targets. I hope our spy “Duroc” is keeping his ear to the ground, because it still seems a bit like something is about to blow around here. He’s done a good job for us ever since he covered that SDS-monster meeting in September last year. In any case, right now is just like the funny-colored sky between the rainstorm and the tornado. Everything seems safe, and “funny,” at the same time.
RALPH: Yeah, it seems a little like that ta me, too. Why don’t we take another look at our files? Maybe there’s something that’ll jog our memories.
GEORGE: Good idea.

(they both stand and go to a nearby filing cabinet. Ralph flips through a few files, as does George. Then, Ralph sees something.)

RALPH: Say, it’s probably nothing, but I’m wondering why we didn’t follow up on this lead following the Primate Center fire bombing earlier this year. We still haven’t done a thorough interview of this Lynn Schultz, whose car was spotted around there then.
GEORGE: Yeah, let’s do that soon, maybe tomorrow. Hope it’ll keep for a day, at least.
RALPH: Those fire bombings – I wonder if they were all done by the same group. There were quite a few, and the communiqués sounded different on some of them. This Vanguard of the Revolution nonsense we keep hearing, though, may be the thing that matches the trouble-makers to their crimes. We should put Duroc on the Lynn Schultz interview, as soon as he gets back from Oberlin.
GEORGE: OK. We need some good fortune pretty soon, and I don’t mean an atomic bomb falling out of the sky on us, either.
RALPH: Got ya, George. Yeah, we could use a little luck. But it just seems like something’s going ta blow, and it may take us a while yet ta solve whatever does.
GEORGE: You may be right, Ralph. In any case, we’ll need the help of the public to solve the crimes that continue to happen around here. Hopefully, we’ll have the public on our side again soon, if they aren’t right now.
RALPH: Yep, let’s hope so.
GEORGE: Now, how about you and me going over ta the closest do-nut shop we know of, ta see if we can coax one or two of them down our soon-to-be-lucky gullets.
RALPH: Sounds downright good to me.

(The two men rise and exit, as the lights go out.)

Act III-Scene 1-Action: The Lakeshore Dorm room of Joe McGrew and Brant More, at the same time, that is, as the conspirators are rumbling into Mad-town. Joe and Brant are each in their single bed, talking. Joe is a 19-year-old of average height and in good shape. He wears a moustache and has medium-length, brown hair. Brant is 20, taller, with a slimmer build, and shorter, blonder hair. He goes by the nickname “B.J.”; his middle name is James. Both young men will be entering their junior year in September. Both ordinarily wear glasses, which are off at present, and neither is bad-looking.

JOE: Jeez, I wish I could get to sleep. It seems like I want to stay awake all the time. Ever since I started school in ’68, it’s been rought that way. One thing that does put me to sleep, though, is talking about metaphysics and theology. Know what I mean, B.J.?
BRANT: I do. I can’t get to sleep unless you get to sleep. It’s a horrible situation, but that’s where we’re at with it.
JOE: You know, my classes are more interesting, these days, especially American cultural history, but the riots and other stuff happening on campus took a toll on me last year. I wasn’t able to study well, until this summer. I wish something would happen to end the riots, something positive, that is. I marched in one protest, shouted “One-two-three-four, we don’t want your fucking war!” a few times, then watched as the “people” I was marching with trashed the school—buildings all around us. It was a nightmare. I believe in protesting some things, but nonviolently, like Martin Luther King Jr.

BRANT: Yeah, he believed in that, I guess. I didn’t like some of their activities, but I thought he and the people he marched with had some legitimate concerns.

JOE: Well, if our generation gets any more violent, the whole place’ll burn down. I don’t want to see that happen. By the way, I met a nice guy the other day at the gym. His name was Robert, Robert Fassnacht. He’s a graduate student in Physics. We talked about the protests, and he said he’s against the war, but doesn’t like violence, in Vietnam or on campus. I wish I could say I’m against the war, now, but I don’t know if I am anymore.

BRANT (Getting out of bed): I’m not. I’ve had pretty good luck with school, though. My business classes have been going well ever since freshman year. Knock on wood (He does.), I hope my luck keeps up for a long, long time. I hope Debbie looks as good to me when she gets back to campus as she did when she left. How about you? Will you and Ann be getting together again? (Going through his things on the desk.)

JOE: Don’t know about that. She’s due back today. I don’t know how I feel about her. I broke up with her last semester, but I guess I’m not sure about that now.

BRANT (Opening his top dresser drawer): Well, I think you’re nuts not to go steady with her. She’s kind of pretty and she’s smart as a whip. (Looking at his clock, he changes the subject.) God, it’s 1:30. I guess I’m going to take a sleeping pill. Got to get some sleep. And I’ve got to get used to getting up early soon; I’m going to have three 7:45’s a week, this semester. (Motioning with pill.) Do you want one, too?

JOE: Maybe I will take one of those. It couldn’t hurt. I don’t want to get up in two hours and turn the TV on in the den, after all. I’ve seen enough early morning TV to gag a maggot lately.

BRANT (Knowing): I don’t want you to do that, either. (Hands him a pill with some water.)

JOE: Thanks. Don’t mind if I do. (He swallows pill, then some water.) That wasn’t so bad.

BRANT (He takes his own pill and some water): Yeah, it seems to help me a lot, to get to sleep, that is. Don’t know what I’d do without them some nights, in fact. Say, wasn’t it lucky for us to get into the dorms early this semester. They usually don’t allow it, but it’s nice to have connections.

JOE: Yeah, your dad really knows what he is doing. Didn’t you say he used to be in the FBI?

BRANT (Returning to bed): Yep, he was an agent in Philadelphia, when we lived there. One of his partners even got murdered there.

JOE: Really? What happened?

BRANT: My dad and his partner we’re going after a couple of mafia-types, and they got to this building and tried coming in from the alleyway. My dad’s partner went first, and that was the last he ever breathed. The mafia-types were waiting for them, and blasted Jim, that was his name, the minute he stepped through the door. My dad got hit in the shoulder, but he held the enemy off until help arrived.

JOE: Jeez, your dad is a hero, then. Must be great to be around him.

BRANT: What about your dad? He’s a meat-cutter, right?

JOE: Yep, and he’s about the best there is at it. He can cut a steak perfectly, and knows how to make a case look good. He takes real pride in it.

BRANT: You sound like your dad’s a hero to you, too.

JOE: Well, he is, even if he does drink too much.

BRANT (Dosing off): Ah, Drink, just what I could use right now...

JOE (He too does off): Yeah, know what you mean. God, that pill is taking effect. I wonder if...

(Both students are at last asleep. Lights out.)

Act III—Scene 2—Action: The Physics Department lab of Robert Fassnacht, very, very early Monday morning, August 24, 1970. The young physicist is just wrapping up some equations in a notebook, and listening to his radio. The Rolling Stones’ “As Tears Go By” is playing. He taps his pencil on the notebook, as he sings along.

ROBERT (Singing): It is the evening of the da-a-a-ay. I sit and watch the children pla-a-ay. (Looks at his notebook, something occurs to him. He talks to himself!) This can’t be true. (Looks more closely now.) If this equation is right, I’ve not only got this phase of the project solved, but I’ve figured out the whole project’s solution. (He can’t believe his lucky stars; he stands and sashays to the music.) Yes, yes, my God, it’s got to be true, and it’s about time! This could be a great relief, for Stef and the kids, for the department, for many, many... It may not be “e equals mc squared,” but for me, it’s close. I’ve got to tell someone about this. Don’t want to wake up Stef just yet, so whom can I find?

(He walks out of the lab, and is gone for a minute or two. While he’s gone, the Doors’ song “Break on Through” begins to play. A truck or van can be heard pulling up outside. A door can then be heard slamming. In a moment, the young physicist returns, looks out the window, and sees the van.)

ROBERT: I knew I heard a door slam. The driver looks like he’s gone. Wonder who that could be. (Thinking better of his interest.) Must be a janitor or some other staffer. It couldn’t be anyone else. (Looking at his notebook again, he sings loudly to himself as he sits back down and picks up his pencil): Break on through to the other side, break on through, break on through, break on through to the other side....

(He taps loudly with his pencil to the music. He feels so good now, he decides on something.)

ROBERT: I’ll check my figures at home, and be there for Stef with my good news when she wakes up. This will be great! Can’t wait to get there. (He thinks of something first, though.) I almost forgot. I’ve got to pick up some do-nuts for breakfast. We’ve got to
celebrate. (He looks at his watch, and digs in his wallet.) The Do-Nut Factory opens at 4, and it's a little past 3:30. I just hope I've got enough money to cover the sweet-stash. (He has no cash on him.) Shoot! I thought I had some money with me. Maybe I've still got my coffee money in here. (He opens one of his drawers, and removes a metal. Opens it.) Let's see what's in here. (Discovers some petty cash.) Thank God, there's even enough here for me to take the family out to breakfast. This will be better than great. This will be the best ever! (Looking at his phone.) Should I call Stef now, though? (Looking back at his notebook.) It would be awful if this weren't the correct solution. (Decisively.) I'm heading out. (Going to the corner, where his umbrella is kept.) I'm not sure if it will rain, but I'm always prepared for it (Laughing to himself.), or as prepared as anyone can be...

(Robert grabs his notebook, goes to the window again, and looks outside at the van. He then returns to his desk and the radio, turning it up, as he thinks thoughts to himself.)

RADIO (Very loudly.): Break on through to the other side, break on through, break on through, break on through to the other side....

(A very strange expression comes over Robert's face, as he looks back toward window. Lights out. A tremendous explosion is heard, and the collapse of a building. Then utter silence.)

Act III-Scene 3 -Action: A phone booth near Rennebohm's Drugstore on University Avenue just before explosion. David Fine is scanning street, waiting for Karl and the others to pick him up.

DAVID (To himself): Come on, Karl, you big oaf! Where are you guys, anyway?

(A car passes in front of him, but it isn't the Corvair.)

DAVID (Again to himself): This could be a lot worse, couldn't it? I mean we could have bombed the White House. Jeez, what am I saying? We just bombed Army Math. There could even have been people in there.

(Another car passes. David is greatly worried.)

DAVID (Still to himself): Jeez, Karl, don't be so damned slow. That explosion is going to bring in the cops, and quick! No doubt about it: The only place we'll be safe will be Canada, and maybe not for too long there. Got to be here, guys, got to be here quick! (Thinking over the phone call he has just made.) I hope I got it right. I did read it right, didn't I? (He pulls a piece of paper from his pocket, and reads its message to himself) "Okay, pigs, now listen and listen good. There's a bomb in the Army Math Research Center, University, set to go off in five minutes. Clear the building. Get everyone out. Warn the hospital. This is no bullshit, man!" (Thinking aloud again.) Man, are we revolutionary or what? I just don't know. Who does?

(The Corvair pulls up.)

DAVID: It's about time you guys got here!
THE OTHERS: Yeah, get the hell in fast! The pigs'll be thick around here, and quick!

(A bomb-blast tears open the night, and a huge ball of flame rises.)

KARL: What the hell are you doing?
DwIGHT (has turned and looks back): You guys have to look!
ALL OF THEM (all look back): Long live the Revolution!!!

(The car pulls away, as sirens blare and the lights go out.)

Act III-Scene 4-Action: Outside Lakeshore Dorm at 1 p.m., later that day. Joe McGrew is loading some things into his dad's car. Dave McGrew and Joe's brother, Dan, are helping, too. Dave, 39, is short and stocky, with black hair and Irish good looks. Dan, 16, is just above average height, with brown hair and sideburns. All three men are well-put-together.

DAVE: Is that everything, then?
JOE: Yep, Dad, that's it. I guess I'm ready.
DAN: We'd better head out, then, before it gets nasty around here. It's good the troops are here, because this place could bust wide open in the next couple of days, don't you think, Dad?
DAVE: Yeah, the radio down here was full of the news, and everyone in the state must know about it by now.
JOE: Ann was counting on getting here today and starting work tomorrow, but she said on the phone that all that will have to wait now. Hopefully, I'll be back here by Sunday.
DAN: First things first, Son. It could be a rotten place to come back to this weekend, not to mention dangerous. We'll have to think about it, long and hard. Now, let's get in.

(The three get in, and Dave starts up car. Lights out around the car, as their drive is simulated.)

DAN (Pointing.): Look at the troops over there. Those guys are ready for combat. Every one of them has a gas mask and rifle, and the headgear could put a hole through a bull's eye.

JOE: Jeez, this place hasn't learned its lesson yet. The violence is insane. The protesters even burned a grocery store to the ground, along with all the other vandalism in town lately. I didn't want to believe it this morning when Brant woke me at 6 a.m. and said Sterling Hall had been bombed, but I guess I knew something like that was going to happen here. And it sure as hell doesn't sound like it was a small bomb either, especially with one man dead. They found him in a foot of bloody water. Have they ID'd him yet?
DAVE (Lighting up a cigarette.) Yeah, they said the dead man was a physicist. What was his name, Dan?

DAN: I think it was Fassnacht – Robert Fassnacht.

JOE: (His face goes white.) My God, you guys, I met Bob Fassnacht at the gym the other day. He seemed like the nicest guy in the world; and it didn't sound like he was a big fan of warfare at all.

DAN: Yeah, well SDS, or whoever bombed Sterling, must not have agreed. It makes you want to become a cop, and that’s what I think I’ll be, too, in a few years.

DAVE: It’s always someone innocent that gets it, that’s my thinking. The protesters never hit the bad guys on our side. It’s always someone who’s doing a good job with his life, and has a wife and kids at home to care for.

JOE: Yeah, I feel sorry for his wife and kids. It really sounded like he loved them a lot. He was hoping to move them into their own home in a year or two. And he was hoping that home would be right here in Madison. Well, he’s found his home, I guess, and I hope it’s in heaven.

DAN: Christ, the rats who did this don’t have a brain between them. The war may be over in a couple years, and what did they contribute to it – more violence, bloodshed, and death. With stuff like this happening, we may not win in Vietnam, no matter what we do, and you can’t honestly say the North Vietnamese commies are noble, whether you’re Jane Fonda or not. That’s a hell of a legacy to leave your family and friends, when it’s time to go.

JOE: Well, Jane Fonda may be beautiful to look at, but she is one messed-up woman. Christ, she went to North Vietnam and everything. What a distinguished patriot she's been. (Noticing something under the front seat.) Say, Dad, is this a shotgun or what?

DAVE: Yeah, Son, we came prepared, didn’t we, Dan? (Dan, who is in the back seat, and Dave exchange a smile.)

JOE: But I didn’t even know you owned one, Dad. Where did you get it?

DAVE: I’ve had it all along; just kept it pretty well hid at home. You never know when you might be needing one.

JOE: I hope we don’t have to use it, but I guess it does give a person a sense of security, nonetheless.

DAN: Yep, some people say Mifflin Street is armed to the teeth, and I’m not talking about our guys. (Changing subject.) Where do you think the guys who bombed Sterling Hall are now, Joe?

JOE: I’d guess they’re on the way to Canada, as we speak. There have been so many draft resisters heading up there, the last couple years, it’s surprising we haven’t made it our 51st state.

DAN: I’ll bet whoever is commie in Canada will be looking forward to seeing them, too. Jeez, what a world.

JOE: Say, Dad, how did you get off work today? Monday’s always your big day at work. In La Crosse, like most places, Monday is a big day for business.

DAVE: Phil had Jim and Rocky come in for me. I guess he figured it’d take two men to match me.

(Laughter.)

DAN: Yeah, Jim and Rocky will deserve tomorrow off, after they sub for Dad. In fact, they may need the whole week off, after we tell them our stories about this Mad-town Monday.

DAVE: I know they won’t be feeling their feet until tonight, but boy will they feel them then.

JOE: Speaking of pain, was anyone else hurt in the blast?

DAVE: Two or three others. It’s lucky they weren’t killed, too.

DAN: Say, Joe, this Bob Fassnacht, was he involved with the Army Math Research Center?

JOE: Not as far as I know. He said he was doing research on low-temperature superconductors, and I guess that means he was looking for ways to put electricity and chemistry together into improving our everyday lives. He may have had something to do with computers, too, but I’m not sure about that. He did say, though, that the military uses of what he was working on, lie far into the future.

DAVE: That’s a shame. Maybe we could have used his research to help end the war in Vietnam and at home, if it has more-present-day uses.


JOE: Yes, he never knew what hit him… Well, I hope Mom has some good food on the stove when we get home. I’ll be famished by then.

DAN: She was talking about making homemade pizza. Isn’t that your favorite, Joe?

JOE: That and steak, either one would be fine.

DAVE: We’ll have steak tomorrow. First, we’ve got to get home in one piece, and you never know about a town like this letting you do that. Let’s just hope we get home for supper in good shape. Supper will look a whole lot better, after we’ve covered the 135 miles between here and home. We should be there by 4 o’clock, though, unless something happens along the way.

JOE: Let’s hope that nothing happens along the way. (Looking right) It looks like there are some other supporters of Bob Fassnacht out today. There’s a picket with a “We Love You Bob, R.I.P.” sign there. God, what a shame. I hope he can rest in peace now.

DAVE AND DAN: Yes, what a damned shame, it is.

DAVE: I hope God can forgive the bastards who did it, but I don’t think I will.

JOE AND DAN: We know what you mean, Dad, we know what you mean…

(The lights go out, as the car speeds onward towards La Crosse.)

Act III-Scene 5-Action: A reunion of antivar protesters in the UW Library Mall, summer 1989. Present on the speakers’ stage are Karl Armstrong, David Fine, Mayor Soglin, and Jim and Susan Rowen. The crowd that has gathered – which forms an inverted V, due to a clock-tower that reads 12:10 in their midst, with the V’s point at the speakers’ stage -- seems mellower than the protest crowds of the late ’60s and early ’70s in Madison. To be sure, though, there is still plenty of dope around, and babies and kids, too now. The speaker is Mayor Soglin. He has shorter hair than in the opening scene, has put on some weight, but still has his trademark moustache. The others have aged, too. Karl, for one, has gone toward gray hair; but there’s even less of that then there was 19 years ago. Also, he wears a white turtleneck sweater, dark dress slacks, and athletic shoes.

MAYOR SOGLIN: Welcome, people, welcome. You know, 20 short years ago, many of us were on this mall, protesting that horrible war in Vietnam. A lot took place here then, and later. For one thing, U.S. troops exited from Vietnam in 1973 as a direct result of our
protests. (Cheers and applause.) For another, our whole generation decided soon after, that capitalism isn’t the worst way to go. In fact, many of you here now are at least semi-capitalistic, middle-class Americans. (More cheers, and one or two jeers.) In any case, there are many things we're thankful for today that we wouldn’t have seem come to pass, unless and until there were protests against the war. Jim Rowen is now a key player at the Milwaukee newspaper. What do they say that paper, Jim, the Journal?. As I recall, outside of his reporting, the closest Jim ever came to an actual journal was the day he found his wife’s diary, and then what a mess! (Laughter and cheers.) Needless to say, though, few of us would be here today if we didn’t also believe in the value of a certain amount of socialism in our society. After all, Social Security and Medicare are nice, as will be universal health care, when that comes about here. (Applause.) I’m fortunate to be mayor of this great city now, because many of you will recall that the life of a protester wasn’t always easy. There was a lot of hard work, and even some violence, on both sides. (Cheers and jeers.) We have with us, now, two men who took part in the violence that was Madison then — Karl Armstrong and David Fine. (Cheers.) You'll remember them as one-half of the notorious New Year’s Gang, responsible for the bombing at Sterling Hall, a bombing that helped bring an end to the Vietnam War. These two men have since paid their debts to society. (Cheers. and jeers.) I believe, that despite an innocent man’s dying at Sterling Hall, our cause for was worth dying for. And I’ve since heard that Bob Fassnacht also opposed U.S. involvement in Vietnam. (Cheers.) Regardless of where you stand on those protests, we're all glad civil conflict has ended in our streets. Today, we can go nearly anywhere in this land, and feel reasonably safe. We could not do that in the '60s and '70s. (Boo s and jeers.) Today, we live in a more democratic society, due in part to the people who brought the war in Vietnam to a close. (Cheers.) Now, I’m going to let a man who helped our cause in those days say a few words. You all know who Karl Armstrong is. So, without further formality, I present to you a longtime rebel, Karl “Mad Bomber” Armstrong. (Cheers, applause.)

KARL: (Begs crowd not to clap as long as they do): Please… please… No… I never was much good at bloody math, but this turnout is amazing. That’s better. I say that because I don’t deserve your applause. I did what I thought was right in 1970, but an innocent human being did die in that explosion at Sterling Hall. We didn't even destroy Army Math, which it turns out, was a small part of that building. Bob Fassnacht didn’t deserve to die, and I now understand a bit what the Fassnacht family has suffered since then. Violence shouldn't have to beget violence. Bob Fassnacht had a lovely wife and three lovely children. I've even seen Mrs. Fassnacht, and have talked with her. She seems a very forgiving person. (The crowd is attentive.) My sisters talk about the best part of God’s law, grace. When I was in prison, I thought long and hard about some of the things I’d done. God doesn’t create life for us to destroy it. Some of our Vietnam Veterans know that better now, too. Maybe none of us can appreciate how great life is, until we temporarily lose it. I know I lost mine a while, at least in some ways. God knows about life and death, and will give all of us another chance, if we ask for it. I've asked, and now I’ve been given my second chance. I'll try to make good use of it. Thank you.

(Mayor Soglin and others on the stage on the main-stage go up to Karl and shake his hand and put him on the back, as the drama's crowd applauds. Ralph Hanson can be seen in the crowd, talking with George Croad and a police-chaplain in uniform. Neither Ralph nor George is wearing a uniform. George gives “Duroc”, who has been busy taking notes in the crowd, a signal, and the undercover officer takes out a small camera, moves into position a bit, and takes Karl Armstrong's picture, candidly. He then moves to the other side of the crowd, and resumes taking notes rapidly, turning his notebook pages quickly, to find the right spot, like a figure from a 19th century Russian novel. A street musician plays the Buffalo Springfield song, “For What It's Worth”, as the Lights Go Out.)

EPilogue:

Following a memorial service for Robert Fassnacht, a few days after the bombing, Madison police and the FBI began a giant manhunt, in which the four bombers were placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List. In February 1972, Karl Armstrong was arrested in Canada, and eventually was extradited to the United States, where he pled guilty to second-degree murder and was sent to prison. The noted attorney William Kunstler helped defend him, and “Free Karl” signs went up everywhere in Madison. As the final scene indicates, Karl was released, after seven years in prison. For many years, he was a street-merchant and taxi-driver, in Madison. He was re-arrested, though, in May 2012, for having more than $800,000 in his motor-home, when stopped for a traffic violation in Illinois, when he didn't indicate he had that money. The money bags smelled heavily of cannabis, but no marijuana was found there.

After being arrested in spring 1972 in Canada, Dwight Armstrong was sentenced to seven years in prison for second-degree murder. He later was imprisoned for three years at Indiana State Prison for drug manufacturing. In more recent years, he lived with Karl and worked in the produce business. Dwight died in June 2010.

In January 1976, David Fine was arrested in California, and, with the help of Harvey Goldberg, he also received only seven years in prison for second-degree murder. He later earned his law degree from the University of Oregon, but was denied admission to the Oregon bar, because authorities believed he was still withholding information from them. More recently, David Fine worked as a paralegal with a Portland law firm.

Officially, Leo Burt still has not been seen or heard from, since the bombing.

The Vietnam War ended in 1975, two years after the last American combat troops left. The Sterling Hall Bombing, along with events like the Ohio National Guard’s killing of four students at Kent State, played key roles in ending U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, but at what price? Laws are meant to be obeyed and enforced; and the Sterling Hall bombers paid a minimal price for their crimes. The family of Robert Fassnacht has paid a much heavier price than modest-prison-time for three of the perpetrators was: They lost a son, a husband, and a father.

Stephanie Fassnacht, Robert's widow, eventually completed a long career working at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, within a few blocks of where her husband died. Their children -- including son Christopher, an esteemed physicist -- are positive contributors to society.

On May 18, 2007, the UW-Madison unveiled a plaque on the side of Sterling Hall, which reads:

IN MEMORIAM
This is the site of the Sterling Hall Bombing, which occurred at 3:40 AM on August 24, 1970. An outstanding research scientist, Dr. Robert Fassnacht, was killed in the bombing while working in his laboratory on a physics experiment studying a basic mechanism for superconductivity in metals. Three others were injured. Dr. Fassnacht was 33 years old, married, and had three young children.

(End of Drama.)

Author's End-Note: Shakespeare used “Holinshed's Chronicles” as the basis for several of his plays, including his history plays. In a more modest way, I've used Tom Bates' event-history “Rads: The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and Its Aftermath.” Also used here by me have been Wikipedia and my personal interviews with people who lived through that event. I, too, was a UW-Madison student in 1970, though I did not suffer, during those years, in any way like the Fassnacht family must have, the four students killed at Kent State, and many of our troops in Vietnam. And in fact, though the McGrew incident in this play is based on my family's response to my situation right after the Sterling Hall Bombing, that “rescue-incident” has been recounted semi-fictionally here, based on what my family has told me happened during that particular, fatal protest period, because my memory is vague about that week's events. That may be why I've written this drama, to learn the truth about many aspects of 1970 and beyond, for others, as well as for me and my extended family.--djm.
**BORDERLINE – OR, JOHNNY, GET A GUN:**

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE:**
Yumi Shim, a 31-year-old South Korean shop-owner.
Dean Marcus, a 35-year-old American journalist.
David Bemis, a 30-year-old American soldier.
Jinny Kwak, a South Korean singer in her late 20’s.
Sunshin Yi, a 34-year-old South Korean journalist.
Walter Arundell, a middle-aged British journalist.
Dandae Park, a waiter.
Johnny Kim, a South Korean nightclub owner.
Police.

**SCENE ONE:**
Ouijongbu, South Korea, 1986. A nightclub in the wee hours of the morning, after closing-time. The waiter is clearing tables, not asking those still remaining to leave. Those at the tables are loosely united by the occasion. Johnny Kim, the owner of ‘Borderline’, is throwing a small party for his club’s 10th anniversary. Jinny Kwak sings ‘Borderline’ while a karaoke machine plays the melody.

Jinny (singing very much like Madonna):
Something in the way you love me won't let me be
I don't want to be your prisoner so baby won't you set me free
Stop playing with my heart
Finish what you start
When you make my love come down
If you want me let me know
Baby let it show
Honey don't you fool around

Just try to understand, I've given all I can,
'Cause you got the best of me

**CHORUS:**
Borderline feels like I'm going to lose my mind
You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline

Keep on pushing me baby
Don't you know you drive me crazy
You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline

Something in your eyes is makin' such a fool of me
When you hold me in your arms you love me till I just can't see
But then you let me down, when I look around, baby you just can't be found
Stop driving me away, I just wanna stay,
There's something I just got to say

Just try to understand, I've given all I can,
'Cause you got the best of me

**CHORUS**
Keep on pushing me baby
Don't you know you drive me crazy
You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline

Look what your love has done to me
Come on baby set me free
You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline
You cause me so much pain, I think I'm going insane
What does it take to make you see?
You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline

As Jinny finishes, the group applauds, and David Bemis whistles for her. Jinny comes over and sits down as David offers her a sip of his drink.

David: You deserve something cold and wet. (Laughter.) Actually, something warm and wet. (He kisses Jinny, she returns favor. The waiter brings more drinks, and listens as he does so.)
Dean: Hey, go easy, big fella. Some of us have morals – loose though they be.
Walter: You ought to know about borderlines of that kind, Dean.
Yumi: Dean know borderline. I know Dean. (Laughter.)
Jinny: I’d like to find out how to handle situations like that, Yumi. But my guy is too fast to catch. I’m thinking, he was a sprinter in high school.
David: No, actually middle-distance, but I had a helluva kick! (Smiles now.)
Sunshin: Mr. Marcus, where were you when Madonna was making such great music? (Wink) Over the borderline?
Dean: I try to remain as close to it as possible without crossing it. I know you Koreans have a thing about borderlines.
David: As far as I’m concerned – great crossing them, not as great contesting them.
Walter: You Americans and South Koreans are alike in one regard: You push things over a lot. Reminds me that my gal is sick at home, and I’m here with this gang (toasting Dean, who sits across from him), having a hell-uv-a-great-time. (Laughter as he half-feigns drunkenness. Johnny Kim enters from the kitchen with the waiter, bearing food.)
Johnny: Bulgogee, rice, and kimchee for everybody. Don’t burn tongue, but give it old college try. (Seats himself.)
Walter: Will do, Johnny, my main man. Will do. Say, why don’t you have rice with us, Johnny, and drink some, too?
Others: Yeah, have rice with us, Johnny.
Johnny: You know where I get money for business – hard work, more hard work, and then… casino winnings. (Laughter all around.)
Sunshin: And those casino winnings were all above-board, too, right Johnny?
Yumi: Big winner casino, right Johnny, only little hard work.
(Jinny: Johnny, we hardly knew ya then, but what we know now, ain’t so good.
Johnny: What Johnny know ‘bout you ain’t good either.
(Laughter.)
Dean: Well, it’s a good bet you’re a businessman because you love your customers, right Johnny?
Johnny: Johnny in business ‘cause wife and kids need food, clothes, house – that why Johnny in business.
Jinny: How much money you make last year, Johnny -- 20 million won, 30 million, maybe 40 or 50 million?
Johnny: Not enough to make wife and kids happy. Johnny fine with money he make, family not. Number one son get big ideas – want to go American university. Where Johnny get money for that? Maybe should join Foreign Legion instead (Laughter.), more chance to pay way there, no wife and kids to think ‘bout.
Waiter: Boss, want me to clean up in kitchen?
Johnny: No, get something to eat for self. Need you to clean up more later.
Waiter: Okay, boss.
(Waiter returns to kitchen. Then, he re-emerges with food and drink and sits at separate table somewhat near the others.)

Walter: When you going to tell that student-son of yours that there are some pretty fine British universities, too, in this world? He could go there.
Johnny: How you want me pay for that – donate heart from own chest?
Jinny: It’d kill you, Johnny, but your son would be happy.
Johnny: Son got plenty of everything except money – still need Pop for that.

(Laughter.)

Jinny: Well, your wife knows you don’t have all the money in the world, just most of it, right? That’ll be enough for her, when she gets her hands on it.
Johnny: Right, wife wants hands on all Johnny’s money, and Number One Son get half. Johnny and little daughter get none.
David: What does your son want to do when he graduates?
Johnny: He want to work at Blue House – no he want to run Blue House. Not interested running nightclub; leave that to Dad. Johnny not interested in big government man. I like it Number One Son businessman, and send family Care Packages when old and gray.

(Laughter.)

Yumi: No, then you live with Number One Son’s family and eat his food for change.
Johnny: Yeah, but Johnny be dead and gone before Number One Son get big-paying job and bring home Pop’s food. Maybe should have died in war. That way, no Number One Son, no headaches.
Jinny: Say, Johnny, why don’t you sing a song with me. Good blues, or maybe rock-and-roll. Take your mind off troubles.
Johnny: No, don’t want to sing, not tonight. Want to eat, drink, and forget troubles.
Walter: Amen to that. Let’s drink mainly, and have a bit of food, too. Troubles can take the hindmost. (Everyone toasts, except for the Waiter, who goes on eating.)
David: I’m lucky I’m on furlough, or I’d be in trouble carousing all night with this group. Tomorrow, I leave for California, and a chance to see my parents and brothers. Say Johnny, has your son thought about any California schools? We’ve got many good ones there. I’ll bet he could get some decent scholarship money, too.
Jinny: Say honey, when you take me to California with you? I can use scholarship money, too.
Walter: Yeah, David, Jinny would use that money big-time, then you’d start real school.

(Laughter.)

Johnny: California better than New York or Chicago. California got Sammy Lee.
Dean: Who’s Sammy Lee?
Dean: He’s same man who won the Sullivan Award, I’d guess. Number One amateur athlete in U.S. in the 1950s.
Walter (a bit more drunk): Now, don’t drag the British into these international squabbles. You know where it got us in Korea. Oh right, we’re still in Korea, I forgot. (Drinking.)
Dean: And don’t drag New York or Chicago into this either. They are two of my favorite watering holes. (Toasts all around; even the waiter motions to toast this time, too, as the others look his way.)
David: Say Dandae, you ever been to the U.S.?
Dandae: No, never. Maybe someday…
Dean: We don’t know much about your family, Dandae. Where do you hail from?
Dandae (taking sip of barley water first): Parents come from North during war, go Southwest. No brothers or sisters. I born late. Parents dead now.
Yumi: That too bad. Where your school?
Dandae: Went elementary and high school in Kwangju. No college. Come here two years after high school, and work for Johnny.
Johnny: Yeah, Dandae unique man. He work hard, no give grief. Wish had more like Dandae.
Jinny: What do you do in free time, Dandae? Any girlfriend?
Dandae: No. Dandae not have time for girlfriend. Only work for Johnny and listen to music on radio.
Johnny: He listen to plenty of music on radio, and news, too, right Dandae. You like news.
Dean: Sounds good. Do you pay much attention to political or economic news?
Johnny: Yeah, he listen some of that, too. Dandae become what you call it, Rennaisense Man, right Dandae?
Dandae (feigning shyness): No, not Rennaisense Man. Barely regular man. (Only half-lying) Want to have family someday. Want to be happy like all people.
Yumi: How you have family without girlfriend?
Johnny: He not have time for girlfriend yet, but he will.
Dandae (lying): I want girlfriend, but not find one yet.
Johnny: Dandae, take break, bring more drinks. We need more drinks. (Dandae gets up and goes to kitchen.)
Jinny: Dandae need girlfriend, Johnny. Why you not set him up with nice girl?
Johnny: Johnny got plenty on plate. No time to be matchmaker, too. You freedom, why not you matchmake?
Jinny: I could, but I need expense money to do that. Got some?
Johnny: No money for matchmaker. Not even own son and daughter. Son not want wife now anyway.
David: Why don’t you help out for nothing, Jinny? Johnny is a good friend, after all.
Jinny: Okay, I do it for free. Story of my life. Why all Americans think Koreans work for free?
Dean: Ooh, be careful big fella, your girlfriend is wearing her fighting spirit.
David: Yeah, about every other day of the week, these days.
Jinny: Jinny sing every night, so she can eat. How much you help out with that? Taxi money and free supper don’t stretch very far in Korea. Koreans want to eat all time, and do lots of other things, too.
Walter: What’s it they say? Buy a girlfriend, you don’t sleep nights; buy a wife, you sleep never.

(Dandae returns with more drinks, then resumes his place at nearby table.)

Sunshin: That’s right Mr. Arundell, except in Korea sleeping is not first priority. Eating and drinking are, and a few other things, too.

David: Say, Mr. Yi, can you tell us a story about good-old Korean priorities? For example, how is it that you came up in the world?
Sunshin: That is too long a story to tell now, except I can say I was an orphan at 18, in other words I knew my parents just long-enough to be a man. They died in auto accident, and I was youngest of seven children. Their legacy supported me in college, and I went to work for Yonhap News Agency when it was Hapdong Agency, right after graduating. Most of you know I’m still with Yonhap, married last year, and hope to have children like Johnny’s some day. But most of you already know my bio, why a story?
David: Because of what you do for Yonhap. When my brother worked there, he said you were the eyes and ears for the entire agency. What exactly did he mean by that?
Sunshin: When Dennis worked there, he saw me at my best. I’m not at my best. I am married now, and marriage takes a lot out of you.

(Laughter.)
Jinny: You mean your wife takes a lot out of you, right Mr. Yi?
Sunshin: Right, Ms. Kwak. Like singing takes a lot out of you, but you keep giving it back to singing.

(Smiles.)

Walter: When I see you at Yonhap, Mr. Yi, I see a man in charge of himself, who knows where he’s going. Someone not averse to a little chicanery, but by-and-large, on the up-and-up.
Sunshin: Thank you for saying I am on the up-and-up – the chicanery you’ll have to discuss with my bosses.
Dandae: Excuse me, if I may say something, Mr. Yi, how did Yonhap come to hire man like you, who seems to know much about world?
Sunshin: Very simply, I was the last one they kept over from Hapdong, low-man-on-totem-pole. I was very young, but somebody at the new agency saw some promise in me. I am grateful to him for that.
Walter: Who was that man, Mr. Yi?
Sunshin: That man was Mr. Sun, who is now president of my agency. He did me a very great favor, hiring me for Yonhap.
Dean: I’d guess you really have enjoyed your work ever since.
Sunshin: Yes, Mr. Marcus, I have, though not as much as you.
Dean: Me, enjoy work? Only when it helps a good cause, including me and my gal. (Hugging Yumi, who hugs him back.) Say, Dandae, I think I saw someone who looked like you on the street the other day in Seoul. I was riding the bus and ‘you’ were heading into the restaurant across from opposition party headquarters. Was it business or pleasure took you there, if that was you?
Dandae: (tensing only slightly): I was having lunch with old friend, who was visiting Seoul from Kwangju, ah, Mr. Rhee.
Walter: What does Mr. Rhee do for a living?
Dandae: He is, ah, teacher. He teaches secondary school students in Kwangju.
Yumi: Really? I got cousin who teaches school in Kwangju. Which school does friend teach at?
Dandae: a little more concerned: He teaches at Catholic school. I don’t think your cousin know him.
Yumi: Really? Sukie teach at school there. She know some people who teach at Catholic schools.
Dandae: (too concerned now): I not know about that. Mr. Rhee just started work there.
Yumi: Oh, maybe he have no idea who cousin is.

(Dandae is about to answer, but Johnny chimes in.)

Johnny: I teacher. I teach you all how to sing favorite American song, if you not know it already.
Dean: What American song is that, Johnny?
Johnny: This one -- it not sexy, just nice. (He stands and sings.)
Oh give me a home, where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard, a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

(Others toast him and join in the singing, feigning drunkenness partly.)

Home, home on the range, etc.

(The song concludes. Dandae makes a motion to get up.)

Walter: Dandae, hold on a second, I want to ask you something.
Dandae: Me? What question, Mr. Walter?
 Walter: I’m kind of wondering about your interest in North Korea. Do you still have close relatives there? And have you ever wondered what you’ll do if you can visit them someday?
Dandae: I have great-uncle there, but that all. Don’t know I ever visit him.
Walter: How old is your great-uncle now?
Dandae (thinking): He… he about 70, if he still alive.
Jinny: You lucky to have great-uncle 70 years old.
Dandae: Yes, lucky, very lucky.

(He gets up to go to the kitchen, but Johnny calls him back.)

Johnny: Dandae, there nothing to do in kitchen now. Sit down and relax; people want you to enjoy tonight just like them.
Dandae: Dandae need to….

Johnny (waving him to sit down, and only half- jesting): Dandae, when I say sit, you sit!

(Dandae sits back down, ill-at-ease.)

Walter: Dandae, what will you do on a day like tomorrow?
Dandae (thinking, trying to stay calm): I go to market, get groceries, and then I come back and read maybe.
Johnny: And listen to radio, too, Dandae.
Dandae: Yes… and listen… to radio.
Dean: What sort of music do you listen to, Dandae? Rock, blues, pop? What type?
Dandae: Like Korean pop and some American rock, too.
Dean: What singers?
Dandae: Patty Kim and Jefferson Airplane.
Walter: What do you think about the Stones? The No. 1 British group?
Dandae: They good, too. Like ‘Ruby Tuesday.’
Walter: Just so it’s not, “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction”.

(Laughter.)

Dandae (pulling punches): I not understand that song much.
Walter: Story of my life, ‘Satisfaction,’ is – don’t know when I ever get any.

(Laughter.)

Dandae (with Walter looking at him, concentrating): I don’t know about ‘Satisfaction.’ I work hard, play only little. Life go on.
David: I’m wondering if you like AFKN-Radio, Dandae. The music is pretty good on it. The U.S. Military sometimes does some things right.
Dandae: Yes, AFKN good station. I listen sometime, but most of time, MBC. Radio and TV both, when I can watch TV.
Johnny: Yeah, sometime I invite Dandae next door to my place, to watch TV with me and family. Dandae hear too much music sometime.
Sunshin: Where is it in North Korea your parents were born?
Dandae: Little town north of capital city, but grandmother come to hospital in P’yongyang because fall in labour – grandmother and mother almost lost early.
Jinny: When were you born, Dandae?
Dandae: 1966. I bring luck to parents after many years’ wait.
Jinny: That’s some luck, honey. Your parents must have been 40 when you were born.
Dandae: Mother 38, Father 40.

(Johnny gets up and goes to kitchen. The others chit-chat. In a minute, Johnny can be heard saying, ’Dammit, what this?” He enters with a handgun.)

Johnny: Dandae, any idea about this? Find behind dishwasher.
Dandae (defensive): Not mine. Must be inspector who stopped other day.
Johnny: But why would food inspector have gun. Kill rats?
Dandae: Don’t know. Maybe someone threaten him.
Johnny (half-suspicious): Yeah, maybe someone threaten him. Food inspector make lots enemies. Probably happen all time.
David: That gun’s against the law. No guns in this country except military and police. Johnny, phone the food inspector. Let’s find out what’s going on right away. (He pulls out his handgun and sets it on the table. Johnny puts other gun next to it on table.)
Johnny: Good idea, David. I phone right away.

(Lights out.)

SCENE TWO:
Same locale, half hour later. Everyone is seated, but various people get up during initial conversation, and walk about, except Dandae.
Yumi: thinking about what you do to Koreans here. Don't be spy.

Dandae: No, Johnny, not know about gun. Maybe belong to burglar; could be something missing.

Johnny (thinking): No… no, Dandee. No burglar. I have no idea where it come from… You must know something about it…. Roads to P’annunjom not straight, like arrow; could be you lie about gun. Jeez, this like M*A*S*H show, only not so funny now.

Dean: Dandae, you said your family was from North Korea. Any possibility you’re still in contact with people there?

Dandae: I not from North Korea; parents were. I have nothing to do with North Korea.

(In distance can be heard martial music.)

Dean: Where’s that music coming from?

David: It’s the North Korean noise freaks along the DMZ, trying to win converts by playing their damned military airs. Dandae, I’d guess you do know something about North Korea. You at least know about your parents and grandparents. And why do you listen to the radio all the time. Could it be you communicate with someone through your radio?

Dandae (worried): No, not communicate through radio. Work for Johnny; don’t know about anything like that.

David: Johnny, you want to get his radio?

Johnny: Dandae, why you so nervous about questions? Maybe got something to hide?

Dandae: I not hide anything. Dandae honest man.

Yumi: Honest? How come gun in kitchen? You in kitchen all time, must see something.

Dandae: Not see anything, only mice in cupboard and one time bugs in rice flour.

Sunshin: Let me question him in Korean. It might help.

David: Yeah, go ahead.

Sunshin (seating himself across from Dandae; in perfect Korean): Okay, we need to know how the gun got here. Tell me, do you have contacts with North Korea or anyone else that may be on the shady side?

Dandae (in English): Know enough not to talk to everyone.

(Sunshin returns with radio, and a periodical he’s also found.)

Johnny: Find these in room. Radio and magazine. Something called, ‘Vantage Point.’

Dean: ‘Vantage Point’ – that’s Yonhap’s North Korea-watch publication, right Mr. Yi?

Sunshin: Yes, I know it well. (He takes it and looks at it.) This issue talks about power struggle in North Korea, and fallout politically.

David: Why do you have a copy of ‘Vantage Point’ in your room, Dandae?

Dandae (to David): I interested in North, like all South Koreans, especially since parents come from there.

Sunshin (motioning to let him continue conversation in Korean with Dandae; gets okay signaled from David, and proceeds – in Korean) Tell me the truth, Dandae, and it will be easier on you. Why do you have the magazine?

Dandae (in English): You know how Koreans stay close to ancestors. I stay close. Magazine and radio my only way to stay close to ancestors.

(Sunshin motions to Johnny to give him the radio, and Johnny does so. Sunshin turns it on and tunes it.)

Sunshin (in English): Seems like ordinary radio. (Pushes on it in several places.) What’s this? Looks like microphone. What about this, Dandae?

Dandae (dummysing up): I don’t know what you’re getting at.

Sunshin: You communicate with the North Koreans, don’t you? You are a North Korean, right?

Dandae (reconsridering): I'm not North Korean. I'm South Korean, and tired of propaganda. That does not make me a spy.

David: Oh really. Gun in kitchen, suspicious radio and magazine in apartment. Something's up.

Dandae: No, I tell you truth about my parents. They came to Kwangju from the North. I born in Kwangju. And my parents do sleep with our fathers.

Sunshin: You do communicate with someone through that radio. Who?

Dandae: I keep tabs with what’s going on in North Korea. But I am no more a spy than you.

Sunshin: So, are you an anti-capitalist friend of South Korea, or more a North Korean spy.


Johnny: Why you two-faced spy, Dandae?

Dandae (Desperate; he reaches across table and grabs gun sitting there; David reaches for his own gun; Dandae shouts): Hold on, big guy! I kill you and everyone here, if you play wrong. Drop gun.

David (easing his gun onto table): Okay, okay, just take it easy. Nobody here wants to die, including you and me.

Dandae: Everyone get on one side of room (motioning), over there.

Dean: Anything you say.

Walter: Dandae, don’t do this. It’s bad for you and bad for all of us. The police won’t hurt you, if you cooperate.

Johnny: Walter right. Police do nothing bad if you cooperate.

Dandae: I don’t intend cooperate! Police know torture methods. Now, shut up, boss!


Dandae (motioning her to stay with the others, though he is listening to her more closely now): Keep away, woman.

Yumi: Yes, I keep away. But you show some respect to us – we Koreans, too, who work hard and love our people.
Police (in English): This is the police, Dandae. Come on out and don’t hurt anyone or we’ll have to shoot you.

Dandae: Jesus, how they know I’m here?

Sunshin: I expect they probably tapped into your radio transmissions at some point, and bugged this place. (Johnny looks surprised.)

Dandae (going to door, but carefully, opening it a crack): I’m not coming out until you leave — got it.

Police: Oh, we’re not going anywhere anytime soon, unless you throw out any firepower you might have.

Dandae (thinking a moment, then motioning): Sunshin, get soldier’s gun, and throw it out there.

(Sunshin does as instructed.)

Police: Thanks, Dandae, but do you have any more firepower?

Dandae (near door): No more firepower. You come in.
Police: No, Dandae. You come out.
Police: Should I send a medic in?
Dandae: No, not that bad.
Police: Well, what do you suggest we do next.
Dandae: You get me car and boat, to go to North Korea. I want woman driver, too.
Police: We might be able to do that, Dandae, if you let any innocent people in there go.
Dandae: No innocent people in here.
Police: You know what I mean – send out the women.
Dandae: I think about it… (Motioning to women) Go, get out!
(The women get up and carefully go out the door.)
Dandae: That better? Now, where my car and driver?
Police: They’re coming. (Silence, then) Can you send out the wounded man, too?
Dandae (thinking): Okay, will do, but no more after that.
(Motioning to David to leave. David does so, carefully.)
Police: Thanks, Dandae -- who’s left inside?
Dandae: Just two Americans, one British, one Korean journalist, and Johnny.
Police: Good. Now, when that car comes, we’ll holster our guns and you go to the car with the Korean journalist.
Dandae: Don’t know about that, boss. Don’t trust you. Have to think. (To the people inside) Where is soldier’s flak jacket. He leave it here.
(Sunshin retrieves the flak jacket and Dandae has him move back, then puts it on.)
Dandae (back to police): Okay, let me know when car and driver here, boss. (To Sunshin) Give me soldier’s helmet, too.
(Sunshin does so.)
Police: Okay, they’re almost here. We are holstering our guns, like I promised. Take a look.
(Johnny can be seen inching toward a shelf near him. Dandae is looking outside. Johnny grabs something off a shelf, hidden till now, a third gun.)
Johnny (pointing his gun): Hold it, Dandae, or I’ll shoot.
Dandae (stunned, looking at Johnny’s gun): Where you get gun?
Johnny: Johnny break law and have one, long time. Never know when burglar or spy come along.
Dandae: Put your gun down, Johnny, or I’ll shoot you.
Johnny: Me not so dumb, Dandae. We surrounded all sides. You going down, if shooting start.
Dandae: Then, it looks like you going down, too. (Aiming gun. Two men fire, at once.) I hit!
(The others kick away gun Dandae has dropped.)
Police: What’s going in there?
Sunshin (outside, but sneaks look): It’s okay. Johnny shoot gunman. Police can come in.
(Police enter with guns ready.)
American Police Negotiator: You’re lucky Johnny is a good shot; this could have been a whole lot messier. Get him out of here, guys.
Police Captain: We’ll take you all downtown for questions and any medical treatment you need.
Police Negotiator: A couple of guards will keep an eye on your club til you return, Johnny. What are you doing with a gun?
Johnny (winking at others): Oh, soldier had two. And I was crack shot in Army, many years ago.
Police Negotiator: Thank God, you’re handy with a gun. It could have gotten really nasty in here.
Walter: Johnny has always been smarter than the spies of this world give him credit for, right, Johnny?
Johnny: Yeah, Johnny smart enough to catch fish with right bait. Love fishing, and fish, too.
Police Negotiator: I guess you’ll be known as Johnny, the Big Fisherman, from now on. Or better yet, Johnny Got A Gun. (Smiles.) The guards have been assigned (they take their places). You can all head downtown with us now. What’s this? (Picking up the radio/transmitter.) Must have been the object of Dandae’s attention, the last couple of years.
(He turns radio on. Madonna is singing ‘Borderline.’ The Negotiator signals everyone except the guards to leave, and departs himself, with Madonna still singing her song. He begins to sing along with her... Lights Out.)

Setting: A cabin that could be located in many locales – Ireland, New England, the Great Plains, the Great Northwest, ca. 1900. The people speak with the hint of an Irish brogue, but could be recent immigrants to America, or current residents of Ireland. There is a body laid out on a table, around it people are kneeling – looking like the deceased’s wife, son, and a Catholic priest. A beautiful young woman stands by a window at right. She is holding a photo close to her breast, without frame.

The Priest Stands, Makes the Sign of the Cross, and Intones: Lord, take this soul, James, into your eternal home in heaven, and allow the living to continue to move forward, in the hopes we will all be joined in heaven someday. Please do not hold our sins against him or us, because we are poor mortals, in need of your forgiveness and grace. Give those who remain, life, and all of us eternal peace afterward, because you are God, and know we do not deserve your forgiveness or you grace. But we are grateful your son came down to earth, to ensure that your forgiveness and grace will save us, forevermore.

He Continues; the Others Praying with Him: Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil – For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

They All Make the Sign of the Cross, and the Priest Goes to the Mother Figure, Saying as He Grasps Her Hands: I’m so sorry for your loss, Mrs. Meany. I hope you know your Frank will be prayed for a long, long time, and that if anyone has a chance for heaven now, it is Frank. Salt of the earth, and a good churchman too.

Mother Figure: Thank you, Father. I’m sure Frank appreciates all our prayers. We all need prayers, and the Lord’s forgiveness too. Frank shouldn’t have been drinking the night he decided to swim in that river, that wicked old river.

Son Figure: Yes, Father, we do all need that.

Daughter Figure by Window Stirs a Bit, Then Holds the Photo Tighter to Her Breast.

Son Figure: Father, why do you think Frank went into the water drunk?

Priest: I’d guess the Devil was at work that night. Frank drank I know, probably to ease some sorrow or another, but drinking and drowning he didn’t have to do.

Son Figure: Do you think he committed suicide, then, Father?

Priest: It may be he did, but maybe not. It’s hard to read a person’s mind about that when they don’t leave a note or some clear signal like that behind.

Daughter Figure Stirs Again, Then Hugs Photo to Her Breast Again.

Mother Figure: There’s a bit of a lunch here, Father, and I’d be honored to serve you.

Priest: I’ll have just a quick bite. I’ve a wedding to preside at in three hours, and have to make final preparations for that.

Mother Figure Hands Him a Sandwich: Here you are, Father. I hope it hits the spot.

Priest Bites into Sandwich: It’s very good, Mrs. Meany. And it does hit the spot. I didn’t have time for breakfast this morning, so it’s very tasty indeed.

Mother Figure: Glad you like it, Father. It’s my treat, those ham sandwiches. Just like eating spiced candy, some people say.

Son Figure, Grabbing a Sandwich Himself: Yes, Father, Mother is quite a cook. Makes us all want to weep that Daddy is no longer around to enjoy this.

Daughter Figure Moves Away from Window to Table Where Father Figure Is Laid Out. She Begins to Cry Vaguely, Then Quickly Returns to the Window with the Photo, Hugging it Closely Again.

Mother Figure: Yes, it is sad Frank’s no longer alive to enjoy this. But maybe in some way, he still is.

Foot of Body on Table Twitches Almost Imperceptibly, Then Stops.
Priest, Done Eating: The sandwich was very good, Mrs. Meany. First-rate, in fact. I’d have never thought to put pepper on a ham sandwich, but it was really very tasty. I’d guess Frank would approve, if he could. (Body’s Foot Twitches Again, But Stops Abruptly.) Did you see that, Mrs. Meany. I thought Frank’s foot twitched a minute. Now, you wouldn’t want to bury him while he’s still living would you?

Mother Figure: No, he’s not living, Father. Here, I’ll see if he feels this. (She sticks a knife in his breast.) How do you feel now, my big strong Frankie?

Priest Is Aghast: But if he was living a moment ago, I doubt he is now, Mrs. Meany. Why in the world, did you put a knife in his chest?

Mother Figure: Oh, I didn’t kill Frank, Father. He was gone from us a long time ago. It seems he put on quite an act of living, though, for a few years after that.

Priest: I don’t get your meaning, Mrs. Meany.

Mother Figure: Well, did Frank ever go to confession to you, Father?

Priest: Yes, many times, Mrs. Meany.

Mother Figure: Well, do you remember what he confessed to you, Father, as his biggest sin?

Priest: I do remember, but I can’t divulge his confession to you. You know my priestly vows.

Mother Figure: Then I’ll guess a bit, though I don’t see the harm of divulging something like that to his family, after the man has died. Didn’t it have something to do with impure actions?

Priest: Something like that, Mrs. Meany, something like that.

Son Figure: Yes, Father, I’ll bet it did. I’ve seen some things that suggest that was true.

Mother Figure: Yes, Father, and me too.

Priest: Do any of you want to go to confession yourselves now? In case, you have had any impure thoughts about those actions of Frank’s.

Son Figure: No, Father, no interest in confessing here and now.

Mother Figure: Same here, Father.

Daughter Figure Removes Her Shoes, Goes Over, and Sets Them at Foot of Table, by Her Father’s Feet. She Then Returns to the Window, Picks Up the Photo Again, and Hugs It Closely.

Priest: Well, then. Your friend Jack and his brother will be burying Frank, then?

Mother: In an hour or so, Father, they should be here. (She Grabs Priest’s Hand and Shakes It.) Thank you for coming this morning, Father. Say some prayers for us, because we surely need them. We’ll say some for you too, though I doubt you need them as much as Frank and us here.

Priest: That’s very kind of you to say, Mrs. Meany. I’ll be off, then. That couple to be married will be anxious to have me marry them. I hope you understand.

Mother Figure: Yes I do, Father, Yes I do.

Priest Shakes Son Figure’s Hand Too, Then Exits.

Mother Figure: Jordan, put the sackcloth over your father’s body, so when Jack and his brother come, Frank’s body will be ready for them.

Son Figure Gets Sackcloth and Puts It Over His Father’s Body. Lights Out. Then, Lights Up Again on Daughter Figure by Window. Just Enough Light Is on Her to See the Sudden Reach of Three Hands for Her Breast. The Daughter Figure Then Begins to Disrobe as The Lights Go Out.

End of Single Scene Drama.
Korean Love Song: A Play in One Act, Written & Revised by David Joseph Marcou.

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For Matthew Ambrose Marcou and His Wife, Jessica Amaranek Marcou, and Their Family-to-Be.

Characters:
Bo, a 35-year-old American journalist
Gina, a 21-year-old Korean woman.
Kyong-Hae, an ageless waiter.

Place: The Dayang Tea Room, Seoul.
Time: May 1, 1984.

Action: Bo is having a cup of coffee and thinking about his next story, corruption in the Chun regime. He's scribbled a few notes to himself and is musing over his prospects, if the story he writes is published. Gina enters the room, alone. She seems to be looking for someone and a table at the same time. There are no free tables, though, and the waiter approaches Bo.

KYONG-HAE: Excuse me, sir. Do you mind if that (pointing) young woman sits with you?
BO (appreciatively): No, please ask her to sit down here.
KYONG-HAE: Thank you, sir. I'll be right back. (He goes over to Gina and informs her that Bo would not mind if she sits with him. They come over.)

KYONG-HAE: Sir, this is Gina Kim. And your name?
BO: Bo Winters – nice to meet you, Ms. Kim. Have a seat.
GINA: Thank you. I was looking for a friend, but I guess she's not here. (She sits.)

BO: Waiter, please bring more coffee. (Kyong-Hae acknowledges Bo's request and exits.) You say you're looking for a friend. What's her name?
GINA: Michelle – Michelle Franzen. She's American.

BO: Where does she work – or is she married?
GINA: Oh, she's not married, but she doesn't work either. You see, her father is very wealthy and –

BO: And she travels a lot, right?
GINA: Yes, that's right. I wish I had a picture of her, because she's here whenever she's not traveling.

BO: Picture won't help. This is the first time I've been in this place.
GINA: Oh, I see... You've been writing it looks like. Are you a professional writer?
BO: (he puts his notes away): Yeah, a writer – you could say that. I'm a journalist actually. Don't do any more writing than I have to. Say, you speak very good English. (The waiter returns with coffee.)
GINA: Oh yes, thank you.

BO: Thank you, waiter.

GINA: I lived in Australia for four years, beginning in 1976. My father sent me to a good Catholic school there, and when we returned, I enrolled at Sogang University and majored in English.

BO: Did you graduate?
GINA: No. My father died three years ago, and I didn't have the money to finish.
BO: That's too bad. Any prospects now?
GINA: Oh, I don't know. I guess I'm like most young women my age... want to have a good time a while, and then get married. Why do you ask?
BO: Oh, maybe it's because I'm thinking a lot about prospects, these days. Can I trust you with something? (She nods reassuringly.) I'm faced with a controversial publication, and I don't know if I'll be able to stay on here, if the story's published.
GINA: Are you an investigative journalist?
BO: Yes, I guess I am... don't know for how much longer, though, because I don't much like the prospect of being out of work – or of going home right now, either.

GINA: What do you mean? Are you afraid of going home empty-handed?
BO: Yeah, sort of. Say, wait a minute. We've known each other only five minutes and already I'm revealing the secrets of my soul to you-- if you'll excuse my wayward pun.
GINA: That's OK. You'll find that I'm just as open and outspoken about my own soul. If Michelle were here, she'd reassure you on that.
BO: How old is your friend, Ms. Kim?
GINA: She's 27, but she acts 50. She's a lot smarter than you'd expect, considering her father's fortune. She's seen a good bit of the world, and doesn't have the weaknesses of the tourist class.

BO: Oh balls, I'm glad to hear that. I've been running around in tourist class the last ten years. Don't know if I'll ever step up to business class, either. I'm a journalist first and foremost, but I've gotten used to tourist accommodations, wherever I go. Guess you'd call me a typical tourist with a strong interest in good reporting.

GINA: Yes, typical journalist, I'd say. Not married I presume.
BO: No, haven't picked up that bad habit yet.
GINA: Bad habit?! My God, you need a good woman like no one I've ever seen. (Catching herself.) Sorry, I didn't mean to blurt that out.
BO: No, no. I may need a good woman eventually, but right now I need a good story. I'll worry about the next step, after that.
GINA: Mind if I ask what kind of story would be a good story?
BO: Yes I mind, but seeing as you won't spill the beans under water torture – that's a joke, humor me – I'm writing about corruption in the highest places.
GINA: Oh, the Chuns again. You're the second journalist I've met this week who wants to write about the Big Man in the Blue House. The other writer – and I don't know how much of a journalist he is – wanted to point up the merits of President Chun's rule – a Ruling Party character if there ever was one. Korean, too.

BO: Well, I doubt he'll lose his nationality, if he writes that about the regime.
GINA: No, I don't suppose he will, but then he's not in jeopardy of losing his mind, either.

BO: And what is that supposed to mean??
GINA: Oh, nothing... just a frank assessment from an honest young woman.
BO: Well, I'm not in danger of losing my mind – just my soul.
GINA: Same thing – without a soul, a man may as well not have a mind. He's a robot, then, and not much else.
BO: Say, you know something, Ms. Kim, you're a formidable young woman. How old are you?
GINA: Well, I'm over 20 and less than 30. And you?
BO: 35... today... the first of May. Christ, what a coincidence – worker's day.
GINA: That is a coincidence, but more... What do you want to see happen with your story?
BO: That's an easy one. I'd like to see the people rise up and bust Chun in the chops, leave him a little bloody, and then demand his resignation. You know, formation of a new government.
GINA: But that's not going to happen with one story alone. The “man at the top” has too much clout for that. More realistically, if you do publish your story, what will happen to you? Expulsion or what?
BO: Expulsion, I'd guess, because even if the people get to Chun, there will be a lag and I'll likely be expelled during that lag.
GINA: That is realistic, Mr. Winters. I admire you a little more for saying that – owning up to it, if you will.
BO: Yeah, I guess I'm not a total dummy. And I've talked with many of my journalist-friends. They know what's up here, even if they're afraid to say it.
GINA: Are your journalist-friends good men, Mr. Winters?
BO: Good men and good women. But for some reason everyone is still afraid here to hit the presses with what I'm putting together. Now, I'm doing this...
BO: Because I'm tired of just sitting on this thing alone – and besides, you've said that you'd be as open about your own soul, and you have been, I guess. Already I can tell a lot about you, Ms. Kim.
GINA: Well, for your own good, you shouldn't talk so much, because as open as I've been, I'm not in jeopardy right now. You are.
BO: You're right, but that won't stop me. When I feel like talking, I talk – and nothing stops me, at least when I'm with a young woman whom I think I can trust.
GINA: Fair enough, Mr. Winters. Let me tell you a little more about myself.
BO: Shoot. I can sit on this thing till Christmas.
GINA: That is realistic, Mr. Winters. I admire you a little more for saying that – owning up to it, if you will.
BO: So, what are we waiting for, Ms. Kim? Let's go find your friend.
GINA: It's not that easy. Michelle knows wholesalers who live there, and she does business with them.
BO: Maybe so... but more about your friend. Where do you think she is?
GINA: Whenever she feels like spending, she goes to Itaewon. No stopping her today, she's in Itaewon.
BO: You could say that, I guess. Yes, you could say that.
GINA: And meeting me here today isn't just a coincidence – it's a blessing.
BO: Maybe so... but more about your friend. Where do you think she is?
GINA: Where she feels like spending, she goes to Itaewon. No stopping her today, she's in Itaewon.
BO: So, what are we waiting for, Ms. Kim? Let's go find your friend.
GINA: It's not that easy. Michelle knows wholesalers who live there, and she does business with them.
BO: I see – some key differences between you and Ms. Franzen.
GINA: Yes, she and I are different, but then so are you and I.
BO: Yes, I agree. Decently different, Ms. Kim.
GINA: Good. I didn't want to go out just yet, and we're agreed.
BO: What do you mean by “a blessing”?
GINA: Well, I've been thinking about politics lately, and you just happen to be very interested in that field.
BO: It's my side-job, Ms. Kim, just my side-job.
GINA: Yes, but journalism – and now the political expression of that journalism – mean a lot to you, don't they?
BO: You could say that, I guess. Yes, you could say that.
GINA: And meeting me here today isn't just a coincidence – it's a blessing.
BO: How's that?
GINA: You like this place – or places like it – because you are inspired here. And inspiration should not be given up so easily. Good poets must be inspired – and good journalists, too.
BO: OK, OK – we stay here.
GINA: Of course, even if you hate the rule.
BO: It's a strain, but I don't mind it too much. It's close enough to journalism to keep me “inspired”.
GINA: Of course, even if you hate the rule.
BO: Yes, even if I hate the rule – and mainly I do – Christ, to be honest, my story so far has been self-censored, and I haven't yet been able to do very much...
about that.
GINA: But could you do more, Mr. Winters?
BO: It's really not a question of more, Gina, because we are all so ineffectual anyway.
GINA: Which is why you're writing about South Korea's President.
BO: Exactly. My, the music is getting loud in here.
GINA: Just an expression of yours, Mr. Winters?
BO: Yes, just an expression, but it's my expression, at least.
GINA: Good, now about the story -- who informed you of the corruption?
BO: A friend who works for the Trade Ministry.
GINA: The Trade Ministry? How did he find out about it?
BO: An associate of his is a relative of Chun's, on the take. I guess he doesn't like this relative very much. Doesn't like his job, either, for that matter.
GINA: And how many people does this corruption take in? Twenty? Fifty? A hundred?
BO: Quite a few -- but there are so many relatives and cronies of Chun's involved, I have to see this through.
GINA: And who will publish your story? (Kyong-Hae is back.)
KYONG-HAE: Here is your coffee, sir.
BO: Thank you, waiter. That will be all.
KYONG-HAE: Yes sir. Thank you. (Kyong-Hae exits.)
BO: I have friends at AP and UPI. I'll have to see what's what, when I complete the story.
GINA: And won't there be sanctions against whichever agency publishes it?
BO: Both agencies are aware of that possibility. For one, the last time AP ran a story like this up the flagpole, a correspondent was expelled. This time could even be worse.
GINA: Then, if your name is attached to it, you'll be leaving, too?
BO: I guess, which is why I'm doing this as much on the sly as I can. (Kyong-Hae returns.)
KYONG-HAE: Ms. Kim -- telephone for you.
GINA: Oh, that must be Michelle. Excuse me, Mr. Winter. I'll be right back.
BO: Of course, go ahead. (The waiter and Gina exit. Bo takes out his notes and looks them over. He arranges them in a pattern, circling sections and numbering them. Gina returns.)
GINA: That was Michelle. She wants to meet me in 45 minutes at the Lotte Hotel. That leaves us with some time to talk yet.
BO: Did she say if she'd bought the whole Hotel yet, or just some knick-knacks in it?
GINA: Oh, she always buys something big. But she wouldn't tell me on the phone what exactly.
BO: Well, I hope she got a good deal in Itaewon. It's full of sharpsters, you know.
GINA: I know, but it's also full of Americans and as long as there are Americans there, there will also be sharpsters.
BO: You're right. (Looks at notes.) Say, I think this is finally coming together. Now, if I can just get confirmation of the latest appointment in the Treasury Ministry, I'll have a real story.
GINA: You're sounding more sure of yourself, Mr. Winters. That is good.
BO: You know, I've been sitting on this so long, it's bound to come together soon.
GINA: I'd like to hear some music. Do you mind if I make a request?
BO: No, what do you want to hear?
GINA: Frank Sinatra's "My Way". Is that all right with you?
BO: Yeah, they play it all the time at the Lotte for a friend of mine. It's a good song - solid, I'd say.
GINA: OK. Now, if they just have the record....
BO: I'll find out. (Loudly.) Waiter... over here. (Kyong-Hae enters.)
KYONG-HAE: Yes sir.
BO: I'd like you to play a song.
KYONG-HAE: Yes sir. What is the song?
BO: Frank Sinatra's "My Way." Do you have it?
KYONG-HAE: I think we do. I'll have the DJ play it for you.
BO: OK. Now we're in business. Thank you, waiter.
KYONG-HAE: Kyong-Hae's my name -- and you're welcome, sir. (He exits.)
BO: I don't suppose you play chess, do you Gina?
GINA: No, I'm a great admirer of those who do, though. (Bo puts his notes away.)
BO: Oh, that's OK. I'll play Randy when I get home. (Song begins.) I just feel really good right now, and I could see a little diversion -- if you don't mind.
GINA: Oh, I understand. But don't feel too good yet. That story isn't published yet, and you're not clear of the next step after that yet, either.
BO: (catching himself): ...but... well, I've got the makings of something useful at last, and I'm not going to let anything stop me now. Thank you, by the way, for the inspiration.
GINA: Still inspired are you, Mr. Winters? That's good! I was hoping I'd have that effect on you. Want to talk a little more about Yonhap?
BO: No, not really. The sooner I'm out of the there, the better. Maybe even if my name is attached to the story, I'd be so happy to have it published, I wouldn't mind leaving that late, great news agency -- or Seoul, for that matter.
GINA: But Mr. Winters, you could make a real name for yourself here -- become a truly respected journalist. I mean -- especially if you can do more at Yonhap.
BO: Well, some days I feel that way, but at other times I feel absolutely ineffectual.
GINA: Get your story published first -- then see what happens.
BO: You're right. I've got to keep my head on my shoulders and my feet on the ground. People like you and me are in a great army of sorts -- we're culture-warriors, moving forward for a better world.
GINA: That's the way I like to think of things, too, Mr. Winters. You know, we think a lot alike on many things. I wish we had more time to talk today, but Michelle needs company, in half an hour.
BO: OK. Maybe we'll meet again sometime. And then I can begin to express myself more clearly on many issues.
GINA: Well, we've still got a few minutes today. What do you think? Why don't you let me know a few more of your ideas.
BO: (Sips coffee.) Be happy to, Gina.
GINA: OK, now that we're fully agreed, I'd like to know how you feel about living in Korea, as an American.
BO: Well, that's a tough one. You see, I feel peculiarly drawn to Korea, which is why I came here in the first place, and peculiarly repelled by her, at the same time.
GINA: Typical so far, Mr. Winters. So, tell me why you are drawn to her.
BO: First of all, I find the women here as beautiful to look at as anywhere I've seen. One of my old girlfriends is a Korean-American. I almost married her. I guess I've determined that if I can find someone like her here, I'll marry that woman instead.

GINA: And what was so attractive about your old girlfriend?

BO: Typical, Mr. Winters, of what it is that attracts American men to Korean women. And what else did you like about Korea?

BO: The same dual features in all the people, as well as the beauty of the countryside. I love to travel in Korea – when I have time and money. Can't get enough of the countryside then, poor as many of the people are there.

GINA: I'm very much attracted by the countryside myself. And the strength of the people there. Some are very poor, but there still is an enduring spirit among them.

BO: Yes, and I have many friends in the countryside. I like to go with them to the mountains, drink a little soju, eat a little bulgogi and enjoy...

GINA: And what repels you, Mr. Winters?

BO: The totalitarianism practiced by your country's leaders. It makes me angry almost every day, these days. And so far, I've been unable to do much to make things change for the better – if you know what I mean.

GINA: I know what you mean... but your story could change the way in which we do things, if only a little at first.

BO: It could – then again, I might find myself outside looking in, soon-enough. I've got to be more careful in my everyday life, if I'm not going to draw suspicion down on me. One of my friends – a Korean photographer – spent two months in prison for shooting pictures of student demonstrations. They were very dramatic pictures, and he's lucky he didn't do more time. I don't want to be caught in the same kind of trap.

GINA: I can see your point. But really, the story is important, if you can protect yourself enough.

BO: Yes, you've inspired me, Gina. I will see to it that its gets published – even if I lose my standing here, temporarily. I have this feeling I will, but no matter. A person's got to take smart risks, every so often. It's part of life.

GINA: No, you've got to take smart risks, every so often. It's part of life.

BO: Yes, and I have many friends in the countryside. I like to go with them to the mountains, drink a little soju, eat a little bulgogi and enjoy...

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GINA: Stop thinking that way, Mr. Winters. You're a bright, caring man, and you can do anything you set your mind to. Just don't sell yourself short, and you'll be OK I've seen a lot of journalists working here go through all sorts of gyrations for the little stories. Knowing you the way I do now, I realize the gyrations you go through are just as extreme, but you have the potential to affect outcomes that are far greater than with my other journalist-friends. Please, don't sell yourself short and you'll be all right.

BO: I hope so, Gina (touching her hand). Thanks for being you. You're a wonderfully gracious woman and I doubt I could have run into more encouragement anywhere in Seoul today than here. This place is an inspiration – and you are an inspiration. The youth of Korea will make her great someday – her young-bloods, I mean. Passionate, yes, are young people like you, and I won't ever forget you or that passion.

GINA: I don't think I could have “run into” more encouragement either today than here with you. Thank you and praise God for people like you, Mr. Winters.

BO: As you say, praise God.

GINA: Well, it's time to be going. Let's meet here every day at the same time until your story is published. What do you think? Can you make it?

BO: Yes. Let's meet again tomorrow and the day after that and the day after that, too. (Kissing her hand.) And if you can't make it, that's okay. I guess I'll understand.

GINA: Oh, I'll be here, Mr. Winters. You see, I've made an emotional investment in you today, and I like to stick around to see if that investment will pay dividends. But more tomorrow – more investment, that is.

BO: It's a deal, Gina. See you tomorrow. (Gina rises.)

GINA: And one other thing, Mr. Winters. Don't ever say you met me here to anyone. I want these meetings to be just for the two of us – at least until your story is published. Is it a deal?

BO (Shakes her hand and kisses her cheek): It's a deal. Good luck and I look forward to seeing you here tomorrow.

GINA: Yes, what does the Bible say? “The land is beautiful and upon it shall dwell a holy people.”

BO: Yes, a holy people. We do have a bright future, don't we Gina?

GINA: Yes, we do. Good-bye, Mr. Winters, and God-speed to you.

BO: God-speed to you, too, Gina (Kisses her hand again.)

GINA: To us, then, Mr. Winters, until tomorrow...

BO: Yes, Gina, good-bye, until tomorrow....

(Lights out. Play's end.)
The World-Debut of DJM's Earlier, Abridged Version of RDC Was Performed as a Community Event by the Mercury Matthews Players, Fri.-Sat., April 20-21, 2012, 7 PM, Aquinas Schools' Campbell Theatre, La Crosse, WI. RDC was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Drama in early 2013.

For our troupe's extended family & audiences, & the memory of Davy Crockett & Charlie Casberg.

Starring: Steve Kiedrowski as Davy's Old-Friend.
Playwright, Director, & Producer: David Joseph Marcou (CEO, Mercury Matthews Players).
Narrator & Assistant Director: Rourke Decker.
Newsboy: Danny Skifton.
Sally: Katherine Gentner.
Singers: Claire Olson & Nina Newton.
Script-Consultants: Steve Kiedrowski & Rourke Decker.
Lighting and Sound Technician: Paul McGettigan.
Set Design: Mark, Jean, & Bobbie Smith, & Steve & Deborah Olson.
Costume Design: Steve & Deborah Olson, Steve Kiedrowski, & Cast.
Aquinas Schools (AS) Principal: Ted Knutson.
AS Custodial Staff: Craig Lynse & Dan Kammel.
AS Theatre Director: Peter Bosegraaf.
AS Technology Teacher: Paul Callan.
Production Assistants: Mary & Kate Temp, & the Decker Family.
Business Advisers: David A. and Rose C. Marcou.
Sponsors: Bp. William Callahan & the La Crosse Diocese; Patrick Stephens & Irishfest-La Crosse; Rev. Roger Scheckel; Matthew A. Marcou, Jessica Amarnek; Dennis A. Marcou & Polly Smith; Dan & Vicki Marcou; Tom & Joy Marcou; Diane & Robert “Rocky” Skifton; Lynn Marcou & Tyler Sattler; Mary & Kate Temp & Paul Frederick; Charles & Christine Freiberg; Prof. Roger & Charlotte Grant; the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (for Their Prayers); Plus A Very Gracious Anonymous Sponsor.
Research: Kelly Krieg-Sigman, Anita T. Doering, Rochelle Hartman, & La Crosse Public Library/Archives Staff; J. Nelson, A. Kraushaar, H. Knies, S. Dorst, J. Lathrop, & the Entire Wisconsin Historical Society Staff; David Haberstich, Archivist, Smithsonian NMAHAC, & the Entire Smithsonian Institution Staff; British National Portrait Gallery; Richard Dungan; Steve Kiedrowski; Walt Disney; Michael Wallis; Wikipedia; Dale Barclay; Ursula Chiu; the Crockett Family; the Pena Family; the Caro Family; the Decker Family; the Behm Family; the Parker, Wayne, and Thornton Families; Paul McGettigan and Family; the News Media; the Steve & Deborah Olson Family; Dan & Vicki Marcou; Tom & Joy Marcou; the Diane & Rocky Skifton Family; Lynn Marcou & Tyler Sattler; James and Lynn Hobart; Charles & Christine Freiberg; David W. Johns; Robert & Loraine Mulock; Prof. Roger & Charlotte Grant; Mark, Jean, Bobbie, & Jess Smith; Matthew Butson & Getty Images; the Mr. & Mrs. Yi Do-Sun Family; May's Photo; Gundersen-Lutheran & Mayo Health Systems; & Universities of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri. --Our thanks go to all those who make the works of the Mercury Matthews Players possible, especially the above good people and organizations, plus God; the world's historically-minded audiences; Aquinas Schools generally; & the Coulee Region of the Upper Mississippi Valley.

Action: (The Disney-Fess Parker “Davy Crockett” movie-theme plays, as audience enters. When show is set to begin, a soloist singsVerses 1 and 2 of “Shenandoah”. The Narrator then enters.)

Narrator (In 19th century gentleman's garb): Welcome. Stories about the famous frontiersman Davy Crockett have been plentiful. Davy set out for Mexican Texas, after losing a Congressional election in 1835, having sworn he'd leave, if he lost then. He fought bravely at the Alamo with the likes of Jim Bowie and William Travis, but despite the valiant efforts of the severely outnumbered Texans, that old Mexican Mission fell, on March 6, 1836. Soon after, Sam Houston's Army of Texans decisively defeated General Santa Anna's Army at the Battle of San Hu-sin-toe, renewing Davy's fame. Our setting is a village inn, somewhere in the United States, on July 4, 1876, our Nation's Centennial.

Old Man (Man in bed awakens, speaks outright): Gotta shake these cobwebs out of my head, and get on with the business at hand. (Sits on bed's edge, sees audience.) Well, hello all you good folks. Glad you could stop by for a visit. I'm an old wilderness frontiersman, old as Adam, and you're probably wondering why I'm up here all alone.

(Rises, hobbles on cane, stops, views audience closely, speaks outright.) How all you folks feelin' tonight? Me, I'm fair to middlin' myself. But I often think of what my good friend Davy Crockett said, “Remember these words when I am dead. First be sure you're right, then go ahead.”

(Hobbles to desk, standing, touches papers, speaks outright.) Now, I've written some things for you, and I need to read them. Y'see, I'm nearly 90 years old, and my memory ain't what it was. Some of the words come from Davy Crockett, some come from me. I consider myself what you'd call a – historian. It's sometimes said that old people know a lot, but one thing I know for sure: I need to make peace with myself, before it's too late.
"This is not a tall tale -- just a true one -- though there were at least a few tall tales written in the Davy Crockett almanacs published a while ago. Those almanacs helped make Davy into what you might call an American folk hero. But there's a lot more to the real Davy Crockett than tall tales.

"I knew my friend David, or Davy, very well. I called him 'DC', for his initials. I remember we talked, argued, and laughed a lot in Tennessee. Sometimes we even cried together, because Life isn't always fair. It's even downright sad, sometimes. At other times, it's more joyful, and that's what people most live for, though it's funny -- folks sometimes cry then, too.

"DC fought under General Andy Jackson in the War of 18 and 12. Our Cherokee allies from back then, appreciated DC's vote against the Indian Removal Law of 18 and 30, a law President Jackson backed, which was passed. In the 'Trail of Tears', the Cherokee had no shoes or moccasins for the march from the East Coast to Oklahoma, and their blankets came from a hospital riddled with small pox.

"Now, only a few folks know that Davy, who'd been a Lieutenant Colonel in the Tennessee Militia many years before, felt it his duty to save President Jackson's life in 18 and 35, even though they weren't the best of friends. A crazed painter shot at the President during a funeral in the Carolinas, but his two derringers misfired. Davy tackled Richard Lawrence, and took his weapons. Andrew beat the man with his cane.

"DC owned a few slaves, but treated them decent -- considering they shouldn't have been slaves to begin with. His first wife, Mary, died young of malaria, and his second wife, Elizabeth, was a business-woman and matriarch, who tried to keep Davy out of debt.

"DC had contracted malaria, too, fighting Indians in 18 and 14. His Indian allies said he would die, and he was left by the roadside to do just that. Later, after recovering, but having been reported dead, Davy said, 'I knew this was a whopper of a lie, as soon as I heard it.'

"Abraham Lincoln admired Davy. Both men had a sense of humor. When Abe was asked why he blacked his own boots, then-President Lincoln retorted, 'Whose boots do you think I black?' Abe also shared DC's backwoods spirit, calling Davy an 'honest American'.

"DC wrote of tough times -- surviving bears, snakes, Indians, and alligators. Once, he waded through icy waters, fetching gun-powder to feed his family. Nearly busted a gut with that keg. He'd have drunk it, if it had ale in it.

"The good folks of Pennsylvania gave Davy a rifle in 18 and 34 – gold-inscribed. Still, DC once said, 'Fame is like a shaved pig with a greased tail. It's only after it's slipped through the hands of thousands that some fellow, by mere chance, holds on to it."

"Davy liked freedom -- fame a while, too. One tale says President Jackson commissioned him to wring the tail off Halley's Comet -- every word's true, unless it's false."

"But why tell you Davy's story, when there are many other good things to do? -- like fireworks, bicycles, iron-horses, baseball, and typewriters invented in Milwaukee, a city known for its beer! I once rode on an iron-horse -- that was fun, and a lot faster than my mounts used to be. (Sips.) Still like my dark ale, in any case. But if you combine riding on an iron-horse with too much dark ale, I'll wager you come by a very painful head-ache, or a convulsive stomach-ache.

"Davy was away from home often, a real trailblazer, just like Daniel Boone. Frontiers need talented men and women who take smart risks. He came from good French-Irish-Scotch-English stock -- the family name used to be De Crocketagne. His ma was a Hawkins -- Rebecca was her given-name. The Crocketts came from the area in Scotland where the ancient Picts lived. Named for their fearsome tattoos, the Picts were the only British tribe Caesar's Army couldn't conquer.

"DC once visited New York to address the New York Stock Exchange. But he visited an area there, too, known for its brothels. Davy generally thought Irishmen were gentlemen, but he said about the Irishmen in that area, that they were 'too mean to swab hell's kitchen'. That's where the term 'hell's kitchen' came from in New York, from Davy Crockett.
(Reads aloud.) "DC didn't carry his rifle Old Betsy for nothing. But our leaders? Quite a few of them would rather send others off to kill for them than fight wars themselves.

(Reads aloud.) "Most folks think they know about Davy's dying, after he'd killed many Mexican troops at the Alamo Mission. The Texans may have holed up there, to be near God. There were other reasons, too. But, 'Be sure you're right, then go ahead.'

(Reads aloud.) "Davy had hunted for the Tennessee Militia, and fought like a tiger against the Red-Stick Creek Indians, who were allies of the British. When hunting, Davy had a grin that practically caused racoons to slide down trees to surrender. No wonder he liked coonskin caps, especially after he saw a stage-actor playing him in 'Lion of the West', wearing one.

(Reads aloud.) "DC was a long hunter, named for the long rifle, and for being in nature long periods. Well, you know how hunters get when they've been out in the wilderness a long time – they get downright whimsical. As a joke, it's said Davy sent his tamed mountain lion into camp one night, giving a good scare to his men. One fella ran up a tree, as if that'd help him escape most cougars!

(Reads aloud.) "Back home, Elizabeth got tired of Davy's drinking, womanizing, and risk-taking. In fact, she got tired of what you'd call his being a man's man, and left him. What she wanted was a man to stay home and farm, like her pa. Davy always thought they'd reunite.

(Reads aloud.) "When criticized for being wayward, DC told the critics he'd never committed adultery, since he'd never run off with a married woman who wasn't willing; always planked down cash, to pay his debts; and no matter how much whiskey he drank, he never got drunk.

(Reads aloud.) "Then came the Election of 1835. DC told voters, he'd serve them well in Congress, but if not re-elected, Davy said, 'You may all go to hell, and I will go to Texas'. And by God, he did. DC said, I'd rather be beaten and be a man than be elected puppy dog.'

(Reads aloud.) "Everyone knew Davy. But in 1835, he said he felt like a foreigner, and figured to help start a new nation, in what's now the Lone Star State. He lit out for the territories, like Mark Twain would. Davy headed towards the Alamo, ol' San Antone.

(Reads aloud.) "On the way, he visited Little Rock, Arkansas, and was praised as a hero. Folks swarmed to meet him at a big dinner, where he spoke about Independence.

(Reads aloud.) "As for Santa Anna, Mexico's dictator, he'd tried Independence from Spain, but turned Royalist. He called himself the 'Napoleon of the West'. The first time DC spied the blood-thirsty brute wearing a feathered hat, Davy said, 'He's quite the peacock.'"

(Reads aloud.) "Davy was as bold as a badger, with a hawk's eye. DC said: 'I can run faster and shoot straighter than anyone, speak as well as any speaker, dive deeper than any diver, plus my father can whip any man in the county and I can whip my father.'

(Reads aloud.) "DC was real independent. He said, 'Look at my arms. You will find no party handcuffs on them.'"

(Hobbles to the bed, sits, speaks outright.) It's no fun getting old. Well, at least I'm still vertical, for now. What did Ma always used ta say, kinda feisty-like? 'Sit up straight, Mister, or your back'll cripple ya before the gout.'

(Rap-at-door. Man stays in bed, speaks outright.)

Old Man: Come in. Oh, hi Danny. Got my newspaper?

Danny: Yes, Sir. Two cents. (Hands man newspaper.) Oh, and here's a note I'm supposed to give you. (Hands man 5x7 note. Man pays two cents plus tip.)

Old Man: Keep the change. You're a good lad.

Danny: Thanks, Sir. You're all right, too.

Old Man: Y'know, Danny, Life's kinda short, so look up and have fun while you're walking around upright. There's a lot to enjoy in this world, and news-papering is one thing you might want to do more of, writing I mean. Ever thought about it?

Danny: A little, Sir, but first I've got to get through school, which ain't easy. But I do like the people who work on newspapers. I guess I'm one of them already, so maybe the next step up wouldn't be bad.
Old Man: I may need the services of a good young reporter, in the future, to help spread my story around the country. Someday, you could be that good young reporter.

Danny: I hope so, Sir. You've always been good to me. Maybe I can do that job for you someday.

Old Man: Thanks, Danny. I'll see you again soon. And say hi to your ma and pa for me.

(Danny says "I will," waves, and exits.)

Old Man (Reads note to self, refers to it with audience.) We'll talk about this later.

(Studies newspaper.) Now, let's see what's going on in the newspaper, in 18 and 76. Not much, only it's THEE United States Centennial, today. Hallelujah! (More.) Oh, it says Jim Tronkey got hitched. 'bout time. He's 57 years old, for God's sake! Jim's having a big nest-egg doesn't hurt.

(Looks farther into newspaper.) It says here a group of ladies are declaring their rights today, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. They want the vote. I hope gentlemen agree with them.

(Still reading from newspaper.) Oh, the paper's predicting rain for tomorrow. That means it's going to be sunny, so I can go see one of those baseball games everyone's talking about.

(Puts newspaper down, rises, hobbles to desk, speaks outright.) Now, baseball is a game that's catching on with America. You can pack a picnic lunch, and take the whole family. I'm learning more about the game all the time – double-plays, hitting 300, stuff like that. If I was five years' younger, I'd be playin' it myself.

(Sits at desk, reads aloud.) "Y'know, DC had some hillbilly in him -- though for a hillbilly, he sure traveled to a lot of interesting places. When he and his sons came home from hunting, he'd break out his fiddle, after a big meal. Me and the ladies would dance. Davy even taught ME how to fiddle.

(Reads aloud.) "At the Alamo, Davy played in contrast to the far-off Mexican Army musicians, while the few brave Texans held out, inside. I'll wager he played 'Shenandoah'. If anyone's fiddle would stop a bullet, it'd be Davy's.

(Reads aloud.) "It's said Alamo messengers were sent out for reinforcements. Reinforcements never came. At that Mission, on March 6th, 18 and 36, Mexicans outnumbered Texans 7-to-1. The final attack lasted an hour.

(Reads aloud.) "Santa Anna's secretary, Senor Caro, wrote: 'Every enemy-man died, 183. Among the Texans at the Alamo were five wounded, taken to Santa Anna, who ordered his men to kill them. He turned his back, and the five were killed.'

(Reads aloud.) "Today, it seems an outrage to humanity. But, it might as well have been Leonidas and his 300 Spartans that Santa Anna ordered killed, or the 300-some Texans he ordered executed on the road from Goliad, on Palm Sunday, 1836, because the Alamo's 183 Texas troopers just weren't going to be forgotten, for fighting like super-powerful rangers the day the Alamo fell.

(Reads aloud.) "Soon after, on April 21st, came the Battle of San Ha-sin-toe, where Sam Houston's Texans won the war in 18 minutes. Santa Anna had thought his Army safe, posting no sentries for the afternoon siesta. Many Mexicans died there, but 700 were captured, alive.

(Reads aloud.) "Davy must have been afraid, but he didn't sit around and mope. DC did many good things. He even wrote an early book. Critics say it's more humor than truth. I think it's skillful in both ways.

(Reads aloud.) "DC once won a shooting contest with skill and wit. Davy was the only man to hit a perfect bull's-eye, then said he'd repeat it. He went up to find where his second ball landed. No one else saw it on the ground. DC secretly popped it on top of his first ball, and won!

(Reads aloud.) "His pa was tough. Some folks'll tell you to 'Eat a rock', to give you strength. John Crockett fought in the American Revolution, and was a strong member of the Over-Mountain Men, who defeated the British at King's Mountain, on the border between the Carolinas.

(Reads aloud.) "Davy spent many nights, thinking up ways to keep his pa from punishing him. He even ran off for three years as a youngster – he had beat up a school bully, and feared he'd be whipped for it. When DC returned, sister Betsy threw him a big welcome-home party.
"His pa then had him work for John Kennedy, a farmer who was owed money by the Crockett family. DC could shoot, ride, tote, work, and play. Was eloquent too, like President Lincoln and King David.

"But Davy didn't like farm-work as much as wilderness-work. Once, a farmer kidnapped him, to force heavy labor on him. DC escaped, walking seven miles in two hours, in knee-deep snow.

"Just as dramatic, escape-wise, were the twisters 'n' quakes in Tennessee. It seems someone always watched over Davy's brood. It's true -- "There are no non-believers in storm-cellars or foxholes."

(Sips ale, speaks outright.) Ohh, I sure do like my dark ale. Too much. You know why they call it ale, don't ya? It's good for what ails ya. Jim Bowie told me that.

"Maybe I should tell you -- I kind of have a gal, Sally. She's fairly young, and likes yellow roses. First time we met, I gave her one. Haven't seen her in a while."

"About Davy's book, it foretold Mark Twain's works. Yep, Realism and Humor -- or hard work and dreams. Y'know, even a simple farmer's or laborer's sense of humor can surpass the Queen of England's, though the Queen pays more for her writers. Mr. Twain steered riverboats, prospected for gold, reported the news, and became the author of America's best books. Never read a funnier springer-bites-the-dust story than "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

"There's also Realism in President Ulysses S. Grant. He didn't like war in the 1840s, but helped end slavery later. I still dream of troops on their mounts, coming home through the hills by night, torches in front, like a river of flame. Course, if the Great Compromiser Henry Clay had lived 'til 1861, there likely wouldn't have been a War Between the States. And the slaves would have been freed, sooner or later. Slavery isn't the highest human state; freedom is. Yes, God lends rhythms to Life -- for the things we have, don't have, then have again.

"In Washington, Davy was a doer of good deeds, not only a talker. His ideas about treaties and land-use still make sense today. The rest crave re-elections and payment royally for taking trips with taxpayers' money. I wouldn't give a plug-nickel for but two Congressmen, one of them Davy. The other one might be here tonight.

"Davy said the worst ticks is poly-ticks. The widow of a veteran who'd worked long after the war, wanted Government money. Davy said Congress shouldn't pay her from taxpayer-funds, but offered a week of his own salary, if his associates did the same. The bill died.

"Another time, fellow Congressman Mitchell referred to Davy as 'The Gentleman of the Cane'. That was part-derogatory, about DC's coming from the backwoods, where sugar-cane flourished. Davy tried to retrieve an apology from Mitchell soon after, but wasn't satisfied, so later that day, DC spoke in Congress, wearing the cambric ruffle, a fancy shirt-decoration Mitchell usually wore. Davy wore it, not on a dress-shirt, but on his coarse, homespun shirt. This had the desired effect, bringing laughter down on Mitchell. From that day forward, Davy wore the title 'Gentleman of the Cane' as a badge of honor.

"Now, Davy wasn't a regular church-goer, but he did read his Bible. Inspired by St. Matthew's Gospel, Davy re-phrased what Jesus had said in it: 'When I've seen a person suffer, I've been more anxious to relieve them than myself. It's never left my heart empty of things money couldn't buy, having fed the hungry and covered the naked.'

(Speaks outright.) Oh, about my own upkeep, I've lived here for years. I play a little music and the owner likes me. Plus older ladies say I'm kind of pleasant-to-look-at. Well, everyone's entitled to their opinions, even as the eyes start to go. But a young woman told me 40 years ago that I wasn't hard on the eyes. I hope she'd say the same thing about me today.

(Speaks outright.) I went walking one day, and a little girl comes up. She says, "Hey Mister, aren't you the man who knew Davy Crockett?" I says, "Yes. Do you want to know more about Davy?" She says, "Nope -- I already know he's an American hero. I want to know more about you."

"Folks still say, 'Remember the Alamo'. Davy was its star. Banners went up and much was written. Songs were sung and photographs were made. I like the circus, but it's bittersweet when it leaves town.

"DC didn't personally create the After-Alamo fanfare. But even if Davy had survived that battle, who'd want to be known as the only Texas man to survive the Alamo? There was a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars there, Moses was his name. When Bill Travis drew his famous line in the sand and said Liberty or Death, Moses had second thoughts, because he knew with the maneuvers the Mexican Army was doing, there'd be no escaping the enemy attack. Moses scurried out, and started another life back East.
With DC, people might think you a big coward, when in fact, maybe God had sent you some good luck, since you were courageous, and fought well in the battle. Still, some old wife's tale says that before the final attack, Davy dressed up like a woman and sneaked out. Well, some folks say Davy was six-foot-four, and you know, he would have been a pretty conspicuous lady, I'd guess, at that height.

(Reads aloud) “If you live to be 90, or if you're real lucky and make 100, folks'll remember you. 'course, Davy'll be remembered longer 'n most. Sometimes, the good die young. As for me, I hope I can shake another great man's hand, dance again with a lovely lady, and make at least 90. But the Lord lets you know what's next, as soon as it happens.”

(Speaks outright, exiting) Now, if you folks'll excuse me, I need to go into the next room and fetch a little more of my favorite ale. But please do stay in your seats, cuz this story has a big ending.

(Lights up on Narrator) This isn't an intermission, but a minute to think about what the old man's said. He's talked a lot about his old friend Davy Crockett, and knows the history pretty well. Some of it is well-known to the public, but a lot of it isn't. You'll learn more, as we continue. We're two-thirds of the way through a good story.

(Instrumental march music for “Yellow Rose of Texas” precedes and follows a capella singing of that song's lyrics by a soloist.)

Old Man (Lights up. he reads aloud from manuscript) “Davy wasn't outwitted often. But maybe that school-bully let DC win, cuz he knew Davy would catch hell for it, soon-enough. We can question history, but what matters most is – who works hardest with decent skill and good luck. And y'know, wits are big, but looks sometimes turn out to be bigger. DC always did have good looks.

(Reads aloud) “It takes real faith to get to Life's next good place. It's said Davy knelt and prayed in the Alamo chapel, as Mexican troops began their final attack. I should pray more. Couldn’t inflame my rheumatism any worse. Sally goes to church regular. She's smart and pretty. I hope she sees sense in this.”

(Hobbles to window, speaks outright) Heck, I check this window every day, hopin' ta see a friendly face a-comin'. (Nods resignedly.) Even I like pleasant surprises.

(Hobbles forward, speaks outright) I recall some of my old friends had lots of family and kids around 'em. (Tears up) Old friends... family... memories... puppy dogs... other things. It seems the heart is a lonely hunter. I wonder where my kids are tonight.

(Hobbles to desk, standing, picks something up, speaks outright) I found somethin' the other day you might be interested in – my old school report card. I got an F in Arithmetic. It took me a whole term to figure out figures.

(Sits at desk. reads aloud from manuscript again.) “Now, right after San Ha-sin-toe, Santa Anna dressed as a lowly corporal to escape his defeat. When he was captured and brought in, other Mexican prisoners shouted 'El Presidente!' The Texans then knew they had caught their big fish.

(Reads aloud) “Santa Anna signed a treaty as Sam Houston's prisoner. He gave up Texas -- hundreds of thousands of square miles. There were very few Mexicans living there then. I guess Mexico would like to have Texas back today.”

(Speaks outright, identifying something) I'd best tell you now that the real author of this manuscript I've been reading from is Davy Crockett. It's title is: “Davy Crockett: The Lion of the West.” In the middle of this story, DC changes his voice, and pipes up:

(Reads aloud) “I, Davy Crockett, still live! Many think I died at the Alamo with Jim Bowie, a man's man. Now, Jim, he was quite a character. In the famous Sand Bar Fight in 18 and 27, Jim fought two men on a Sand Bar in the Mississippi River. He took a saber in the chest-bone – which had been pulled from a false cane – plus two bullets, one in the stomach, but he ended up killing both men with his Big Bowie Knife. Jim was sick with pneumonia at the Alamo, but died fighting. When his ma heard he'd passed, she said, 'I'll wager there were no wounds found in his back.' Those brave soldiers had been surviving on sips of hope that didn't fully materialize. All those good men went to heaven just a-hollerin.'(Tears up a bit.)

(Reads aloud) Davy continues: "I was one of those wounded captives brought in and ordered killed. One guard ordered by his officer, faked a saber stab to my heart. I played along. The guard moved me to a tent to change clothes and to heal from my battle-wounds. Those two Mexicans were Texas sympathizers.

(Reads aloud) “Some historians say the enemy didn't know who I was, but another captive had told the friendly officer. A Mexican trooper later said he saw me executed. He may have been partly wrong about my death, but I do appreciate the trooper adding that he'd forever associate the name Crockett with Courage.
“Having been almost executed, I remembered what I'd said early in life, 'A government big enough to give you everything you want is big enough to take away everything you have.' But I guess, in the end, we get from good governments, what we most need from them.

“After I had healed up, the friendly guard and I headed out, and met up with Sam Houston’s Army. I changed clothes again. I couldn’t let Santa get his hooks in me anymore. Oh, did I say Santa? Well, Santa Anna, Santa Claus – they're both short and stocky.”

Davy's story gets real interestin’ here.

DC writes, “I talked with Santa Anna, during treaty negotiations later that year. But when I'd first seen him, right after the Alamo, I'd said, ‘I thought you'd be taller.’ I also let him know that he was dealin’ with a screamer, cuz I wouldn't go down without fighting, if I went down at all. Later, during the negotiations, in disguise, I befriended his interpreter, persuading the pair to give up Texas.”

Davy adds: “From a Mexican friend, I got a copy of a diary of one of Santa Anna's officers, Lieutenant Pena, who confirmed on the record, that I hadn't been killed in battle, and was captured, though wounded. But he said I was executed, the one thing he was wrong about.

“Now, to be more fair to the record of the Alamo and its aftermath, a white woman and a slave who were allowed to live after being captured there, testified to the Mexicans that they saw my mutilated, dead body near the chapel. I can see why both sides might lie a bit. The survivors, to protect me, and Pena, to shed a bad light on Santa Anna, who wasn't real popular in Mexico afterward. Question is, in the famous vault of ashes that bears my name with other famous Texans, who was really buried there?

‘But the reason I went to the Alamo, in the first place, when I'd originally thought to return to Tennessee, was because I fell in love with Texas, and wanted to be part of somethin' big. I even remember saying then, 'I may not have been born in Texas, but I got here as soon as I could.' My wife moved there later herself, dying in Texas. Our son Robert fought in the Texan Army, while son John served in Congress from my old Tennessee district.

“Texas is now part of the Union, which is a very good thing. But folks won’t always sit still, as leaders send men off to war, and too often, die. Wars can tear families apart. And about the only ones wars make rich are Army suppliers and their bankers. 'course, even those two monied-groups are made up of human beings, and all humans have at least a little goodness in them. It's just actin' on that goodness that's hard, sometimes.

“Next, I moved to Crockett, Texas. It's nice they honored my memory by naming the town for me. No one guessed the real Davy Crockett was in their midst. But this story reveals the true, positive spirit of me, Davy Crockett.”

Is life worth living? That all depends on how you live it. It seems to me that Davy just didn't want to be a hero anymore, after the Alamo, and he became more of an everyday good man. He's sort of ridden off into the sunset, the way all of the greatest heroes do – happy and content that they did their best for others and for themselves.

Now, maybe you think I made all this up, but this manuscript is in Davy’s own handwriting. Dated 18 and 75. He wanted me to have it, and had someone leave it with me. Verify, before you trust. I’m turning over a new leaf tomorrow, by going to the newspaper to publish it.

What else is in the newspaper, this Centennial Year? It looks like a man named Alexander Graham Bell has invented the telly-phone, whatever that is. And at the Philadelphia Centennial Fair, a new fruit was introduced, called the Banana. Never heard of it, but it could be good. Ya never know. Here's a story about the Government ordering all Indians onto reservations. And General George Armstrong Custer and all his men just met their Maker, at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. (Views audience directly.) What ever happened to the Golden Rule, anyway? (Back to newspaper.) Oh, in Sports, it says the Indian game of lacrosse was just introduced to Canada and Great Britain.

I hope my heart will be able to enjoy the excitement my manuscript will bring to America and her neighbors, fingers-crossed.
(Picks up fiddle and bow from steamer-trunk, sets them on bed, picks up note from trunk, speaks outright.) They've asked me to play a little music, downstairs, this evening. After all, it's Independence Day! THEE One-Hundredth Birthday of this Great Country. And my newsboy Danny brought me a nice note from my gal -- "I'll meet you in your room, tonight. Love, Sally." I'd best be sprucin' up a little bit. (He does self-check, straightens, viewed mirror, combs hair with comb, views himself in mirror a moment longer, speaks outright.) There, at least you look better than you did a minute ago -- right, Davy?

(Sitting on bed, begins playing "Shenandoah", stops, tears up, wipes eyes, speaks outright.) What was it, I, Davy Crockett said long ago? "Let your tongue speak what your heart thinks." Those poor, brave men who died at the Alamo, on both sides... Don't know why I survived. I'm fessin' up, Lord -- I'm fessin' up. I'm sorry for my sins, but Thank You for my Life, and Thank You for Remembering Davy Crockett. Now I can go home and be with my men again. At last, I'm free! (Wipes eyes, lies down, puts fiddle/bow on his own chest, drifts off... Rap-at-door.)

Sally: Mr. Crocketagne. Dave. It's Sally. I know it's been a while, but I've been looking forward to seeing you again. (Tugs at his sleeve, checks breathing.) Wake up. (No reply.) Am I too late? (Puts single yellow rose on his fiddle, kisses forehead, makes sign of cross, tears up.) Why'd ya have ta leave me now? (Sees manuscript on desk, goes to it, holds it.) What's this? (Reads in it, amazed.) Yes, this makes sense... D-a-a-a-a-yy Crockett. (She sees a thing hid behind books atop furniture-chest, gets it, puts it on DC's face. It's a coonskin cap, tail toward audience. Spotlight next on Davy Crockett asleep, with Sally kneeling in prayer. In second spotlight, stage-center front, a soloist sings Verses 3 and 1 of "Shenandoah". After song, lights out. Curtain calls. Instrumental music from John Wayne's "Alamo" movie-theme plays, as audience exits.)

"Shenandoah" – (Verse 1) Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you.///Away, you rolling river.///Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you.///Away, I'm bound away,///'cross the wide Missouri. (Verse 2) Oh Shenandoah, I love your daughter.///Away, you rolling river.///For her, I'd cross your roaming waters.///Away, I'm bound away.///'Cross the wide Missouri.

"The Yellow Rose of Texas" – (Verse 2) Where the Rio Grande is flowin' and starry skies are bright.///She walks along the river in the quiet of the night.///I know that she remembers where we parted long ago.///I promised to return and not to leave her so. (Chorus) She's the sweetest little rosebud that Texas ever knew.///Her eyes are bright as diamonds, they sparkle like the dew.///You may talk about your Clementine and sing of Rosa Lee.///But the Yellow Rose of Texas is the only girl for me.

"Shenandoah" – (Verse 3, Then Repeat Verse 1) Tis seven long years, since last I've seen you.///And heard your rolling river.///Tis seven long years, since last I've seen you.///Away, we're bound away.///'Cross the wide Missouri.

--For God, Two Very Special People (Matt & Jessica & Their Family-to-Be), My Mom, Extended Families and Friends Especially the Marcous, Muskats, Brunners, O'Caseys, Whales, and To Be Sure the Fitzgeralds of This World, All Our Alma Maters, Producers/Sponsors/Casts/Crews, Venues/Viewers, Publishers/Sellers, Publicists/Reviewers, Counselors, Medics, Administrators, and Archivists/Readers.

--'I believe that in a great city; or even...a village, a great theatre is the outward and visible sign of an inward and probable culture.'-- Sir Lawrence Olivier.
--'If a play is what it ought to be, it must be a religious function, whether it is played before a community of thousands or a community of ten.'–Sean O’Casey.
--'Small talk is interesting, and can get Real interesting, at times.'–David Joseph Marcou, SOJ—OTOR Playwright.
--'But then, ain't all religions curious? If they weren't, you wouldn't get anyone to believe in them.'–Joxer Daly, in SOJ—OTOR.
--'To me one thing alone is certain – we are all one in the tremendous and glorious bond of humanity. Jew, Gentile, bond and free, Tory and Communist can never break away from this grand bond. We are born, we die and we must do the best we can between the day of birth and the night of death.'–Sean O’Casey.
--'When he reached his eighties...he could see nothing except the difference between light and dark... But he...remembered that Beethoven wrote his greatest symphonies when he was deaf,...and that Renoir went on painting when he was so rheumatic that he had to tie the brush to his hand...He never considered himself too old to be instructed about anything from any source....But he was creative and imaginative and he was spiritually alive until the last moment. He had the moral courage of an idealist. Whatever his religious ideas may have been, I think God had reason to be proud of Sean O'Casey.'–Brooks Atkinson.
--'Sacred Heart o' the Crucified Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone...and give us hearts o' flesh! Take away this murdherin' hate... an' give us Thine eternal love!''–Mrs. Tancred, in 'Juno and the Paycock'.
--'I have found life an enjoyable, enchanting, active, and sometimes terrifying experience, and I've enjoyed it completely. A lament in one ear, maybe, but always a song in the other.'–Sean O'Casey.

Introduction: 'Song of Joy—Or the Old Reliables’ is based on Sean O’Casey’s ‘Juno and the Paycock,’ with his 1922 Dublin moved ahead to 1940. This sequel views the possible rise in fortune of the Boyle Family – Captain and wife Juno plus now-married-daughter Mary, who's given birth to and is raising her own daughter from an early affair, plus her young son. Also key is the remembrance in ‘Song of Joy’ of Johnny Boyle, killed in ‘Juno’ for betraying a comrade. ‘Juno’ was strong tragicomedy; ‘Song of Joy’ suggests comic redemption, though comedy often springs from ‘tragic irritation’. But a question lingers: Does human goodness motivate the 'reformed' characters, or the scent of money?

Dramatis Personae:
'Captain' Jack Daniel Boyle
Juno Rosemary Boyle, his wife
Joxer Daly, Captain’s pal
Johnny Boyle, the Boyles’ son-apparition, and apparitions he informed on and/or who killed him
Mary Boyle Fitzgerald, the Boyles’ daughter
Dr. John Dennis Fitzgerald, Mary’s husband
Shivaun Fitzgerald, John’s adoptive- and Mary’s daughter
John ‘Johnny’ Fitzgerald Jr., John Sr. and Mary’s son
Diane Fitzgerald, newly-arrived American businesswoman
Fr. Michael ‘Rocky’ Murphy, St. Bart’s pastor
Agnes Ida Rogers, Joxer’s lady-friend
Alan Matthews, Johnny’s friend, a newsboy
Thomas Daniel ‘Tommy’ Malone, friend of the late Johnny Boyle
Claudine O’Malley, solicitor
Ray O’Reilly, barkeeper
Ray’s family (incl. wife Polly), musicians, dancers, and/or singers
Lizzie O’Hara, bar-hopper who “used to know” Captain and Joxer
Bar-flies, male and female
Mrs. Tancred, murdered Commandant Tancred's mother.

Action:
Act I - Interior of St. Bart’s Church, Dublin, day after Ash Wednesday.
Act II, Scene 1 - Living room and kitchen of Boyle apartment, Dublin, that night.
Act II, Scene 2 - Same apartment, next Tuesday.
Act III, Scene 1 - Pub, Holy Thursday afternoon.
Act III, Scene 2 - Boyle apartment, suppertime, Holy Thursday.
Act III, Scene 3 - Same apartment, two hours later.
wouldn't get anyone to believe in them. But with so many tempting habits around, it's a wonder more people don't smoke, to rest the emotions.

JOXER (BOYLE: Joxer, the priest's in his element. That's how you know he is ready, willin', and able to take us on.

BOYLE: Not now about your reading. If Juno's ta forgive me and my sins, then I need to get behind curtain, NOW!

JOXER: Say, Captain, did you hear what the snail said to the police officer when he was asked to describe being robbed by a tortoise?

JOXER (views his cap in Boyle's hand, smiles): Now, Captain, I was just about to remove me cap. I know how to praise the Saviour, even if I haven't been in church, same as you, since Johnny's funeral. But then, ain't all religions curious? If they weren't, you wouldn't get anyone to believe in them.

BOYLE: (returns cap): Just keep it off a little while. I want me confession heard, and don't you need talkin' about how negligent I've been for 18 years. Tis true Johnny's funeral's long-past, but his dying still haunts Juno. Some folks say Johnny betrayed Commandant Tancred, but my missus thinks it was mistaken identifying.

JOXER: I hope ya know Joxer respects our being together a lot longer than 18 years. I doubt Johnny was a full traitor to the Republican cause, no matter what trots about as 'truth'.

BOYLE: Why I saw Mrs. Madigan smoking like a fiend t'other day, with her stogies and ciggies, in a pub besides.

JOXER: Yes, and the women that smoke now make me think the world is in a terrible state o' chassis. Though his language is semi-coarse, he has a kind of charm. Second Man is Joxer Daly, Boyle's age and his pal. Joxer is slightly taller than Boyle, slim, with spry good looks. He wears an ironic smile, lived-in clothes, and dark green beret.

BOYLE: My word, Joxer, 'twas a mouthful coming from the likes of you. Since when did you learn about paratoxes?

JOXER: I picked it up on me own. I read a little, too.

JOXER: Say, Captain, did you hear what the snail said to the police officer when he was asked to describe being robbed by a tortoise?

JOXER: And wasn't it Joxer beside you when you saw herself sinning against the tobacco laws o' heaven, pretty as ya please? I've even heard she likes women better than men.

JOXER: Next,... let's us...say something like: Oh Lord, what brought us here is the sort of things only You know. Me and Joxer, we haven't been so good always, though we do our best. Help us – me – confess my sins...you know, venal 'er mortal. And once I confess, help Mrs. Boyle forgive me for not being a bigger man the last 18 – make it 20 -- years.

JOXER: Yes, Captain. And what are your sins?
BOYLE: Well, one is my friendship with some pretty un-particular fellows, excepting present company. And my drinking and the chaos I've brung on me family, if it's my own fault, a-tall.

JOXER: Good. Now?

BOYLE: Well, I don't want to tell him about, you-know-what...

JOXER: Looks at him hard? What about the ponies, AND the you-know-what?

BOYLE: I suppose I could tell him I've been lucky with the ponies lately, but not as lucky with them as with somethin' else — through no goodness of me own.

JOXER: Captain, that's a darlin' proposal. And what about Lizzie O'Hara?

BOYLE: There you go again, Joxer, mixing up darlings and confessions. Don't you know darlings don't have anything to do with Captain Jack Boyle and his state o' grace.

JOXER (sneezes twice): Lord, the air in here is gettin' cool.

BOYLE: No, it isn't. Are you editeriorizing on me state o' grace, you ignorant o'...

JOXER (gently raises hand): I don't think you mean editeriorizing -- editorializing's more like it. Also, if we start a brawl, Father'll know you've no reverence for the atmospherics in God's House. And innocent ol' Joxer'll be dragged into his upset, same as if the devil himself pitched in, like the British did when the famine struck a hundred years ago.

BOYLE: Maybe, but I still don't like people sneezin' when I'm talkin'.

JOXER (distracts Boyle): Look, Captain. (Points.) I just saw the curtain shift again, and the light blinked thrice.

BOYLE: I should go in and talk to the good Father.

JOXER: I expect so, Captain -- no time to waste, either.

BOYLE: Aye, I'll go; let me clear me head first. (Shakes it.) I'm going, Joxer, let me go, while I've got me courage up.

JOXER: It ain't me, Captain, who's holding you back, go right ahead. (Pushes him.)

BOYLE (Pushes back): Don't you be pushing at me, Joxer Daly, don't push...

Priest -- good-looking, only a bit portly, at 45 -- emerges. Seeing Captain stopped, and sensing the old man wants to confess, priest points at confessional. Boyle nods. Priest re-enters stall, and Boyle, after looking back at Joxer, enters penitent stall. Joxer sits, as green light above penitent stall turns red. Church-door opens. Juno enters. Instinctively, Joxer moves towards confessional, to warn Captain, but she enters too fast. She's dressed in a dark green dress, black shoes, and red sweater, small holes in elbows. She's her husband's age, hard-work-handsome, salt-and-pepper hair.

JUNO: Good, it's time you were makin' peace with the Lord. I agree with you one hundred percent, Mrs. Boyle.

JOXER: Whatever 'tis, I'll find out... Now, are you going to confess, as well?

JUNO: I don't think you mean editorializing -- editorializing's more like it. Also, if we start a brawl, Father'll know you've no reverence for the atmospherics in God's House. And innocent ol' Joxer'll be dragged into his upset, same as if the devil himself pitched in, like the British did when the famine struck a hundred years ago.

JOXER: But I'm in need of prayer, Mrs. Boyle. (Works it) I just saw the curtain shift again, and the light blinked thrice.

BOYLE: Well, one is my friendship with some pretty un-particular fellows, excepting present company. And my drinking and the chaos I've brung on me family, if it's my own fault, a-tall.

JUNO: God bless you, Joxer Daly, because I doubt anyone else will.

(Penitent curtain opens; light goes green. Captain emerges, heads to Joxer, kneeling.)
JOXER (looks around): Captain, how did it go?
BOYLE (relieved): Mother o’ God, it’s like I’ve been waiting a lifetime to get all those things off me chest.
JOXER: What did you tell Father Michael -- everything?
BOYLE: For a fact, I did. I told him about my skipping Mass Sundays, being drunk for Johnny's funeral, cursing, and idleness, Lizzie O'Hara, and even the big one. I didn’t want to, but...
JOXER: You told him about Lizzie O’Hara -- Jeez, that’s human of you -- PLUS the big one? What’d he say?
BOYLE: 'All’s well that ends well.' 'tis a fine thing to say in confession.
JOXER: Did he give you any ideas about how to tell your wife and family, about the you-know-what?
BOYLE: He said, 'Leave it to the Lord. You’ll divulge the news when He wants you to.' Fine, but Juno’d have a flare-up, if she found out from anyone but me. And when I tell her, I’ll be lucky if she doesn’t boil me alive.
JOXER (Looks round): You’ll tell your wife a lot, soon-enough. ‘tis your usual way.
BOYLE: Yes, I’ll tell her I confessed, when time’s right. It’s me only chance. She’ll understand, Joxer, won’t she? She’s a darlin’ woman, and I should be thankin’ me lucky stars she’s still around.
JOXER (looks round): I’m not sure, Captain... but yes, Mrs. Boyle’s a darlin’ woman. Didn’t she back Mary after Johnny died. Four-flusher Bentham left Mary high and dry? But whisper. ‘tis a sleek animal, this church, with big ears.
BOYLE: Bentham was a jackass, while John Fitzgerald is next to St. Peter. I’m thankful for Charlie too, a darlin’ man!
JOXER: Yes, a darlin’ man.

Door opens. Woman about 28 enters, wearing red/green dress and blue shoes, with brown purse. She goes to them.

DIANE: Excuse me, Gentlemen.
BOYLE: G’day, Miss. Anything we can do for you?
DIANE: Is the priest hearing confessions Father Michael Murphy?
JOXER: That he is, Father Michael himself.
DIANE: No one answered the rectory door. I was worried he was out.
BOYLE: I’m not an expert on comings and goings of priests, but ‘tis Father Michael you’ve found.
DIANE: Have you been here long?
JOXER: Seems so, but it’s been only about 10 minutes, right Captain?
BOYLE: Aye, Joxer.
DIANE: My name’s Diane Fitzgerald. I’ve flown in from America, to learn my family history, and to do business, too.
BOYLE: I’m Captain Jack Boyle and this is me pal, Joxer Daly. (Shake.) I’ve heard there’s those new aeroplanes about, but didn’t know you could fly in from America. A Fitzgerald? That’s me son-in-law’s name.
DIANE: I made it roundabout, Chicago to New York to Paris to Liverpool to here. Where's John from?
BOYLE: His ancestors came from the interior. I don’t know much more.
DIANE: My ancestors did, too, but I don’t know all the details yet.
BOYLE: My son-in-law’s a doctor and gentleman. He’s relieved the pain in me legs for 18 years.
DIANE: My company asked me to start a branch office here. Jesse & Sons does export-import. I’d like to meet John.
BOYLE: It won’t be any trouble. John's home every night by six, unless he makes a late house-call. He's in till six, next mornin’. You can phone him at: 1688.
DIANE: That’s decent, Captain. I'm staying at the Green Coulee Hotel on O'Connell Road. Where do you live?
BOYLE: Wife and me stay at 148 Gallagher Road. We have a telly-phone, 1916. We can take you now to meet me missus. I’d invite you to supper, but missus might serve liver, and most people don't like it like she does, includin’ me.
DIANE: I wouldn’t want to inconvenience you, Captain. Another time. I’ve just arrived and have to get situated.
BOYLE: Yes, meantime we’ll stock provisions for your visit. Now, I need to start home for supper. Mrs. Boyle’ll have a flare-up if I’m not on-time. (Winks to Joxer)
JOXER: Yes, master o’ her domain, she is, master o’ her domain.
DIANE: Then I look forward to seeing you again. Maybe I can visit your John and family, too. Nice meeting you both.
BOYLE: It was decent meetin’ you, too.

Pair exit. Priest emerges from stall, sees Diane.

DIANE: Are you Father Michael ‘Rocky’ Murphy? I'm Diane Fitzgerald, from America.
FR. MICHAEL: ‘tis me himself. (Shakes.) The Rocky comes from the rocks I knocked from guys’ heads in the ring.
DIANE: I heard you’re a boxer.
FR. MICHAEL: Make that was a boxer. Not now. Bad for me health.
DIANE: But I did hear you were a very good boxer.
FR. MICHAEL: I held me own, especially versus Billy Quinn for the championship in '22. Why it was a real tussle, I...

Musician plays Beethoven's 'Song of Joy'. As hymn, it's Van Dyke's 'Joyful, Joyful'.

FR. MICHAEL (loudly): Music's a bit loud. Let’s go to the rectory.
DIANE (loudly): Yes, that’s a good idea.

They exit -- music grows louder, stops.

Act II, Scene 1

Action: The living room and kitchen of Boyle flat, pre-supper, same day. The Boyles have moved up a bit in class since 1922, with aid from Mary and John. There's a radio, stage right, with phone on top. Back, off-right, is Juno and Captain's bedroom. Also at back is a cabinet with delftware. Above is a picture of the Sacred Heart, with smaller picture of the Blessed Virgin below. On cabinet, too, is a red votive candle. Stage left, is half-door. Juno cooks, stage left. Table has delftware, utensils on it. A small ice-box and cupboard are
MARY: Ma, where are the photos of my brother Johnny? In the old flat you kept them on bedroom shelf. Since you moved last year, everything’s shifted.

JUNO: They’re in the cabinet out here, bottom drawer. I thought, ’Gonna need them soon.’ Now they’re in an album. MARY (Sets down her photos, opens drawer, gets album): I want to compare my Johnny’s early pictures with Johnny Boyle’s. (Sits on couch.) I’d like to make another family album and could use one or two pictures of Johnny Boyle, too.

JUNO: (turning liver at fire, glances up): What are you learnin’, Mary?

MARY: There’s a real resemblance, early. Now I’m comparing their teen photos. Yes, there’s a similarity later, too.

JUNO (places tray of bread on kitchen table): Your brother was a good boy and would have been successful, if he’d steered clear of a couple bad Republicans, though we do have a republic today, ’cause enough good men put it through.

MARY: I hope my own Johnny appreciates all we have today, but I still wish your Johnny was here to enjoy them, too.

JUNO: My Johnny never had his own family, other than us.

MARY: When he was 6 or 7, he pulled home turf on his rickety, old wagon from them with plenty, to burn on our fire.

BOYLE: Well, Joxer and me were just praying, first time in years. It helped.

JUNO: Anything else you want to tell us, Captain – about the kinds of sins you asked forgiveness for?

MARY: When he was 6 or 7, he pulled home turf on his rickety, old wagon from them with plenty, to burn on our fire.

BOYLE: Like it or not, you’re goin’ to have to unburden more of yourself soon-enough.

MARY: ‘I hope my own Johnny appreciates all we have today, but I still wish your Johnny was here to enjoy them, too.

BOYLE: Aye, that’s what we Irish would have to do.

MARY: But wars are such bloody businesses, at times you’re stuck fighting and don’t know why. Johnny Boyle fought here, and got killed by his mates. They may have called him traitor, but that doesn’t mean he was. He was a scared kid.

JUNO: For all the fighting in Ireland, the North’s still not free. Let’s eat.

BOYLE: Right, Mrs. Boyle.

(Mary and Boyle sit at table. Silent grace. Mrs. Boyle serves.)
BOYLE: You know, this liver tastes better than I remember. What's in it – champieen?
JUNO: Not much, but the finest calf’s liver from Butcher Bob’s. Come from London last year, he carves Masterpieces!
MARY: I've got to stop at Bob's, and get your new recipe, too, Ma.
JUNO: That's why I'm here, Daughter-o-Mine.

Telephone rings. Juno answers.

JUNO: Hello, Mrs. Boyle. Yes John, Mary’s here. (Motions to Mary to come.) John said he'll be late. House-call.

BOYLE: He's always makin’ house-calls; wouldn’t be a good doctor, if he didn’t.

MARY: (takes phone from Juno, who sits): Hello, John. Where are you? Oh, still at office. When will you be home? 9:30? I’ll start in about an hour and be home before you. Ma and Da, John says he looks forward to seeing you soon.

JUNO (Loudly): Same here, Dear.

MARY: My supper’s getting cold, John, so I’ll see you at home at 9:30? I love you, too. (Hangs up, sits.)

BOYLE: It’s too bad John’s parents passed, Ambrose and Caroline. They’d have loved to know more about our family.

MARY: Yes, Da, it’s sad they’ve passed, but they raised a good, strong son, and have grandchildren, like you and Ma. What about your family, and Ma’s? Do ya know any more about them now?

JUNO: We know my Ma, along with my sister, raised a bit of you and Shivaun, before passing, but you know my Da died before he saw his grandkids -- Captain?

BOYLE: I know me Ma and Da died before they saw their grandkids -- they went to a finer place than they knew here. You know about cousin Ellison, Mary. I didn’t have brothers or sisters, really. The kids I was raised with were cousins, and it took me a while to talk about the nasty things we did to each other.

MARY: Like what, Da?

BOYLE: Like when cousin Larry and me got in trouble for stealin’ candy from Ol’ Kennedy’s store. God Almighty, I thought the gard’d put us in jail for sure. He just kicked us each in the seat o’ the pants and said fly right. Good ol’ Larry told gard he hadn’t swiped the sweet poison; I had. Never did I steal candy again. (Looks.) Well, almost never.

JUNO (smiles at Mary, who smiles back): Tell Mary about when you and Kenny O’Kelly went off the deep end of Liffey pier.

BOYLE: Well Kenny ‘n’ me went down to the Liffey to catch some fryin’ fish. Soon, Kenny was pokin’ me with his pole and I was pokin’ him back. Next thing, we poked each other into the river! By God’s grace, there was a fisherman saw us and pulled us up. We couldn’t swim. Later, at sea, I learned to stay close to the innermost, knew me limits.

MARY: And your other cousins, did they go fishing with you, too?

BOYLE: Just Sheila, runt o’ me Aunt Susie’s litter. She may have been tiny, but fished with the best. And she was cute.

JUNO: She was your only cousin still single when I married you, Captain. Tis a pity she married that Australian gentleman, and moved there with him. She was fun.

BOYLE (sips milk): I’ll bet she grew to be six foot, a real Amazon! (Giggles.) Stranger things have happened, Ladies.

(Mary hangs up, goes to kitchen, dries dishes.)

JUNO: Is Mrs. Murray okay, Mary?

MARY: Yes, she found her pills. They’re part crutch, but they also stimulate her heart, if the blood’s not flowing right.

JUNO: I could use one myself, at times. I’ve plenty stress on my heart, things are improving.

MARY: Yes, we’ve been lucky lately. The poor people on Continent are fighting a war. At least it hasn’t touched us yet.

JUNO: We need to be thankful -- our situation used to be much worse.

MARY: True, Ma. When John arrived, Johnny Boyle had just passed. The Lord closed one door, and opened a window.

JUNO: I can get the dishes, Mary. You check on Mrs. Murray.

MARY: Would you mind, Ma? I’d just like to make sure she gets both pills, and lies down.

JUNO: Go. It’ll be dark soon, so get home by sunset.

MARY: Right. (She puts on sweater and coat, kisses Boyle.) Bye, Da, I have to go.

BOYLE: Aye. ’Twas good seein’ ya again, Darlin’.

MARY: Thanks for looking at the photos with me. (She picks up photos) Ma, can I borrow these two of Johnny Boyle?

JUNO: Of course, Dear. Just make sure you return them, after you make copies. Paul’s Camera can do them reasonably.

MARY: I’ll bring them back to you soon. Or maybe Teddy or Rudy Nelson, Paul's assistants, can drop them off.

JUNO (dries hands): Either way’s fine, Dear. Twas good to see you, Mary. See you again soon. (Hugs her)

BOYLE (rises and kisses her on cheek): Yes, Mary. Oh, me and Joxer met an American lady today, Diane Fitzgerald; said her ancestors are from Limerick. I said we’d have her over for supper, to meet you and John. She’ll phone us soon.

MARY: We’ll look forward to that. Thanks for supper.

JUNO: Say hi to Mrs. Murray. Tell her to eat right, take her pills, and sleep tight. After Mr. Murray’s death, she was a too shy, but thankfully she allows you and John to visit more now.

MARY: She’s got more faith now than right after her husband died, 10 years ago. She's holding her own at 82.
JUNO: It helps Father Michael hears her confession and brings communion weekly. He may have been a boxer once, but he takes off his gloves for the Lord’s work.

MARY: He’s a fine man. Thanks again. (Parents smile.) Take care, you two.

JUNO: We will. Dear. Say hi to John and children.

MARY: Yes, see you soon. (She exits.)

BOYLE (waves): Don’t talk to any strangers, Mary, especially if his name's Kenny O'Kelly.

MARY (distant); I won’t. Da. Thanks!

BOYLE (closes door): That girl is magic, Mrs. Boyle.

JUNO: Oh, I just remembered -- Mrs. McCarthy is baking a cake for her grandson's birthday tomorrow, and asked for some flour. (In kitchen, pours flour into bowl.) I need to talk with you about today, but it'll have to wait. You behave, don't go out nippin' brew with Joxer. You two have been better lately, but Joxer still likes mischief. Did you hear me?

BOYLE (nods as Juno exits): You can count on me, Mrs. Boyle. I'm never going to drink again -- Never! (Door closes. Boyle goes to phone, dials.) C'mon, Katie Lynch McShane, answer the bloody telly-phone! Katie -- it's Captain Boyle. Is Joxer there? (He drums his fingers on radio, pulls something from pocket.) Joxer, the missus just left. I don't feel right about me confession. Juno might find out about the big one, too soon. And I've got to contact you-know-who, but don't want to call her till you and me have talked. Okay, I'll meet you at McInity's in 10 minutes. Maybe I can get back home before Mrs. Boyle misses me. Very funny -- if you were married, your missus'd be used to missin' you, too. (Slams receiver down.) Damn that Joxer -- he's a smart one now, and forever will be one! (Gets coat, exits. Lights out.)

Act II, Scene 2

Action: Boyle apartment, next Tuesday. Extra chairs. Guests haven't arrived. JUNO stirs stew, replenishes fire with turf. She goes to cupboard, gets two bread-loaves, then butter from icebox, humming “If You Ever Go Across the Sea to Ireland” Knock at door. JUNO opens it. It's Joxer, holding beret.

JUNO: Joxer! What a surprise. (He's suddenly scared to enter, slams beret on head, turns to go.) Oh no you don’t, Mr. Joxer Daly! (She grabs his belt. pulls him in, walks him to couch, and forces him to sit.) Now, what brings you here?

JOXER (No choice): I, I, I came to meet Captain Boyle, and I didn’t think you were here. Mrs. Madigan said I should be here… (half under his breath) Bloody Madigan Mischief… (louder, faster) but I don't know why she said that.

JUNO: Okay, you're here, so tell me more about other day -- Captain's confession and all. You don't have to stutter, just say what it means, good and bad.

JOXER (Nervously moves beret in hands): Well, I'm not used to easin' my mind like this. No disrespect, Mrs. Boyle, but it's been a very long time since I've been in your home when you've been present and accounted for. But, it's like this -- the Captain has been bettin', not often, but betting nonetheless... on the ponies.

JUNO: I KNOW you both bet on the ponies. I'd like to choke the Captain, every time he pinches my bread and egg money for ponies' sake. You two should belong to that group in America, the Old Farts Club. They never pass resolutions, only gas. No, the ponies are bad, but the Captain must have confessed some other things, too. What?

JOXER: Well, he's settin' on somethin', like a good deal. You see, we're aiming to get some furniture. But the Captain thinks if he tells you now, he won't get the deal that's cookin'. It's part superstition, yet strong superstition all the same.

JOXER: Around Easter.

JUNO: Doesn't seem superstition, but guilt. Mixing business and Easter comin'-and-goin's. When'll he spill the beans?

JOXER (Semi-guarded): Well, the Captain will know. When he tells you, it'll be when he's left sin behind.

JUNO: He has a funny way, but I think that’s a fair summimg up, Joxer. Truth will win out. I'll know what to do when time's right, too. Do you want to tell me anything else, like about his social life?

JOXER (Lies, harries.): No, Mrs. Boyle. I've got to go.

JUNO: Well, you’d best find Captain and bring him home. We’ll be eating when Mary and John’s family and Diane get here, so hurry. One other thing, Joxer, why'd you tell me this? For 18 years we haven’t spoken a civil word together.

JOXER: Well, he's settin' on somethin', like a good deal. You see, we're aiming to get some furniture. But the Captain thinks if he tells you now, he won’t get the deal that’s cookin’. It’s part superstition, yet strong superstition all the same.

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JOXER: I’ve met a lady meself. And she likes me just for being me! I don’t want to jinx me chances by seeing me pal foul it up any more with you. It sounds strange, but stranger things have happened. Mum’s the word, Mrs. Boyle?

JOXER (smiles): Mum it 'tis. That’s a good-enough confession for now, out you go. Tell Captain to bring you along for supper. Tell him you saved my life, that is made me smile, on the street today, and I asked you to join us in thanks.

Having pushed Joxer out door, JUNO stirs, tastes stew, turns on radio. Billie Holiday sings 'Pennies from Heaven'. She dances, then slices bread to the beat, plates slices. Knock at door -- she turns radio off and answers it. It's Mary, John, and children. John Sr. is tall, handsome, about 45, with brown beard, full head of hair, wire-rims. He wears brown suit, black shoes and tie. His overcoat is dark blue; he has two bottles of wine. Shivaun is 18, pretty and feisty, with red hair. She wears bright red dress, dark blue shoes, and coat. Her freckles stun. John Jr. is 14, medium build, brown hair. He's less presumptuous than his quick-wit half-sister, but can be feisty, too. He wears black pants, shoes, and tie, white shirt, brown overcoat. He's handsome, intelligent.

JUNO: Hello. All. Good to see you.

MARY and JOHN: Hello, Ma.

KIDS: Hi, Gran'.

JUNO (motions to couch): Sit. The Captain and Joxer should be here soon. I asked Joxer to come. What's become of Diane Fitzgerald?

MARY: She had to go to hotel to change clothes. Won't be long, Ma.

JUNO: I'm looking forward to meeting her.

JUNO (Grabs coats, goes into bedroom, emerges, hands teens magazines.): Children, I know these magazines once were your parents, but you can read more in them now. (Points.) There’s a nifty photo-story on animals at London Zoo. It’s tells about the funny things they do for people, and how kids love them. Look at the penguin reading a newspaper!
JUNO: Where have you been, Captain?

BOYLE: Hello, how's everyone?

JUNO: IRA said he betrayed them; they killed him. I think it was mistaken identity. Ireland can be a cruel mistress.

JOHNNY FITZGERALD: And why did he die?

JUNO: I was so proud of him. I'd give my own life to see Johnny live still.

MARY: When he was a tyke, he'd pull his rickety, old wagon to the neighbors and gather a few pieces of their extra turf to bring home to Diane, stirs pot

JUNO: Either my mind or my hearing is slipping. When all is said and done, the war was mainly a matter of holes and ditches.

JOHN SR.: Right. Do you know it?

DIANE: This bottle will be fine. (Sipping cup just poured.) It’s Merlow, isn’t it?

DIANE: Heart and Soul.

MARY: You must have been happy in Chicago.

JOHN SR.: Some say Hitler wouldn’t have come to power, if the Great War hadn’t been fought. Had to do with war – reparations – made Germany poor, made Hitler powerful. That, and America’s Army left Europe. The Emergency now is shaping up to be a Second Great War.

DIANE: Reasonably, but adventures there began wearing thin, which is why I was transferred here, that and I couldn’t drink with the big-shots anymore. Too much makes me sick. One glass now hits the spot. This morning, I signed a deal with a customer for 100,000 pounds. Before, I’d drink all night over that, but no more early death for me.

MARY: Your business was very good today. Have you learned anything so far about the Irish?

DIANE: Yes, the Christmas Truce of 1914. But Hitler is more evil than the Kaiser was, and our men may have to fight him, but I still don’t see why the Great War had to be fought. It was two-way power politics. Neither side was just.

MARY: Yes, the Christmas Truce of 1914. But Hitler is more evil than the Kaiser was, and our men may have to fight him, but I still don’t see why the Great War had to be fought. It was two-way power politics. Neither side was just.

MARY: Your business was very good today. Have you learned anything so far about the Irish?

DIANE: Heart and Soul.

JOHN SR.: Mr. Engen taught you literacy, Shivaun, not berating teachers. (To Juno) He's at Patrick Pearse School.

(Hand-door opens, Captain and Joxer enter.)

BOYLE: Hello, how's everyone?

JUNO: Where have you been, Captain?
BOYLE: Joxer and me have just been transacting a deal. I’ll explain later.
JUNO: Okay, as long as you explain soon-enough. I’m glad you brought Joxer for supper. He made me smile today.
BOYLE: Aye, Mrs. Boyle. As for everyone else, how’s my fav-rite group of humanity?
SHIV AUN: Grandda, how many Nazis does it take to screw in a light bulb?
BOYLE: You’ve got me, Shivaun -- how many?
SHIV AUN: Twenty-one – 20 to kill the Communist ladder-holder and one to study a year to figure out how it goes in.
JOHNNY: And you know the Communist ladder-holder, don’t ya, Sis?
BOYLE: That’s a good one, Shivaun. But what does the Pope say for grace?
SHIV AUN: In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Whoever eats the fastest gets the most!
BOYLE: You’re learnin’, Darlin’, you’re learnin’.
JUNO: Hush. Don’t speak about the Holy Father that way. Speaking of eating, supper’s ready. Come and sit, Everyone. (Group sits.)
EVERYONE: Amen! (Lights out.)

Act III, Scene 1
Action: Pub, O’Casey Avenue, Holy Thursday afternoon. Stage right is bar. Bartender is Ray O’Reilly, a friend of Captain and Joxer’s. ‘Belle of Belfast City,’ also called ‘I’ll Tell Me Ma,’ is played/ sung by Ray’s family. Patrons are at bar and tables, worker-types. One woman wears a smart green dress, red coat, blue hat and beautiful red shoes. She sips gin and tonic; others drink stout. Father Murphy talks with a man at table. In back, Ray’s wife, Polly, talks with their daughter, when music ends. An amply-endowed woman of 30 drifts about; keeps eye on Captain, after he enters. She’s Lizzie O’Hara, flaunting her stuff to catch Captain’s Eye, succeeding at times, as she mingles. A newsboy enters, 15-year-old Cockney Alan Matthews, moved in recent years to Dublin from London with his mom. His eye is slightly ulcerated.

RAY: Hey, Alan, how you doin’?
ALAN: Good.
RAY: You’ve been here about a year, right? How you liking Ireland so far?
ALAN: Well, Ray, I may not have been born here, but I got here as soon as I could. (Hands Ray a paper):
RAY: Are you almost ready for your surgery?
ALAN: Yep, I’m hoping my eye’ll improve soon as doc operates. (Ray nods.) Traffic’s picking up on O’Casey Avenue.
RAY: (gives Alan coin): That’s good, ‘cause I like it busy in here.
ALAN: It should be busy tonight, even if it is Holy Thursday.
RAY: My family and me’d be paupers, if people didn’t patronize this place, even round holy-days. Say hi to your ma.
ALAN: I will. See ya later, Ray. (Exits.)
CLAUDINE: Barkeeper, what time is it?
BARKEEPER: Quarter to five, Ma’am. Why?
CLAUDINE: I’m waitin’ on a coupla fellows.
RAY: Which coupla fellas?
CLAUDINE: Jack Boyle and Joxer Daly.
RAY: Haven’t seen ’em since Monday, but they come in sometimes. You got business?
CLAUDINE: Sort of. Did you know a man named Charlie O’Keeffe?
RAY: Matter o’ fact, I did.
CLAUDINE: I’m his solicitor, Claudine O’Malley.
RAY: Pleasure to make your acquaintance, Miss O’Malley. (Shake hands.)
CLAUDINE: Do the fellas I’m lookin’ for ever talk about Mr. O’Keeffe?
RAY (watches his p’s and q’s): Not to speak of.
CLAUDINE: Good. I don’t need them spreading rumors about Charlie.

Two men start fight.

FIRST MAN: Well now, Jerry, what makes you think you can take me, even on your best day?
SECOND MAN: Paddy, I can take you on me worst day, and today ain’t me worst.
PADDY: Well then, go ahead and try, you paltry-poor excuse for ‘Two-Ton Tony’.
JERRY: I will, you loudmouthed hooligan.
PADDY: Loudmouth yourself.

Jerry throws drink in Paddy’s face. Paddy punches Jerry’s nose. Tussle. Ray comes out front. Fr. Murphy referees.

FR. MICHAEL: Marquis of Queensberry Rules, Men, Marquis of Queensberry Rules!
Ray can’t pry the brawlers apart, goes back behind bar; gets handgun. He fires into ceiling; fight stops.
RAY: Now, you two shake hands or I’ll put some lead into your bottoms and elsewhere, too. Anyone else want a piece o’ me pistol? (Quiet.) They don’t call me Old-Reliable Ray O’Reilly for nothin’, like a great Army unit. (Stashes gun.)

The two brawlers shake hands.

THIRD MAN: Hey, that’s my drink, Paddy.
PADDY (drinks some): Not anymore.
RAY: Make peace, not war! Bantry has shamrocks, and I have brew here for all of you, like at St. Patrick’s Irishfest.
FR. MICHAEL: Right ya are, Ray.
PADDY: Yeah, right ya are. (Smirks) Let’s drink to peace and love. ‘tis as good as anything.

He drinks up. Ray fills others’ glasses. Miss O’Malley gives Paddy and Jerry her card. Polly comes over.

POLLY: Ray, can we get some halves.
RAY (fills glasses): Yep, there ya go, Me Beautiful Wife. That'll keep family happy a while.
POLLY: Thanks, Hon. I hope business picks up again, after that tiff.
RAY: It should, Me Darlin’ Polly, it should.

Captain and Joxer enter. Captain wears green shirt.

RAY: A near-donnybrook. I ended it with me pistol. What’ll you have, Gents? Still on a no-Guinness regime?
BOYLE (feigning weariness): Aye, Ray. Two ‘fresh’ orange juices.
RAY: I’ll set ’em up.

BOYLE: Thanks, Miss O’Malley, ‘tis a fine day. My pal Joxer and me have been noticin’ the weather, inside and outside. (Brawlers exit. Priest, pal move.) Now, what about Charlie, before he died in that auto accident in America?
CLAUDINE: You know the deal, Captain: 60% for you, 40% for me, like I’ve said all along.
BOYLE: Well now, t’other day Joxer and me were talkin’ with another solicitor, who said it’s highway robbery, the deal you been cookin’ up this Lent.
CLAUDINE: Take it or leave it, Gentlemen.
BOYLE: Slow, Miss O’Malley. Our friend says we can take you to court -- for more than 60%. That’s in Charlie’s Will.
CLAUDINE: Now you know I should hold this matter up in court a few months, or longer. You might never see a penny of Charlie’s money.

BOYLE: That’s a possibility, but I say ‘tis time we both put up or shut up.
CLAUDINE: What do you mean?
Joxer: Tell her, Captain.

BOYLE: Miss O’Malley, I need three-quarters of Charlie’s 100,000 pounds -- 75,000. Our friend says no good solicitor takes more than 25%. We got Rights – not like when my daughter’s first man-friend fouled up our inheritance from cousin Ellison, 18 years ago.
CLAUDINE: You may have Rights, but I do, too. I deserve a decent share of Charlie’s inheritance. His estate was in a big mess, until I worked on it. You’re lucky he liked you two. To me, it seems you shared a drinkers’ night out. Now, you’d best be taking my offer, ‘cause no one will think you were longtime friends of Charlie’s.

BOYLE: We respect that, Miss O’Malley, but maybe this’ll do better. If you’ll take a little less than 40,000, say 30,000, we’ve got a deal. If that ain’t enough, we’ll have to take you to court and draw this out, even if no one gets the money.
CLAUDINE: We might have a deal, Captain, if you’ll sign the papers soon. But I want 35%, 35,000 pounds. You’ll get 65,000. Should I draw up papers?

BOYLE (looks at Joxer, then Claudine, then Joxer): That you should, Miss O’Malley. Joxer, Me Boyo, let’s head to my place for a tasty beef and potato supper?
Joxer: Sounds grand, Captain. (Drinks up.) Ah! I’m getting in the habit of me orange juice, and Miss O’Malley brings out the best in me thirst.

BOYLE: Miss O’Malley, if you’ll call me when papers are ready, we’ll do real business.
CLAUDINE: Yes. I’ll phone soon. (Boyle nods.) I’ll be in touch. (Starts to pay.)

BOYLE: It’s me treat, Miss O’Malley. (Puts coins on bar.) I’m feelin’ right ‘bout us now.

BOYLE: Thanks, Captain. (They shake.) I’ll see you and Joxer again soon, then.

BOYLE: Aye, soon.

(Miss O’Malley exits.)

BOYLE: Joxer, I used ta think women like Miss O’Malley were a nice bit o’ skirt, and her wearing some pretty gorgeous red shoes (Joxer nods in the affirmative) to boot, but sometimes it pays to go back to old-reliables: find out what’s what, make your mind up, stick to your guns. We liked Charlie before we knew what money he had. He liked us, too. And we drank with him four or five nights, not only one.

Joxer: Aye, Captain, you’re making sense. It reminds me of what Sr. Ellen Anita Bernard used ta say, “Find the truth, and act on it.” Old-reliables is what’s needed now, like Ray’s nickname. Sr. Ellen was one of them, just like her sister-sisters. In Wisconsin, USA, those nuns pray non-stop, have been for more than 50 years. Sister also said, “Humans do what’s possible; and FOR humans, God does what's impossible.”
FR. MICHAEL: Did I hear you say ‘Old-Reliables’. (Comes over.) I know Ray goes by that moniker, but it was also what they called Donny O'Toole, whom I fought in 1920 and ‘21. Now, there was an ugly type of old-reliable. I bloodied him both fights, knocked him out, too. ‘Twasn’t pretty, but those fights led to me championship bout with Billy Quinn in ‘22. ’Course, Donny got his chance at the championship later, and won it.

Joxer: You fought for the championship with Billy Quinn, Father? How’d you do?
FR. MICHAEL: Well, I was w-a-a-a-y ahead on points, mind ya, and I was bobbin’ and weavin’ like any good fighter. All of a sudden, Billy hits me with an uppercut, and BOOM, down I go! Couldn’t get up by the 10 count. 'Twas a very sad day for the Murphy Family. I fought two more fights and won both, just didn’t get another title-shot.

BOYLE: The ring's loss was our gain, Father. We just did a little business with solicitor, what you and me talked about, early Lent. Won’t be long ‘til that inheritance ismine and Joxer’s. We’ll make sure the Church gets its share, too.

FR. MICHAEL: Good, Captain. If more people spent more time in confessional and boxing ring, and less time pulverizin’ pubs, the world would be a nicer place. (Returns to table.)
BOYLE (inspects his hands): Sayin’ the rosary last night musta helped

(Lizzie approaches, cleavage showing.)

LIZZIE: Hello, Captain. You too, Joxer. What's cookin’?

BOYLE (Nervous): Not much, Lizzie. Me and Joxer were just havin' a drink. We've got to go.

LIZZIE: Seems I heard something about percentages. Sure sounded like business.

BOYLE: They’re doin’ a play 'cross river. Family ting, OJ for the soul sort o’ drama.

BOYLE: Seoul’s in Koraea. Ray, where are the owners, Tyler and Joy?

RAY: They’re doin’ a play ‘cross river. Family ting, OJ for the soul sort o’ drama.

FR. MICHAEL (Tips glass to duo.): G’day, Gentlemen. See you in church. (Boyle, Daly wave. Lizzie shakes her head.)

RAY (Nods): And there go a couple of Old-Reliables, too.

(Dynamic duo exit. 'Wearing of the Green' is played and sung. Ray's daughter dances reel, stops. Tableau. Lights out.)

Ten-Minute Intermission.

Act III, Scene 2


MARY: Ma, isn’t it nice that Mr. Penney took photos when Johnny Boyle and I were young?

JUNO: Mr. Penney had a gift. Pity we didn’t see him every day, but he'd his business to run.

MARY: (Puts album by couch.) He took pictures while delivering. Grocers don’t deliver now; doctors do.

JUNO: ‘tis different today... Oh, there’s some unfinished business to address tonight.

MARY: What's that, Ma?

JUNO: Oh somethin’ your Da needs to reveal. (Knock) At last. Who’s knockin’?

MALE VOICE: It’s most o’ the rest o’ the Fitzgerald family.

MARY: (opens door): Hello, My Darlings. Where have you been?

SHIVAUN: We’ve been talking to Diane on telephone. She’ll be here soon.

JOHN SR. (Sets down black bag): Yes, sorry we’re late.

MARY: They’re doin’ a play ‘cross river. Family ting, OJ for the soul sort o’ drama.

JOHNNY: Diane is bringin’ me a present. Right, Da?

JUNO: Good, but has anyone seen Captain and Joxer?

JOHN SR.: Diane saw ‘em on O’Casey Avenue. Don’t know what they were doin’.

MARY: Sean Fitzgerald of Limerick was John's great-grandpa, too, making him your great-great-grandpa, Johnny.

JOHNNY: They’re beautiful, Diane. Who gave them to you?

DIANE: Cousin Sammy Fitzgerald in Limerick. We’d been told by a man half-German and half-Irish in Chicago, a Mr. Brunner, to look up Father Murphy about these matters. Since Father knows the priest at St. Rose’s, he put us up to this. Along the way, we learned more about the Fitzgeralds, including Sean.

JOHNNY: Mary and I raise roses, and have got a few gladiolas in our greenhouse, too.

SHIVAUN: Oh, Da, you don’t raise them. Mother does.

MARY: Thanks, Daughter, for declarin’ the truth. But your Da does his share as the leadin’ physician in Dublin.

Boyle and Joxer enter with a friend of Johnny’s, Alan Matthews, the newsboy. The three are dressed in new shirts, pants, and shoes. But Boyle and Joxer still wear their usual caps.
BOYLE: I hope it's okay. I found Alan Matthews walking about, and we asked his ma, Susan Patricia, if he could sup with us. I thought Johnny'd like seein' him.

JOHNNY: Hey, Alan, what’s cookin’?

ALAN: Hey, Johnny -- your gran’s supper, by the sweet aroma o’ things. (Laughter.)

BOYLE: Once Alan came along, we had to buy him some new clothes and shoes. Show everyone, Alan, like in store.

Alan turns slowly, to oohs and aahs. The two boys go to couch to read magazines.

JUNO: We get use from the English magazines you brought, Mary. Alan, when you lived in London, did you see these?

ALAN: A bit -- we couldn't buy them, but I had a friend whose parents did.

MARY: The photos and stories are lively. I hope a similar magazine is made by the Irish soon.

JOHN SR.: It will be, Mary. The Irish aren't rich by English standards -- though Picture Post caters to everyday people, too. But with shipping, it runs into some coin to purchase a subscription here.


Mary gets the boys to sit at table, bringing extra chairs first, and the group sits.

JUNO: Now, if the Captain'll lead us in prayer…

BOYLE: Bless us Oh Lord and these Thy gifts we're about to receive from Thy bounty through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Juno and Mary begin handing dishes round.

MARY: Mother, this meat is delicious. What did you add to it?

JUNO: Just salt and pepper, and some wine. What do you think, Diane?

DIANE: It tastes just like my mom’s. Where did you get the recipe?

JUNO: Mary said you were talking about American food, and remembered what you said went into your mother’s roast. It’s little enough I can do for a Fitzgerald.

DIANE: Thank you. What do you think, Boys?

ALAN and JOHNNY: Tastes great, yuppity, yup, yup!!

DIANE: You’re even talkin’ like Americans, American comedians.

JUNO (looks): Captain, don’t you have something you want to say to everyone?

BOYLE (stunned): I-I… no… except, America is a grand place to find freedom for the Irish. (He raises a cup of milk.) Toast to the Americans and to the Irish. (All join in.)

ALL: To the Americans and the Irish!

JUNO: Now, don’t you want to tell 'bout the business you been doing? Joxer told me….

BOYLE (deflects): Don’t know what you’re talking about, Mrs. Boyle.

JUNO: Oh, I think you do, Husband.

BOYLE: But Mrs. Boyle, our guests should be served, not bored. We’ll talk later.

JOHNNY: Yeah Gran’, the food’s too good to tell stories over. Let's eat. (Scoops food.)

JUNO: As you say, Grandson, for now at least... (Lights out.)

Act III, Scene 3

Action: Two hours later. The group is on/around couch, chairs pulled up. Juno puts up her apron after cleaning kitchen. Mary puts bread away. Group discuss photo-story.

ALAN (holds photo-story): Hey, Johnny, look at this. Operatin’ on a fish. They got at its insides. It’s a gross sight!.

JOHNNY (Half-serious): Just think, soon you’ll be takin’ that fish’s place, with your eye surgery and all.

MARY: Boys, stop. Not everyone likes talkin’ about such things. Alan will cope with his surgery fine, won’t you, Alan?

ALAN: Yes, ma’am, I will.

BOYLE: Besides, Johnny, you’ll embarrass your Da, who does surgery like a great musician plays strings

JOHN SR.: Ease up, Johnny.

JOXER: Photographers get paid to take those pictures? Seems easy to me. You can look up with cameras and have fun.

BOYLE: I say, be careful of photographers, 'cause they can record your posterior for history. (Smiles.)

MARY: Da! They don’t get paid much, Joxer, but this one’s named Bert Hardy. We subscribe to Picture Post. John's cousin works there, and we get a discount. Mr. Hardy is a young still-cameraman, with natural skill and street savvy.

JOHN SR.: Yes, I’ve seen other samples of his work. He can be humorous or serious, with a good eye. Didn’t you tell me, Alan, you want to be a professional photographer?

ALAN: Yes, Doctor Fitzgerald. I still hope to be one, someday.

JOHN SR.: Then, that’s what you’ll be, after you recover from surgery.

JUNO (pulls rocker over): We’ve picked up some photos by Irish photographers. I’d like to hang them on the walls.

JOXER: Oh, if these walls could talk. But I guess we humans make up for it.

DIANE: Mr. Daly, where do you live?

JOXER: I used to have a room. But I just moved into a flat. It’s not much to some, but ‘tis home to me.

BOYLE: Joxer, tell them about your new friend.

JOXER: Oh, there’s a lady taken a shine to me. Last Sunday, St. Patrick’s Day, we got engaged.

MARY: Congratulations, Joxer!

JOHN SR AND OTHERS: Yes, congratulations!

MARY: What’s her name?

JOXER: Agnes Ida Rogers. She’s younger than me, pretty as a picture, and twice as nice.

MARY: Why didn’t you bring her tonight?
JOXER: She’s tending a friend, who wasn’t well, but is getting better now.
MARY: That’s decent, Joxer.
JOXER: Aggie wants to hear her favorite hymn on Easter. Congregation sang it the day her parents met. They’ve passed, but the hymn still tugs at Aggie’s heartstrings.
SHIVAUN: Where does Aggie live?
JOXER: Near Johnny Boyle’s cemetery, Captain and me see her regularly.
BOYLE: I like the walk, too. (Views magazine.) What else’s in Picture Post?
JOHN SR.: Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan’s Emperor, who colonized Korea. Some people are saying the war in Europe isn’t going well. Britain’s PM says Hitler’s opposes Britain and even America. Ireland could be drawn in, too.
MARY: I’m afraid for the young. We adults can cope; it’s the young need protection.
JUNO: You’re a wife and mother, Mary, but a daughter, too. Captain and me want you and John to live long, too.
ALAN: Hey, look! (Holds up photo-story showing lady’s upper legs on a roller-coaster.)
JOHNNY. Yeah, wow!
MARY: Now, Boys, relax. No decent young woman wants to be ogled like that. It may be you boys will find women just as pretty when you grow up, but you won’t want them showing off their legs.
JOHNNY: Sept ta us.
ALAN: Sept ta us.
BOYLE: I hope you boys don’t have giant ideas about women. They’re very nice creatures, but not giants, right Joxer?
JOXER: Still Captain, women are too unusual to be small.
JUNO: Same to you, Joxer. Captain, I used to think you and Joxer thought me the giant chasin’ Jack of the Beanstalk. I’d say, “Jack, Johnny Boyle, you make me so mad sometimes, I could bite off your head and spit it back in your face!”
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BOYLE: That did scare me, but we’re reborn, and don’t see you as a giant anymore, and you surely are good, like Jack. (Wanks at John Sr. A knock.)
JUNO (loudly): Who’s knocking?
MALE VOICE: Father Murphy.
JUNO (opens door): Hello, Father. What brings you here tonight?
FR. MICHAEL: Mrs. Boyle, I’m here to ask if you and your family will be at Good Friday service tomorrow.
JUNO: I think so, why?
FR. MICHAEL: Because there’ll be a petition sent to Rome with names of the Irish who died from St. Bart’s making our nation.
BOYLE: I like the walk, too. (Views magazine.) What else’s in Picture Post?
JUNO: Johnny Boyle’s included. Do you want to send a letter, too? And can you write it before Noon service.
JUNO: I’m not much of a writer (looks round), but with help, maybe I can manage one. FR. MICHAEL: Good. I’m also wondering if you can read your letter to congregation.
JUNO (nervous): Well... I suppose I can, but I’m not much of a public speaker either.
FR. MICHAEL: Mrs. Boyle, I’m asking you to read it, for a profound effect. Can you?
JUNO (braces self): Yes. ‘tis the least I can do for the many who have died for Ireland.
FR. MICHAEL: Good. You’ll read to start. Can you be there by 11:15?
JUNO: Yes, I can.
FR. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mrs. Boyle, and all of you. I’ll see you tomorrow?
JUNO: Yes, see you then.
FR. MICHAEL (waves, looks back): Good night to you all.
JUNO AND GROUP: Good night, Father.
JUNO: Mary, bring me paper and pencil. We’ve got writing to do.

(She sits in rocker; lights dim.)

Act III – Scene 4
JUNO: Oh, my darlin’ Johnny – where have you gone off to now?

The vision of Johnny Boyle appears, with Irish Irregulars. Johnny is forced to kneel. He fingers his beads anxiously, with his only hand. He says, ‘St. Patrick and St. John of the Cross, pray for me in my hour of vital-est need.’ He starts the ‘Our Father’, drops his beads, picks them up and surveys the men’s faces, desperate to see a saving glimpse. ‘Why?’ is spoken, over all. The men prod Johnny with guns, and tell him to get back to his beads. Just after he utters, ‘And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,’ guns are pointed at him. His final words are, ‘... deliver us from Evil...’ Shots ring out. Another figure is seen at stage-edge (Commandant Tancred) – he is shot the instant before Johnny. Juno, who has sat up in her bed to watch, in a hazy light, shots upward, arms imploring, as the silhouette of another mother is also seen. The two women exclaim together, ‘Blessed Virgin, where were you when my darlin’ son was riddled with bullets, when my darlin’ son was riddled with bullets? Sacred Heart o’ Jesus, take away our hearts o’ stone, and give us hearts o’ flesh! Take away this murderin’ hate, and give us Thine own eternal love!’ Captain awakens.

BOYLE: What the devil? Juno, what’s happened?
JUNO (Wakes fully from her vision): Oh, Captain, hold me. (He does.) I don’t know how, but I saw Johnny’s dyin’, and Commandant Tancred’s, too. They came and went so quickly, but it was them. I saw their dying so clearly tonight. Twas terrible. Hold me, Husband. (She clings to him; he kisses and strokes her hair.)
BOYLE: Why don’t you lay back down. Twas a bad dream. It doesn’t have to spoil Easter. Maybe it’s somethin’ll make us feel stronger about what we can only touch in dreams.
JUNO (calming down): Thanks, Captain. It’s been many years since we’ve known much happiness. But this Lent has been a relief, even if tonight’s dream makes me sure this Easter will be Johnny’s and Commandant Tancred’s – the reasons we still believe in Resurrection, which God’s forgiveness offers, no matter how terrible our sins. I never admitted it before, but Johnny sinned against the
Commandant and God. But without us knowing there’s a place where we can find all sons and daughters happy and at peace forever, there’d be no reason to hope in this world.

BOYLE: But we can hope. For somewhere’s God and all children will be with Him, in the end.

JUNO (smile): Yes, Captain. I hope you still remember Johnny as I do – the times he’d come in from playing, asking for somethin’ to eat – like potatoes, sassaies, and onions – Dublin Coddle -- which you hate, but he loved. We didn’t often have the makings, but when we did, it was like a feast of the Church Itself. That was before Ireland's troubles got in his way, and he fell. He’d already lost an arm for Ireland, but he turned on his Republican comrade, and was shot.

BOYLE (Kisses her hair again): I feel terrible about our Johnny, like you. I knew what he’d done long ago, and didn’t have the courage to tell you. I’ve been thinking of you all day. Somewhere, Johnny knows we're all made for each other.

JUNO (only half-mollified): But Johnny was shot again tonight, like Mrs. Tancred’s son.

Captain nods affirmatively, tries to kiss her.

JUNO (suddenly): No, I’ll not let you kiss me, not until you tell me what you’ve been hiding from me this whole Lent, You Old Dissembler. You and your excuses. I let me guard down, and you ‘forget’ to tell me anything. Why, I ought to bite off your head and spit it back in your face!

BOYLE: (feigning ignorance): What do you mean?

JUNO: A little bird flew into me kitchen, day after Ash Wednesday, telling me to visit church, where you were, first time in 18 years you'd been there. She said Joxer was there, too -- you can’t walk two feet without leaving him stuck to your footprints. That little bird was Maisie Madigan.

BOYLE: Lord, Woman, I still don’t know what you’re talkin’ about.

JUNO: Oh, you don’t? Just ask Mrs. Madigan, next time you see her. (Pulls his hair.)

BOYLE: Leave me hair alone. I can’t tell you now, or I'll spoil any chance for our peace.

JUNO (still pulls): How’s that, Husband? Tell me now or the only one left to bless you will be a priest, over-coffin! Why are you keen for furniture? And who have you been seein’ lately?

BOYLE: Yes, furniture. I’ll tell you, but I don’t have to enjoy it.

JUNO (lets go): Talk now, or you’ll never come into my bed again.

BOYLE: Well, Joxer and me, we know this fellow, Mr. Fennerly, at Hanners, who has some nice furniture they’re willin’ to part with, if we sell other furniture for them. They reclaimed the nice stuff from a rich family gone bankrupt. I feel sorry for that family, but what can you do but pick up the pieces, which is fine, if you work for the privilege, right?

JUNO: ‘tis true. Where are you sellin’ the other furniture?

BOYLE: In pubs mainly. But even Mary and John are buying some.

JUNO: Captain, that makes some sense. (She touches him as if to hug him, but holds back yet)

BOYLE: Leave me hair alone. I can’t tell you now, or I'll spoil any chance for our peace.

JUNO: Captain, that makes some sense. (She touches him as if to hug him, but holds back yet.) But what about your social life? (Sternly:) Have you been seein’ Lizzie O’Hara again? (He's shocked.) Oh, I know all about you and Lizzie. Last New Year’s, whooping it up and callin’ each other lovey! You probably backed up your words with bed action, too.

BOYLE: But Juno, I haven't been with her since then, and especially not this Lent.

JUNO: I know she's been in the vicinity of you and Joxer, this Lent. I'm tellin' you to stay away from her, and any other woman who wants to spend time with you that way. I know the sorts of things that fraternizing can lead to.

BOYLE: Juno – til death do us part. Lizzie and me haven't talked in a long time, not that way, and I don't have eyes for any other women, only you.

JUNO: If you're tellin' me even half the truth, that's a good day for us, compared to what you and Joxer used ta be up to. By the way, stay away from the track. It'll eat up every penny you come by. (He nods affirmatively. She hugs him.)

BOYLE (He hugs back): Thank you, Mrs. Boyle. You’ll not regret this.

JUNO: Something tells me I will before the night’s up.

BOYLE (He strokes her hair): Don’t say that. Kiss me, Juno Rosemary Boyle.

JUNO: Easter helps, and tonight is tonight. Lord, let the frog become my prince. (They kiss. Lights out.)

Act IV - Scene 1

Action: St. Bart's interior, Good Friday. Juno, in pulpit, reads.

JUNO: Dear Holy Father: I'm an everyday Irish mother. My son was Johnny Boyle. My Johnny once tried new things, and believed in God and the Body of Christ. He also believed in Ireland, though he made mistakes, especially in Commandant Tancred's death. We cried mightily for Johnny, after he died. Mrs. Tancred cried mightily for her son, too. Many have had sons and daughters die for Ireland. They still die in the North. Why? Who can say when any death is sensible, when some ask others to suffer, and have not themselves suffered for Ireland? The British have suffered and died during our troubles, too, even during the famine, when Queen Victoria ruled. They have dreams and hopes like us. The British should not rule us, but neither should we think we're better than them. All are God's children. The South is a Republic now. When will the whole world be free? Holy Father, please answer our petition and letters. Please tell the world, we mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, do not want to die for a world not-free. Yes, let's stop Hitler and Mussolini, but do not let any people die only to die. No person has every answer for Ireland, Britain, America, Poland, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, and Italy, but if you help save the world from war and death, we'll back your peace. An English preacher once said: 'He who conquers his own soul is greater than he who conquers a city.' We cherish equal rights, but equal responsibilities, too, men and women, adults and children, from all nationalities and faiths. All people have some goodness inside; we know you can help bring it forth. Thank You, Your Holiness, for reading the pencil-scratchin's of this feeble Irish wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. You’re in our prayers; we hope we’re in yours too.

(Lights out.)

Act IV – Scene 2

Action: Front steps, St. Bart's, post-Good Friday service. Juno, Captain, their family and friends, talk. Juno recounts how the family helped compose her letter.
JOHNNY: You did the real writin’.
SHIVAUN: And you stood before congregation to read it. I’d have been scared out o’ me mind.

Father Michael enters, in black cassock with white collar.

BOYLE: Father Michael, what’s been keepin’ you? We’ve been out here twenty minutes.
JUNO: Husch, Captain. The good Father has work to do.
FR. MICHAEL (hand up): I was opening the sacristy windows to air the dampness out and talk to roofer Jim Larkin and his son
Stephen, about the rains. It’s only been decent weather the last two days, but if we get rain before Sunday, it’ll be a damp Easter-
congregation. They’ll start fixing the roof tomorrow.
JUNO: Easter Saturday?
FR. MICHAEL: No choice. He’s got three men to help; they’ll be done by supper.
JOHN SR.: They’ll need good weather, Father.
FR. MICHAEL: I’ll be sayin’ a rosary for it. You can, too.
MARY: Yes, Father Michael. And thank you for telling Diane Fitzgerald to visit the priest at St. Rose. (He nods.)
BOYLE: Father, we were talking about Juno’s reading. What did you think?
FR. MICHAEL: It was a moving tribute to those who’ve sacrificed much for Irish independence. You referred to your son’s mistakes,
and to the British who’ve also died. We often forget British troops and innocents have died like Irish Republicans and innocents.
JUNO: That was Alan’s idea. Everyone helped compose the letter, and Alan piped up, “What about the British?” So we had to say
something about them, too. Even the Germans and Japanese are human. That’s why they’re also in the letter.
JOHN SR.: Speaking of good writing, where’d you get the poem you read today, Father?
FR. MICHAEL: By A.E. Housman, the British poet? He translated an ancient Latin poem by Horace, called “To Torquatus, the Snows
Are Fled Away.” (Digs in pocket.) Does anyone want to hear it again?
JOHN SR.: I would, Father.
SHIVAUN: So would I.
FR. MICHAEL: Well, I’ll read the excerpt from church: “The snows are fled away, leaves on the shaws./And grasses in the mead
renew their birth,./The river to the river-bed withdraws./And altered is the fashion of the earth.”
ALAN: That’s beautiful, Father. Who was Horace?
FR. MICHAEL: A great Roman writer.
ALAN: What do you think of his poetry?
FR. MICHAEL: Well, Alan, Horace didn’t see life exactly as Catholics do. But he did see a time when life is at its fullest, and should
be enjoyed. As Catholics, we believe that after life’s prime, we don’t simply die and vanish. We can be reborn. Other Christians
believe similarly. A kind of death is all life’s destiny, but if we live right, we can be reborn.
BOYLE: We know you like the poet Horace, but who’s your favorite playwright, Father?
FR. MICHAEL: An Irishman many know of here, but not so, abroad. The Church doesn’t praise him as highly as some, but he’s a real
student and teacher of human life: Tony Dooley.
JOXER: Tony Dooley wrote The Paycock Rises Again. Our friend Charlie O’Keeffe was his agent.
BOYLE: ‘Tis a small world, after all, Father.
FR. MICHAEL: Charlie was the man you told me about, wasn’t he?
BOYLE: Yes, Father – the very one.
FR. MICHAEL (looks at Captain and Joxer): You owe a lot to him, don’t you?
BOYLE and JOXER: Yes, Father.
FR. MICHAEL: Then we should all pray for a good friend’s immortal soul. (He clasps his hands, leads.) “Hail Mary, full of grace, the
Lord is with Thee, Blessed art Thou among women and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for
us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.” Now, think of Christ’s life, and His life after death. You won’t feel low about
Ireland’s state or the world’s.
The Group: Yes, Father.
JOXER: Father, is it true you once fought for the boxing championship?
FR. MICHAEL: Yes, Joxer. What a fight ‘twas. I was way ahead on points, settling in for a win, when....
MARY: Father, no offense, but if we’ve heard that story once, we’ve heard it a thousand times. (Groans.)
FR. MICHAEL (Sadly, lets go): And so you have, Mary. So you have.
MARY: Then we’ll see you Sunday, Father, on Easter?
FR. MICHAEL: Yes, Easter Sunday. God bless us all, until then. (All wave; lights out.)

Act IV - Scene 3
Action: St. Bart’s interior; Easter; 9 a.m. Church is spruced with flowers and banner. Musician plays ‘Joyful, Joyful’. Boyle extended
family half-gather by pew, dressed up, Boyle and Joxer with same caps. Juno, Mary, and John Sr. sit.

MARY: John, where are the flowers?
JOHN SR. (slaps forehead): How could I? They’re in the motorcar. I was so excited about us all being here, Easter, I forgot why we
arrived early. Back soon. (Exits.)
JUNO: Doesn’t the church look lovely, Mary? The last few days have gone very well. A decent Lent, all the way round.
MARY: Yes, Ma. Father Michael and the Ladies’ Prayer Circle look after things well. Other parishioners help, too. We’ve got a nice
parish, now that Da and Joxer attend. I never thought I’d see them darken the Church’s doorstep again, but now they’re back, they
lighten up this place. Tis true what the Lord said about the lost-sheep.

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JOHN SR. (slaps forehead): How could I? They’re in the motorcar. I was so excited about us all being here, Easter, I forgot why we
arrived early. Back soon. (Exits.)
JUNO: Doesn’t the church look lovely, Mary? The last few days have gone very well. A decent Lent, all the way round.
MARY: Yes, Ma. Father Michael and the Ladies’ Prayer Circle look after things well. Other parishioners help, too. We’ve got a nice
parish, now that Da and Joxer attend. I never thought I’d see them darken the Church’s doorstep again, but now they’re back, they
lighten up this place. Tis true what the Lord said about the lost-sheep.
JUNO: But if Captain and Joxer hadn’t reformed, I’d have killed them both. Nippin’ out for brew more often than a pious monk says, “Glory be.” When I learned they came home drunk the night Johnny met his maker, I trembled with anger and sadness. Thank the Lord, they’re better now. What a strange, wonderful place Ireland is, these days.

John Sr. enters with roses and gladiolas in vase. Boyle and Joxer grin.

JOHN SR.: Do they still look as victorious as when we picked them?
MARY: Better – they look absolutely stunning, John Dennis Fitzgerald.
JUNO: Now place them where Father left room – by the altar, front and center.
JOHN SR.: Sure as I will.

John Sr. goes off, right.

MARY: Ma, isn’t it grand everyone we know is a real human family again? I mean, you, Da, and Joxer, John and the children, Father Michael, Diane, and me. It shows the power o’ prayer.
JUNO: And it’s decent your Johnny’s servin’ Mass. Johnny and Shivaun will be fine their whole lives. They’ve good heads on their shoulders, good family, friends. As Rolly Coughlin writes in the paper, “What more could be fairer?”

John Sr. returns from altar.

JOHN SR.: How do they look? I’m asking the two most important women in the world.
JUNO and MARY: Gorgeous!
JOHN SR.: Good. Now, where’s Johnny? He was to meet us at nine o’clock.
MARY: Don’t worry. He’ll come round to see us soon.
JUNO: What time do you have, John?
JOHN SR. (looks at watch): 9:05.
MARY: Maybe Johnny got held up listening to Father explain preparations.
SHIVAUN (comes over): Mother, Johnny said he’d be here, as soon as he hears instructions on incense and things. He said it’d be a few extra minutes..
JOHN SR.: Johnny needs to let us know about the Offerings.
JUNO: He’ll be here soon.

Johnny emerges, right, and moves to his dad.

JOHNNY: Sorry I’m late, Da. I had to listen to Father about incense and things.
JOHN SR.: Yes, what about the Offerings?
JOHNNY: Father says you and Ma should bring up wine, water, and hosts, right after Creed. But instead of waiting at the altar, he’ll come down to the Communion Rail, take the gifts, and an usher’ll bring up the collection plate with you.
JOHN SR.: We’ll be ready, Son.

Boyle and Joxer come over.

BOYLE: When are we visiting Johnny’s grave? You have every Easter. I’m finally doin’ what’s right by him this day.
JUNO: We’ll go as soon as we’ve talked with Fr. Michael after Mass.
JOXER: ’Tis a glorious day. The sun’s been shinin’ four straight days, and the Church’s roof is put right. Jim and Stephen Larkin know their business.
BOYLE: What have you planned for lunch afterward, Mrs. Boyle?
JUNO: Isn’t it like a man to want to know how his stomach will feast, before he sits at table?
JOXER: It’s all those years of Dublin Coddle and liver; Captain doesn’t trust every family meal.
JOHN SR.: I promise all, what Mother’s cooked up’ll ring up tons on the scales. Get ready to add a hole in your belts.
JOXER: Sounds like a darlin’ meal. (Smiles.)
MARY: Ma, it’ll be nice to hear Father Michael leadin’ us in prayer at Johnny’s grave.
JOHNNY: He’s a special prayer he wrote for us. It should be fitting.
MARY: And Tommy Malone’ll be there, the oldest Malone son, who popped up whenever Johnny Boyle was home. The three Malone brothers have volunteered for the British Army, because Ireland’s neutral.
JUNO: And how is their mother, Teresa?
MARY: Still fair. She says she wishes she could return to the old neighborhood. She sends her best wishes to you, Ma.
JUNO: And I to her.


Act IV - Scene 4

Action: Johnny Boyle’s grave, Dublin outskirts, 12:15 p.m. A little rise, right. Other graves are down from it, near back. Distant hedges. Flowers have been placed round some graves. A violet adorns Johnny’s. A stone marker shows his name, dates, and ‘Johnny, we’ll always love you. Your family and friends.’ A motorcar is heard pulling up, off left.

BOYLE (offstage): Okay, Mary. Joxer and me’ll take these. John and Johnny get the rest.
MARY (offstage): Good. We’ll be over in a minute.
Boyle and Joxer enter, left. Boyle puts the roses-and-gladiolas bouquet by Johnny's marker. The two make sign of cross. Claudine O'Malley, carrying satchel and wearing red shoes, enters opposite.

BOYLE: We need to be quick. You've got the papers, Miss O'Malley?

CLAUDINE: Take a look. (Hands Captain papers and pen.)

CAPTAIN (defers to Joxer): What do they say?

JOXER (silent-read): They're in order. Yes, same deal as we talked about at the Yeatse's Sporting Pub. You, Captain, and me get 65% of 100,000, or 65,000. Miss O'Malley gets 35,000.

CLAUDINE: Then sign here, Captain. (Captain signs original and copy.)

CAPTAIN (takes his copy.): Now for the money.

CLAUDINE (She pulls out two envelopes): Count it. It's all there. (Joxer counts it.)

JOXER: It's all here, Captain. (The trio get their takes.)

CAPTAIN (extends hand): Thanks, Miss O'Malley. Done with business on Easter. I hope the Lord doesn't roast us. Oh, me and Joxer like those red shoes of yours. Where d'ya get them?

CLAUDINE: Thank you. I doubt He will. As for my little old red shoes? After I graduated law school, I visited Paris, and picked these up from a singer I know at the Paris Opera. She used them once, and decided to give them to me. Nice of her, don't ya think? They remind me of Dorothy's shoes in the "Wizard of Oz", that big American film from last year.

CAPTAIN: Very nice. Wizard? Of Oz? What's that about?

CLAUDINE: It's a long story, about a girl in a storm in Kansas, and an incredible dream she has, but it has a happy ending.

CAPTAIN: Good, I like happy endings. Now, there may be more work for you from us in future. We can always use a top solicitor.

CLAUDINE: Thanks, Captain. Let me know when you need me again. Now, let's see, I need to tap my shoes together, and disappear. (She taps them together.)

CAPTAIN: That we will. (A puff of smoke and Claudine is gone.) Now, this seems like a dream, too. We both have a good cut, Joxer. And 250 from each of us will go to a very sensible bet on 'Golden Paycock,' a one-time-can't-miss prospect at the track.

JOXER (kisses share): Yes! The Good Lord be praised! I'm glad our bookmaker knows a peachy deal when he sees it.

CAPTAIN: Yes, he does.

The pair put the money into their pockets. Then the rest of the group enter. Some bring flowers; others bring photos of Johnny Boyle. A woman about 70 and another woman about 60, appear too. So does Diane Fitzgerald.

BOYLE (half-whispers): Mrs. Boyle, this looks ta be as right a time as any to tell you. Well, there's no other way to say it: we've come into a little inheritance from a friend of Joxer and me, Charlie O'Keeffe. Charlie helped Tony Dooley produce his greatest play at the Abbey. Charlie died in an auto accident in America, and left us, well, some money.

JUNO (half-whispers): Captain, what do ya mean, some money? That's what you've been keeping from me all-Lent? Why, you are an Old Dissenser... How much money?

BOYLE: 65,000 pounds, minus our tithe and Joxer's share.

JUNO (gasp): 65,000 pounds!!! Show me that money! (He does; she takes it and puts it in her bag.) Good Lord, that's enough to build an orphanage or a church. Is it above-board?

BOYLE: Aye, tis, Mrs. Boyle.

Juno: Well then, quiet, we'll discuss it later. Tis Easter, but I'd guess you've been thinking on it all-Lent. Confession 'twas, confession 'tis, thank God for confession!

CAPTAIN: Right you are, Mrs. Boyle. (Kisses her.)

JOXER (on cue): Isn't it Romeo and Juliet the two of you be imitatin’, but a bit further along in years?

BOYLE (louder): Right you are, Joxer.

Diane steps forward.

DIANE: Isn't it delightful John and I are cousins, with the same great-grandfather?

JOHN SR.: Thank goodness Father Michael knew the priest at St. Rose.

JUNO: Yes, it's God's serendipity, for sure.

Father Michael arrives, as does Tommy Malone; group gathers up.

JUNO: Well, Father, 'tis summer-like today. Our rosaries must have helped.

FR. MICHAEL: Yes, they did. Aren't you Miss Rogers, the future Mrs. Daly? Nice to meet you.

AGGIE: Nice meetin' you, too, Father Michael "Rocky" Murphy. I've heard a lot about you – former boxing contender and all. It'll be an honor to pray and sing with you today. My parents would've loved to be here, to meet you and sing the hymn that first brought them together 60-some years ago.

FR. MICHAEL: It would be nice to have them here, too, but maybe they are here, in a way (looks at Aggie). As for the boxin, twas nothin' a-tall. (Punches air, then holds his knee.) Tis the prayin' on me knees that's hard. (Laughter.)

AGGIE: Father Michael, I been praying' n' singin' a lot over the years, but this day is very special to Joxer and me, too.

JOXER: Yes, Father, Aggie's been prayin' 'n singin' forever, haven't you, Me Sweet Apple Blossom?

AGGIE: 'tis grand to praise the Lord, when so much of the world seems content praisin' the sins of worldly leaders.

JOHNNY: Miss Rogers, I've a friend, Alan Matthews, who works for the Irish Times. There's a young Sister Teresa I know who taught me, 'Do small acts with great love.' That still makes sense to me, because small acts of love can amount to large acts of redemption.

JUNO: Yes, Aggie, I've heard of Sister Teresa. She's a great woman. And Alan Matthews at the paper has clout. He's a young man who uses initiative, just like Johnny.
Tommy Malone comes over.

TOMMY MALONE: Hello, Everyone. (Gives Juno photo of her Johnny, and Tommy) Tis grand ta see you -- especially you, Captain and Mrs. Boyle, and Mary. It brings back good memories of Johnny Boyle. Your son would've become somethin' fine, if he'd got past the troubles.

JUNO: Yes, he loved you, Thomas Daniel Malone, as much as family, til the end. Thanks for the lovely photo of the two of you; it brings back memories to us, too

TOMMY: (Reads watch.) I wish I could stay longer, but have ta hurry. The train leaves soon, and me brothers are waiting ta go with me to the Army. Our fiancés'll see us off.

FR. MICHAEL: Yes, when you volunteer for Army, the Generals can't be kept waitin’. Be like the Green Bay Packers. My cousin is their chaplain in America. The Packers are a strong football team, and we all love our courageous troops.

Juno goes over to the woman in her seventies; they tear up and hug. It's Mrs. Tancred, the Commandant's mother. Mrs. Tancred holds a photo of her son. Juno leads her to Fr. Michael.

JUNO: Father Michael, this is Mrs. Tancred, the Commandant’s mother. We’ve talked recently, after not talking to one another in many years. I hope you’ll give her a blessing for her son’s memory, too.

MRS. TANCRED: Yes, father, would you?

Fr. Michael makes the sign of the cross over Mrs. Tancred and the photo of her son, then over Juno, then over the group. He moves to the foot of Johnny’s grave, and blesses it, too. The others move closer.

FR. MICHAEL: Captain, please hold the bouquet. (He does. Priest to crowd:) Lord, we honor You today by honoring two young men long loved by family and friends, both who died for Ireland – Johnny Boyle and Commandant Tancred. My predecessor, now-Bishop William Ted Jerome Burke, knew both men, and sends his blessings. He’ll pass our petition and Mrs. Boyle’s letter on to His Holiness soon, with our photos and other letters. Now, today means rebirth – Easter Sunday. St. Matthew wrote, inspired by God’s Angel: 'Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down. Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They were placed at his feet, and he cured them.’ (15:29-30.) Yes, Friends, ‘Those who are humbled will be exalted, and those who are exalted will be humbled.’ Love and be loved. Also, worry doesn't bring peace, unless we act wisely upon our worries. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

EVERYONE (sign of cross): Amen!

FR. MICHAEL: Tommy, please sing the lead verse of an old reliable: ‘Joyful, Joyful’.

TOMMY (Nods, sings): ‘Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,/God of glory, Lord of love/Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee/Praising Thee, their Son above./Melt the clouds of sin and sadness/Drive the dark of doubt away/Giver of immortal gladness,/Fill us with the light of day.’ (Crowd repeats verse.)

FR. MICHAEL (smiles): A great hymn’s your favorite, Miss Rogers, thanks to artists like Schiller, Beethoven, Van Dyke, and others. It reminds me of a boy who used to play 'Song of Joy' on his recorder-flute -- who's become a great-good son, man, soldier, husband, father, and leader, making his family and many others, very proud of him. We’re glad we'd the talent to perform 'Song of Joy'. The Aborigines of Australia say, every person must follow their central song-line, to be decent. We too must abide by our song-line. Thus does the Lord melt the clouds of sin and sadness, and fill us with the light of day.

JUNO (Touches his hand): Father, this is our most blessed Easter in more than 18 years. (Speaks to all.) And if it weren’t for all of you, this day would never have been happy. Isn’t that right, Father Michael? (He nods.) Will you join us for a memorial meal, Mrs. Tancred?

MRS. TANCRED: Thank you, Mrs. Boyle. I will.

FR. MICHAEL: Yes, ‘tis glorious (hands to sun) to find the Lord here. Now, I hope you all agree, ‘tis time we all go to proper dwellings to enjoy the Easter meal of our choosing.

BOYLE (winks): Sounds like paradise to me, Rocky. What do all of you think?

EVERYONE: Paradise it is!

JUNO (hugs Boyle): Oh, I love you, Jack Daniel Boyle, with your different, special speeches. Now, kindly assist your lovin’ wife home, so we can enjoy a fine Easter meal of lamb, potatoes, peas, wine, milk, and (eggs him on) dessert! Will you join us, Father?

FR. MICHAEL: I'll be happy to, Mrs. Boyle.

BOYLE: Me favorite, Mrs. Boyle, lamb and dessert. God be praised, from Whom all blessings flow!

JUNO: And isn’t it a man’s stomach that be the quickest way to his heart?

People with photos of Johnny Boyle share with his parents. Johnny Fitzgerald takes a posed photo -portrait of group, with a box brownie. Boyle speaks to Joxer, still keeping his arm round Juno, as she keeps her arm round Mrs. Tancred.

BOYLE (low, to Joxer): We go to the track, very soon, Joxer, for a very safe bet on ‘Golden Paycock’. 3-to-1 Dorie Banner ain’t wrong. A better bookmaker there isn’t, this side o’ Churchill Downs, and today we ain’t goin’ to be down, not by a long shot. (Louder) Now, let’s enjoy this day to the best of our abilities.

JOXER (arm round Aggie): You can count on us.

MARY: What in God’s green earth are the two of you talking about?

JUNO: Don’t know, Mary, but ‘tis a special ‘Song of Joy’. For our blessings, we're grateful. For the Shamrocks from Bantry (winks at Joxer) and the brew from St. Patrick’s Irishfest (winks at John). Now, let’s move on, Captain Jack? Didn’t I used to say, ‘God bless you, Captain Boyle, “cause nobody else will’? Well, some of us and God will now, too. CAPTAIN JACK: Yes, the Lord surely works in mysterious ways, so let’s be headin’ home to a darlin’ meal and dessert, Me Beauteous Juno Rosemary!

JOXER (looks at Captain, musicians, crowd): Anyone for another Old-Reliable?

JOHN SR.: (Winks): Why not, Joxer? We’re all Old-Reliables now.
JOXER: Yes, John, you never know when you're entertaining Old-Reliables, or Angels, either.  
STAGE-CROWD: Amen to that!  
JOXER: But then, ain't all religions curious? If they weren’t, you wouldn’t get anyone to believe in them. Rocky, I can believe you fought for championship. You look like you could go 20 rounds today. Like they say, look up and have fun.
FR. MICHAEL (fakes a punch at Joxer; who raises hands to defend himself): Roger-Joxer, You Boxer -- And fightin' evil's just like me championship fight in 1922 versus Billy Quinn. I was wa-a-a-y ahead on points. I was giving him the old left-and-right, left-and-right, left-and-right, when ALL OF A SUDDEN... (hits himself; they exit -- Father Michael is hurting, but semi-triumphant, in silhouette. As hymn begins, Tommy still is talking, but has to hustle off at last.)  
ALL: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound/That saved a wretch like me;/I once was lost but now am found/Was blind but now I see... (Melody plays on alone, after lyrics and lights fade...our play's end.)
The Marcous of Prospect Street, or Just Wait in the Car – A Reflective Play
Written/Revised by, and Copyright 2016+ of, David Joseph Marcou --
(Updated Summary Version as of June 11, 2016).

This play (TMOPSOJWITC) was published by DigiCOPY of La Crosse, WI, in June 2016.

Playwright’s Preface:

I’d been thinking to write another play after 12 earlier plays, including one Pulitzer nominee. Feb. 3, 2016, I started writing this one, about a
place in time that’s likely meant more to me and my family than any other place on earth. It was where my siblings and I were raised; and it was
the first and only house my parents ever owned (for 60 years).

My mom wondered what my new project was, and I told her I’ve written a play that may be even funnier than my Irish play, and this time it’s an
American play. She asked if Hillary and Trump are in it, because if it’s funny and they’re in it, it would be an insane play. I said I don’t know if
they’ll be in it, but that any comic play has to be a bit insane to work. This play is just different-enough to have positive effects via the
presentation of its paramount characters and ideas.

Our family’s house on Prospect Street (1720) and the people who grew up in it are good subjects for the stage. My brother Dan and I were talking
via phone one day (early 2016), and Dan asked, “Just how would somebody write about 1720 Prospect Street? So much happened there, so much
that was pretty unbelievable.” I didn’t tell him then I had such a play in mind. We all felt we had prospects in those days, and we still do.

Here is my attempt to write about me and my family’s ideas about that little yellow house on Prospect Street, the house Mr. Douglas sold my
parents ca. 1954 when its siding was brown-painted wood -- soon-enough my parents had modern yellow siding put on, and which we boys
proceeded to crack a pane in once with our baseball -- and which my brother Tom and his wife, Joy, bought from Mom after Dad’s death in 2015
and put up for sale after making some improvements.

Many details in this play aren’t exactly as they were then, but those invented and/or super-selected should give viewers clearer ideas about what
has made our family tick – love, tribulations, humor, stamina, prayer, and lots of all those things. I hope this drama proves a successful
transaction in communicating some of the drama and comedy our family and friends created there – one and a half blocks from the Burlington
train yards and its Que Restaurant. I hope readers/viewers very much enjoy the life suggested by this play; our branch of the Marcou Family, and
the people most influencing us and affected by us then, surely enjoyed living it.


All of this play’s action takes place at or immediately around the home of David A. Jr. and Rose C. Muskat Marcou in La Crosse, WI.
Events have been dramatically condensed and simplified, so a family’s life of 60 years at the 1720 Prospect Street address can be decently
suggested in a modest number of scenes. Décor, photos, and furniture change a bit from scene to scene, but the essence of the Marcou
family’s home remains present and positive-enough, even in the final scene.

Scene 1: Dawn, 5:58 AM, a train whistle blows, a Tuesday, ca. 1964. A handsome-looking woman about age 34 makes her way into the kitchen
of a house on Prospect St., La Crosse. She is Rose, the wife of a meat-cutter and mom of seven kids. She turns on a light and the radio; Paul
Robeson is singing “Old Man River”; Rose listens a moment, then changes the station to Hank Williams’s “Your Cheatin’ Heart”. Rose brings in
a newspaper from the front-door, and retrieves some orange juice from the refrigerator for the table. Also, she cooks some scrambled eggs and
sausage. Msgr. John Paul recites the Angelus prayer on the radio at 6AM (St. Francis’s Prayer for Peace). Then, Milo Knutson comes on, a
former La Crosse Mayor doing his daily, early AM broadcast from the State Capitol in Madison.

Milo: Good morning, La Crosse. I’m Milo Knutson at the State Capitol in Madison, and this is news. (He mentions the US military’s involvement
in a then-little-known-place called Vietnam, and follows that with some news from the State Legislature and its impact on La Crosse. Rose turns
the radio off, as her oldest child, Davy, 14, enters from sleeping on the front sun porch.)

Davy: G’morning, Mom. How are things today? Any good news?

Rose: Not much, Davy. Some political stuff, and news from Asia I’d guess. How are you today?

Davy: Not bad. What’s for breakfast?

Rose: I’ll get your brothers and sisters up; we’ll have scrambled eggs and sausage with toast.

Davy: Sounds good. (A girl enters, Diane, age 8, fifth child of seven, and oldest of three girls.)
Diane (softly): Mom, are you going to iron my dress or should I?

Rose: You can do it, Diane. And wake up your sisters and the others.

Diane: Okay, Mom. Except Davy’ll have to wake Dad up. As we all know, Dad got in v-e-r-y late last night. G’morning, Davy.

Davy: G’morning, Diane. I usually iron my own shirt, but could you do that too? I’ll wake up Dad.

Diane: Sure.

Davy: Thanks. It’s by the ironing board. Don’t burn any holes in it; it’s my favorite shirt.

Diane: Oh, the red paisley one. Maybe I should burn a hole in it, so you’ll get a new favorite one.

Davy: Now, now, Sis, it’s a good-enough shirt, just a little different is all.

Diane: Just kidding.

Rose: Davy, start waking up your Dad. That’ll probably take a while, but start now, while the iron’s plenty hot.

(Davy heads into his parents’ bedroom. His mom usually sleeps in a recliner in the living room due to Dad’s snoring, which can be heard as Davy opens the bedroom door. Then, “Hut-Set-Brawl” can be heard being softly sung; it gets louder due to the lack of response from the bed’s occupant. Finally, Davy’s dad, Dave Sr., can be heard, saying: “Quit tickling my feet, Davy. You know I’m not ticklish.”

Davy: You may not be ticklish, but that old song seems to do the trick every time anyhow, and I figure you’ll notice the tickling too, even tho it might not make you laugh, like it does the rest of us. Probably you, Uncle Ed, and that Silver Star winner-buddy of yours, Frank Devine, have sung that old song in bars for years. You’ve got to get to work, Dad, after you drop some of us off at school. Mom’s making breakfast.

Dave: Don’t want any breakfast, just more sleep.

Davy: Well, Mom has some coffee for you; that’ll help get ya started. The Boulevard Foods meat department awaits. (He pulls the covers off his dad, who moans mightily.)

Dave: Okay, okay. A man knows when he’s not meant to get any sleep.

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Danny: Mom, do you have a quarter? I forgot my lunch yesterday, and it was heck to pay at lunch time. Had to borrow a sandwich from Mikey. And he only had one.

Rose: Yes, Son, here it is. Give Mikey fifty cents, in fact. I knew you’d forgotten it the minute you went up the street. Sit down, and I’ll get breakfast for you.

Danny: Thanks a bunch, Mom.

(Rose gets up and goes into the kitchen, as more of his siblings drift in, Dan first, third oldest.)

(Rose heads into the kitchen. Her son, Davy, enters the kitchen, as more of his siblings drift in, Dan first, third oldest.)

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Rose: Yes, Son, here it is. Give Mikey fifty cents, in fact. I knew you’d forgotten it the minute you went up the street. Sit down, and I’ll get breakfast for you.

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Danny: Thanks a bunch, Mom.
Denny: Well, you’re talking chocolate chip cookies – the cream of the crop in an otherwise vast wasteland.

Danny: Denny, you don’t know what you’re missing. Kids at school give three weeks’ allowance to get a couple of Mom’s cinnamon rolls. Mikey practically kills for them.

Denny: I suppose. It’s just that the boiled ham sandwiches we get a couple times a week draw other kids like flies too. I love boiled ham generally. Maybe I should carry a fly-swatter with me in the classroom. What do you think?

Danny: Oh, Mikey likes those too. But if you had a flyswatter, some wiseacre would probably steal it and sell it. Some of the kids are pretty slippery that way. They can’t get money any other route. Billy Debettinges and Jimmy Cranshaw, for instance. They’re real little shysters. Why I’ll bet they’d sell their mother’s best clothes for rags, then steal them and sell them back to her. And both of them still pick their nose sometimes; I’d guess we only did that when we were 6-years-old. Gosh, what’s this world coming to?

Denny: I forgot about Mikey, and Billy and Jimmy, too. How could I do that? They’re so much guardian angel and little devil in the three of them, as to make for a true war of worlds, heaven and hell I mean. Funny how life works, though. Billy and Jimmy help Mikey like best buddies. Crazy match up, because Mikey’s so innocent, and the other two, well, they’re so incredibly guilty, but crazier things have happened in this world God must have made.

(Rose re-enters kitchen.)

Rose: Danny, as long as your dad will be on “The Throne” a while longer reading his ungodly sports section, why don’t you ask him if he wants coffee and orange juice with breakfast or just coffee? And tell him not to fall in with the scoring statistics, because then he’ll only have the shortest of time to fetch himself out and drive most of you to school and himself to work.

Danny: Sure, Mom. (He ducks into his dad’s bedroom to get to the bathroom door; knocking can be heard softly.)

Rose: Denny, are boiled ham sandwiches okay for lunch again or do you want peanut butter?

Denny: I love both, but I haven’t had peanut butter in a while. Can you make me two of them and cut them into quarters, Mom?

Rose: I think I’ll make everyone’s peanut butter today, even though peanut butter can be binding – you all like them and they’re nutritious too. Besides lunch meat is expensive, except for big baloney, which not everyone here likes, and I can only give you one boiled ham sandwich whenever you have them; I’d guess most of you have had your share of jelly sandwiches for this month too.

Danny (rushing in): Mom, Dad cut himself shaving. He’s bleeding, well, not like a stuck pig, but pretty bad anyway.

Rose (grabbing two ice cubes from a freezer tray, she puts them in a wash cloth and goes through the bedroom to the bathroom): Denny, you’ll need to make and pack your own sandwiches. Your dad needs some help right now.

Denny: Yep, Mom. I hope Dad’s okay. (He makes sandwiches, and wraps them in wax paper for bagging.)

Davy (enters wearing his red paisley shirt and a pair of tan pants): Denny, Dad did it again. Mornings when he’s not wide awake right away, he can cut his face like one hell of a boxer. And he’s been in a ton of fights so far too; maybe that’s why his drinking nights go fairly long. That, and maybe he has a girlfriend or two.

Denny: Dad’s always been a flirt, and a fighter. That’s what gets him through so many tough scrapes, including the night he fell down drunk on our snowy Prospect Street, and Mom found him making angels in snow with the luck of the angels, who kept traffic away from him that night till Mom rescued him. His pack of Lucky Strikes was sitting on his chest when she found him. I just know I don’t ever want to be on the receiving end of one of his punches. It’s bad enough when we get it with the belt or an open hand. But clenched fists just don’t sound healthy.

Davy: I know it sounds strange, but spanking us is one way Mom and Dad have of letting us know they love us. They’ve never ever beaten us to within an inch of our lives (Denny gives him a look); well, maybe once or twice. But I heard American soldiers are in a place called Vietnam; it looks like someone is going to take a beating pretty soon there; let’s hope it’s not us. I know a girl named Linda from St. James who’s a freshman at Logan; she has a boyfriend, Terry, who just left for Vietnam; something about troop-trainers. I hope he is okay, b/c Linda and Terry are both nice.

Denny: Yeah, you’re right about that. Linda’s really nice.

Davy: You know, Denny, sometimes I think this old world ends when it ends for some people, while the rest of the world goes on living forever somehow, somewhere, having a grand old time, forgetting basically about those who went before. If I can do anything good in my life, it’s to
preserve the memories of those people who have gone before, and us too, especially as to the good we’ve all done. (Kidding.) Of course, I’ll change my mind for the highest bidder, like everyone else, at least until I make my first million.

(Lynnie enters, age 5, with the ability, like the others in the Marcou family, to talk keenly if, for her, in a high voice.)

Lynnie: Davy, is breakfast ready? I’ve got to be to kindergarten early today. Maybe Mom forgot.

Davy: Dad cut himself shaving, and Mom’s tending to him. She has some eggs and sausage warm for us on the back burner. (Davy dishes up some for Lynn and Dennis. Then, Danny enters kitchen and dishes up some for himself.)

Lynnie: I like eggs and sausage. As soon as I’m done eating, I’ll go to Linda’s house and walk to school with her.

Denny: That Linda has really become a good friend of you and your sisters.

Lynnie: Yeah, I really like Linda. She’s funny and she likes the same things I do.

(Diane enters with ironed clothes.)

Diane: Davy, you’ve got your shirt and pants. Here are some things for the others. (Putting them on an empty chair by table.)

Davy: Thanks, Diane.

Rose (returning): Your dad doesn’t need ice now; the bleeding’s stopped, thank goodness.

Davy: I hope Dad’s okay. Diane, you aren’t still feeling bad about him scolding you the other day for not waiting in the car when he was running errands with you girls? Errands that were delayed by his stopping for a few brewskies at the North Star.

Diane: Well, I did feel bad a while, especially when he shouted, “Diane, I thought I told you to wait in the car!” But then I thought, why should I feel bad? I wasn’t stopping him from doing his errands, just shortening his waterhole break.

Rose: Dad’s still in the bathroom, so be ready for a quick ride to school after he is liberated from his favorite room, you older kids. Lynn will walk with Linda to Franklin for her half-day of school. I’ll be here today with Mary Kate.

Diane: Mom, you’re a rock. Our family is a good family, and it all starts with you, and Daddy. Even if we’re not kings and queens like in England, we stick together and do good things. And that throne Dad sits on every morning is as great as anyone’s. He can’t help it if he spends more time tooting on his than most people. And he helps our town’s newspaper do great, to pass the time.

Denny: Yep, that’s right, Diane. If anyone wants advice on how to toot up a storm or run a newspaper sports section, all they have to do is ask Dad, and he provides anytime proof of how to knock ‘em dead.

Rose: Kids, we’re running late this morning. (Very loudly.) Everyone listen up – Get into the kitchen and eat; bring all your things and get ready to leave for school and work. We don’t have all the time in the world, but we’ve got enough, so get in here pronto! Dad’s got to be to work by 8, and all of you have to make it to school before then.

(The kids, except Mary Kate, all gather in the kitchen by fits and starts, including Tommy, fourth oldest of seven and youngest boy, who is very short, cute, quick-footed, and non-stop witty; a couple more grab a bite of breakfast, and chat too. They look a motley crew, but they’re the Marcou Motley Crew and proud of it.)

Denny: Do we look okay, Mom? Or do we have to do this whole thing all over again? Oh god, some of us have to use the bathroom after Dad is done in there!

Rose: You all look fine-enough. (Shouting.) But where is your dad? Dave – get in here! We’ve got to get you and the kids off to school and work. Boulevard IGA’s meat department is not going to sell any meat today if you don’t get moving. So, let’s go, Daddy-O!

Dave Sr. (shouting from bathroom): We’ll make it in-time, Ma, don’t worry. It’s a piece of cake.

Danny: Oh, you know, Dad, Ma. He always wants to wait till the last minute when it comes to being any place WE should be on-time. When he wants to be their on-time for HIMSELF, it’s a whole different story. He gets there with bells on and everything buttoned-up, even ten minutes
early once in a while I’ve been told, ten whole minutes early! How’s that for crackin’ the whip? He really makes that old Chevy fly, when he wants to.

Lynn: Yeah, Daddy likes to get himself there on-time, even if he speeds. It’s the rest of us that get late.

Tommy: Yep, that’s Dad all right. Flying like a big bomber, dropping his bombs on all the little kids, while he takes aim at the awards. He’ll probably get, what do they call it, the Extinguished Flying Cross. I’d like to get one of those myself someday, if I ever get my wings, and except for the extinguished part. (Tommy turns on the radio, EXTRA LOUD; it’s playing “The Wanderer”. His mom gives him such a look that all eyes are on her; Tommy jerks his body violently and says “Yikes”. He turns the radio off.)

Rose: Tommy, if you ever do that again, I’ll do what Sister Robertina did to your big brother Davy when he was in fourth grade. (Tommy looks scared.) Do you remember what he said she did to him?

Tommy (quivering, half-acting): Y-e-e-s-s, M-a-a-a. Davy smarted off to Sister Robertina, who was only 4 feet 10 and 75 pounds. Davy said she grabbed him by the collar and lifted his butt to the ceiling, ripping the top button on his favorite old shirt. You didn’t sew it back on to punish him for smarting off to Sister in the first place. I don’t want to risk being choked to death by you or a nun either, like Davy almost was by Sister Robertina, and I don’t want to lose my best shirt, that’s for sure. (Looking at his mom with puppy-dog eyes.) I’m sorry, Mommy. I shouldn’t have turned the radio on super-loud in the middle of breakfast.

Rose: You’re forgiven if never forgotten, Tommy, but be a good boy and eat your breakfast. (He sits down, and eats his breakfast at speeds never before seen by human beings.)

Lynn: Look at Tommy fly, Everybody. He’s faster than Johnny McDougle runnin’ from Sheriff Bob Black after stealing little Timmy Dikeman’s bike. Never seen anything like it!

Tommy: Shut up, Lynnie, and eat. We need to get to school on-time, or I’ll get double-detention again. And Sister Flatiron Flavia REALLY ENJOYS playing that game with me.

Rose: What have I told you about calling nuns by nicknames, Tommy? You’d better quit that or you’ll have a nickname, too -- Dead Before Your Time Marcou. Now, Everyone, eat, and keep quiet!!! (It is actually quiet a moment as everyone eats.)

Tommy (finished eating, washing it down with milk): Say, Mom, I’ve always wondered: How are babies made? There are a lot of us in this family, and we were all babies to start with. Any ideas would help.

Rose: Tommy, sometime I’ll tell all of you how the babies in this family were made, but not now. It’s a family secret. Just put it down to the stork, for now.

Tommy (coyly): Oh, Mom, you really need to tell us all about that soon. Otherwise, we might get the wrong ideas about things. If it has anything to do with girls mixing with boys, Wow! -- it could really set us back.

Rose (dishes up more food to him): Here, have some seconds, Tommy. (He looks perplexed an instant, then gobbles that helping down too.) Anyone else still hungry? (Everyone passes, still eating mainly.)

Danny (changes his mind): Oh, Mom, maybe I will have another sausage and slice of toast.

Rose (retrieves seconds for Danny): I hope that holds you a couple hours, Danny, at least until your bag lunch at noon.

Danny: Don’t know about that, Mom. I’ve often thought it’d be nice if they took a tea break at school, in the middle of the morning, for extra food and, not tea, but Pepsis and chips.

Rose: Don’t count on that happening anytime soon, Danny. The Franciscans are good teachers, but they crimp on expenses. Tight as a drum, they are.

Danny: You’re telling me, Mom. My stomach growls like one of those Bengal tigers every mid-morning.

Denny: Don’t you think, Danny, the rest of us wish those nuns would open up their pocketbooks a little more too? I wish they’d take us to Wisconsin Dells every Friday, instead of the boy servers going to Milwaukee and the Dells once a summer only. And not a single female either on that bus heading to and from Milwaukee for a Braves game. What a waste of good seats, and my good deodorant and mouthwash, too. Usually, we go to Milwaukee and the Dells when cousin Stevey K. is staying with Grandma and Grandpa Marcou. I don’t mind my cousin too much, but it’s like Davy said once, he stays for TWO WHOLE WEEKS, and Grandma and Grandpa won’t let us near them then, though once I think I did go with Davy and Stevey to Copeland Field to watch a Little League game together, but don’t quote me on that. That was kinda fun.
Rose: Well, Denny, if there were females on board for the Braves’ game, especially little girls, the parents would fear not only for the lives of their little girls, but for the lives of their whole families!

Tommy (with an impish grin): And why is that, Mommy?

Rose: Oh, you never stop, do you, Tommy? You’ll get that talking to earlier than you want, if you keep that line of questioning up. And my paddle might not be far away either; just keep it up and see.

Tommy: Sorry, Mom. You know how us boy wonders are – can’t keep our lippy lips shut.

Rose: That’ll be enough now, Tommy!

Tommy: Yes, Mom. As you say sometimes, “It’s better to be seen and not heard – even if you’re in the middle of an elephant stampede.”

Diane: Speaking of elephant stampedes – we’d better get crackin’ or there will be an elephant stampede out to Dad’s car, with little chance of surviving it, unless we all pray fast while we run.

Rose: Good point, Lady Di. All of you need to say a meal prayer right now. We all forgot that first thing this morning.

Tommy: I said mine under my breath, Mom. It may have been invisible and really quiet, but it got said. (His brothers and sisters all say, “Same here, Mom”, though most are lying through their teeth.)

Rose: Yes, yes, of course you all did, that’s why we’re all going to heaven someday. Thank the Lord for little favors and big wonders.

Denny: Mom, Sister Schenectady, or I mean, Sister Skelnia, said there actually is going to be a field trip next week – to the Channel 8 News Station. She’s got this idea we all want to be journalists. Why, I’ve never heard a more insane idea, but there it is, plain as day. And the girls are going with us. Course, it’s only a cross-town trip, not much danger there I’d guess. What do you think? Will you sign for me?

Rose: What makes you think I want any journalists in the family, though I did take a journalism class at Aquinas High. Sister Felice was my teacher and I didn’t write every day, but when I had an assignment, I always got inspired somehow, and wrote something very good. She gave me top grades. I did well in all my classes, even math and science. Sister Felice reminds me of Sister Valeria, Davy’s teacher in first grade, who made sure he did all his assignments when he was out of school five months with rheumatic fever. She even had his classmates make a group book for him to enjoy. Remember that, Davy? Construction paper, yarn for binding, penciling, and coloring.

Davy: Yes, Mom. That book was really nice, with Dick, Jane, and Spot their dog. The coloring was fun, and everyone added to it I guess. Sister Valeria was a nice nun. She was even pretty; I saw her without a hood once and she looked like any other nice-looking woman; kind of surprised me, because I thought they wore all that costume because they weren’t very good-looking to begin with. We did see her again, after she left St. James, at Grandma Muskat’s wake in Sparta a couple years ago. Maybe I’d even like to do some books myself someday, because she seemed very proud of her students, my friends, who did that book for me.

Rose: You don’t call her bonnet a hood; it’s a habit.

Denny: You said a mouthful, Mom. We know you did so well in high school, after moving to La Crosse from Grandma and Grandpa Muskat’s farm, that you helped Dad survive class-work, and that must have been a lot of extra work for you, a ton in fact. So can I go? I’ll even buckle down and be a better student. (Crosses his heart) Cross my heart and hope to die.

Rose: Well, I’ve got you pegged for the law, and I don’t mean serving time in the State Pen, Son. Journalism?? Yes, you can go. You ought to keep the group on thin-ice with that sarcastic sense of humor. Don’t know where you get that from; no one ELSE in this family is like that, right kids? (Several say: “Right, Mom. We’re never smartspastic.) Where do I sign?

Dennis (digging out a folded-up slip of paper from his pocket): Here you are, Mom. (She glances at it and signs.) Thanks a million. Maybe I’ll even land a seat on the bus next to the prettiest girl in class, Beth Blanding. She’s a sucker for a good set of legs, and that’s me all over again.

Rose: I knew there was some ungodly angle to your request. You just stay clear of little Beth Blanding on the bus. Do you hear me?

Dennis (half-lying): She’s not little, Mom; she’s taller than me, sort of thin but a little curvy, and has gorgeous red hair. I’ll do my best, though. (Under his breath.) But kids can’t always be held responsible for their actions.

Danny: Davy, what’s going on at Aquinas? You still out for freshman football?
Davy: Yes, but I’m about fifth string. A lot of rich kids in front of me. I’m not in the clique. Maybe I’m not even a good football player, though in grade school I was fast-enough that Ed Peaslee tripped me on purpose once, to keep me from an 80-yard touchdown. He caught me with five yards to go, the big behemoth, and broke my wrist. Chuck Liddell laughed about it.

Danny: Ed is a wily big guy, no doubt about it. Well, sometimes you have to be more sticktuitive than the clique, and a harder worker too. That’s what I heard on TV anyway. And you have to hope your broken bones heal quick too.

Davy: You’re probably right, Danny. I know I was sticktuitive-enough with Johnny McDougle last summer to finally take him at wrestling. I told him I was “getting wild” and I guess that scared him. Now Denny Behm is a different story; I can’t take him no matter how hard I try. I can take Jeff Ceason sometimes, if I can catch him. Jeff usually runs and gets a lethal weapon; but once I caught him on his snow hill and made him give. As for Dave Smith, he’s three years older than me and he’s strong as an ox. But I’ve got to focus at least as much on my studies as football. I’d like to go to college someday, and that will take a lot of hard work.

Danny: I’d like to go to school after high school too -- to be a police officer. I don’t know where I can go to school for that, but there must be at least as many schools in Wisconsin for police officer training as there are prisons in this state.

Davy: Good point. You’re doing okay in school, aren’t you?

Danny: Yeah, not great maybe, but decent. Some of my teachers expect me to be a straight-A student, because you get good grades, but I’m more the snake in the grass kind of student; I surprise the teachers with my brainpower when they least expect it. And Sister Slam-and-Jam (looking at his mom, saying “Sorry, Mom”), I mean Sister Cecilia, cut me some slack the other day when Jack Wittenberg and I got in a fight. I took Jack down with wrestling moves, not with punches to the head, and she respects that.

Rose: I think Sister Cecilia is a fine nun, and giving you a second chance makes sense. But keep working on your grades and stay in shape generally, and you just may be a good police officer someday.

Denny: Danny’s a really good wrestler, Mom. Kids even call him “Dan the Man.” It makes even skinny old me think there’s a place for us kids who aren’t 6-foot-4 and 240 pounds. Of course, we do have our good looks to fall back on with the girls. (Chuckles emerge from the rest.) Somebody once told me I’d never make it through life just with my smile; but I do have a pretty nice smile, which I’ll still bet on in tight situations. (Flashes that smile.)

Rose: You are very skinny, Denny. I wish eating more would help, but you’ve got a high rate of metabolism, doctor says. You may be skinny all your life. Maybe skinny people are the wittiest.

Denny: Yeah, a high rate of me-table-and-me. I eat like a horse, Mom, but it just doesn’t stick much. Maybe I should start breaking into the Sweet Shop over-nights to eat as much ice cream and candy as I can stand, except I don’t like the penalties for knocking over grand establishments like the Sweet Shop.

Rose: Say, Everybody, time to get crackin’. Get in the bathroom anyone who has to yet, and finish dressing too; your dad’s in the bedroom now. Make it snappy. You’ve only a minute each to take care of that business and leave for school. Lynnie, are you set to pick up Linda?

Lynnie: Yes, Mommy, I am. I’ve even got bells and whistles on. (She whistles neatly, and rings a bell on her bookbag.)

Rose: Good. Make sure you two get home safely at noon, after your half-day. And be careful about strangers. Go ahead now. (Rose gives her a kiss.)

Lynnie: Bye, Mommy. Love you.

Rose: I love you too, sweetie.

(Tommy turns the radio back on, and it’s playing “The Lion Sleeps Tonight”, though not too loudly. Lights and music dim to nil.)
Scene 2: Noon, June 5, 1972: The Marcous are just arriving back from a weekend in Fond du Lac. Davy is in Madison with his new wife, Ann; the rest of the Marcous come home to Prospect Street.

Rose: Well, first child married off and setting up apartment a day later in Madison; no honeymoon for them right now. I hope they’ll be happy. The Majeskas seemed nice enough. Ann is sharp as a tack and somewhat cute. She looked nice in her white gown. I took some pictures.

Dave Sr.: Food at the reception was real good. Plenty of ham and scalloped potatoes, corn, and cake. Could have done without the green beans, though. The cake was my favorite.

Denny: Yeah, Dad, you’ve got the biggest appetite for sweets of anyone around. That’s something a few of us have inherited.

Rose: Yes, but your dad’s mother was diabetic, so your dad might become diabetic too, and that’s nothing to joke about.

Diane: Dad, do you have ten dollars for my St. James year book. I don’t like my picture in it, because I don’t like any pictures of me, but I need that book for the signatures I’ll get from my friends.

Dave Sr. (pulling a ten-spot from his wallet): Here you go, Sis. Knock ’em dead!

Diane: Thanks, Dad. I really need that book.

Rose: Seems like there are a lot of readers in this family – from Dad with his sports sections, to the rest of us and our novels and histories. And of course the year books, too, because they come in handy, later on especially.

Tommy: Dad, do you have a ten-spot for me, too, just for my good looks.

Dave Sr.: Doubtful, Tommy, real doubtful. But I will give you five dollars to go get some ice cream cones for the family.

Danny: Ice cream cones sound great, Dad. (Dad gives Tommy a five-spot.)

Dad: Hustle on over, Tommy, but make sure Elsie at the Que gives you one of those special holders for them all.

Tommy: I know. I’ve done this a few times before.

Lynn: Mom, can Diane, Kate, and me have chocolate sauce on ours, because they’re really good that way?

Rose: Of course, Lynn. (She retrieves a bottle of chocolate sauce from the refrigerator.)

Kate: Yes, that’s the only way to eat vanilla ice cream, with chocolate sauce. Not too much, not too little, but just enough.

Diane: Mom, when will you take your wedding film in for processing? I want to see how terrible I look in the pictures, so I can warn Dave and Ann when they see them, that I always look bad in my pictures.

Rose: You do not look bad in your pictures, at least no worse than Tommy does when he poses for my pictures with his tongue stuck out.

Tommy: But Mom, that’s only for my best pictures. Usually I look really cool just by holding up the peace sign, sometimes backwards.

Rose: Yes, you and your backwards peace sign. It’s all the rage in Hollywood.

Denny: Well, at least Tommy’s conversant with all the rages today. He also likes girls, and who’d ever thought that was something we’d be involved with, right? Oh, I forgot, there are seven kids in this family!

Tommy: Yeah, Mom, we never had that talk about how babies are made. Any ideas now?

Dave Sr.: That’s enough from you, young man. I’d guess you’ve got plenty of ideas by now about how babies are made.

Tommy: But, Dad, I was just wondering about how you and Mom managed to have seven kids. We’re not rich, after all.
Scene 2: Noon, Sept. 23, 1987. The radio plays C. Lauper’s “Girls Just Want to Have Fun.” Rose enters from living room, and sits at kitchen table with Dave Sr., who’s having a bite to eat. She turns radio off.

Rose: I’m glad the doctors have at last given you clearance to drive, after your heart surgery in April. I know you’ve missed it, and you can even start thinking about working a few hours again in a couple months.

Dave: Yeah, giving up smoking and drinking wasn’t easy; I always thought my Lucky Strikes kept me lucky, and the drinkin’, well that was with the guys. These days, I’ve got religion, a rosary every night with you. I’m feeling as fit as a fart in the middle of a fiddle. I hardly ever have shortness of breath any more, a sign I’m recovering, doctor says. Of course, doctors aren’t always right, great as they are. I like a good meal, even with a little salt, sugar, and fat in it, but my heart doctor would have none of that last April, and you’re watching my diet like a hawk now too. Still, I’m glad you made me a hamburger for lunch. They are a lot easier to look at and taste better than oatmeal, which you’ve sworn I’ll be eating for breakfast the rest of my life. What a fate!

Rose: That’s right, and I hope liking it too. (Dave does a mock frown, then laughs.)

(Phone rings.)

Rose: Hello, Marcou residence. Oh, hi Dave. How’s Suk-Hee doing? I imagine she’s drunk more tea with honey than an old-style plantation owner. What? She’s had the baby?!! Boy or girl? Boy? Well, what’s his name? Matthew Ambrose Marcou. Oh, that’s a fine name. (Motioning to her husband, saying: ‘The baby has the same middle name as you.) Congratulations! And give our best to Suk-Hee too, and a kiss to Matthew on the cheek. What’s that? You were there for the delivery. That’s exciting. Yes, your Matt was born on the first full day of the autumn equinox, when day and night are equal in length. So you say he’ll soon learn to both work and play hard. (Looking at Grandpa Dave across the table, smiling.) I don’t know where in the world little Matty gets that from. Oh, I do too, it runs in this family. What was that? You had picked out the name Michael, not Matt, but Suk-Hee gave you such a look when you were in labor when you said Michael, you went to the second name on your list? Sounds like the Green Bay Packers all over again; Vince Lombardi’s was the second name on the Packers’ list, but they asked him to be their coach anyway, and he said yes. The stuff of history!!

Dave Sr. (waving his hand at her): Say Hi from me, Rose, and Congratulations too. I’d break out some cigars, but I suppose my doctor and you would have fits.

Rose: Your dad says Hi and Congratulations, Son. Yes, we’ll be over to see the baby as soon as we can. We’ll be happy to have supper with you and your new family. Your dad just got medical clearance to drive again. We look forward to seeing you three. Keep everyone safe and happy there. Thanks for calling. Yes, we love you, Suk-Hee, and Matthew too. Good-bye for now. (Hangs up phone.)

Dave Sr.: Well, it’s about time she delivered. Ann never did that for young Dave in the seven years they were married; maybe that priest she was dating had something to do with that. He left the priesthood to marry her after the divorce; they have twins now. As for Davy’s new wife, Suk-Hee had so many false labors, I was beginning to think she had a pillow underneath her blouse and Davy was keeping her secret for her.

Rose: Now, Dave. Of course she was pregnant. When your son sees the delivery, there’s no doubt a child was born.

Dave Sr.: Well, it is nice to be a Grandpa again. And Matt’s a good name, like St. Matthew and some other good men too by that name. Ambrose is a good filler, as I know from experience.

Rose: Finish your burger, Dave. If you want an apple for dessert, you’ll need to eat up. (He eats up.)

Dave Sr.: Oh boy, an apple for dessert. I like apple pie better, with ice cream, but I guess that won’t be on the menu for a while. Not as long as my diabetes has me by the tail.

Rose: That’s for sure. (She clears away plates and silver, and sets a sliced apple on a napkin in front of Dave Sr.) You know, I doubted that Korean wife of Davy’s would turn out okay. She seems to have so many iron in the fire, without really working a job here. She sells a lot of the clothes she designed in Seoul, though. When they came here in April from Korea, Davy was sure he’d find a good journalism job, but no one hired him then. He worked some good journalism jobs in Korea for two years, but I guess that isn’t big enough stuff in this country, yet anyway; maybe someday it will be.

Dave Sr.: I’ve worked a lot of jobs in my life, and have never really been without a job, so it’s kind of hard for me to understand. ‘course, I was never a journalist, just an everyday reader of newspaper sports sections who watches TV sports, too.
Rose: Well, Dave Jr. loves sports, but he also knows how to write about many other things too, plus take pictures. If he can find the right job or jobs, he’ll do fine. I don’t know why the local paper hasn’t hired him yet. His work is as good as anyone’s who works for the La Crosse Times. Better in many respects. And he’s sent out many, many job applications, too. I hope he’s not on some blacklist for having worked in South Korea.

Dave Sr.: You never know about the media, Rose. They sometimes do things differently than the rest of us. At least he does freelance journalism a little; maybe that will develop into something bigger for him and the family.

Rose: I just know my children, and our oldest son is as gifted in many respects as anyone ever has been in this family. He’s already earned three university degrees and lived and worked in London and Seoul too.

Dave Sr.: And his first university was the UW in Madison, the state’s top university. Then Iowa and Missouri. UW’s sports teams are tops, at least during better times, and Dave worked for them when he started school there. He was a pretty good running back and linebacker himself in high school. If he wouldn’t have taken his sophomore year off to work, buy a car, and pay his way through school, he might have been on the Aquinas varsity by then, instead of senior year after a year on junior varsity. John Michuta was a great football and baseball coach, but in football, he still sometimes favored kids from wealthy families over others.

Rose: Well, Davy is gifted at some good things, but he’s had to work really hard for what he gets. I don’t know why that should be, but it is. All our kids work really hard and are talented at many good things. You’re one of the best meat-cutters around, and I can keep a house, records, and budget, and write and take a picture too once in a while, like our oldest. I’d guess our skills first came from our parents, then from our teachers. Thank goodness you actually sat in on a few of your high school classes, and were only in the principal’s office about half the time.

Dave Sr. (chuckling): Well, principals all kind of liked me, that’s all I’m going to say on that.

Rose: Yes, they liked you, like a hole in the head.

Dave Sr.: Still, they liked me. You can’t deny that, Rosie.

Rose: Seems like we’re at an impasse. Care to rub my shoulders?

Dave Sr.: If you insist. (They retire to the bedroom. Lights out.)

Scene 4: October 1997, 4:45 PM. Dave Sr. is watching TV in living room, waiting for the 5 o’clock news to begin.

Rose (enters, sitting down, looking very sad): I just got off the phone with Diane. She said they’d have some footage on the 5 o’clock news showing where Tony’s body was discovered, and letting the public know about the three deaths since July of young men in the rivers here. I’ll bet 10 to 1 they’ll find a high blood-alcohol content too in Tony’s body when they do the autopsy, like with the two others. But Tony’s drowning is horrible; I can’t think of a worse thing to happen to Diane and Rocky’s family.

Dave Sr.: You’re right, Rosie. But Diane has said many times that Tony drank a lot and did marijuana too.

Rose: Yes, it’s too bad she and Rocky couldn’t get him to stop that dangerous mix, Diane being a police cadet and Tony’s godfather and uncle being a Lieutenant on the force; but sometimes humans are only human. Tony may have been a bit depressed a while too, though he was a good worker for that recycling company. Still, Mark, his biological dad, didn’t have him over for Christmas last year, the way he had every year before then. It may seem old-fashioned now, but maybe for years Tony’s having been born out-of-wedlock bothered him. Diane was so young when he was born to her and Mark, and Tony and her living with us until Diane married Rocky, must have been hard on both of them. Rocky adopted Tony of course, but kids are tough to know completely sometimes.

Dave Sr.: Well, it’s just as hard for a young one like Dave’s Matthew, after Dave and Suk-Hee divorced. Sometimes I thought little Matt didn’t know which end was up. But he’s doing better now, and I hope he keeps doing better. Dave had trouble with him when he had troubles with Suk-Hee. His first wife, Ann, was just as headstrong, but she didn’t have the temper Suk-Hee does. Ann just kept dating the priest, teaching school, and not spending time at home. It’s no wonder Dave went away for a year to school in Iowa, after trying two or three marriage counselors. It was pretty much in the cards Ann would marry the priest, which she did, after he left the priesthood.

(Knock at the door. Rose answers it. It’s Dan, their third oldest.)

Rose (opens door): Oh, Dan. Come on in.

Dan: I can’t stay long. I just stopped by to say the preliminary report indicates Tony had a high blood-alcohol content – around .20. I don’t know fully about other drugs in his system, but I think the blood-alcohol was the big contributor to his death -- looks like it was accidental, probably
fell in while urinating into the river at Houska Park. He had two dollar bills in his pants pocket, the same amount Grandpa Marcou used to pay Davy, Dennis, and me each week when we worked at his store when we were very young.

Rose: Have you seen Diane today yet?

Dan: Not yet, but I’ll talk with her for sure tomorrow. She does know about Tony’s blood-alcohol content though, because Sergeant Kloss let her know about that.

Dave Sr.: Good old Greg Kloss, a friend of Davy’s and Tom Elsen’s in high school, and your good friend and work-partner for many years after that.

Dan: Yep, Greg is a straight-shooter, and one of the toughest, shrewdest cops I know. Pretty good sense of humor too.

Rose: This whole thing has been terrible for Diane and Rocky, and also for Mark, his biological dad.

Dan: It looks like Tony’s funeral will be next week, at St. James. Diane has asked me to give the eulogy. I’ll talk about what Tony’s life meant to those closest to him, our family and his friends. He could be a bright light sometimes, but he also knew about the tougher sides of life. His graduation from Aquinas, before he started full-time work, meant a lot to him. He wanted to get somewhere good, but drink and marijuana didn’t help. He was partying with friends the night he died; then got some more beer apparently, and went down by the river at Houska. He was deathly afraid of water, as you know, so it’s hard to figure why he went so close to it that night, but a lot of drug deals go down in that park. If he needed to urinate, the river was right there.

Rose: Outside of his parents, you’ve known him best. We gave him car-rides and presents over the years, had meals with him and family, and went to his baseball games. I just wish we could attend his wedding, his babies’ births (tearing up, and wiping her tears away with kleenex), their baptisms, and such. But that will never be.

Dave Sr.: At least Diane and Rocky still have Robyn, and they may have more kids in the future too. If their next child is a boy, I’ll bet if they don’t name him Tony II, they’ll name him Danny. Tony had my and Davy’s name as his middle name; this time I’d bet on Danny as his first name.

Dan: I’m not sure what Diane and Rocky have in mind about more kids, except both of them love kids. Anyway, that’s about it. Diane will let you know more about the wake, funeral, and burial; and I’ll be in contact too. There will be some things on the news in a few minutes. I hope it’s not too gruesome to watch.

Dave Sr.: He was our grandson; we’ll watch.

Dan: Thanks, you two, for being so understanding about all this.

Rose: It’s what we do, Son. Thanks for stopping.

(The three shake hands. Dan heads out the door, saying “Good-bye”, which his parents reiterate. Lights out.)

Scene 5: Sept. 11, 2001, 10AM CDT. Dave and Rose are watching TV coverage of the attacks on New York City’s World Trade Centers’ Twin Towers.

Rose (making the sign of the cross, as does her husband): It’s just sickening to watch the video-clips of the two planes crashing into those towers. Just think of the people on-board those planes, or the people high up in those towers, with flames all around. Some people even jumping to their deaths rather than being burned alive.

Dave Sr.: It’s just unbelievable what people will do to each other in the name of some bad cause or other. I hope the president says something brave that lifts up all Americans, because this country will need that for quite a while.

Rose: Davy and the group he leads are putting together that book, “Spirit of America”, which should be timely and strong. They’ve worked on it a year and it will be published soon. Dave says it’s about 100,000 words of text and 325 photos. Matt typed the text, and he’s only 13. This is like Pearl Harbor all over again, so all Americans will need to pitch in, in case we go to war. That book may be important, around here and some other places too.
Dave Sr.: Well, Dave’s adult students are very good writers and photographers. He said he’s directing about 125 people this time. I’d guess he’ll need to work very hard especially on the last few details, to make it work and sell.

Rose: Our oldest knows what he’s doing when it comes to publishing. He’s been doing this a while, and will likely do it a while longer too. (Pointing at TV screen.) Look at those people jumping. It’s one of the scariest things I’ve ever seen. I bet very few of the firefighters going up in that building will be coming home tonight. I guess a person really has to believe in doing their job well, to do that sort of job now.

Dave Sr. (rising): Yes, that’s right. I’ll be right back. I’ve got to use the restroom.

(Phone rings -- Rose waves to her husband -- then answers it.)

Rose: Oh hi, Dave. We were just talking about the awful attacks on the World Trade Center. You must have seen some of the TV coverage. You woke up with your TV on, just after the first plane hit? So they played that footage again, and then the second plane hit? Some of the scariest videos we’ve ever seen, and real besides. Oh, you phoned your cousin Steve first because our phone was busy? He’s working at Empire Printing today, isn’t he? Are you thinking about how to close your “Spirit of America” book yet? Only the epilogue and a couple of photos need to be added? Well, make them good additions, because today’s news is very big, though horrible and tragic. I suppose it means our nation will be going to war again soon. We may, but that’s not exactly what your epilogue will cover? What are you thinking of? Oh, you’ll write about what occurred when the second plane hit -- the great courage of the American people, about where we came from, and what the future may hold. Yep. What about new photos? You’ll be working on that soon? Just need a couple, uh? Well, you must have a lot of very good materials already, after gathering and editing things more than a year. And you won’t bother Matt to type in your epilogue, you’ll do that straightaway yourself? Well, make sure you keep your costs down, because you know you’ve got a ten thousand dollar loan to pay back to John Hansen. You figure the overall bill will be about twenty thousand? How many books have you pre-sold so far? About 300 to your students, with a likely 150 more going to them after today? And you’ve got two book-signings planned? One at Barnes and Noble, the other at Pearl Street downtown? I’ve a strong feeling you’ll sell a lot more books because of these attacks! You say that Russian neighbor of yours who predicted a huge American catastrophe this year, when you had lunch with her a while ago, was right? Yes, I’m glad that gave you the motive to say spunky, spirited America would rebound, where the title “Spirit of America” came from. How is Matt doing, now that you have full-custody after his mom’s difficulty? He’s improving? Good. I know the first few months last year were tough on you both. But something tells me many things are helping Matt now, including the typing you’re paying him for. He’s doing fairly well with that, several hundred dollars, so hopefully he’ll save enough to make a difference later. Yes, that’s about it, your dad and I will watch more of this news today. Then, Dad has to work tomorrow. I’m glad I’ve retired from the medical records job I had at the nursing home. That gives me more time to pay attention to TV news, and read more things in the newspapers too. And your dad still loves sports sections. Yes, I’d better be going. I’ve got to get something together for lunch here. Your Matt will be home at the usual time I’d guess, although that sort of thing will be very different for students in New York City today and in future. Give Matt a big hug from us too. Thank you, Son, for calling. I’ll have your dad phone sometime soon, so you can talk sports when it’s a little better time. Yes, we love you too. Have a good day, and give our love to Matthew too. Good-bye. (Hangs up phone.)

Rose (speaking somewhat loudly): Dave, let’s say a rosary for those affected by 9/11, because that’s what they’re already calling today’s events, and for all our families. (Dave Sr. re-enters; they pick up nearby rosaries and begin. Lights out.)

**Scene 6:** December 2013. Matt and his wife, Jessica, are visiting Dave Sr. and Rose. Dan and his wife, Vicki, are also present, along with Davy. They’ve had lunch together there, and are now taking pictures in the living room.

Rose (with camera): Now, Matt, you and Jess stand in front of the TV. Yes, right there. Smile and look into the camera. (They do, and she snaps two photos.) Now, sit on the couch you two. That’s it. Smile and look into the camera. (They do, and she snaps two more photos. Davy is snapping all the action to document what’s happening.) Now, Dan and Vicki, and both Daves, stand with them here. (Motioning for all of them to stand perpendicular to the couch. They stand together there, and Rose snaps two photos again. Davy then asks everyone to stand together, including Rose now, and he takes two photo-portraits of that grouping, too.) There, that should do it for the picture-taking. Did you like the meal, you two?

Matt and Jess: Yes, it was very good. (Jess adds, “Especially the salad.”)

Rose: Will you fly back to Philadelphia soon?

Jess and Matt: Probably tomorrow, or the next day.

Dave Sr.: Flying while the iron’s hot, though it’s in the middle of winter, right Jess?

Jess: Yes. We do appreciate having lunch with you and the pictures, plus the Christmas gifts. It was very generous of you.

Rose: Our pleasure. I suppose now that you’ve served your country as a Special Ops Combat Medic and you’re back at university, Matt, you’re buckling down with new confidence and discipline.
Matt: Yep, my grades are straight A’s so far, and I intend to keep them in great shape.

Rose: And you, Jess?

Jess: My art teaching and design jobs are going very well too. It helps for me to already have earned a university degree in the city we live in. And there’s still family there on my side too. Seems to be working out fairly decently, though we may move after Matt graduates in 2017. Won’t know until a little closer to that time.

Rose: Any plans for more family anytime soon?

Jessica: We’re thinking about that for a little up the road.

Dan: Matt, what was the toughest part of your job in Afghanistan?

Matt: Staying awake, alert, and keeping the dust off equipment and ourselves. Oh yeah, we did a couple of other things there too.

Dan: Sounds like you performed admirably. But never let your guard down, Matt; that comes from an ex-cop of 30 years.

Vicki: Yeah, Matt did his duty over there. Now, he can study, work, and enjoy life a little more, while he’s keeping his guard up.

Matt: We plan on that, yes.

Dave Sr.: Any chance they’ll call you up, Matt, when you’re in the reserves?

Matt: Very unlikely. I hope to finish up with the reserves just before I graduate. Then, it’s on to the regular working world. Where cops bust the bad guys, and engineers like me, I hope, keep the electrical grids secure, etc. Somehow I’ll be working in defense areas I’d guess.

Dan: Not letting your guard down covers a lot of ground, doesn’t it, Matt?

Matt: Yes, it does. Yes, it does.

Jess: Well, we’d better be going, so thank you all again. We’re riding with Dan and Vicki to the Lenards’ house. (She hugs Grandma and Grandpa Marcou, while Matt does the same. Matt’s dad takes the action photos.)

Dave Sr. and Rose: Thank you, too. And we love you guys.

Matt and Jess: We love you, too.

(Door opens to let daylight in, and then as quickly, Lights Out.)

**Scene 7:** June 2015. The house at Prospect Street is fairly empty and being renovated a bit, with some elements relating to that visible. A DVD player is playing Porter Wagoner’s “The Green, Green Grass of Home”. Tom and Joy Marcou, who recently bought the house from Tom’s parents, are keeping busy, and also waiting for Dave Jr. to arrive to take some photos to record the look of the place.

Joy (holding up a photo of Dave and Rose): It’s a very nice 60th Valentine Anniversary portrait of your parents. Your brother Dave did one of his nicest photos with that.

Tom: Yes, he did. I guess it pays to sponsor his books and such, especially due to the good memories his words and photos create.

Joy: I agree. Maybe we can sponsor another one of his plays fairly soon, too. “Remembering Davy Crockett” made a bit of a splash in 2012, with the Pulitzer nomination. And it was certainly imaginative enough, while still sticking to a lot of accurate history about Colonel Crockett.

(A knock at door. Tom answers it. It’s Davy.)

Tom: Oh hi, Dave. We were expecting you. Come on in.
Dave: Thanks, Tom. Hi, Joy. Making progress, it looks like. I see you’re playing the song Dad wanted at his wake – “The Green, Green Grass of Home”. I didn’t hear it there, but Dan apparently had a DVD player with Eddy Arnold’s version on it. Eddy Arnold was Grandma Marcou’s favorite singer, but Dad often talked about liking Porter Wagoner’s version too. They didn’t have either of those versions in Seoul when I was there, just Tom Jones’s take on it; but good old TJ sure sounded great singing that old tune, halfway round the world from here.

Joy: Yeah, it’s a great song, no matter who sings it practically. We’re doing pretty good, pretty good. Not too much more adjusting and cleaning to do. We just bought the house from mom, and have put it right back in the realtor’s lap for re-sale; don’t know if anyone will take us up on that. Haven’t seen you since Dad’s funeral in March. I’m glad Tom and I were in from Texas for that, and especially three weeks before Dad’s passing, for Mom and Dad’s 65th Valentine Wedding Anniversary.

Dave: Yeah, Dad was somewhat foggy for the anniversary party, but you could tell when he put little Henry, Dan and Vicki’s new grandson, on his lap, he was still ready for business. And it was nice to get some photos taken that day too. Which is why I’m here today -- so can I get started?

Tom: Be our guest. Will it take a while?

Dave: About 10 minutes, altogether. (He goes from room to room quickly taking photos a couple of minutes then enters the living room again.) I’ll finish up in a minute. How long are you two going to be in town?

Tom: At least another week or two, because now that the house is up for sale again, there may be a prospective buyer we can talk with. Maybe someone named John or Joan or Ted or Tammy. Let’s hope it someone nice and responsible, regardless.

Dave: What if you can’t sell it soon?

Joy: We’ll figure out something either way.

Dave: Have you seen Dennis and Polly lately?

Joy: You mean La Crosse’s municipal judge and his beautiful City Hall wife?

Dave: Yep. I haven’t seen them since the funeral, and I didn’t really talk with them much then.

Tom: We had supper with them the other night.

Dave: That’s what they told me; they sent it to the judges. And I wonder how Mary Kate’s doing. I didn’t get much chance to talk with her at the funeral either.

Joy: Well, her son, Paul, is working for Logistics Health, and young Katie is busy at school and with music lessons. We hear that a Christmas Eve or two ago at Mary Kate’s house, Katie played the piano beautifully, including Beethoven’s “Song of Joy”, also the name of your Irish play, Dave.

Dave: Yes, I suggested she might play some of the music when we do a full staging of it. She played that Beethoven piece from memory after our staged reading at Aquinas in 2008, and did it beautifully then too. I guess Lynn and family are doing well, as well. She has a huge family, though she’s been divorced three times. And Dan and Vicki continue doing great with their relatively new daughter-in-law, Mayo research doctor from the Bahamas Cherisse. As for you guys, how are Stephen and Sebastian doing? Any sign Jody will relent and let Stephen and you visit his son anytime soon?

Tom: We always send Jody a card with money for Sebastian’s birthdays and at Christmas, and she sends us pictures. She will have no contact with Stephen, though. I hope she relents sooner rather than later. What about you, what’s next for you, Dave? More books and plays? Grandkids?

Dave: I’m hoping for some grandkids reasonably soon. And I’m always writing plays and books and photographing for books and creative contributions to archives, too. I wish I’d make some decent money for all that work. I do appreciate your sponsorships, though. You two are my most loyal sponsors; and there’s a man originally from Central America who lives in my building, Ignacio, who has bought a copy of each of my last 10 books or so. He’s now an official sponsor too. Always looking for more financial backing for my projects. Never know where and when
that will turn up next. Sort of like the ending of some plays. The stagehands and/or actors sometimes just all-of-a-sudden turn the lights off and
that’s it, maybe with a little music added in. By the way, remember what Dad used to say to us kids when we were very young, when he’d leave
us in the car and head in for some brewskies, “Just wait in the car.” One day, many years after he’d given up drinking, he asked us, “Did any of
you EVER wait in the car?” Maybe that comes from one of our ancestors being a bit of an explorer, Louis Joliet, but that’s another play I’d guess.
As for Mom’s pictures, it looks like you’ll need another box. (Joy hands Tom one.) Gee, this one of Dad viewing an old photo album a few
months before he passed will always be one of my favorites.

Joy: Yes, it is nice. Family members really do like seeing family, and friends, in the old photos, whether they’re very old, or from just a few
months back.

(Another knock at the door. More Marcous enter, Rose, Kate and Katie, Dan and Vicki, and Dennis and Polly.)

Joy: Hi, Guys and Gals. Where have you all been?

Young Katie: At Grandpa Marcou’s and Tony’s graves. We put some more flowers on them. They look really nice.

Joy: Yes, though the flowers there have to be synthetic, the people there certainly weren’t artificial. (She hugs Rose.) Thank you for coming,
Mom, and everyone here. We haven’t much in the line of refreshments, but there should be enough Mountain Dews in the fridge to wet
everyone’s whistle.

Dennis: Sounds good. I’ll get a few, in the can yet of course. (Dan helps Dennis.)

Davy: Hi, Mom, Everyone. I just took a few last photos of the old homestead. The empty spaces here are a little hard to comprehend, because we
did a lot of good living in this house.

Rose: Yes, we all did. Did you get plenty of photos of the bathroom fixtures. Tom and Joy put them in a couple years ago, but they still look
great. Your dad always liked the bathroom. Kitchen cabinets look nice too. Another bit of beautiful work by Tom and Joy. Say, Tom, where did
you ever learn so many technical skills. Your dad couldn’t use a handsaw well, much less a power saw and sander.

Tom: That was part of my inspiration, I guess. Just wanted to be of use where the family needed it most. Dad and his Dad never were very good
mechanically, but they did some other things very well. I just wanted to fill in the gaps a bit.

Joy: Well, you certainly do that, Tom.

Diane and Lynn: Why don’t we all go out to eat together tonight? Maybe Old Country Buffet?

(Dennis and Dan return with the Mountain Dews.)

Dan: Did I hear someone say something about a buffet? I could murder half a dozen appetizers and two or three main entrees too.

Vicki: You always have the ability to do that. Maybe tonight would be the best time for it, what do you think?

Dennis’s Polly: A good family meal does sound in order. What do you think, Mr. Justice, do you agree?

Dennis: With my undivided attention, I agree. The Court orders punishment for everyone of plenty of food and drinks.

Rose: I could even polish off some of that too. Maybe we can get the big room at Old Country Buffet, the way we usually do.

Diane: I’ll phone there in a minute, and make sure we can. I’ll tell them it’s the usual Marcou culprits, but I won’t mention we’ve all got criminal
records, though nothing more serious than laughing and crying as a family I hope.

Dave: Laughing and crying as a family. Maybe if you hum a few bars, we’ll catch the tune. Or maybe we can finish up here today with that old
hymn that ends my Irish comedy, “Song of Joy”. (Smiles, then they begin singing that ending’s old hymn in fact, “Amazing Grace”.)

(Lights dim slowly, as they begin to sing it. End of play-proper.)
Encore: Lights suddenly up-again for the Encore. In bops 34-year-old Papa Dave, in short-sleeved, white dress work shirt with a pack of Lucky Strikes rolled up in one short-sleeve, black pants and black work-shoes on, with white socks. He knows he’s top male dog in the family, and all the others make room for him. He hands his wife a special rose.

Dave Sr.: Well, my good wife, do I look okay for work or should I start over with this and draw things out a lot longer? And I hope you like this Louis Joliet Rose, Rose of My Life and Love.

Rose (takes the rose and kisses him gingerly on the cheek): Thank you, Sweetheart. You look fine, husband, like you’re primed for a prize-fight. In fact, it’s like you’ve just finished a prize-fight for the light heavy-weight championship, and won it.

Dave Sr.: Good, I’m set to go. What about the rest of this crew? I see Mary Kate and Katie are here, and Diane, Lynn, Tom, Dennis, Dan, and Davy of course, and some mates too. Is everyone following my lead today, or staying at home?

All: We’re following your lead, Daddy-O.

Dave Sr.: Oh, you in the audience can do your thing now, and I don’t mean boo or boo-hoo -- if you don’t do Good, the Mayor and Bishop’s police and priests will run you in. But thank you for belonging a bit to our family tonight, the Marcous of Prospect Street. And may God Bless Us Every One, Always! Isn’t that how my grandson Mike says it? His first role in the Community Theatre was as Tiny Tim in Mr. Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol”. The rest of us don’t do badly either. Thank you all for being here. We love you all! (Audience applauds. Lights dim but don’t go out completely. “The Wanderer” plays briefly this time, and full cast joins audience for mingling and chat. Then, Ringo Starr’s song dedicated to George Harrison plays, “Never Without You,” as audience continues to chat with cast and crew, and some begin to leave. Thank you, Helena Garcia. THE END.)

Further Note about the Marcous who lived at 1720 Prospect Street for many years: Dan, Vicki’s husband, was Wisconsin's SWAT Officer of the Year in 2005, for talking down a killer-hostage-taker while visiting Oak Creek. Brother Dennis, Polly’s husband, has been La Crosse's Municipal Judge since 1997; he said the night of his first election, “This is the last elected office I'll ever run for; I'm glad I've won it.” Tom and Joy worked in top-level federal jobs 30 years, including their last 15 years in Washington, DC; Stephen and Sebastian are part of their family, as are many nieces and nephews, and other close relatives. Diane Marcou Skifton, Rocky’s wife and a civilian Police Department employee, gave birth to three wonderful children, including Tony, who was one of the many young men who died mysteriously in the rivers at La Crosse during a decade or so. Lynn has a beautiful family of her offspring; she works for La Crosse County and for Duluth Trading Co. after many years as a Target Store Team Leader. Mary Kate was the first valedictorian to graduate from the new Logan HS Building in 1981 (and a Magna Cum Laude from UW-L soon after); she has two very talented children, and works as an accountant for Mathy Construction. A direct ancestor of this family was Louis Joliet, on the Marcou side, while the Fitzgerards, Muskats, and Brunners were also essential contributors. David A. Jr., David Joseph Marcou’s dad, was Steve Kiedrowski's mother's brother; Steve is a local actor, artist, and promoter. SK starred in David Joseph Marcou’s Pulitzer-nominated play, “Remembering Davy Crockett”, which David wrote, directed, and produced. In addition, David’s Irish play “Song of Joy--Or the Old Reliabiles” was positively critiqued by the National Theatre of Ireland in 2010, the Abbey Theatre. Despite struggling against many adversities, especially in the 1980s, David’s writings have since then been twice-nominated for Pulitzer Prizes, and his photo-books twice-nominated for POYi Awards. He’s authored more than 115 books and more than a dozen plays. His son, Matt, born in 1987, is a Special Ops Combat Veteran who is now a stellar university Engineering student married to Jessica Amaneck Marcou, a successful artist and university teacher. “That Little Yellow House on Prospect Street”, which could also be the name of this newest play by David, was a powerful motivator for his branch of the Marcou family, and the same can be said for parents David A. and Rose Muskat Marcou, who married on Valentine's Day 1950, and who celebrated their 65th Valentine Anniversary in 2015, three weeks before David A. Marcou passed. Other Marcou and Marco families have lived along and/or close to Prospect Street, including Bob “Saboo” Marco and family. Bob was La Crosse’s best slow-pitch, 16-inch softball player for many years, showing tremendous speed, accuracy, and power. He also worked for Trane Company many years. Saboo used to chat with David A. Marcou when he was going by the back yard at 1720 Prospect Street. Memories of many chats with David A. Marcou, still inspire many family members. And chats the Marcou offspring still have with their mom, Rose, inspire many, too. Regarding Ringo Starr’s song for those who have preceded and/or left the Marcou/Marco family, the title says a lot: “Never Without You”...