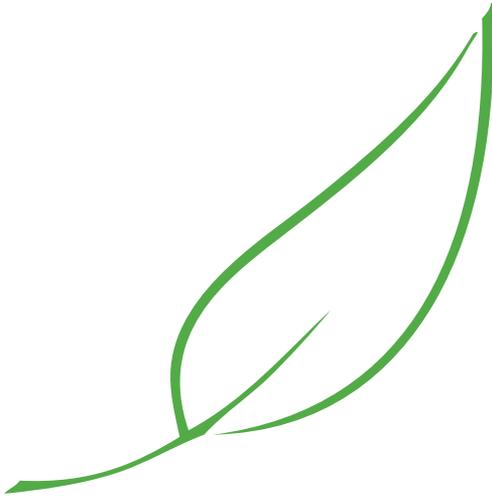


The Big Shot

By Edan Schappert



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THE BIG SHOT

By Edan Schappert

SYNOPSIS: This national award-winning play is an impressive drama from today's frightening news stories about "loners" who explode seemingly out of nowhere to make a mark on history. What makes a person want to seek revenge on society? Why is it so important to be a "Big Shot"? The gripping headlines on the national scene set the backdrop for this intense, mind-stretching play.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 5 males, 2 either)

- EDDIE YORK (m)..... A fairly good-looking late teen or as old as 21, recently a high school graduate, has no career. Has a nervous personality. Comes from a cold, emotionless family. Is searching for a purpose in life. *(306 lines)*
- ARTHUR YORK (m)..... Eddie's father, very good looking. A factory worker. Not home much. Big ego, only thinks of himself, his needs and his comforts. *(93 lines)*
- MARIAN YORK (f)..... Eddie's mother. A pallid woman. Has a slight but indistinguishable foreign accent. Has spent most of her married life agreeing with and waiting on Arthur, as well as tending to one of her children who has an illness. *(106 lines)*
- FRANK YORK (m)..... Older brother of Eddie's. Works as a lineman in the local power and light company. *(39 lines)*
- MARLENE (f)..... A 19 year old girl, very insecure and timid. Works as a clerk in an insurance company. *(65 lines)*

- LEONARD NATWICK (m)..... The owner of one of the “best” restaurants in town. Handsome, wears expensive clothes. (*46 lines*)
- MRS. HERRINGTON (f) A wealthy woman who is head of a political candidate’s volunteer campaign headquarters. Snobby. Out of her element in the working world. (*62 line*)
- JERRY FELDMAN (m) A 22 year old who has taken a year off from college. Has spent the past year on a motorcycle, living where and as he pleases. To make money he takes dishwashing jobs as he travels from city to city. (*114 lines*)
- TV ANCHORMAN (m/f)..... Trained, suave, very professional announcer with excellent enunciation. Speaks in ponderous, dramatic tones. (*8 lines*)
- ON-THE-SPOT NEWSMAN (m/f)..... Same. (*3 lines*)
- TV NEWSWOMAN (f)..... Same. (*6 lines*)

TIME AND SETTING: The present. A large U.S. coastal city.

COSTUMES

- Man’s yellow sweater [grimy]
- 2 men’s heavy winter jackets
- Old-fashioned woman’s apron
- Newly pressed man’s shirt
- Man’s sweater [expensive looking]
- Man’s tie
- Fringed suede handbag
- Woman’s coat
- 2 white restaurant kitchen aprons
- Man’s blue blazer

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- Man's gray slacks
- Men's jeans, t-shirts
- Mink Coat [fake fur]
- Older woman's elegant dress or suit
- Man's lightweight wind breaker or jacket

LIGHTING

- Effects such as darkened room, twilight, bright daylight, night time, indoor lighting.
- A very bright spotlight is required for TV interviews.
- Intermittent flashlights from photographers' cameras during interviews are optional.

SOUND EFFECTS

- Water splashing in sink
- Gurgling noise of water leaving sink
- Background music in a bar
- 3 gun shots
- Siren

FLYING PROPS

- Rod with hooks for kitchen pans
- Same rod with hooks used for campaign bunting
- Chandelier over dining room table [on rod]

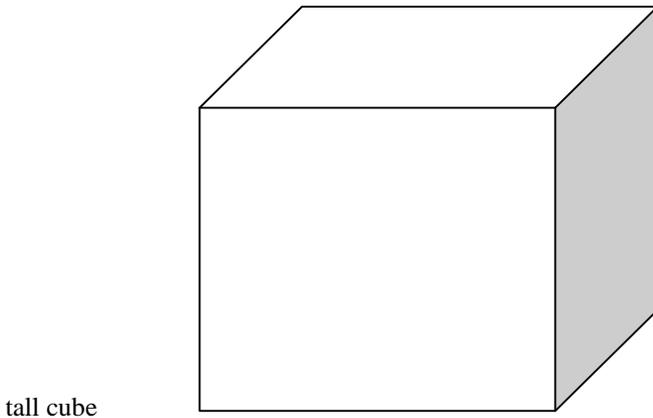
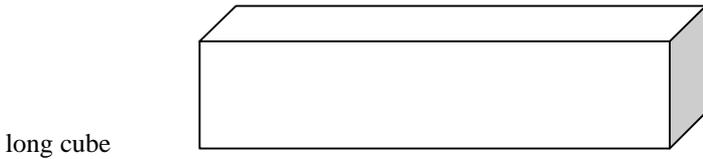
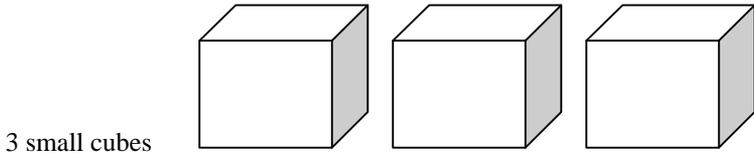
PROPS

- Stand up microphone
- Hand-held microphone
- Variety of small medicine bottles
- Teaspoon
- Piece of notepaper for prescription
- 2 suitcases
- Pile of shirts, socks, underwear, shaving gear
- Large restaurant pots, pans
- Large red and white “farm” handkerchief
- Coffee mug
- Rag [that a workman would carry in back pocket]
- Large piece of cheese
- Small kitchen towel
- Left over food and food containers
- Note pads, pieces of paper, newspaper, crumpled magazines, books, notebooks, big 3-ring binder
- Cardboard box [upturned cube]
- Toothpick
- Large container of “Comet” Cleanser
- Large pad of Brillo
- Flat knife or scraper
- Box of Band-Aids
- Campaign brochures
- Campaign bunting [red/white/blue cloth]
- Yellow writing pad
- Beer mug or bar glass
- Broom for sweeping
- Dust cloth
- Several wires and long cables
- Wrench
- Screwdriver
- Bath towel, hairbrush
- Oversized “elegant” restaurant menus
- Large bottle of dishwashing detergent
- Canvas zippered bag

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SET DESIGN (OPTIONAL)

Five Wooden Cubes [Idea from premiere production at Northeastern University, Boston.] The following can be used for all furniture requirements:

**FURNITURE – All Gray**

- 3 straight-back chairs [3 small cubes]
- Dining room table [high cube]
- Sleeping cot [long cube]
- Outside stair stoops of building [long cube, 2 small cubes]
- Gray restaurant kitchen sink [long cube and 3 small upturned cubes]
- Campaign counter [high cube]
- A bar [high cube]
- Manhole [upturned cube] [high cube]
- dining room table and chandelier

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**ACT ONE**

- SCENE 1: A Press Conference
2: The York Living Room
3: A Press Conference
4: Eddie's One-Room Apartment
5: A Press Conference
6: The Restaurant Kitchen
7: A Press Conference
8: A Campaign Headquarters

ACT TWO

- SCENE 1: Eddie's Apartment
2: A Campaign Headquarters
3: A Neighborhood Bar
4: The York Kitchen
5: A City Street
6: Outside Marlene's Apartment House
7: A Phone Booth
8: The Main Entrance to the Restaurant
9: The Restaurant Kitchen
10: Eddie's Apartment/His Radio & TV
11: An On-the-Spot News Report
12: The LATE NEWS

PRODUCTION NOTES

It is desirable that this play be done with as few props and in as spare a manner as possible. This play, if desired, can be performed with most of the props and settings mimed. Characterization overshadows everything else in this play. But for optimum effect, props, sets, and costumes should be used.

An assortment of blocks, cubes, square open-ended boxes could be used for most effects, such as apartment house stoop, kitchen sink, campaign headquarter counter, dining room table or construction scene on street. Flying props, such as bunting for campaign headquarters, chandelier for interior of house, and row of hanging pots for kitchen scene could be added to set when needed for visual believability.

Change of scene is accomplished mainly by lighting and re-arrangement of cubes.

Interview scenes precede some of the action. During the interviews we are to imagine a room full of reporters, some television cameras, and general press conference ambiance. It is to be fully believable that questions have been asked, and the cast should respond in ways which verify the illusion of the reporters' questions.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *ARTHUR YORK, well dressed, in middle ages and his rather plain wife, MARIAN, middle-aged woman, are sitting on two chairs on bare stage. Lights shine down on them intensely. A stand-up microphone might be in front of them.*

For the most part during this scene, the TWO speak directly into the audience.

ARTHUR: No... the missus don't much like to talk to people... and she sure don't like interviews.

MARIAN: *(To ARTHUR.)* How do you know!

ARTHUR: *(More intensely to audience.)* We don't talk to strangers. Especially about family matters. Makes us both feel uncomfortable.

MARIAN: *(Angry.)* Arthur, would you let me speak for myself?

ARTHUR: *(Loud whisper to MARIAN.)* The man is supposed to do the speaking for the wife! Be quiet!

MARIAN: *(Still Angry.)* These people are here to interview the two of us. Not just you.

ARTHUR: *(Waves cheerfully to audience and smiles nervously.)* Hold on. We'll get on with this in just a minute! We have to settle something here first...

MARIAN: *(To ARTHUR.)* I want to answer them *everything*.

ARTHUR: Forget it, Marian! You want to blab everything out in the *open* like this? In front of cameras and newspaper people?

MARIAN: *(Tough.)* Shut up, Arthur.

ARTHUR: *(Surprised.)* What's gotten into you! *(Nervously, to audience.)* No... this isn't an example of our home relationship. *(Chuckles.)* This is what I'd call very odd behavior on her part... *(Disgusted.)* and of course she has to wait until every camera in the country is focused on her to act like an idiot!

MARIAN: I'm an idiot? Because I want to answer these reporters' questions?

ARTHUR: *(To audience, nervously.)* She's usually very peaceful... *(To MARIAN.)* Would you calm down? You know that the man should do the talking in cases like this.

MARIAN: (*Quickly.*) Don't tell *me* about cases like this! Our son is being accused of a Federal offense... his picture in all the newspapers! Splashed all over the television set. The great family name of "York" finally made the big time... and today they want to talk to *me*... to give clues if he could have committed such a crime... and you want me to calm down! It's my baby they're talking about! And I'm telling them everything they want to know!

ARTHUR: (*Pleading.*) Just be *careful* what you say... (*To audience, more nervously than before.*) Yes... we'll get on with the interview in just a moment! (*To MARIAN.*) Remember that we still have a reputation as a family in this city... my brothers and sisters, their families, and all my *friends*.

MARIAN: We haven't seen any of your relatives in the last 10 years. And I don't consider your bar cronies as friends *I* have to worry about. So you know exactly where you can go, Arthur.

ARTHUR: (*Shocked.*) When did you start talking like that?

MARIAN: Yesterday...

ARTHUR: Just because Eddie got into this mess?

MARIAN: When I saw it's all been for nothing... the way you wanted us to live. All a phony cover up... and now... all this... (*To audience.*) We're all set now. You reporters can start... we'll be glad to tell you all we can of our son... although we might not have all the answers... (*INTERRUPTS quickly and answers a question from an unseen "reporter."*) Yes. We have three children. All of them boys. All of them... different from each other.

ARTHUR: (*Quickly.*) But all good boys! Fine boys!

MARIAN: That's right... Edward is the youngest of our children.

ARTHUR: How old? By gosh, Eddie's got to be maybe 18 or 19 by now.

MARIAN: (*Flat.*) He's 21.

ARTHUR: (*Nervously, to MARIAN.*) Oh yes, but you've got to admit that he *looks* much younger. (*To audience.*) The boy never grew much in size... he's a short little tyke for being practically an adult. (*To MARIAN.*) Wouldn't you say so?

MARIAN: Edward's always been a very handsome boy.

ARTHUR: Oh brother Marian! What's that got to do with it! I was saying that he doesn't look his age! (*To audience, softer.*) Yes... okay... we'll try. (*To MARIAN.*) He said we should try to answer the questions.

MARIAN: (*Calm.*) That's exactly what I'm doing.

ARTHUR: (*Leans towards audience, cups ear.*) Excuse me? (*Uncomfortable, shifts his legs. To audience, in a confused way.*) Well, I never had much to do with the boys when they was growing up. Frankly, I left most of the rearing to be done by her. I was always out doing a man's job. Been with the Can Company down by the docks ever since I was 15. Do you know that's the biggest Can Company in the entire country? Turns out cans of every size and description... all shapes and colors... thousands of 'em a day... yessir... been going down to that factory over by the docks for the last 40 years. Was made a foreman over five years ago. (*Beams.*) They appreciate a man there!

MARIAN: He's worked two shifts at the factory every since I can remember. His excuse to get away from us.

ARTHUR: What?!

MARIAN: I told you before I wasn't going to hide anything.

ARTHUR: (*Very phony.*) At least tell the truth!

MARIAN: Let's say my husband wasn't home much while the boys were growing up.

ARTHUR: I was out working!

MARIAN: (*Straining to hear a "question" from audience.*) How was Eddie different from our other boys? (*Sincerely trying to explain.*) He always seemed a *troubled* child... from small on...

ARTHUR: They don't want to hear about that.

MARIAN: He would do upsetting things...

ARTHUR: You don't have to tell them.

MARIAN: Now... once when he was five... he sat in a chair... the same chair... for over 12 hours... and giggled and laughed crazy the entire time... never loosening himself from the chair... Arthur said to pay no attention to it... made me promise just to ignore him. But the boy just got numb sitting on that chair. When Arthur came home, I begged him to let me pull the boy off the chair. It wasn't *right* leaving him there. So Arthur said all right—then he put him in his room and locked him in.

ARTHUR: (*Quickly.*) You know he needed to be shown a thing or two... or he would have gotten out of hand!

MARIAN: One time the boy cut all his hair off. He was young. Could have hurt himself with the scissors.

ARTHUR: And don't forget the time he took the scissors to my clothes! Stupid kid went into my closet and cut everything to ribbons! My clothes! *(Pause.)* What kind of kid would do a thing like that? I don't know what's going on anymore. There's nothing to explain it. All I can say is that none of it's my fault.

MARIAN: After a certain time, Arthur gave up with the kids... said I could bring them up any way I wanted, as long as they never did anything to embarrass him.

ARTHUR: I never said it exactly that way! Uh... what I mean is... *(Pause. Speaks softly.)* Heck. What did I know about being a father. Nobody ever was a father to me. I mean, my old man had problems of his own. He didn't spend time with me. You know what I mean? The way I'd get a message from him is when he whacked me. I got plenty of 'em in my time. Pop didn't believe in big conversations. Can't really remember him talking to us much. He'd come home from work late. Then he'd stay mostly behind his newspaper. On weekends, he'd go down in what he called his "tool shack" in the basement. He was always hammering or banging on something. Never even saw him talk much with Ma. But hey, that's the way it goes... right? Things work out okay without none of this fancy communicatin' stuff they're always talking about. Don't they? Don't things work out? *(Pause. Embarrassed.)* Ah, come on... you guys know what I mean. Uh, excuse me, ladies. I mean... what's all this garbage about families having to talk to each other. Don't make no sense. All that... that emotionalism... just plain junk. Got to do the sensible stuff. Work. That's a man's duty, ain't it? *(Pause.)* So like I was saying, uh, well... see, Pa died when I was 16... Ma died a year later... so naturally, after that I started looking for a wife. I first tried to get into the service but they wouldn't take me. I had to find a wife to take care of me, didn't I? So somebody introduced me to Marian, and she seemed okay, so we got married. First thing I know is we got kids coming... *(Pause; angry.)* Marian should've handled things better... then this never would have happened! *(Looks offstage and shouts quickly.)* You got enough on your tape machines now? *(Disappointed.)* Aren't we almost through? *(Slightly angry.)* We've told you everything we know. *(Smiles childishly and turns to MARIAN.)* Do you know our voices are going down in history on that tape machine over there? We got a boy in the

headlines... and it's *us* that gets famous! (*Chuckles softly.*) That's a good one...

MARIAN: Arthur! For heaven's sake!

ARTHUR: (*To MARIAN.*) I'm telling you... I want to *hear* myself on that machine! The guys down at the bar tell me I've got a real professional actor's voice...

MARIAN: (*Strains to hear a question from the audience.*) What are you asking?

ARTHUR: (*More to himself than anyone.*) I SHOULD HAVE GONE INTO ACTING. I ALWAYS HAD THE LOOKS FOR IT. The girls always told me I was good looking. Remember when all the girls said that, Marian? *You* told me, too.

MARIAN: What difference does that make now! We're here to talk about Eddie.

ARTHUR: (*Sits up in chair.*) Well... let's get it over with. I told the guys I'd meet them for a beer later. (*To audience, smiling.*) That's right... like most real men... I got a hangout... but *she* don't like me to go there. Because I'm treated right there. (*To audience.*) Tell you more about Eddie? (*Pause.*) Well... not too much I can tell you about my particular relationship with that kid... (*Pause.*) Now, Frank... he's our oldest son... 26 or 27 now... He's going to be some kind of executive some day. You just wait and see. Right, Marian?

MARIAN: Yes, but...

ARTHUR: Frank works over at the electrical power and light company... course he only climbs poles and does installations and runs cables, that sort of thing... but he'll work his way into the executive office. (*Laughs.*) Can you imagine me being the father of an executive? Me?... Only going to fifth grade in school? I'd say I'd done pretty good...

MARIAN: Frank was a smart boy... but he left home when he was 16... dropped out of high school a year before he graduated... wanted to get out on his own he always said... get a job and get out. Make money.

ARTHUR: A good boy.

MARIAN: Said there was no communication at home...

ARTHUR: (*Quickly.*) All this big fancy talk about communication! Where do kids get these ideas!

MARIAN: We should of talked to each other more... you were always saying to leave things be... not to stir things up... you should have acted more like a father... we should have talked.

ARTHUR: (*Angry. To MARIAN.*) I acted like a father. I did as much as any father could! I provided! I put food on the table! You're lucky I stayed with you all these years.

MARIAN: Why did you?

ARTHUR: Where else could I have gone! A man's got to have a home, don't he? He has to have someone to take care of him! (*Pause. Turns to audience.*) Me? Go into that place where they're holding Eddie? I'd be embarrassed going in there. (*Softly.*) Maybe his brother, Frank, will go in and see him. Frank would know what to say.

MARIAN: No. The boy doesn't want to see me. I don't know why. (*Pause.*) Our other boy? Oh yes... Robert... the second oldest. He's taken most of my time...

ARTHUR: (*Quietly.*) Sickly kid...Robert. Always sick.

MARIAN: (*Quietly.*) Kidney disease. We've had to give him the closest of attention. Either bringing him to hospitals or giving him care at home. I've been a full-time nurse to that child. (*Annoyed.*) Yes! I *know*. Eddie's problem was just as serious!

ARTHUR: You can't compare the two! Robert had a *disease*! But Eddie was just your ordinary misfit. There's nothing you can do about that! Except hide it!

MARIAN: Arthur was always telling me to hide things. Never to mention Eddie's odd behavior to anyone.

ARTHUR: What? (*Scratches his chin. Pause.*) What did I do with the boys when they were growing up? (*Pause.*) Lemme see... (*Pause.*) Once I took the oldest, that's Frank you know, down to a baseball game at the stadium... that was in the early 1980's... I remember the game well... It was between the Red Sox and the uh... uh... (*Pause; angry.*) Oh, it's not coming to me at the moment! I must have done a lot of things with the boys...but right now none come to mind! (*Looks offstage.*) Haven't we got enough on that tape machine yet? (*Shouts slightly offstage.*) You're not going to forget and play me this tape recording back, are you? (*Pause. Kicks at floor in an annoyed way.*) All right! Okay! So maybe I wasn't the best father in the world... but I wasn't the worst, either. I'm a real man, and I had to go out and do a real man's work. I was always told to behave... do the right thing. So

I *did* behave. I got me a job, a wife and a family... so what's the gripe? What more do they want from me. I did it by the book... on the straight and narrow. And I still get criticized.

MARIAN: (*Annoyed.*) Arthur! That's not what they're asking.

ARTHUR: (*Ignores her.*) She don't know about our American ways... her being from the old country and all. She don't know that a man's got to buy himself nice things once in a while... got to buy rounds down at the bar. Got to get out once in a while. Live it up.

MARIAN: That's *not* what they're asking you...

ARTHUR: Let me tell you about it. She came over here during the war... yep... I thought she'd be a pretty good homebody... take care of the house and take good care of me... but she ain't like the rest of us real Americans... (*Pause.*) Oh... you know... like fast-talking... fast on your feet... keep up with the rest of 'em... You know – real American! (*Pause.*) What? Me *talk* with my kids? Why, no. What's there to talk about with kids.

MARIAN: (*Cups her ear to hear a question from the audience.*) How long ago did Eddie move out?

ARTHUR: I know what you people are thinking. Yeah, sure, I got a life that looks pretty good to you. I got a nice house down on the south side of town... small, but nice... got up to 23 suits in the closet now... two color TV sets... trade in the Oldsmobile every three years... Yeah, I'm what's called a regular Joe. I'm on the ball. And I didn't do bad for a guy who only finished fifth grade, hah? (*Annoyed.*) What? How long ago did Eddie move out? Oh... one or two months ago.

MARIAN: Six months ago. In January.

ARTHUR: (*To MARIAN.*) That long?

MARIAN: (*To audience.*) No, he didn't move in with friends... he never had any real friends.

ARTHUR: The boy always looked funny! That strange way of twisting his face up! Then he'd grin! We couldn't get him to stop grinning!

MARIAN: I should have tried to find out what... the trouble was...

ARTHUR: Find out! There was nothing to find out!

MARIAN: (*To audience.*) He found an apartment. Got one down by the old railroad depot. Had himself a girlfriend for a while, too.

ARTHUR: Little pipsqueak Eddie? A girlfriend?

MARIAN: He got average or a little lower in grades. Yes. The city schools. Very large classes. Eddie was never noticed much. His teachers said he did his work and said he behaved... you see, he functioned all right in the outside world... it was inside him... in his fantasy world... well, that's where he really lived...

ARTHUR: *(Looks to ceiling.)* Getting hot in here with all these lights... *(Looks at watch.)* Listen, I gotta go meet the guys, hah?

MARIAN: Yes... and I must get home to Robert... I can't leave a sickly 23-year old child sitting home without me... he's got medication I must give him... I told you all I can about Eddie.

ARTHUR: *(Annoyed, to audience.)* What, more questions! We're not going to have time to listen to the tape machine if we have to answer more questions!

MARIAN: Only one more? The day he moved into his own apartment? That'll be all you need to know? *(Pause.)* All right. It was like this...

ARTHUR: And *then* can I hear my voice on that tape machine?

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Lights come up dimly to show a standard middle class living room. In prominence is a large round table in the middle of the room with small bottles of medicine on it. MARIAN is sitting at the table sorting the small bottles intensely.*

EDDIE comes in from a door at the left, quickly walking in nervous, rather jerky steps. HE takes off his jacket and throws it on the chair. HE wears a dirty yellow sweater.

EDDIE: I got it, Ma!

MARIAN: Did you pick up Robert's medicine?

EDDIE: *(Rubs hands briskly.)* Cold out there! *(Walks to right stage, peers offstage.)* The snow makes everything look real bright! Shiny bright!

MARIAN: Where's the prescription?

EDDIE: *(Pulls a slip of paper from pocket. Hands it to MARIAN.)* I didn't have time.

MARIAN: Where have you been, then.

EDDIE: I told you this morning. Out to look at apartments. And I found one.

MARIAN: (*Stands up. Looks at prescription in her hand.*) All right. I'll go out and get it.

EDDIE: Don't you want to hear, Ma?

MARIAN: (*Sits down at table again.*) While I'm down to the drugstore, I might as well see what else we're low on. Go into the bedroom, Eddie, and see if Robert's sleeping.

EDDIE: (*Continues to walk around the room nervously. His hands are dug into his pockets, and HE has a very tense look, as though he is to snap at any moment. A feeling of intense frustration emanates from him.*) I'm going to fix that apartment up like a pad! Like in the Playboy Mansion! Wait'll you see! (*Pause.*) Don't you want to hear about it?

MARIAN: About what.

EDDIE: (*Leans over the table. Leers at MARIAN.*) Hey, Lady... did I ever tell you that I don't think you take much of an interest in me?

MARIAN: Yes. You've told me that.

EDDIE: Well?

MARIAN: (*Looks from checking the bottles.*) Well what?

EDDIE: Why don't you pay attention to me!

MARIAN: Look, I've got enough on my mind as it is. And your father says it's not good to pay attention to your antics. It only encourages you.

EDDIE: You know what I think?

MARIAN: No.

EDDIE: I don't think he's interested in anyone besides himself.

MARIAN: That's not true. Your father tries his best...

EDDIE: You're always saying that. And you never mean it. You're always covering things up.

MARIAN: (*Gets up-tight.*) You're talking nonsense. I won't listen.

EDDIE: Every time I try to find out what's going on... or I try to talk about us... you say you won't listen and you start acting funny.

MARIAN: I'm not acting funny.

EDDIE: Why can't we just TALK, for Pete's sake!

MARIAN: You're always full of big ideas. But you'll cool off pretty soon.

EDDIE: I don't want to cool off! I want to talk!

MARIAN: Talking never solved anything.

EDDIE: (*Pleading.*) Ma...

MARIAN: Let's all get on with our work. And not get too emotional.

EDDIE: I've heard that a million times from you! Is that all you ever can say?

MARIAN: We all worked hard. Trying to make something of ourselves. We didn't have time – like you do – to figure out *why* everything is the way it is.

EDDIE: Ma, do you know that I'm moving out? (*Long pause.*) Today? (*He goes to the closet, gets down two suitcases.*) Huh, Ma? Did you know that?

MARIAN: Eddie... you're old enough now to do as you want. You've been working... and I'm real proud of you the way you've saved your money. If you want to move out... that's fine... Just don't get into any trouble. I've got to go check on Robert... I can hear him crying...

EDDIE: Robert's a grown man. Grown men don't cry.

MARIAN: (*Goes to exit.*) Robert is very sick.

EDDIE: So am I.

MARIAN: Now don't you go pulling any of your tricks to get my attention. I've got a lot on my mind.

EDDIE: So do I! (*MARIAN exits and EDDIE stands in the middle of the room stamping his feet up and down in one spot. It's a monotonous cadence.*) Dumb ignorant people. (*He goes offstage for only a moment, comes back with arms piled up high with clothes and shaving gear, etc., in a jumbled mess in his arms. He dumps it into one of the suitcases.*) I hate all of you.

He exits again, then comes back with another load of clothes. ARTHUR YORK comes quickly into the room from door at side. He sees EDDIE throwing clothes around in middle of room but he doesn't stop to ask him what's going on. He takes off his heavy jacket, hangs it on the back of an empty chair, then stamps his feet and rubs his hands together.

ARTHUR: Oh Mama! It's cold out there! (*Calls off to one side.*) Marian! Where are you?

MARIAN: (*Comes onstage, holding a teaspoon and small medicine bottle in her hand.*) What is it?

ARTHUR: It's cold out there! (*Beats chest with arms to warm them.*)

MARIAN: (*Sits down at table and rummages through bottles and finds one that she picks up and shakes.*) Eddie... get that mess out from this room.

ARTHUR: You know, Marian, a lot of the guys are talking about how cold it is out and a lot of the boys didn't show up at the morning shift. All calling in sick. Just because it's cold out.

MARIAN: *(Knock at door.)* What now.

ARTHUR: *(Irritated.)* Well, someone answer it!

EDDIE: *(Kicks his suitcase and clothes over to a wall. Goes to door, looks out peephole, looks over to MARIAN and ARTHUR with big grin.)* Hey, it's Frank! What do you know!

Opens door.

MARIAN: *(Hugs herself.)* So Frank's come by. What does he want...

EDDIE: *(Opens door expansively.)* HEY, FRANK! Wait'll you hear my news!

FRANK: *(Enters, is gruff.)* I don't have time, kid. In a rush. Ma, Pa, how are you...

Goes over to ARTHUR. ARTHUR stiffens slightly as HE approaches. FRANK gives his hand one quick shake. Both move away from each other quickly.

ARTHUR: *(Hands on hips.)* I'm going to get my sweater. Marian, where's my sweater? Did you get it back from the cleaners?

MARIAN: It's in your closet in the bedroom.

ARTHUR: Do you know how cold it is outside today?

FRANK: I came to borrow your electric drill, Pa.

ARTHUR: *(Heads towards bedroom door.)* Help yourself. It's in the basement. *(Mutters to himself.)* Always borrowing from me. Can't he get himself a drill?

FRANK: *(Has a hurt look. Looks at ARTHUR.)* I told you mine's out of commission. Can't afford a new one right now.

ARTHUR: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

FRANK: I'm putting up some new lights in the apartment... before Shelly and I get... you know... married.

ARTHUR: *(Turns around at door.)* You getting married?

FRANK: I told you and Ma a half a year ago.

ARTHUR: *(Scratches head, exits.)* Oh, yeah. Yeah. Hey, wait 'til I tell the boys that. They'll get a kick out of it. Me, Arthur, father of the groom. That's a new one. *(Chuckles to himself.)*

MARIAN: *(Goes up to FRANK, almost touches his arm.)* That's the way. Married. That's the way it's done. That's the way it's always been done. It's good, Frank.

FRANK: *(Pulls his arm away.)* Yeah, Ma.

EDDIE: *(Effusively grins.)* But, hey, Frank, HOW ARE YOU?

FRANK: Calm down, Eddie... don't get excited.

EDDIE: *(Grins, talks very fast.)* But, I mean, you're really getting married? Is that the same girl I saw you with a while ago? But you really getting married? When's it going to be? Are we going to go?

EDDIE looks at MARIAN and FRANK expectantly.

FRANK: *(Gives a big sigh.)* Ma... can't you calm him down? What's wrong with him?

MARIAN: *(In hushed tone.)* I've told you... there's nothing wrong with him. We just have to accept him.

EDDIE: What do you mean... you have to accept me. Am I a *mutant* or something?! You think I'm some kind of crazy? So are you getting married or what, Frank. Can't we just talk?

FRANK: All right. Shelly and me... we're getting married. At the City Office in a few weeks. So let's not get excited.

MARIAN: *(Goes up to him, kisses him awkwardly on cheek.)* You're a good boy.

FRANK: *(Wipes cheek.)* Let's not get emotional, Ma. I don't like it.

EDDIE: *(Flings hands in air and walks around in a circle.)* What kind of family is this? No one can get emotional... no one can ask a question... no one can get excited... no one can even give a hug or a kiss. This is the most ridiculous...

FRANK: Ma, you got to do something about him. I've gotta go.

EDDIE: Hey, I got myself an apartment today, Frank.

FRANK: *(Not interested.)* That's good. That's a good first step to getting straightened out.

EDDIE: What do you mean, straightened out?

FRANK: I'm late. I'm going downstairs and find that drill. I'll go out the cellar door so I won't disturb anything here. Don't want to disturb anything.

MARIAN: When are you coming again?

FRANK: I got to go. The drill. That's all I came for.

EDDIE: Want me to help you find it?

FRANK: *(Ignores EDDIE.)* See you around. *(He exits.)*

MARIAN: *(Wipes hands on apron.)* Now, what was I doing? Something for Robert.

MARIAN goes over to table with bottles of medicine on it.

EDDIE: *(Looks at his pile of clothes and suitcases by the wall, speaks softly.)* Has anyone seen my red handkerchief...?

ARTHUR: *(Rubs his hands again.)* You got any coffee on, Marian?

MARIAN: *(Not looking up from bottles.)* Low on this prescription...

ARTHUR goes offstage, and we can hear some pots and pans being shuffled and banged as he gets coffee

EDDIE: *(Shouts to offstage.)* I got me an apartment today, Pa.

ARTHUR: They say it's going to be the coldest winter in 40 years.

EDDIE: I'm moving into the apartment tonight... *(Shouts.)* Hey, Pa...

MARIAN: *(Gets up from table.)* Robert's calling me again...

EDDIE: *(To himself.)* Someone took my red handkerchief. *(Rummages through clothes in the suitcases.)* Oh no. Here it is. Boy, for a minute, I thought it was lost. Then I wouldn't have any good luck. *(Holds handkerchief close to chest.)* It's for good luck. That's what I decided when I bought it... and that day I got the highest mark I ever got on my English paper. *(ARTHUR comes onstage sipping coffee from a cup.)* Hey, Pa?

ARTHUR: *(Walks around suitcases without noticing them. HE sits on a chair and leans down and begins polishing his shoes with cloth a from his back pocket.)* What?

EDDIE: Do you remember when I got that good mark on my English theme paper for class? When I wrote about families, and love, and stuff like that? All those things that the teacher thought was real good? Remember that teacher who used to praise me and stuff? Boy, I did good in her class. Remember all the high marks I got that year?

ARTHUR: How many times have I told you. Praise is no good. Gives you a swollen head.

EDDIE: Yeah! Yeah! (*Points to suitcases.*) Look at this stuff, Pa... going to live in my own apartment!!!

ARTHUR: (*Scratches stomach.*) Geez... I'm hungry. What's around to eat, Marian?

MARIAN: (*From offstage.*) In the icebox.

ARTHUR: (*Goes offstage.*) Some cheese here... guess I'll have that. (*Comes back out with a hunk of cheese that he chews.*) Marian, I might as well eat supper down at the plant. And I told some of the boys I'd meet 'em later on.

MARIAN: (*Comes on stage wiping her hands on an apron.*) Before you go, would you do an errand for me? Please? (*Pulls paper from apron pocket.*) We ran out of these two prescriptions...

ARTHUR: (*Scowls.*) That's not a man's work... picking up prescriptions!

MARIAN: (*Sinks on a chair.*) Then you stay here with Robert while I go get it.

ARTHUR: (*Looks at watch.*) As long as you're back by five... I told the guys... (*Looks at EDDIE on floor with clothes.*) Marian... what is this kid doing?

EDDIE: (*Begins closing suitcases.*) I'm taking the apartment.

MARIAN: It's all right, Arthur.

ARTHUR: Can you pay for it, Eddie? Be sure you can pay for it... don't ever come to me...

EDDIE: I know... for money.

ARTHUR: And don't get into trouble. Whatever you do, don't get no girls pregnant. We won't help anyone like that!

MARIAN: That's right, Eddie. We won't help anyone like that. It would make our family look bad. (*Looks at papers in hand.*) These prescriptions...

ARTHUR: (*Looks at piece of cheese in his hand.*) Any crackers or bread around here?

MARIAN: No.

ARTHUR: My gosh, Marian! When did you go out for food last!

MARIAN: I'm sorry, but...

ARTHUR: (*Goes offstage.*) You iron my good shirt?

MARIAN: Yes...

ARTHUR: (*Comes back onstage, takes off dirty shirt, puts on clean one, possibly with monogram on it.*) Well, Marian, you going out for that medicine? I can't wait here all day until you get that errand done. You want I should have to leave Robert here all by himself?

MARIAN: (*Mouse-like, gets up, goes towards door.*) All right. Just let me check on him once more. (*She exits.*)

EDDIE: (*Picks up suitcases and brings them to front door. Gets his jacket from chair but doesn't put it on.*) Hey, Pa, I'm going to have a real playboy pad... wait'll you see.

ARTHUR: Yeah. Okay, Eddie. Just don't do anything wacky. Okay?

EDDIE: Me? Old Smiling Sam? Do something wacky?

ARTHUR: (*Angry.*) Would you stop that crazy grinning? Stop it! Half the time you look nuts!

EDDIE: (*Hurt.*) Old Smiling Sam isn't nuts...

ARTHUR: Look, kid...if you're going to go...go. (*Goes past EDDIE to closet. Starts putting tie on.*) Whatever you do, don't do anything that will embarrass *me!* I don't want you doing anything that the guys might hear about. You understand?

EDDIE: I'll do things that'll make you real proud of me.

ARTHUR: (*Pleased.*) Yeah! You go out there and get straightened out!

EDDIE: (*Smiles in a silly way.*) Sure... (*Calls to offstage.*) Ma! I'm going!

MARIAN: (*Comes in wiping her hands on a small towel.*) Well... you be real good, son... you keep working and saving your money like I've told you.

EDDIE: Hey, you going to come down and see my new apartment?

MARIAN: As soon as I find time... and if I can find someone to come sit with Robert.

EDDIE: I'm going to buy me a car and do a lot of big important things, Ma. All them important things I told you about. Remember?

MARIAN: Sure.

EDDIE: (*Grins more fiercely.*) You just wait and see... I'm different from all the others. I can figure things out.

ARTHUR: Marian... will you get him to stop that crazy grinning?

EDDIE: Pa... don't be embarrassed about me... that's all I ever remember you being.

ARTHUR: Aw, for crying out loud!

EDDIE: Just wait and see what I do. I'm building a plan in my head.

ARTHUR: (*Annoyed.*) Yeah, plan... okay kid! *Okay!*

EDDIE: (*Grins.*) Soon I can tell you about it... I think you'll be real interested.

ARTHUR: Marian... get him to stop looking at us so crazy!

EDDIE: (*Grinning.*) You'll see...

ARTHUR: WILL YOU GET OUT OF HERE, EDDIE? GET OUT OF HERE!

EDDIE: (*Opens door. Speaks Softly.*) You'll see. Just wait. You'll see.

Lights go dim.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *MARLENE, a young girl, is sitting alone on stage. SHE is being interviewed. SHE speaks to audience as though SHE is answering reporters' questions. SHE is very nervous and plucks at a fringed suede handbag SHE holds in her lap. SHE is dressed plainly, with little or no make-up.*

MARLENE: He kept wanting to show me his crummy apartment! I finally went and saw it. (*Pause.*) I was never really his girlfriend. I wish you'd stop saying that. I only knew him for 2 months. That's what I call a slight acquaintance. (*Pause.*) And I really don't have much to say about him. (*Pause.*) You know, it's so funny. Everyone's looking at me. I've never had so much attention from so many people before in my life. It's really freaking me out. (*Cringes in her seat.*) I'm nothing. I'll never be anything else. (*Insulted.*) Don't tell me! I know myself better than you do! (*Pause.*) Even when I'm grown up... I'll still be the same old dumb and unconfident and skinny and faded and washed out looking Marlene. This is probably about as famous as I'll get. Knowing Eddie and being interviewed by you people. (*Pause.*) See... when you're a faded nothing, you've got to take things as they come. (*Pause.*) And not much comes, let me tell you. (*Looks offstage.*) Did you say they were going to take pictures later on, too? Do you think I

look all right in these clothes? (*Turns and faces audience again and smoothes her skirt.*) Don't ask *me* why Eddie did that crazy thing yesterday! He was weird. I've told you that. (*Pauses and looks around her.*) Boy... if I could ever make enough money... I'd get out of this crummy city so fast! (*Pause.*) Oh. That reminds me. Do you think I'll make much for the interview? A magazine said they'd be paying me something... (*Begins to swing foot up and down in an annoyed gesture.*) Look. I don't *know* what else to tell you about that creep! (*Pause.*) I should never have dated him. He was always doing dumb things and I'd *die*. He always thought people weren't paying enough attention to him. You know? (*Pause.*) Like even when we'd be walking down the street... he'd do crazy things. Like hitting the sides of buildings with sticks to make these funny cracking noises. Then people would look at him and he'd grin at them. Funny like. You know, like creepy funny? And then sometimes he'd slide his feet and make them scrape along the concrete like a retard. Then he'd see a can in the gutter and squash his heel down into the can and go clanking down the street with that stupid thing on his foot. I hated the way people looked at him... not friendly like, but annoyed... people were always giving him dirty looks... he did *annoying* things. You know? He said he didn't care. Because at least people were looking at him. Don't you think that's weird? (*Pause.*) Don't ask *me* why I kept seeing him! (*Pause.*) Oh... man... it was just to pass the time, I guess. A file clerk at an insurance office isn't the most exciting job in the world. So having Eddie around in the evening... or on weekends... broke the monotony kind of... at least for a while. (*Pause.*) You know, these lights are awfully hot, and... and... I don't like sitting here being the center of attention. Didn't you say there was going to be someone else you were going to interview at the same time as me? (*Pause.*) Who? Frank? His brother Frank? (*Eyes roll to ceiling.*) That's a good one! (*Pause.*) Because Frank never even wanted to see Eddie. Eddie once tried to take me around to where Frank lived, and he wouldn't even let us in the door. Don't ask me why. (*Pause.*) All I know is Eddie was really mad... and he took me to his apartment that day... and that was the last time I ever saw him. Until yesterday... when he was in all the papers... (*Pause.*) Yeah... I can tell you what we did in his apartment. (*Looks offstage.*) Then will you give me my money for this interview

so I can get out? I keep telling you I wasn't a close friend of his... so don't make it like I was. Okay? Well, that day in his apartment...

Lights go dim.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT RISE: *Lights up center stage which is EDDIE's apartment. One room with a door at back and one door to left going to outside hall. A cot to one side of room. The room has one window which is closed tightly and the shade is drawn. There is a general clutter of left-over food and papers scattered in disorder.*

EDDIE is flipping through a magazine nervously and walking around the room quickly. MARLENE is sitting nervously at the edge of the cot.

MARLENE: You said you were going to take me out for a hamburger 3 hours ago. Not it's almost 8 o'clock!

EDDIE: Stop complaining.

MARLENE: What are we doing here anyway!

EDDIE: Look. See these magazines and papers? I wanted to show you that I *read*. You're always saying you think I'm ignorant or something.

MARLENE: All right. I've seen all your magazines and papers.

EDDIE: And it's not all girly stuff like you said.

MARLENE: You showed me *those* the most.

EDDIE: Take a look at my notebooks. See? All filled with big ideas... ideas that are going to make me money.

MARLENE: Eddie, let's get out of here.

EDDIE: Can't you even show a little interest, for Pete's sake?

MARLENE: It's not interesting.

EDDIE: *(Waves a sheaf of papers in her face.)* You wouldn't even understand this stuff. This is very heavy, top priority stuff.

MARLENE: Don't you ever open the window in here?

EDDIE: Only to get the milk carton that I keep out there.

MARLENE: What?!

EDDIE: Yeah. Milk keeps nice and cool out on the ledge.

MARLENE: (*Throws her hands up in air.*) You don't even have a refrigerator! What kind of a creepy place is this! No refrigerator, no telephone, no light, no air, no nothing!

EDDIE: It's okay for me.

MARLENE: It's awful.

EDDIE: It's cozy.

MARLENE: It's crummy. (*EDDIE glares at her and scratches his face.*)

And it's dark in here! Like a morgue! Can you even pull up the blind?

EDDIE: I don't want people looking in.

MARLENE: What do you do that people shouldn't look in?

EDDIE: (*Odd grin comes slowly to his face.*) A lot... of things... honey.

MARLENE: Who would want to see what you do!

EDDIE: (*Leers.*) I wouldn't want the little kids on the street to see what I do.

MARLENE: Why not.

EDDIE: (*Leers and grins.*) Sometimes I do X-rated things...

MARLENE: (*Eyes roll to ceiling.*) Oh my gosh. I'm not a prude, Eddie... but sometimes you make things sound so ugly.

EDDIE: (*Leers.*) Talking about sex is supposed to get a girl aroused.

MARLENE: Maybe it's supposed to. But the way you do it... it doesn't. It's sickening

EDDIE: (*Goes over to a stack of books in the corner.*) See this stack of magazines? All on sex. Oh yeah, Marlene... I know about sex.

MARLENE: Sure.

EDDIE: But you and I are incompatible, see. Because you don't even let me approach you. Marlene, I think you got a sex problem.

MARLENE: Don't you ever wear anything besides that yellow sweater?

EDDIE: What do you mean by that!

MARLENE: That's all I've ever seen you wear for the past two months...

EDDIE: So?

MARLENE: Do you get it cleaned very often?

EDDIE: You implying...

MARLENE: Look, Eddie. Your mother should have told you. You can't wear the same sweater every day for two solid months in a row. I mean, certain bacteria set in.

EDDIE: What are you talking about.

MARLENE: (*Flatly.*) That sweater is encrusted with food droppings. It's filthy and it smells.

EDDIE: *(Laughs.)* It's okay.

MARLENE: You're unappealing.

EDDIE: Okay, lady, you made your point. Yeah. Maybe I should try to clean up a little. I mean, I'm going to be a big shot pretty soon. *(Hands her a piece of notebook paper.)* Look at these plans and charts I made.

MARLENE: *(Takes paper. Hands it back quickly.)* Yeah. Great.

EDDIE: I wrote them since I had this apartment. This is a good place. I can get all my thoughts organized here.

MARLENE: I want to leave.

EDDIE: And you're going to come here a lot... and see me... aren't you?

MARLENE: I want to leave.

EDDIE: *(Takes her by the arm all of a sudden and twists it backwards menacingly. His face has a twisted expression.)* You're going to come here a lot. Say it.

MARLENE: Leggo of me!

EDDIE: Say it!

MARLENE: Okay, Eddie... Okay!

EDDIE: *(Lets go of her arm. Talks softly again.)* I don't know what I'd do without you. It's just that you mean so much to me, Marlene. You're the only one I have. I'm sorry I get screwy sometimes... I didn't mean to hurt your arm... it's just that you're so important to me.

MARLENE: *(Rubs arm.)* Oh, yeah. If I'm so important to you, then you shouldn't explode like that... It's very scary.

EDDIE: I said I'm sorry.

MARLENE: Eddie... let's go.

EDDIE: I want to show you one more thing. *(Pulls a cardboard box from under the cot.)* My collection. *(Pulls out an assortment of knives.)* See?

MARLENE: Knives?

EDDIE: A box of shells

MARLENE: For guns?

EDDIE: For the rifle I ordered.

MARLENE: Eddie... you crazy?

EDDIE: I'm not going to do anything with it.

MARLENE: What good is having it, then?

EDDIE: Makes me feel good. Makes me feel like a man.

MARLENE: The whole thing scares me.

EDDIE: It's all legal. Getting the gun registered will be easy. I'm a good citizen, see. Man at the hardware store said there'd be no problem in me getting a gun.

MARLENE: (*Stands up. Speaks in a slightly panicky voice.*) Come on. There's nothing else you want me to see, is there? It's way past eight. You promised me a hamburger and all we're doing is sitting around this morbid place.

EDDIE: This *isn't* a morbid place!

MARLENE: I don't know why I bother with you.

EDDIE: But you do.

MARLENE: All the other kids think you're weird, too.

EDDIE: Don't say that.

MARLENE: I don't know if I can keep going with you. You scare me.

He grabs her roughly by shoulder.

EDDIE: Don't say that!

MARLENE: Let me go!

EDDIE: You're going to keep seeing me... for as long as I want you to.

MARLENE: You can't go around talking to people like that! (*He lets her go, then a silly grin comes to his face.*) Stop that crazy grinning! Why do you do that!

EDDIE: 'Cause nothing is a big deal. Not even you! Nothing matters to me. (*Pause.*) I'm Smiling Sam, see... and no one pays any attention to Smiling Sam. I can go anywhere. No one notices me. Always the friendly bystander. And I don't have to talk to anyone.

MARLENE: You're weird.

EDDIE: Would you shut up?

She picks up her coat from the cot and begins to leave.

MARLENE: I'm...

EDDIE: You're not leaving!

MARLENE: Look Eddie...

EDDIE: You're going to stay here... until you say you're not going to break up with me... say it!

MARLENE: No!

EDDIE: *Say it!*

MARLENE: *(Moves towards door.)* Please...

EDDIE: *(Jumps in front of her.)* You're not getting out of here until you do!

MARLENE: You're scaring me...

EDDIE: I don't mean to scare you. It's just that I need you... to talk to... don't you understand?

MARLENE: OK, Eddie. Let's talk tomorrow. It's way past dark. I'm going. I'll see you around, okay?

EDDIE: *(Scornful.)* You couldn't wait to tell me that you were going to break up with me, could you?

MARLENE: I'm sorry...

EDDIE: You're not sorry. You never listen to me. You were only making believe you listened. But you weren't interested in even one thing I had to tell you.

MARLENE: Okay Eddie, take it easy...

EDDIE: *(Smiles strangely.)* Yeah... sure... old Smiling Sam will take it easy... yeah... see you around... sure... see you around... *(MARLENE slips out of door quickly. EDDIE shuts it, comes back to middle of room. Goes to cot. His smile disappears. He sits on cot. Slowly starts sobbing. Sobs get louder and Louder. He hugs his legs and sits "curled up" in fetal position.)* Talk to me! Please! Someone please talk to me! Someone pay attention to me! Listen to me! Just listen to me! I'm somebody! I'm here! I'm Eddie York! Notice me! Won't anyone ever notice me? *(Pause. Speaks slowly.)* I'll make 'em notice me. *(Very slowly, in a deranged manner.)* I'll make 'em notice me!!!! 'Cause... I'm... Somebody. Aren't I?

Lights black out quickly.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT RISE: ONE WOMAN and TWO MEN are seated on chairs at center stage. WOMAN is in middle. Microphone is on floor in front of them.

One of the men, LEONARD NATWICK, is dressed in natty blue blazer and gray slacks. HE is tanned, very well groomed, but has a highly annoyed look about him. HE often flicks imaginary dust off his trousers and looks at his watch nervously.

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A husky young boy in early 20's, JERRY FELDMAN, is dressed in jeans and T-shirt and is sprawled in his chair, legs outstretched.

MRS. HERRINGTON, a matronly, well-dressed woman in her middle 50's, is sitting haughtily with feet crossed daintily and hands folded in her lap as though sitting for a formal portrait. SHE looks uncomfortable, and her gaze first drifts to the ceiling, then falls to the floor. SHE tries not to look at audience. SHE wears a mink coat over her shoulders.

THEY sit silently for about 30 seconds, shifting in their chairs, before the scene starts.

NATWICK: *(To MRS. HERRINGTON.)* This is preposterous! Being called here to sit in front of all these people.

HERRINGTON: We'll simply have to make the best of it.

JERRY: What's the sweat?

NATWICK: I don't like being stared at!

JERRY: The reporters ain't going to do you any harm... might even do you some good.

NATWICK: How?

JERRY: What we say is going to be printed in every newspaper in the country. Maybe in the world.

NATWICK: So?

JERRY: Not every day you're going to have the spotlight like this.

NATWICK: You mean...

JERRY: Sure. Tell 'em about your restaurant, Mr. Natwick. A little P.R. never hurts in ringing up the dinner sales.

NATWICK: *(Scratches chin.)* That's right! We'll have millions of people reading our words...

JERRY: That's it, Mr. N. ... you've got it.

NATWICK: *(Worried.)* You don't think it would put the restaurant in a bad light... you know... having someone like *him* working for us.

JERRY: Naw. Most restaurants have jerks working as dishwashers. *(Picks teeth.)* People understand that.

NATWICK: But I mean... his violence... his strange ways. Someone like that... working at the Silver Fox... what will people say.

JERRY: People will swarm to the restaurant like there ain't no tomorrow.

NATWICK: They will?

JERRY: Yep!

NATWICK: (*Smiles.*) Well! That'll really be something, won't it. Crowds, you say?

JERRY: You're going to have a famous spot on your hands... someone big worked there. Someone in the news. Good publicity for you.

HERRINGTON: I *do* wish you'd stop discussing such commercialism!

NATWICK: (*Meek.*) But, Mrs. Herrington... the publicity... like Jerry said...

HERRINGTON: (*Haughty.*) The quality patrons of this city, Mr. Natwick, will be offended by any untoward publicity given to your restaurant due to the tragedy which resulted from the actions of your employee.

NATWICK: (*Confused.*) Oh yes... well... I...

HERRINGTON: I would not use this incident as a commercial investment. I can assure you that quality patrons do not like scandals. Do I make myself clear?

NATWICK: (*Nervously.*) Oh yes! Very clear!

JERRY: Oh, man. Hand me the shovel.

NATWICK: The Silver Fox Restaurant has no intention of offending its most valued clientele.

HERRINGTON: Good.

JERRY: Right you are.

The three fidget in their chairs and stare out at audience again.

NATWICK: (*To no one in particular.*) I don't like being here at all!

JERRY: Stay cool, man.

NATWICK: Don't you speak to me that way! I am your employer and I demand respect!

JERRY: Okay... okay.

NATWICK: Just because we're not in the restaurant now doesn't mean you can speak to me disrespectfully.

JERRY: I said, *Okay*, man.

NATWICK: My name is Leonard Natwick, and I am Mr. Natwick to you... at *all* times!

HERRINGTON: Listen to your elders, young man...

JERRY: Yeah. Okay. And I would like you to call me Jerry. Not "young man."

HERRINGTON: Certainly, Jerry. And you may call me Mrs. Herrington.

JERRY: That's what I'll do.

NATWICK: I don't like this mess at all.

HERRINGTON: Nor do I.

JERRY: Then you shouldn't have agreed to talk to the reporters.

HERRINGTON: It's our civic duty.

NATWICK: Hah!

HERRINGTON: Mr. Natwick... we must help in any way we can.

NATWICK: What good is it to answer questions.

HERRINGTON: (*Haughty.*) If I tell all I know about my relationship with this particular individual... it might help us to understand others who may be contemplating similar acts.

JERRY: Lady... I mean, Mrs. Herrington... in cases like these... those that contemplate... usually *do*.

NATWICK: Oh, it's all a lot of nonsense! (*Looks at watch.*) I should be at the restaurant right now... greeting the dinner people.

JERRY: You got Rudolpho. He's a good Captain. What's the sweat?

NATWICK: Customers like to see the restaurant *owner*, Jerry. There are a certain class of people who demand favors and extra attention. If you're aspiring to be an owner of a high-class restaurant such as the Silver Fox, you had best learn a few things.

JERRY: I ain't aspiring. Dishwasher's okay with me. I don't want a job that ties me down. You know?

NATWICK: I have never presumed to know the dishwasher's intellect. Please don't force me now.

HERRINGTON: (*To MR. NATWICK. Very annoyed.*) Excuse me, Mr. Natwick. Would you mind changing chairs with me?

NATWICK: Why, surely. What seems to be the problem.

HERRINGTON: It's senseless for me to sit in the middle of you two while you discuss the restaurant business.

NATWICK: (*Forced chuckle, but he gets up from chair.*) Well, ha ha, we're not exactly discussing...

JERRY: Yeah. We're only chewing the rag, so to speak.

HERRINGTON: (*Sits in MR. NATWICK's chair at one side.*) Yes. This is fine. Thank you, Mr. Natwick.

NATWICK: If you feel better there, of course, anything, my dear Mrs. Herrington.

HERRINGTON: Much better.

NATWICK: (*Self-conscious cough.*) Of course we shouldn't be discussing these business problems in front of Mrs. Herrington. It's uncouth.

HERRINGTON: (*Begins tapping her foot nervously, she looks at her watch, then offstage.*) Why are they keeping us waiting!

JERRY: (*Begins cleaning nails.*) The longer we're here, the more those magazines and papers might pay us.

HERRINGTON: Don't talk about money, young man!

NATWICK: Look. We're all a bit jumpy from the incident that happened yesterday. (*Looks offstage.*) It looks like they're getting everything set up. (*Looks offstage expectantly, then nods his head and makes fingers into an "o" signaling "okay". He turns to the two on stage sitting next to him and smiles.*) You see? They said they're all set. We're on, folks! (*HE taps the microphone.*) Yes, we're on! (*MRS. HERRINGTON adjusts her skirt and puts on a slightly phony smile. MR. NATWICK sits up straight and attempts to strike a debonair pose as HE sits in his chair, and JERRY sits lazily in his chair. MR. NATWICK has been asked the first question. He Snaps to attention and speaks in an extremely cultured, smooth tone of voice.*) Yes. I was the one who hired him at the restaurant... (*Loses his phony smile and peers off to the side of stage.*) What? You're not ready yet? (*Slouches slightly, looks annoyed, looks off to side of stage again, sees a signal, signals back, then perks up and repeats in an ultra-suave tone.*) Yes! I was the one who hired him at the restaurant! I consider it part of the official duties of a restaurateur to be involved in personnel work, no matter how one may dislike such a task. (*Slight cough.*) Yes. The Silver Fox Restaurant. That's right. How long? Oh, I've owned that place for the past ten years. And we have a very respectable clientele. We cater only to the best people. Why, Mrs. Herrington here...

HERRINGTON: (*To NATWICK.*) Please! I am here in the official capacity as the head of a campaign office. Not as a patron of your restaurant!

NATWICK: (*To audience.*) That is... we have only the finest people in the city coming to the Silver Fox. (*Pause.*) Oh. It's beside the point? I see... (*Pause. Is slightly disappointed.*) The day I hired Eddie York? That's what you want to hear? He came in about four in the afternoon... (*Pause.*) Parked his dirty beat-up used car right in front of the place. One of the doormen told him he couldn't park it there, and I was called out front. That's when he told me he was looking for a job.

So I told him to take his car out back, then come in. *(Pause.)* His attitude at the time? *(Pause.)* He was very agreeable, as a matter of fact. He seemed ambitious and eager to work, even when I told him we only had a dishwasher spot open. He said anything would be fine. Had just met a girl, and he needed to make money. You know. I tell you, the boy seemed all right when I first met him. But little by little over the four months he was with us, he got strange. *(Pause.)* No, I can't tell you exactly what I mean when I use the word "strange." I'd go back and say hello to the kitchen staff everyday, you see, but of course I never had any real reason to deal with the sick... I mean the sink people... they worked directly under the kitchen manager... I'd say hello to Eddie maybe, and he'd have that grin on his face, but he never said hello back. Just strange... eerie. I never gave it much thought. *(Pause.)* Co-worker? Yes. That's Jerry Feldman, right here to my left. One of the dishwashers. Worked on the same shift as Eddie, but...

JERRY: *(Smiles eagerly.)* Yeah. That's right! We worked at the same sink. Pots and pans, if you'd like to know. You see, most restaurants have different sinks for different utensils. One for glasses, one for plates, one for pots and pans. That kind of thing. Well, Eddie and I worked on the pots and pans sink. About as low as you can get, I'd say. *(Laughs.)* See, whenever I blow into a new town, that's the first job I take. Doesn't tie me down. You know what I mean. No moral obligation... just wash the crummy pots for a couple of months... get some dough and hit the road. On to the next town. It's the only way to live, man. *(Pause.)* At least for a while. See, I've been going to college for the past two years. Thought it was time to get out of the race... leave the troops, so to speak. Try to get some feeling about what it's all about. About what *I'm* all about! My folks went along with it – they did a lot of living in their time, too. Stretched the old wings, you know what I mean? They're pretty good dudes, my folks. *(Pause.)* Oh, I'll go back to school... maybe next fall... but I think I'll maybe look at things differently. Maybe have a better idea of what I want to do. I found out a lot so far just by rapping with the people I've met... even Eddie. *(Pause.)* Course, Eddie used to carry on a lot. Then I'd get a few words in edgewise. Told him about the cities I'd been to. *(Pause.)* Man, I traveled to a pile of cities! *(Pause.)* How old? I'm 21, man. *(Pause.)* Yeah. I guess Eddie's about the same age.



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