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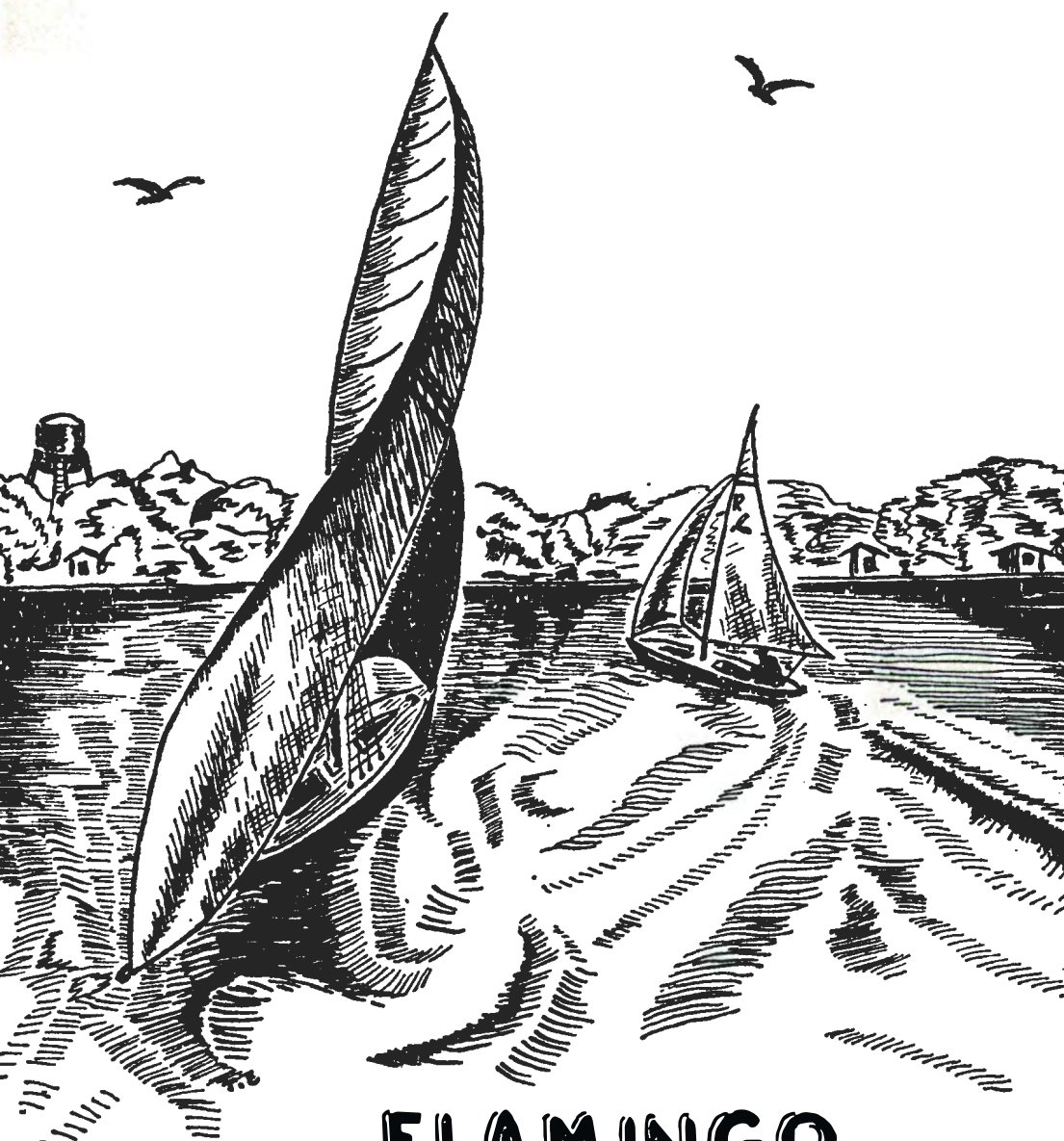
Flamingo, Spring, 1960, Vol. 41

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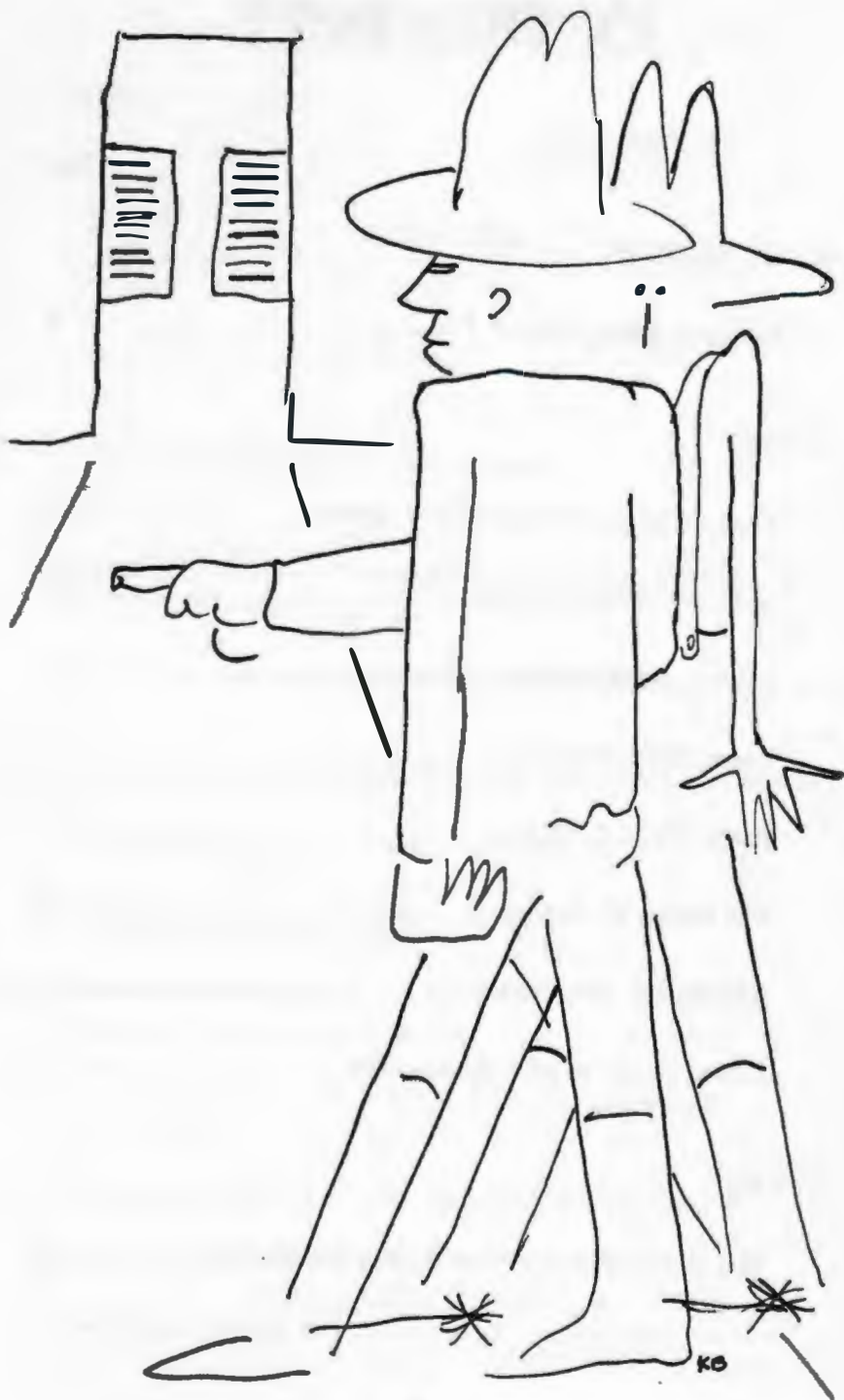
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SMOKING GUNS

BY ROBERT FLEMING

"Slim."

"Yeah, Mr. Nillon?"

"You're standing on my foot."

"Why, you're doggone right. Never would've thought it."

"Slim."

"Yeah, Mr. Nillon?"

"Move."

"Oh, sure, Mr. Nillon. Anything you say."

This town is Get-Out-Of-The-Way-Quick, Texas. I'm sheriff here. My name's Natt Nillon. My sidekick's Slim Limpinlong. This is a quiet town. Folks here live 'bout like folks anywhere else, scratching out a living for themselves, trying to give their kids a little more hell than they had, going to church on Sundays, and having their little squabbles now and then. Ever so often, somebody come along feels things ought to be changed. That's why I'm here, to make sure they don't.

"Slim, how 'bout fixing up a pot of coffee."

"Sure, Mr. Nillon. Coming right up."

We like our quiet, little town with its eighteen saloons, two general stores, six dance halls, one hotel, one blacksmith shop, one jail, and twenty-nine hitching posts. Boot Hill's filled with chaps who figured we didn't like our quiet, little town. Eight of 'em got layed under last week. Not much been doing lately.

"How's the coffee coming, Slim?"

"Not so good, Mr. Nillon. Can't seem to find the coffee pot."

"Slim."

"Yeah, Mr. Nillon?"

"It's on the stove."

"Why, I'll be doggone. I'll get right to work on it, Mr. Nillon. Don't worry none about it."

"Where's my fifteen gallon hat? It's time for my morning walk about town."

"It's over by the sink, Mr. Nillon. I's thinking of doing some experimentin'."

"Never mind, Slim. Take care of things til' I get back."

"Sure will, Mr. Nillon."

"And you'd better put a new plank on this sidewalk 'cause . . . Slim, come here, quick."

"Yeah, Mr. Nillon?"

"Ever seen them three men before?"

"Can't say as I have, right offhand. Faces seem a mite familiar though."

"Must be Bart Clancy and his two boys. Got word they were in the territory. Didn't figure on 'em showing up here."

"What do ye reckon they're after, Mr. Nillon?"

"Revenge, most likely. Way back when I first started in this game, I had to arrest Bart's mother for running a crooked card game at a church social. He swore he'd get even."

"What are ye gonna do, Mr. Nillon?"

"I don't know, Slim. Wait, I guess."

"Look, Mr. Nillon, it's Doc Ryegin. Hey, Doc, come over and chat a spell."

"Morning, Slim. Natt."

"Morning Doc. How's business?"

"Bad as ever. Everybody wanting cured. Nobody wanting to pay. Not much I can do about it."

"Doc, I'm sure glad you dropped by. My mouth's been hurting me all morning. Mr. Nillon said it'd go away if I kept it closed. Get it, Doc. He was joshing me a mite. You know how he does."

"Open up, Slim."

"Don't hurt me, Doc."

"Just relax. Hmmm . . . Looks kinda serious. Should've had it looked at sooner. Take a look, Natt. Pretty hopeless, isn't it?"

"Looks bad, all right. Can you do anything for him, Doc?"

"Don't know, Natt. I'm just a country sawbones. Never learnt much about fatal mouth diseases."

"You've go to do something, Doc. You can't just let me . . . I'm your friend, Doc."

"Well, I'll do what I can. Come down to the office later this morning. The operation shouldn't take longer than two hours."

"Oh, me. Thank ye, Doc. I knew you wouldn't let me down."

"Slim, one thing you might do to kinda ease the pain . . . Take your false teeth out . . . Put the uppers on the top side and the lowers on the bottom instead of the tother way around."

"Aw, Doc. Why didn't ye say so in the first place. Scare me out of a year's growth."

"Better take a look at the coffee, Slim."

"Right away, Mr. Nillon."

"You might stick close today, Doc. Bart Clancy and his boys just rode in."

"Yeah, Natt. I'll be around. See you later."

"So long, Doc."

When you're sheriff of a wild west town, you're all that stands between it and destruction by mean, nasty villains. If you fall, the town is overrun and the good folks leave. So I stand tall, wear a white hat, and stalk silently about the town. I'm a hero, a humble, unassuming one to be sure, but still a hero. To prove I'm a hero though, I have to do little chores now and then to earn my money. That's why I've got to run the Clancys out of town.

"I'm going to Tiger Lil's, Slim. Keep the coffee warm."

"Anything you say, Mr. Nillon."

Tiger Lil runs the best saloon in town. For a long time she sung for the fellers, but when her paw was killed in a corn cob fight, she had to take over the running of the place. Rough on her at first, but the fellers soon learned not to tangle with her. She's pure hell with those fingernails. And somebody showed her judo tricks. Nobody bothers Tiger Lil now.

"Morning, Lil."

"Morning, Natt . . . Aren't you going to shake hands with me?"

"Sorry, Lil. You know I can't do that. What if some kids saw us. Their morals would be ruined forever. I'm their hero, and heroes don't show affection for female critters."

"I'm sorry, Natt. You want something to drink?"

"Thanks. Ginger ale on the rocks, bartender."

"Natt, I'm worried. See those three fellows in the back. They've just been sitting there, drinking. Haven't said a word except to order more liquor. Something's up."

"They want me, Lil. That's Bart Clancy and his boys."

"You're not gonna take them alone, are you?"

"It's my job, Lil."

"But it's suicide, Natt."

"Stand back, Lil."

"Be careful, Natt, please."

"Bart!"

"Been expecting you, sheriff. It's been a long time."

"Not long enough, Bart. I assume you're just passing through."

"Now I don't know 'bout that, sheriff. Seems like a nice little town to settle in. Might hang around a while. Right boys?"

"Right, paw."

"Right."

"Get out of this town, Bart. We're quiet, peace-loving folks. Don't need none of your kind around."

"Now, sheriff, that ain't very hospitable talk. Now, is it?"

"Get out, Bart."

"We're not moving. Right boys?"

"Right, paw."

"Right."

"This town's not big enough for both of us, Bart. Stand up."

"Don't do anything you'll regret, sheriff. You can't take all three of us."

"Don't count on that, Bart. I'm the fastest gun in the west. And besides, whoever heard of the bad guys winning a gunfight. You'd better just ride out of town."

"I'll take my chances, sheriff."

"Draw when you're ready, Bart."

"Now!"

One of the advantages of being a hero is that you don't get killed. Thank God for that.

"That was some fancy shooting, sheriff. How'd you get all of us?"

"Simple, Bart. Got you with one gun, and ricocheted the shot from the second gun off the spittoon and got your boys."

"So long, sheriff."

"So long, Bart . . . Better call Doc, Lil."

"Mr. Nillon, Mr. Nillon!"

"Yeah, Slim."

"The coffee's ready. Oh . . . the Clancy gang?"

"Yep."

"You're not hurt are you, Mr. Nillon?"

"No, I'm fine, Slim."

"Mr. Nillon."

"Yes, Slim?"

"Your gun's smoking."

"That's all right, Slim. It's an adult."

That CHILD and I

*The low brick wall seemed very tall,
The small green pond so wide,
The petaled shrubs to me as high
As knight filled forests where witches hide.*

*— Ave Maria Sanctissima
The prayer blessed the long school day,
Into the garden behind the house
With a sword, a heart and a roundelay.*

*Those days are gone, the grass has grown;
Wild thickets cramp the yard.
There where the mole burrows his hole
Is where a young sentry stood his guard.*

*Ave Maria Sanctissima
The prayer trembles on in my mind.
But the brave little man of Christ's own clan
Has left his knighthood far behind.*

CHRISTINE J. HICKEY



lyric

*Do you remember the night of the sea
with the wind in its hair*

*When the stars on your back as you
lay in the surf, left the sky,*

*And the water, black on your chest, washed
where the sand was our bed?*

SARAH LANIER BARBER

a clown

What love lies there?

*A Happy face
white with bright blue smiles
upon the cheek a gay RED spot
eyes of sparkling glass*

*A gay parading dance
a jump from puddle to puddle in the rain
a skip down the path as the last leaf falls
a flight of the moth around its flame*

*Take off your mask.
no don't
You would die then.*

SALLY SCHREIBER

legend

Lying under the gold-coined copper beech and rustling sky

with bird call bird call

chirp and twitter in my ears

Watching squirrels play elevator on the tree trunk grey of bark

Walking on the green cushion run and lie upon me

rich warm grass

Laughing with a dogwood snowstorm

Dancing in the weeping willow's long and slender-fingered shadow

I dream a momentary thing

the spring

SARAH LANIER BARBER

Moonlight patches on the walk,

Moonspilled pools of milky-gold . . .

Hanging moss grey-soft on limbs

Laps the liquid moonlight up —

Leaves the walk cat-clean at dawn.

VICKI L. BOGGS



RED ROSES

*adorn the walls and
creep on stems along
the curtain's curve where I lie.*

*They grow on the dark soil
beneath my eyelid
and there is a soft rose
fuzz in my ears.*

My mouth is a rose.

There is a rose in my cheek.

I tire of roses and red.

*When I die they will press
the heaviness of roses
at my side.*

Our beings will decay evenly.

K. BRACEWELL

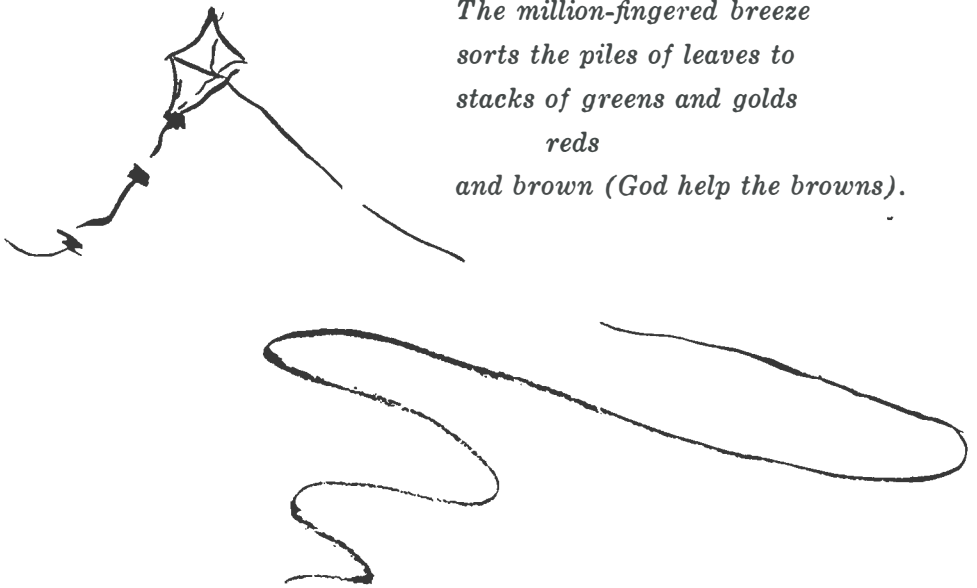
AUTUMN

*Along the bowl of sky
pebble-feathered
blue with tints of
god-eye green*

The sun quints

*Cat-eyed
at a reeling kite flying
a boy on one end.*

*The million-fingered breeze
sorts the piles of leaves to
stacks of greens and golds
reds
and brown (God help the browns).*



K. BRACEWELL

BABIES COME OF AGE

Liquid Life.

Where is their escape?

Once upon a time

They were children.

Chubby, pink, breast-clutching

Infant worriers.

Teddy bears, and silver spoons,

Toys.

Toddling tots spinning prayers.

Laughter.

Grown now. Whooooooooooooosh!

Too fast. Too fast. Too fast.

Toddling tots no more:

Teetling, tottling, unteetotlers.

Someone opened the door.

"Look, Look!"

"Hah! Hah! Hah! Hah!"

And they were crossing the threshold.

Forced to look.

Bears behind.

Cruel.

Cruelty to cuddled cubs.

For a time it was bad,

And when it was bad

It was horrid.

Running around in circles,

Playing hide and go seek.

Hide and go seek with —

Eternity, and Time, and Death.

And they are always —

It!

*Chase an answer,
Solve a riddle,*

*Tag an escape,
Find fair escape.*

*And it was there.
A little brown jug.*

*Quick, quick, take a slug.
See?*

*Here a glass, there a glass,
Everywhere a glass, glass.*

*Babies have their bottles,
Neophytes have their's too.*

*Quick, quick take a slug,
And Sloooooooooow down.*

*Hee! Hee!
Gives the giggles.*

*Slurs the tongue,
Soothes the feet.*

*Mother says it isn't good,
Father says it's horrid.*

*Baby, baby dead,
Says goddam it!*

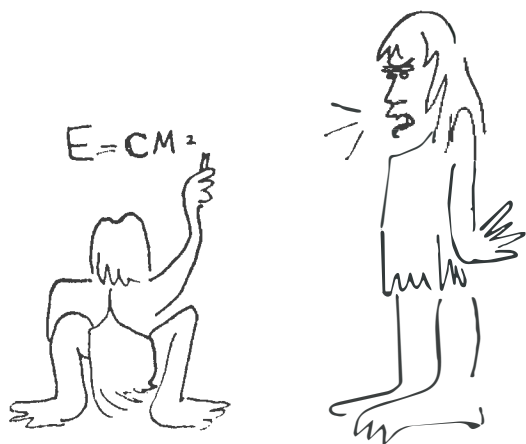
*Four or five,
Five or six.*

*And everything slows down,
Sloooooooooows down!*

*And babies have their toys again,
And teddy bears are friends.*

A BRIEF LOOK AT COLLEGE LIFE
~~and~~ EDUCATION DOWN THROUGH THE
AGES IN GENERAL.

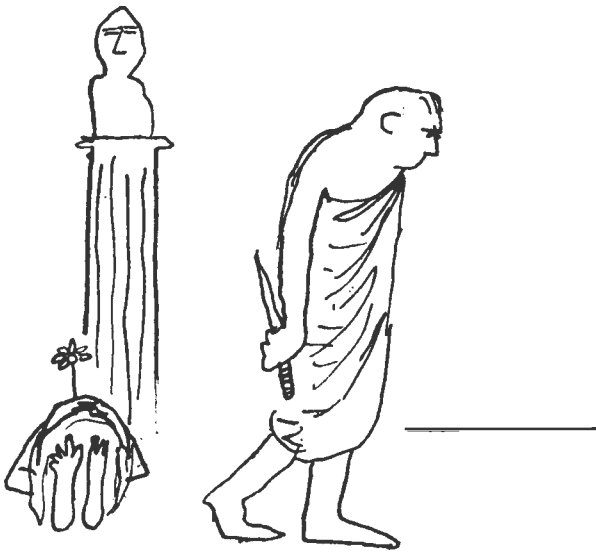
by K. BRAC.



I. The grunt that set
the world back
10,000 years.



II. EARLY METHODS: TRIAL & ERROR

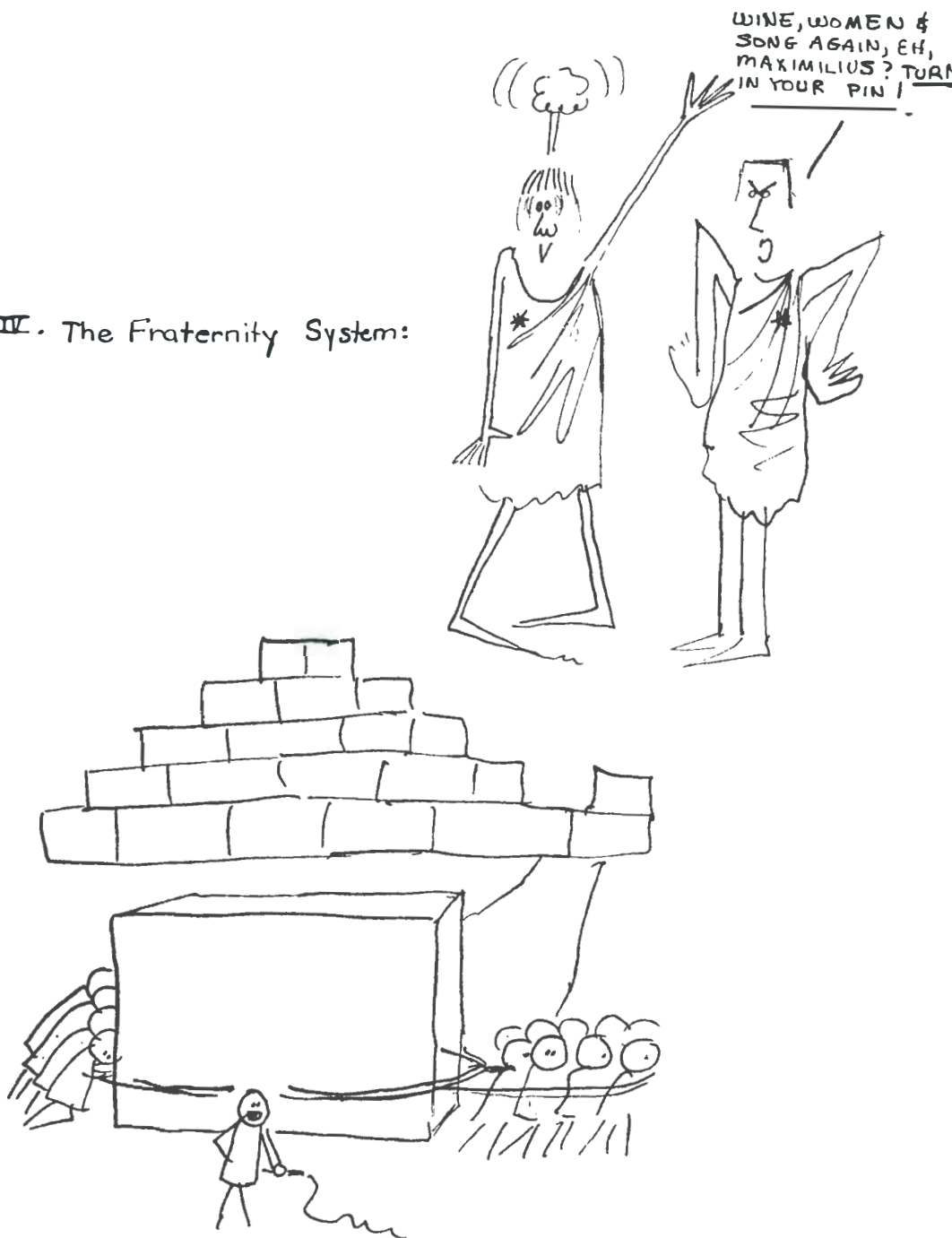


III. THE FIRST PINNING



The Cheating Problem:

IV. The Fraternity System:



V. First pledge duty



VI. he who works
his way through



VII. { "FIAT LUX"

The House that Grandpa Built

by
JOHN HICKEY

Characters:

PATRICK CAREY

ANNA CAREY (his wife)

DANIEL CAREY (their son)

MARTHA (Anna Carey's mother)

The front room of a house in New Jersey. The house was built in the 1930's, and the room would have been called the parlor. The house stands on top of a hill.

All the action of the play takes place in this room that has never really been used. Up center, running along the back wall is a large dining room table. The wood of the table is dark and highly polished. The floor is covered with a dark, wine-colored rug. The drapes are always drawn in the room to keep the sunlight from fading the rug or the furniture. There are pictures on the walls, photographs and cheap oil paintings. The photographs are of people dressed in clothes from the turn of the century. There is an old upright piano that stands against one wall. On top of the piano is a china candelabra decorated with cherubs or cupids. There is also a wood-encased clock.

When the play opens it is a winter afternoon. The drapes have been opened, and a weak wintry sunlight comes into the room. The sunlight does not cheer the room in any way, but leaves it in almost a grey mist. The absence of any color in the room adds to this effect.

PATRICK CAREY is sitting on the couch, smoking a cigarette. He is a man of forty-five, with grey just beginning in his hair at the temples. He is a big man with large hands. He wears a dark blue suit. He sits staring at the rug.

Across from him, in a chair next to the piano, sits his son, DANIEL CAREY. He is nineteen years old, an intensely serious young man. He wears a dark blue suit.

PATRICK — You'd think he would have had something to drink in this room. You know, he never sat in here. In all the times I've been here, I never saw him in this room.

DANIEL — I saw some bottles in the cellar.

PATRICK — Too much trouble. You know what kind of a stink they'd raise if I went down and got one. (*stands up crosses to the center of the room.*) Why don't they hurry up? The faster we get this thing over with, the better.

DANIEL — You still want to drive back tonight?

PATRICK — God, yes! I don't want to spend the night here.

DANIEL — Ma won't want to leave yet.

PATRICK — She'll go. She knows how much I hate this place.

DANIEL — And if she doesn't? She won't want to leave Grandma.

PATRICK — And your grandmother won't want her to go. She never wanted her to leave here in the first place. Let her stay then. But I won't stay with her. (*He goes back and sits down, but only for a moment. He gets up again.*) What are they waiting for?

DANIEL — Aren't we waiting for Uncle Rudy?

PATRICK — No. They've changed their minds again. He's meeting us at the funeral home. Maybe he'll have sense enough to bring a bottle.

DANIEL — He probably thinks you'll have one.

PATRICK — When did I get a chance to stop and buy one. All your mother wanted to do was get here as fast as we could. As if it made any difference to Gus whether we were here at 10 o'clock or noon.

DANIEL — I'm glad he's dead.

PATRICK — He couldn't have lasted much longer the way he was.

DANIEL — I don't mean that. I felt sorry for him.

PATRICK — He lived the way he wanted to. Especially the last ten years or so.

DANIEL — I don't know why. When I used to come here in the summer for vacations, he only came home at night. I'd hear his

car drive up about midnight, and then I'd hear him going to bed in the kitchen.

PATRICK — She got rid of that bed in the kitchen already.

DANIEL — Why did he sleep in the kitchen? This house has four bedrooms upstairs.

PATRICK — He started sleeping there when he had that accident with his car. He couldn't climb stairs. When he got better, he just kept on sleeping there. (*looking at the clock*) It's two o'clock already. (*He crosses up left and opens the door to the rest of the house. He calls.*) Anna! Anna! It's two o'clock.

ANNA — (*offstage*) I know it is.

PATRICK — (*closes the door and comes back downstage*) They'll piddle around till the last minute.

DANIEL — Why don't you just sit down and relax?

PATRICK — I want to get this thing over with.

DANIEL — What's the rush? What difference does it make?

PATRICK — I just can't stand to stay in this house.

DANIEL — I always loved it here. This was the house I always wanted to live in.

PATRICK — You wouldn't catch me living in it. Not as long as it's her house. And it always will be hers. I wouldn't live the way he did. He worked forty years to build it, and when it was built, he came into it, slept, and left it again. He never said, "Open the drapes, Martha. Let the sun into the front room." He never opened his mouth.

DANIEL — As far as I know he never complained.

PATRICK — You get tired of complaining. And then you just let it be. He never ate his meals here. He ate them all downtown. He smoked cigars — but not here. She said it choked her. He had fifty friends. Not one of them ever set foot in this house.

(ANNA CAREY *enters up left. She is in her early forties, and wears a black dress. She crosses into the room.*)

ANNA — She's nearly ready.

PATRICK — What do you know? If we don't get going soon, we'll never get home tonight.

ANNA — Home? I can't leave her alone here tonight.

PATRICK — Let her sister come and stay with her.

ANNA — No! You don't have to be back at work until Monday. There's no reason to go home.

PATRICK — I won't stay in this house till Monday.

ANNA — Oh, stop it, Patrick. Of course you'll stay.

PATRICK — You think so? It's only twenty miles to New York. Maybe I'll go there.

ANNA — Go ahead. Go to New York. Get drunk. I don't care what you do. If you can't have the decency to stop being selfish for three days when my father's dead, I don't care what you do.

PATRICK — Don't talk to me about being selfish.

ANNA — You haven't got anything to drink. That's what wrong with you.

PATRICK — That isn't what's wrong with me.

ANNA — Don't tell me. You can just go without something to drink. You won't waste away without it.

PATRICK — (*not wanting to get caught up in an endless argument*) Go get your mother.

ANNA — If you start throwing your weight around like God all mighty when she can hear you, I'll make you sorry.

PATRICK — Just go get her.

ANNA — I'm warning you. (*she crosses up left and exits. Patrick crosses to the window and looks out*)

PATRICK — You want to come with me?

DANIEL — To New York?

PATRICK — Yes.

DANIEL — No.

PATRICK — Suit yourself. If you want to stay here, and listen to the crap that goes on around here, it's your funeral. (*he stops realizing what he has said*) That's pretty funny.

DANIEL — Is it?

PATRICK — (*ignoring DANIEL'S question and mimicing ANNA*) I'm warning you, PATRICK — Well warn to your heart's content, honey, I'm not your father and you're not your mother. (*He is silent for a moment. He turns away from the window, and sits on the couch.*) Why don't you come into New York with me?

DANIEL — I don't want to.

PATRICK — What do you want to stay around this tomb for? He wouldn't have wanted everybody standing around moping over him. He'd have wanted us to go and get good and stiff. He'd want us to sit in a bar somewhere, and remember the times he sat in bars and quietly talked about the things he wanted. He'd want us to go and have a drink, propose a toast to him.

DANIEL — And just leave Ma here?

PATRICK — She'll have her mother. That's what she wants.

DANIEL — No, I'm staying.

PATRICK — That's right. You stay. You stick by her! You always have!

DANIEL — No more than I've stuck by you.

PATRICK — Like hell!

DANIEL — You know better than that.

PATRICK — Then come to New York with me.

DANIEL — Why is it so important that I go with you?

PATRICK — It isn't that important. I just want to give you a chance to get out of here.

DANIEL — I don't want to get out of here. I don't like this anymore than you do, but I don't think its right to run away from it.

PATRICK — Don't tell me what's right and wrong. She can do that, but you can't.

DANIEL — I wasn't telling you what's right or wrong, Dad.

PATRICK — It's not your fault. It's theirs.

DANIEL — Look, Dad. This thing will be over soon. Can't you just go through it. Don't think about it. Don't think about time going by, or being in this house. Don't think about anything.

PATRICK — Is that how you do it?

DANIEL — Yes. I've been doing it as long as I can remember. I just don't think about things and I can get through them.

(ANNA *enters up left. She leaves the door open behind her*)

ANNA — She'll be down in a minute. Maybe you'd better go start the car, Patrick.

PATRICK — It'll take her another fifteen minutes, and you know it.

ANNA — She's old. You don't ever take into consideration how old my mother is.

PATRICK — She's not that old.

ANNA — And she's got nobody left but me.

PATRICK — What's so bad about that? Who did she ever want.

ANNA — She had my father.

PATRICK — Yeah. Right where she wanted him. Right under her thumb.

ANNA — Why don't you *go* to New York? Why don't you leave us to do what has to be done? You always do anyway. You're never around when anything goes wrong. Why are you staying here this time?

PATRICK — I haven't said I wasn't going.

ANNA — Then go now.

PATRICK — How are you going to get to the funeral? Just how are you going to get there if I go?

ANNA — Oh, don't worry. You're not indispensable. We wouldn't burden you with anything like responsibility. I can call Uncle Rudy very easily. No, don't let anything stop you from doing what *you* want to do.

(The grandmother calls from offstage)

MARTHA — Anna! Anna!

ANNA — She's calling me. If you're not here when I get back, it won't matter. We can bury him without you. *(She exits up left)* I'm coming, Mother.

(PATRICK watches her go.)

DANIEL — *(gets up and goes to the window)* That old chicken coop back in the trees. Did they ever have chickens?

PATRICK — Years ago. Then they rebuilt it. They had the inside done over, and made it into a weekend house. I think the beds are still in there. We used to stay in it when you were small.

DANIEL — I don't remember that.

PATRICK — You were only a baby.

DANIEL — Did we come here often?

PATRICK — In the summer, we came every weekend. They had a picnic every Sunday. Everybody used to come.

DANIEL — Who?

PATRICK — Your Uncle Rudy and his wife. All your cousins. Sometimes there'd be thirty people there.

DANIEL — And Grandpa?

PATRICK — That was a long time ago. He was there. It was right after they built the house.

DANIEL — I wish I'd known him then.

PATRICK — Sometimes I forget what he was like. He was a different man. Your grandfather was the strongest man I'd ever met, when I first knew him. And could he drink beer! He'd start at ten o'clock in the morning at one of those picnics, and he'd drink till ten that night. He'd get happier and happier. Not drunk. Just happy. And when he got happy, everybody else did too. It was something about him. He'd start to sing. German songs that I'd never heard before. And then they'd all start to sing. The women and children too. It was summer and the days were long. There were apples, tiny green ones, on the trees. The last time I saw him, he was thin as a child, and his skin was yellow from the cancer.

DANIEL — He's been dead a long time.

PATRICK — How do you mean?

DANIEL — I never heard him sing. We're just late with the coffin. (*The door opens up left. ANNA comes in with her mother. MARTHA is a small woman, her face and hands wrinkled with age. But her hair is just starting to turn grey.*)

MARTHA — (*she is nervous, her hands constantly moving, fluttering.*) Have you got everything, ANNA? We mustn't forget anything.

ANNA — I've got everything.

MARTHA — The food. Have we got enough? They'll all come back here from the cemetery. They'll all be hungry. The food must be all prepared. We must have enough prepared.

ANNA — The food's all prepared, Mama.

MARTHA — Where will we give it to them? In here? Do you think we should put it on the big table for them? There'll be too many to feed in the kitchen. We'll have to put it on the big table for them.

ANNA — That's where I was going to put it, Mama.

MARTHA — I'd better get a cloth for the table. I don't want the table to get scratched.

ANNA — Mama, we can put that on when we get back.

MARTHA — I'll get it. It'll just take a minute. You remember how much Gus and I paid for that table. (*She exits left*)

PATRICK — They're burying her husband and all she worries about is that lousy table.

ANNA — She's got to do things her own way.

PATRICK — Oh, don't I know it. I wouldn't think of trying to stop her, but if we don't get started soon, poor Gus is going to begin smelling up that funeral parlor. They can only keep him there so long.

ANNA — That's a disgusting thing to say.

PATRICK — Would you please tell her that. That if she doesn't hurry up, Gus is going to start to smell.

(*MARTHA enters carrying a white cloth over one arm. She goes up to the table and starts to unfold the cloth.*)

ANNA — (*going to the table*) Let me help you with that, Ma. (*together they put the table cloth on. Martha keeps straightening and re-straightening the corners. Finally she steps back from it.*)

MARTHA — Maybe I should have put the lace cover on.

ANNA — This one looks fine, Mama. We've got to hurry.

MARTHA — Are you sure it looks all right? The lace one is so much more expensive. And this one looks so plain. It would only take a minute.

PATRICK — For Christ's sake, it looks wonderful. Let's go, huh?

MARTHA — I just want to make sure everything's all right.

PATRICK — Even when he's dead, Gus has to wait until you make sure everything's all right. He doesn't even get buried until you say so.

ANNA — Why don't you keep your mouth shut?

MARTHA — (*without anger.*) Let him talk. I don't mind. Gus was the same way. I know he doesn't mean it. He and Gus are so much alike. So impatient all the time. Do you know that Gus left me at a gas station when we stopped so I could — well, you know. (*laughs*) He got so impatient, he just drove right off and left me. He came back of course. But I waited there ten minutes. He was just so impatient. He didn't mean anything by it.

PATRICK — Like hell, he didn't mean anything by it. You know damn well he wanted to keep right on driving, but he didn't have the guts to do it.

DANIEL — Dad, stop.

PATRICK — No, you listen to this. You might learn something.

MARTHA — It was just Gus's way. I knew he'd come back.

PATRICK — Are you trying to tell me that the only time he ever left you was at a gas station? And that he was only gone ten minutes before he came back to you?

MARTHA — Gus wouldn't have left me. Gus wouldn't have known what to do. He was like a helpless child without me.

PATRICK — He was after living with you for forty years.

ANNA — Patrick.

PATRICK — Patrick hell. Let's have a little truth around here for a change. Why didn't Gus ever eat his meals here? Why didn't he eat one meal here for ten years unless he was forced to.

MARTHA — Gus was very particular about his meals. Everything had to be cooked a certain way. I'm afraid I didn't have the time. That was just Gus's way too.

PATRICK — Wasn't it because he couldn't have a meal in peace here?

MARTHA — Gus loved me. Gus always loved me. Near the end he was so sick but he still loved me.

PATRICK — That's not the way I heard it.

ANNA — Since when do you know so much about it?

PATRICK — I have eyes haven't I? Anybody with eyes could see what was going on here.

DANIEL — (*unable to listen any longer*) What difference does it make? Grandpa is dead. It's all over. Please, let's bury him and leave him in peace.

PATRICK — It isn't all over. I'm not going to spend the next ten years listening to how happy she and Gus were together when I know damn well they weren't.

MARTHA — I think I would prefer the lace cloth, Anna. It'll just take a minute. Will you take the other one off while I get it?

ANNA — Ma . . . *(Martha exits off left. Anna gets up and goes to fold the table cloth and start folding it. Patrick goes downstage and sits on the couch. He watches them fold the table cloth, but he can't sit still. He stands up and lights a cigarette. Martha enters left with the lace cloth over her arm. Daniel comes back down and sits in the chair beside the piano again. Anna and Martha put the lace table cloth on. Martha steps back from the table.)*

MARTHA — That looks much better. I haven't used that table cloth in nine years. The last time I used it was Gus's birthday nine years ago. Don't you think it looks better, Anna?

ANNA — Much better.

MARTHA — Gus bought it when we first got married. Rudy'll remember it. I'll just go put this one away. *(She exits left with the white table cloth.)*

PATRICK — That cloth is so old, it's yellow. Anna, tell her how terrible it looks. You can't expect people to eat off something that old and musty.

ANNA — Tell her yourself. Go ahead, tell her it looks awful. You tell her she can't use it.

PATRICK — Gus wouldn't have had that thing on the table. He wouldn't have stood for it.

ANNA — Tell her that. When she comes back in, tell her Gus wouldn't have had it on the table.

PATRICK — Even now. Even just this once, can't she do something the way Gus would have wanted it done?

DANIEL — What difference will it make to Grandpa? Will it matter to him now what kind of table cloth she puts on the table?

ANNA — Your father thinks so. Your father seems to think that's the most important thing there is. How Gus would've wanted it.

PATRICK — Damn it, it is the most important thing! If somebody else around here had thought about the way Gus wanted things maybe Gus wouldn't have spent the last ten years of his life a broken man.

ANNA — *(as if she were repeating it for the fiftieth time to a forgetful child.)* My father was sick the last ten years of his life. After his accident, he never got better.

PATRICK — He got weak. He got too weak to resist her anymore. And when that happened he was done for.

ANNA — Why do you persist in seeing everything the way you want to see it?

DANIEL — Ma, it's getting late.

ANNA — I'll see what's keeping her. *(She exits up left.)*

(There's a pause. Patrick puts out his cigarette, and sits down on the couch again. He only sits for a moment and then gets up again. He walks to the window and lights another cigarette.)

DANIEL — Dad, why don't you go to New York?

PATRICK — What?

DANIEL — I mean it. Why don't you go to New York right now?

PATRICK — Why do you want me to go?

DANIEL — Because I can't stand to see you like this.

PATRICK — Like what? What are you talking about?

DANIEL — I don't know. So nervous, so . . .

PATRICK — I'm not nervous. Why should I be?

DANIEL — It's as if you were afraid of something.

PATRICK — Don't be ridiculous. It's just this place. It gets on my nerves.

DANIEL — That's what I mean. Go to New York and forget about it.

PATRICK — You think I can't go to that funeral, don't you? You think I can't watch them bury him!

DANIEL — I didn't say that.

PATRICK — No, but that's what you meant!

DANIEL — Yes, that's what I meant.

PATRICK — Don't tell me what I can and can't do. You don't know enough to know what I can't do.

DANIEL — Let me go down in the cellar and get one of those bottles. They won't even notice it if I go down.

PATRICK — No.

DANIEL — It'd steady your nerves.

PATRICK — Maybe you're right.

DANIEL — You stay here. I'll be right back. *(Daniel crosses up left and exits.)*

(While he is gone, Patrick tries to sit in one place. He composes himself on the couch and tries to remain sitting there, but he can't. He has to get up. He walks to the table and fingers the table cloth. He walks back, stops and runs his fingers over the china candelabra. Finally, he goes to the door, opens it and looks out. He closes it and comes back into the room. He sits down

again, but he still can't stay there. He gets up and goes to the window.)

(Daniel enters up left with a pint of whiskey and a kitchen water glass. He puts them down on the table. Patrick crosses up to the table.)

DANIEL — I thought whiskey would be the best.

(Patrick opens the bottle, his hands shaking slightly. He pours the glass half full and drinks it down in one swallow. He refills the glass and does it again.)

PATRICK — Did they see you?

DANIEL — No. They were upstairs.

PATRICK — Good. Your mother'd have a fit if she knew.

(Daniel comes downstage and sinks into the chair beside the piano. It's as if he were suddenly exhausted from working very hard at something. Patrick brings the glass and the bottle downstage with him and sits on the couch. He refills the glass, and this time he sips the drink. He caps the bottle and puts it in the pocket of his overcoat, which is lying over the arm of the couch.)

PATRICK — (as if to a conspirator) I'd better keep this out of sight. What she doesn't know won't hurt her, right?

DANIEL — (without enthusiasm) Right.

PATRICK — You don't have to tell her about this.

DANIEL — No, I don't. But I wish you would. I wish you'd go ahead and tell her yourself. I wish you wouldn't hide the bottle. She's going to know anyway. All she'll have to do is look at you and she'll know.

PATRICK — She won't even notice it. A couple of drinks. It'll never show.

DANIEL — It always shows. (Patrick puts the empty glass under the couch.) Why do you have to do something as small as putting the glass under the couch? You'd think you were a little kid who was a afraid of getting spanked.

PATRICK — (the drinks already relaxing him, mellowing him.) When you get a little older, you'll realize this is the way to handle these things. If your mother saw the glass, she'd get upset. And she has too much on her mind to have me getting her upset.

(Daniel turns away from him in disgust.)

PATRICK — I needed that. You know when you get a little older, you'll find that whiskey is the greatest peace maker in the world. You'll find that most of the couples you've ever seen would have been on the rocks long ago if it weren't for whiskey.

DANIEL — I don't want to hear about it.

PATRICK — Suit yourself. I just thought I'd tell you one of the things I thought was important. (*Daniel gets up and crosses to the window.*) There are a lot of things you haven't learned yet and I . . .

DANIEL — Dad, how many bottles have you hidden in overcoat pockets?

PATRICK — What do you mean?

DANIEL — How many times have you gone into the other room to get something, and while you were there, sneaked a drink?

PATRICK — I . . .

DANIEL — Who are you kidding? Who do you think is fooled? Ma? Me? Grandma?

PATRICK — (*angry and indignant*) I'm not trying to fool anybody. Who said that I was trying to fool somebody? Your mother? Did she tell you that?

DANIEL — Forget it. Forget I ever said it.

PATRICK — You listen to me. When you've got a wife and family, and when you've lived for forty-five years, then you come and tell me what I'm doing and what I'm not doing.

DANIEL — I'm sorry.

PATRICK — Just don't stand around and judge me!

DANIEL — I'm not judging you, but . . .

(*Anna enters up left.*)

ANNA — I don't know what to do with her.

PATRICK — What's wrong now?

ANNA — She's checking on the food. I can't get it into her head that we've got to leave. Everybody's waiting for us at the funeral home, and I just can't seem to make her realize it.

MARTHA—(*enters up left*) Anna, I don't think there's going to be enough bread.

ANNA — We can stop and get some on the way back, Mama.

MARTHA — We've got to have enough bread.

ANNA — We can get some, Mama.

MARTHA — That's one thing we always had whenever people came. We always had enough food. Gus always said it was better to have some left over than not to have enough.

ANNA — There won't be that many people.

MARTHA — You can never tell how many people there'll be. I remember once we expected only a dozen people. And thirty-five came. Gus had so many friends. You just never know how many people will come.

ANNA — Mama, everybody's waiting for us.

MARTHA — And we've got to make sure there's enough coffee. It's so cold outside. Everybody will want coffee.

ANNA — Mama, I'm sure we've got enough coffee.

MARTHA — I'll just go and see. (*She exits up left.*)

ANNA — Patrick, go start the car. If she knows you've started it, maybe I can get her to leave.

PATRICK — I'll start it in a minute.

ANNA — A minute?

PATRICK — (*the drinks have made him lazy, and unconcerned*)

It won't hurt them to wait a few minutes for us.

ANNA — Daniel, will you go and start the car for me?

DANIEL — (*looking first at his mother then at his father*)
Don't ask me to, Ma.

ANNA — I've already asked you.

DANIEL — Why do you put me in this position? Don't ask me. Dad, go start the car for her please.

ANNA — Daniel, I asked you to do it. Your father doesn't seem to care how late we are.

DANIEL — I don't care either. I don't care if he never gets buried.

ANNA — Daniel.

DANIEL — (*softly*) I don't.

ANNA—(*stating a fact*) You don't mean that.

DANIEL — (*with no expression*) Why the hell do you think I said it?

ANNA — I asked you to do something for me.

DANIEL — Don't use me, Ma. I'm not just something to be used.

ANNA — Use you? Daniel, all I did was ask you to do me a favor.

DANIEL — It's the same thing. He wouldn't do it, so you make me do it. If I do it, it makes him feel rotten. And you've gotten what you wanted. If I don't, I'm as bad as he is.

ANNA — I think you must be over tired, Daniel.

DANIEL — (*to Patrick*) Tell her. Tell her it's the truth. You know it is.

PATRICK — Daniel, listen, I . . .

DANIEL — Tell her. What are you afraid of? You've been letting her do it all my life. You tell me I'm on her side, that I always go against you. Then do something about it.

(*Patrick looks first at Anna, then back at Daniel. Suddenly, he turns his head away from him, and crosses up left.*)

PATRICK — I'll start the car. (*He exits up left.*)

DANIEL — Dad!

ANNA — I don't know what's gotten into you.

DANIEL — *(again his voice is flat as if from exhaustion)* Don't you? Grandpa is dead.

ANNA — I don't understand you.

DANIEL — Yes you do. He's so dead that even Grandma has to admit it now, and so do you.

ANNA — I think the strain has been too much on you, Daniel. I'll be glad when this thing is over for your sake.

DANIEL — Don't baby me, Ma. *(He gets up and goes over to the couch. He pulls out the whiskey bottle from pocket of Patrick's coat. He holds it up for her to see.)* I went down in the cellar, and I got him this.

ANNA — You know I didn't want him drinking this weekend.

DANIEL — I couldn't stand to watch him. I couldn't stand to see him the way he was. I wanted him to take the bottle and I wanted him to drink it right here in front of you. Right here in front of Grandma. I wanted you to tell him to stop, I wanted you to tell him how disgusting he was. And I wanted him to tell you to shut the hell up and leave him alone. And then I wanted him to smash the bottle right in the middle of the table! But he didn't.

ANNA — Daniel!

DANIEL — It's all right, Ma. Everything's all right. Because he didn't. He gulped down his drink and hid the bottle. He even hid the glass under the couch. *(He goes to the couch and reaches under for the glass. He holds it up for her to see.)* He even hid the glass. *(He opens the bottle and pours the glass full. As he finished, Martha comes in.)*

MARTHA — Anna, I think if we just . . .

ANNA — Mama!

(Martha is stopped by the sound of her voice.)

DANIEL — I can still do it. I can still do what he couldn't. *(He raises the glass in a toast)* Here's to you, Grandpa. Here's to what you were forty years ago.

(He drinks the whiskey and breaks the bottle against the table. He walks back to the chair beside the piano, and sits down again.)

MARTHA — *(after the first frozen moment of surprise has passed, she goes to the table. She is almost hysterical. Her voice whines)* Anna! Anna! It'll ruin the table! We've got to get it off! It'll eat into the wood! It'll rot it away; Help me get it off!

ANNA — *(goes to her)* I'll get something to wipe it up with.
(She exits left.)

MARTHA — *(picking at the glass on the table)* It's too late. It's already ruined. It's too late to stop it. It happens so quickly. Before you know it, it's ruined.

ANNA — *(enters carrying a rag)* Let's get the cloth off first. Daniel, help us.

DANIEL — Let it rot.

ANNA — Daniel.

(She folds the table cloth into the center of the table, picks it up and carries it off.)

Martha has picked up the rag and keeps dabbing at the table. She moves around and around the table dabbing at it.

Anna enters. She picks up any pieces of glass that may still be on the table.

Martha rubs the top of the table. She keeps rubbing it as hard as she can, pushing the cloth against it violently back and forth. All this must happen as fast as possible.)

PATRICK — *(enters)* I got the car started. *(He stops.)* What happened?

ANNA — *(holds the pieces of glass out for him to see)* We've just had an outburst from Daniel.

PATRICK — *(to Daniel)* I didn't want her to see the bottle.

DANIEL — What difference does it make?

ANNA — We'll talk about this later, Daniel.

DANIEL — It's too late.

ANNA — Mama, come and get your coat on. *(Martha is still rubbing the table.)* Mama. *(Martha doesn't seem to hear her.)*

Mama, we've got to leave. *(Anna goes to her, and turns her gently away from the table.)* Come and get your coat on now.

MARTHA — It'll never be the same. You can never really get it off. *(Anna leads her slowly off.)*

PATRICK — What happened, Daniel?

DANIEL — Nothing that will ever make any difference.

PATRICK — You've got me in a lot of trouble.

DANIEL — Have I?

PATRICK — She's going to think I made you go down and get the bottle for me. She's going to think it was my idea.

DANIEL — No. Not this time. This time I don't think she'll blame it on you.

ANNA — *(enters up left)* She's ready. Get your coats on, and let's go.

(Patrick gets his coat from the couch and puts it on.)

DANIEL — I'm not going.

ANNA — Of course you're going. Now get your coat on.

DANIEL — I'm staying here.

ANNA — Daniel, don't be childish now! You've done about enough for one day!

DANIEL — Ma, I'm not going.

ANNA — Patrick, make him get his coat on.

PATRICK — You go and get into the car. I'll talk to him.

ANNA — Hurry. We're so late. *(She exits.)*

PATRICK — You're sure you don't want to come?

DANIEL — Yes.

PATRICK — I wish you would.

DANIEL — I can't. Someday they'll bury you the same way. I can't watch them bury him and you too.

ANNA — *(offstage)* Patrick.

(Patrick looks at Daniel for a moment, and then crosses up left, and exits. Daniel gets up and goes to the window. He stands looking out, and the curtain falls.)

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