

**Scene One**

*Living room. The room is empty. The SOUND of a car pulling up outside. A car door opening and closing. The front door opens. CHRIS enters. He's holding a duffel bag full of clothes.*

CHRIS                    Mom ... ? Dad ... ?

*(sets down duffel bag)*

I'm home. I came home.

*DEIRDRE enters. She's drying her hair, like she's just taken a shower.*

DEIRDRE                Chris ... ?

CHRIS                    Hey, Deirdre.

DEIRDRE                What are you doing here?

CHRIS                    Mom called —

DEIRDRE                You shouldn't be here.

CHRIS                    Why ... why shouldn't I — ?

DEIRDRE                This isn't a good time. Dad isn't feeling well.

CHRIS                    Yeah, I know. That's the reason I —

DEIRDRE                Shit. He probably heard you drive up. How long are you staying?

CHRIS                    Um, I'm not really sure. I thought I might —

DEIRDRE                Shh!

*CHRIS stops. DEIRDRE listens.*

It might already be too late.

*ABBY enters.*

ABBY                    Chris! Is that you? I thought I heard a voice.

CHRIS                    Hi, Mom.

*They hug.*

ABBY                   What are you doing here?

CHRIS                  You called me, remember?

ABBY                   Did I? It must have slipped my mind. How was the drive? Was it awful?

CHRIS                  Um, it wasn't too bad.

ABBY                   Well, your father will be happy to see you.

CHRIS                  How is he? Is he okay?

ABBY                   He's ... oh well, you know, he's ...

DEIRDRE              He's fine. He's going to be fine.

ABBY                   The doctors are very optimistic.

CHRIS                  What did they say exactly?

ABBY                   To be honest, the whole thing is extremely complicated. The doctors are recommending surgery but the insurance company doesn't want to pay for it. They say it isn't covered by our plan.

CHRIS                  Probably because Dad got the cheapest plan he could find ...

ABBY                   Yes, well, be that as it ... They also suggested it could have been a psychosomatic response.

CHRIS                  What, like he *imagined* he had a heart attack?

ABBY                   You know how those people are. Anything to avoid spending a buck.

DEIRDRE              How was the play, Chris?

ABBY                   That's right, the play! Oh, I wish we could have seen it. What was it called again, The Seahorse?

CHRIS                  The *Seagull*. It went terribly, actually.

ABBY                   Oh no, that's too bad. Well, I'm sure you were very good in it. How long are you planning on staying? You know your room is always waiting. But your bed is gone.

*(DEIRDRE starts to leave.)*

Where are you going?

DEIRDRE To take a shower.

ABBY You just took a shower.

DEIRDRE I'm still dirty.

ABBY What do you want for dinner, sweetheart, chicken or fish?

DEIRDRE I'm not eating.

*DEIRDRE exits.*

ABBY I'm worried about her. I never see her eat anything. I'm sorry, were you saying something?

CHRIS How much does it cost? The surgery, I mean.

ABBY I don't know ... They say it's going to cost at least eighty thousand.

CHRIS Jesus. How are we going to pay for it?

ABBY God knows. With Stan out of work we can barely pay our rent.

CHRIS Dad's not working?

ABBY He's taken a leave of absence from the school. Our only real income now is what Deirdre brings home from Starbucks.

CHRIS Could we borrow the money? I mean, from a bank or something? Or why don't we just ask Grandma for it?

ABBY You know how she is. Makes you grovel for every last cent.

CHRIS Still. This is Dad's life we're talking about.

ABBY Oh well. I'm sure it will all work out somehow.

CHRIS What do you think caused it, huh? Has Dad been under a lot of stress lately?

ABBY It's his job. You know, those kids used to adore him. But times have changed, they just don't respond to him like they used to. And lately he's been getting in trouble with the administration for hitting them too much.

CHRIS                   He *hits* the kids?

ABBY                    He cares too deeply, that's always been his trouble.

CHRIS                   What about smoking weed? He's not overdoing it, is he?

ABBY                    You know ... He likes to take the occasional puff.

CHRIS                   Mom ... come on ... we both know how much Dad loves getting high.

ABBY                    Your father loves three things: He loves the theater, he loves horse racing, and he loves dope.

CHRIS                   You know, I've always wondered what happened to Dad when he was growing up to make him the way he is. But he doesn't like to talk about it.

ABBY                    Not everything has to be analyzed. Like Freud said, sometimes a cigar is just a penis. Tell me more about the play. What went wrong?

CHRIS                   I'm still not completely sure. Somehow, throughout the run I couldn't help feeling like everyone was against me. The director, the cast, even the audience. But then I realized, it's just like what happens in the play, so I used it. It's like I really *was* the character.

ABBY                    We're all characters, Chris.

CHRIS                   Only now that it's over ... it's like ... I don't know ... it feels like I'm drifting ... I don't know who I am anymore ...

ABBY                    *(straightening the room)* I'm just going to do this while you're talking.

CHRIS                   I don't even know if I'm a real actor or not.

ABBY                    You were very good in that play in the sixth grade. What was it called? Pig something.

CHRIS                   Pygmalian.

ABBY                    That was it!

CHRIS                   That was a long time ago.

ABBY Well, all I can say is everyone's very proud of you. Especially your father. He's always going on and on about what a big star you are.

CHRIS Mom, I'm not a — I can't even afford headshots. I've been using a sketch some homeless guy made of me.

ABBY That reminds me ... Are you planning on staying for dinner tonight?

CHRIS Yes, of course I'm staying for dinner.

ABBY What do you want, chicken or fish?

CHRIS What kind of fish?

ABBY Sticks. I'm making fish and chips. Which one, Chris? Chicken or fish.

CHRIS I don't know. It doesn't matter.

ABBY That's true. You still have to pick, though. You see my point?

*STAN enters.*

STAN Well well well. The Prodigal Son returns.

ABBY The Prodigal Son.

STAN Abby, please.

CHRIS Hi, Dad.

STAN *(mocking)* Hi, Dad. You think you know everything, don't you?

CHRIS Who, me?

STAN No, the fellow behind you. You think you can just waltz in here, say whatever you want, do whatever you want ...

CHRIS I don't think I —

STAN All right, let's drop it.

CHRIS Drop what?

STAN I said drop it! Jesus, you can't help beating a dead horse, can you? We're not discussing it anymore, do you understand? *(Pause.) Do you understand?*

CHRIS I understand.

STAN Okay, then. Now: just what the hell do you think you're trying to pull?

CHRIS I'm not pulling —

STAN Don't interrupt! Maybe rudeness is a way of life in the big city, but it isn't here, Mister!

CHRIS I wasn't interrupt —

STAN Enough! I won't stand for it! This is my house and you will live by my rules! *(Pause.)* Answer me!

CHRIS What would you like me to say?

STAN You think you're so smart, don't you? Okay, Smart Guy, what made you come running home this time? You run out of quarters for the laundromat?

ABBY Laundromat!

STAN Abby, please.

CHRIS No, Mom called me. She's worried about you. And just now she told me you need an operation!

STAN Goddamnit, Abby, how many times do I have to say it? My heart is fine!

ABBY Then why can't you go back to work?

STAN I'm going to. Just as soon as I get my strength back. Ah, Jesus ...

*STAN reacts to a pain.*

ABBY Stan?

CHRIS Dad? Are you okay?

ABBY Maybe you should lie down for awhile.

STAN I'm fine, I'm fine. Get me my pills, will you?

ABBY Which ones?

STAN Which ones do you think? The blue ones!

*ABBY exits.*

CHRIS Jesus, Dad. We've gotta get you that operation.

STAN I'll get it, don't worry about that. In the meantime, Dr. Charles says as long as I don't overexert myself there's absolutely no risk.

CHRIS Dr. Charles sells pharmaceuticals to his patients under the table.

STAN He has to make a living somehow. Do you have any idea what a family practitioner makes these days?

CHRIS I only meant ...

STAN *(mocking)* I only meant ... *(suddenly serious)* Hey. Did you hear the news?

CHRIS The news?

STAN The news! Did you hear it?

CHRIS Did I hear the news?

STAN Stop repeating me like some kind of goddamn Mina bird! Is that what they taught you to do in that conservatory?

CHRIS Actually, yes.

STAN Well, stop it. You're in civilization now. I'll ask one more time. *Did you hear the news?*

CHRIS No, Dad, what's the news?

STAN Well, it just so happens I've been asked to direct a new production at the Playhouse. And guess which play we're doing? I'll give you a hint: it's only the greatest play of the twentieth century.

CHRIS Waiting for Godot?

STAN No, not ... Don't give me that Beckett nonsense. I'm talking about Salesman! Death of a Salesman!

*STAN picks up a copy of the play and waves it at CHRIS.*

CHRIS                    Are you sure it's a good idea to be directing right now? I mean, isn't your health more important than some play?

STAN                     "Some play"? It just happens to be the best American play ever written, that's all.

*ABBY returns.*

I'm telling Chris about the new production.

ABBY                    Oh yes! Isn't it exciting? Here's your pills. I wasn't sure which blue ones you meant, they're all blue.

STAN                    Give them to me. Not the baby aspirin. Christ, use your head.

ABBY                    I'll get some water.

STAN                    That's all right, I've got it.

*STAN pours some brandy.*

CHRIS                    Should you really be drinking alcohol?

STAN                    Tell me, Abby, how did we ever raise such a Puritan for a son?

ABBY                    I don't know, it's a mystery!

STAN                    There must've been a mix-up at the hospital.

ABBY                    There must have been!

CHRIS                    I'm not a Puritan, I just don't think it's a good idea —

STAN                    We get it, Chris. You don't have to beat it to death.

CHRIS                    I'm just saying ...

STAN                    *I'm just saying ...*

CHRIS                    Stop it! Why won't you listen to me?

STAN                    Listen? I've been doing nothing but listening! We're still waiting to get a word in edge-wise. Aren't we?

ABBY                    *(not listening)* Hm? Oh. Mm.



STAN                    We're fucking with you, Chris. Come on, lighten up, pull that anchovy out of your ass.

CHRIS                  Look: Mom told me the insurance company is refusing to pay for the operation.

STAN                    Those greedy sons-of-bitches!

CHRIS                  Tell him, Mom, we've got to raise that money!

ABBY                    Stan ... what do you want for dinner? Chicken or fish?

STAN                    Chicken.

ABBY                    But ... you're supposed to eat fish! It has all those healthy fats. Remember what Dr. Charles said?

STAN                    Healthy fat. Talk about an oxymoron.

ABBY                    It's the good kind.

STAN                    Are you telling me Dr. Charles doesn't eat chicken?

CHRIS                  Mom, just drop it! Let Dad eat whatever he wants.

STAN                    *(sarcastic)* You see, Abby, it's okay, Chris says I can have whatever I want.

CHRIS                  *(speaking low)* Can we please just ... calm down and discuss things in a rational —

STAN                    What's that? You have to speak up, Chris. There aren't any microphones in here, you know. You have to *project*.

CHRIS                  Maybe if we, I don't know, took a look at the finances.

STAN                    The finances! My God, why didn't we think of that? Abby, how could we have been so stupid? We forgot to look at the finances!

*ABBY shrugs and shakes her head, going along with it.*

CHRIS                  Can't we be serious for one minute?

STAN                    You want us to be serious? All right, fine ... let's be serious. *(to Abby)* He wants us to be serious.

*STAN and ABBY put on their "serious" faces. ABBY nods along.*

Go ahead, Chris, we're listening. What did you want to say?

CHRIS All I'm saying is ...

STAN Uh-huh, uh-huh ...

CHRIS Maybe if we just ...

STAN Yes, yes ...

CHRIS If we, I don't know ...

STAN Mmmm. Mm-hm ...

CHRIS If we spoke to an accountant ...

STAN An *accountant*. Yes, of course, absolutely ...

CHRIS Or someone, you know, to get control ...

STAN Right, control, right ...

CHRIS Control of the budget ...

STAN The *budget* ... oh right right right ...

CHRIS Stop it! I'm being serious.

STAN So are we.

*ABBY nods.*

CHRIS Jesus Christ, I'm only trying to help.

STAN You've got all the answers, don't you? You've got it all figured out.

ABBY He loves to start trouble.

CHRIS Me? How do I ... ?

ABBY I don't know where I went wrong. Everyone said to breast feed you. But there was pain! Doesn't anyone know there's pain?

CHRIS No one's blaming you, Mom.

ABBY I know you hate me.

CHRIS I don't hate you. Can we please back up a minute? How are we going to raise the money? That's all I'm asking.

STAN *(to Abby)* Didn't you tell him? About the results I've been getting?

ABBY The ... Oh, the horses! Yes, I did.

STAN You're not going to believe this, Chris, but last week I won eighteen out of twenty on paper.

CHRIS ... Okay.

STAN Eighteen out of twenty.

ABBY That's ninety percent.

STAN Is it? That's right, it is. Do you have any idea what this means?

CHRIS No, Dad, what does it mean?

STAN It means none of us are ever going to have to worry about money again.

CHRIS You think playing the horses is going to pay for the surgery?

STAN The surgery, trips to Hawaii ... anything we want.

ABBY Hawaii!

STAN Abby, please.

CHRIS Okay, but should you really be gambling with your life like that?

STAN It isn't gambling. It's investing. Safe as playing the stock market. What am I saying? Safer!

CHRIS Dad, we've been through all this before. You've been playing the horses for years and it never works! Tell him, Mom!

ABBY Oh God! I have to get dinner started. The fish need to defrost.

STAN I told you, I want chicken, damnit!

ABBY Fine! Eat whatever you want. Just don't blame me when it's your funeral!

*ABBY exits.*

STAN                   Your mother's half out of her mind. That's what's kept us together all these years. *(Pause.)* So. What do you think?

CHRIS                  About what?

STAN                   “About what.” The play! The greatest American play with the greatest American actor in the lead!

CHRIS                  Who?

STAN                   “Who.” Who do you think? I'll be playing Willy Loman, naturally.

CHRIS                  You're acting *and* directing? Dad, don't you want to live? Seriously, don't you want to live a long life?

STAN                   Well, that's an interesting philosophical question. *Is* longevity the point of life? Before we can have a debate, however, we have to define our terms.

CHRIS                  I'm not having a debate. I'm asking you, don't you want to live?

STAN                   You think you're so smart, don't you? Got it all figured out. Oh well, you'll learn. It'll be the hard way but ... Actually, kiddo, there is something I wanted to ... The fact is, I'm in a bit of a bind. We held auditions and there wasn't a decent Biff to be found. I don't know what's wrong with young actors these days, they're not angry enough ... something, I don't know ... So I was thinking — actually, it was your mother's idea. Give him a chance, she said. Personally I'm not convinced ...

CHRIS                  Dad, are you asking me to play Biff Loman?

STAN                   Hey, look, I know what you're thinking. Big part, major play, you don't want to fuck it up. Actually, that was my concern as well. But I've been thinking, with *my* direction, who knows what miracles can happen! So what do you say, kiddo?

CHRIS                  Dad, please, let me explain something. Ever since *The Seagull* closed, I've been ... I don't know ... just lost. I don't know who I am ...

STAN                   Is that what's bothering you? Christ, it's taken me forty-three years ...

CHRIS                  But ... you're fifty two.

STAN                    I'm saying since I was *nine*. Look, you're just going through a little existential ennui, that's all. It's natural to experience disorientation between roles. You gotta remember, we're not like other people. We're *actors*. We don't put a nut to a bolt. We know life is fleeting, an illusion. Remember that play you did in the sixth grade, when you played Henry Higgins? Remember how they cheered your name? And the standing ovation! God almighty, you were something else. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away!

*STAN stares off, as if dwelling in the memory.*

CHRIS                  Okay, but, Dad, I feel like you're not hearing me.

STAN                    What is it? What's the problem? Come on, spit it out, the woods are burning!

CHRIS                  Don't you get it? I'm not an actor! I'm no good!

STAN                    Who told you that? Huh?

CHRIS                  Everyone! My teachers, the critics ... even you did, before I left for New York.

STAN                    And you listened to me? Ha! That's a first.

CHRIS                  You were right!

STAN                    What if I told you right now that I think you're a great actor?

CHRIS                  Do you?

STAN                    *(after a moment)* Ah, who cares what I think? I'm just one person! I'll tell you a little story, Chris, this going back to my college days when I did a little play called 'Hamlet.' Perhaps you've heard of it. When I told people I was going to play all twenty-four parts, they all laughed, they thought I was crazy! Can't be done, they said. And do you know what happened? I got the *worst reviews* of my life. Those goddamn sons-of-bitches! What did they know about acting? Always remember, Chris, it's how you see *yourself* that matters. To hell with everyone else!

CHRIS                  But that's just it. I *hate* myself!

STAN                    Hate yourself. Why would you ... ?

CHRIS                    Because — I've always seen myself through your eyes!

STAN                    What are you saying? I *hate* you?

CHRIS                    I know you do, Dad!

STAN                    Are you feeling all right, kiddo? Maybe *you* should lie down for awhile.

*DEIRDRE enters.*

DEIRDRE                Dad, guess what? I'm getting married.

STAN                    That's great, honey.

*STAN busies himself with the Racing Form.*

CHRIS                    What are you mean, you're getting married? When?

DEIRDRE                Someday.

*Pause.*

CHRIS                    Deirdre ... Dad and I are talking.

DEIRDRE                What are you talking about?

CHRIS                    About ... about the play Dad's directing.

DEIRDRE                Can I be in it?

CHRIS                    I ... I don't know. You'll have to ask Dad.

DEIRDRE                Can I, Dad? Can I be in the play?

STAN                    Hm? Oh sure, sweetie. We'll find something for you. Maybe you can play one of the hookers in the dinner scene.

DEIRDRE                Hooray!

*STAN bangs the table.*

STAN                    Goddamnit!

CHRIS                    What's wrong?

DEIRDRE                What is it, Dad? What's the matter?

STAN                    This horse had absolutely no business being in this race. He didn't have the speed *or* the class ...

DEIRDRE                He should've been disqualified!

CHRIS                   I mean, they're just animals. You can't predict them all.

STAN                    You're right, Chris, you're absolutely ... That's right, I forgot, you know everything, don't you?

*DEIRDRE receives a text.*

DEIRDRE                Fuck!

CHRIS                    What? What is it?

DEIRDRE                Nothing. I ... I have to take a shower.

*DEIRDRE exits. CHRIS watches her, concerned.*

CHRIS                    What's going to happen to us, huh? I feel like we're headed towards some kind of disaster.

STAN                    (*chuckles*) Oh no, we hit disaster weeks ago. Listen, I don't want to point any fingers, but your mother has single-handedly driven this family to financial ruin. It's the way she was raised, I don't know ...

CHRIS                    If things are that bad, why can't we ask Grandma for a loan?

STAN                    Well, you know how your grandmother is, she can be a tad stubborn sometimes.

CHRIS                    I know she is. But we have to at least —

STAN                    Ah! Goddamnit!

*STAN cringes in pain.*

CHRIS                    Jesus, Dad.

*ABBY enters.*

ABBY                    What's happening? What's going on?

CHRIS                    Dad's in pain.

ABBY                   Why? What did you say to him?

CHRIS                  I didn't say anything!

ABBY                   Stan, do you want me to call Dr. Charles?

STAN                   No no, I'll be alright in a minute ...

ABBY                   Take it slowly. Are you sure you're okay?

STAN                   Yeah yeah. I just need a moment ... *(Pause.)* There. You see? I'm fine. Nothing to worry about.

CHRIS                  Mom, we need to talk about raising the money for Dad's surgery.

ABBY                   Oh! Speaking of money, you'd be very proud of me, Stan. I went around and found all the little scraps of paper I keep lying around the house and I created a new budget. The *bad* news is: we have almost no income, the rent and credit cards are all due —

STAN                   What about the TV? It's football season.

ABBY                   Don't worry, I paid the cable. But there's nothing left for Deirdre's tuition or Chris's conservatory.

CHRIS                  Wait. You're not paying for my conservatory? It's my last year.

STAN                   You hear how selfish he sounds?

ABBY                   We spoiled him too much.

STAN                   You don't need a conservatory. In fact, that's probably why you're so confused. What you need is a good role to sink your teeth into. I just offered him the part of a lifetime and instead of jumping at it he just whines. *I'm not good enough. I don't know if I'm an actor.* It's time to grow up, Chris. This is the real world you're in.

ABBY                   He's never been able to face reality.

STAN                   Thinks he knows everything.

CHRIS                  Dad, will you just listen ... ? I didn't say I *wouldn't* play the part.

STAN                   Did you hear that, Abby? Jesus, kiddo, you gave us a real scare for a minute.



CHRIS                    Hold on. I didn't say I *would*, either.

STAN                    Then what the hell are we talking about? Christ, it's like talking to a brick wall.

CHRIS                    What's the good news, Mom?

ABBY                    What?

CHRIS                    You said that was the bad news, what's the good news?

ABBY                    Oh! There is no good news.

*The PHONE RINGS, off-stage.*

                                 It's the land-line.

STAN                    I thought we turned off the ringer.

ABBY                    I must have turned it on by accident.

STAN                    Well, don't just stand there, answer it!

ABBY                    Do I have to? Stan, will you talk to them, please?

STAN                    Alright, alright ...

*STAN exits.*

CHRIS                    Mom, why does Dad hate me so much?

ABBY                    Your father doesn't hate you, Chris. He loves you. Almost like a son. You just have to give him a chance, that's all.

CHRIS                    Why do you always lay everything on me, huh?

ABBY                    Because you intentionally provoke him. Why do you do that?

CHRIS                    I guess I just want him to ... I don't know, to face the truth.

ABBY                    No one knows the truth. It's taken philosophers and religious thinkers thousands of years and they're just as confused as we are.

CHRIS                    I'm not talking about some deep philosophical truth. I'm talking about the difference between the truth and a lie ...

ABBY                    You can't take away a man's illusions. He wouldn't survive two seconds without them. Besides, you're no different ...

CHRIS                   I didn't say I was different.

ABBY                   Then why not tell him you'll do the play?

CHRIS                   How can I play Biff when I don't even know if I'm an actor or not?

ABBY                   You don't have to actually play the role, sweetheart. Just tell him you'll do it.

CHRIS                   What do you mean? You mean lie?

ABBY                   Your father just needs something to look forward to. Once he gets his hopes up, everything will be all right.

CHRIS                   Even if it's false hope?

ABBY                   All hope is false, Chris. I'm surprised you don't know that yet.

CHRIS                   So you're saying I should just *tell* him ... ?

ABBY                   I'm asking you to save your father's life.

*STAN returns.*

                                 Who was that?

STAN                    Oh, just Herb, calling about the rent. I told him we'd have it right away.

ABBY                    But how? How are we going to pay it?

STAN                    I'll let you both in on a little secret. I made a little bet that's going to solve all our troubles.

ABBY                    A bet? You mean on a horse race?

STAN                    Fifth race at Belmont. I put a thousand on the nose on a horse called Blue Bayou.

CHRIS                    Where did you get the money?

STAN                    Don't worry about that. Besides, it's only short-term ...

CHRIS                    You borrowed it? From who?

STAN Stop dwelling on irrelevant details! It's the big picture that counts. Can you believe it, Abby, the system is finally ready! Eighteen out of twenty on paper. Once the winners start coming in, I'll be able to quit my job at the high school and we'll open our own theater company and do whatever plays we want!

ABBY Wonderful! Stan, do you remember that Summer when Chris was thirteen ... ?

STAN That was a beautiful thing. The system was picking exactas left and right ...

ABBY I remember one day the two of you came back big winners. You won five thousand on a big exacta and Chris picked a long shot.

CHRIS I picked a thirty-to-one shot!

STAN I remember it like yesterday. You pointed right at that horse and said, *'That's the horse that's going to win.'* And by God, it led all the way! That horse must have been forty, fifty to one!

CHRIS It was thirty-to-one.

STAN And I came home with over ten thousand!

CHRIS It was five thousand.

ABBY And you walked in the door with champagne! I'll never forget that day as long as I live!

CHRIS It was great for a couple of months, but then the system stopped working ...

STAN All of a sudden the odds on the best horses dropped to next to nothing. You know something, I think they intentionally made the tracks faster so they'd be easier to predict. Those greedy bastards!

ABBY Well, it was a long time ago.

STAN It's all rigged these days. An honest man can't win, it's all set up against you ...

ABBY Okay, don't get worked up about it.

CHRIS Listen ... I really think we should talk to Grandma. It's the only thing that makes any sense.

ABBY                    Maybe Chris has a point, Stan. There's no harm in just talking to her. Even if she is the stingiest person in the world. And does she ever have one nice thing to say to me when we visit? Always some put down about what a bad wife I am ...

STAN                    Alright, alright, enough ...

*DEIRDRE enters.*

DEIRDRE                I lost weight, Dad, did you notice?

CHRIS                    You *lost* weight?

DEIRDRE                Three pounds.

CHRIS                    I don't think you should be losing weight, Deirdre. You look just fine the way you are.

ABBY                    Chris is right, Deirdre. I don't like you losing too much weight. It isn't healthy.

DEIRDRE                Okay, okay. What are we talking about?

CHRIS                    I was just saying we should talk to Grandma about borrowing money.

DEIRDRE                She won't give it to us.

CHRIS                    I mean, this is your *life*, Dad. Does she even care?

STAN                    Of course she does. Your grandmother is an extraordinary person. You don't know what she had to go through when I was growing up. Surviving on a minimum wage job while my father drank his paychecks away, disappearing for days at a time ...

ABBY                    And he used to beat you.

STAN                    Well, war does strange things to people.

ABBY                    Your father never fought in the war. He was considered an essential worker.

STAN                    It's true, he never got to fight. I don't think he ever got over it.

DEIRDRE                I don't understand why you don't get a job, Mom.

ABBY Oh God, will everyone get off my back?! Jesus!

STAN Don't be too hard on your mother, sweetie. She works very hard.

DEIRDRE You're not going to die, are you, Dad?

ABBY Of course he isn't!

STAN You don't have to work about that, honey. I'm going to live for a long, long time. Of course, we all have to go sometime.

CHRIS If that's how you feel, why not just kill yourself?

STAN That's an interesting question. What *does* prevent one from killing oneself, knowing one is going to die? I think Camus put it best when he said that suicide was the only important philosophical question. I never understood what he meant but by God, he was a genius!

DEIRDRE Dad, I'm scared!

STAN There's nothing to be scared of, sweetie. I'm just lucky to live in a country that even offers surgery I can't afford. At least I've accomplished everything I set out to do with my life.

CHRIS But you haven't accomplished anything.

STAN Ha! Look who's talking. Okay, Mr. Big Shot, why don't you tell us what you've accomplished? You can't, can you?!

CHRIS That's what I've been telling you, Dad. I'm nothing. I'm nobody. The play was a disaster ...

DEIRDRE It's alright to fail, Chris. That's what everyone expected you to do, anyway.

ABBY Deirdre's right.

STAN Wait a minute, I get it. You're not good enough for New York but you're too good for our little community theater ...

CHRIS No, Dad, that's not it.

STAN Then it's for spite, is that it? Spite! Spite is the word of your undoing!

DEIRDRE            *(to Chris)* Why can't you just do the play?

STAN                Because of spite, that's why!

ABBY                Chris wants to do the role, Stan! He told me.

STAN                What's this? What are you talking about?

ABBY                He's just intimidated by such an important part. He's afraid of letting you down.

STAN                Jesus, kiddo, why didn't you say so? Look, I get it, it's a significant play, perhaps the most important play of all time ... trust me, I won't make you look like a fool, I promise ...

CHRIS                I don't know, Dad, I ... I just can't do it ...

STAN                You see, Chris, that's your whole problem right there in one word: *can't*. Jesus, what time is it?

ABBY                It's ... I'm not sure ...

STAN                The race! It's time for the race! *(to Deirdre)* Sweetie, grab the laptop so we can watch it live. Hurry!

DEIRDRE            Okay!

*DEIRDRE exits.*

STAN                Get ready to break out the champagne!

ABBY                We don't have any champagne.

STAN                Something else, then. Some white wine will do ...

ABBY                I'll see what we have ...

*ABBY exits.*

STAN                Look, kiddo. I know you wanted to go to New York and become famous and all that nonsense, but when you get a little older you'll realize there's more than all that. What I'm offering is a chance at greatness! Just like that production of Pygmalion you were in. The whole audience was on their feet, remember? Shouting your name! With my help you could be that great again. Think about it, the two of us together, father and son!

*DEIRDRE enters.*

DEIRDRE I got it!

STAN That-a-girl.

DEIRDRE The race is up already.

STAN It started?!

DEIRDRE A few seconds ago.

*DEIRDRE sets up the laptop and they watch. DEIRDRE and CHRIS crowd next to STAN.*

STAN Where's Blue Bayou? Why can't I see her?

CHRIS I think she's stuck in the middle.

DEIRDRE They're boxing her in!

STAN Those goddamn jockeys, they never play fair!

DEIRDRE There she is, I see her!

STAN Don't worry, she's a late starter, she's just hitting her stride ...

*ABBY enters.*

ABBY We don't have any wine, all I could find was some mineral water ...

STAN Fine, fine. It doesn't matter.

ABBY Is the race on?

STAN It's on, it's on!

ABBY Are we winning?

CHRIS It's hard to tell. It looks like she's on the rail.

STAN That's it! Come on, baby, get up there!

DEIRDRE Come on, Blue Bayou! You can do it!

ABBY Dear God, please let us win.

STAN                   Get up there, you son-of-a-bitch!

DEIRDRE             Go! Go! Go!

CHRIS                 She's dropping back.

STAN                 It's a tactic. The jockey knows what he's doing, he's a brilliant jockey!

DEIRDRE             Come on, don't give up!

STAN                 Ow! Jesus ... oh Christ ...

ABBY                 Stan ... ? Stan, are you okay?

STAN                 Goddamnit ...

ABBY                 Let your father lie down. Make room.

STAN                 Call ... call Dr. Charles.

ABBY                 You want me to call him? Are you sure?

STAN                 Yes, call him!

DEIRDRE             Mom, just go!

CHRIS                 Hurry!

ABBY                 Oh God, this is actually happening.

*ABBY exits.*

DEIRDRE             This is all your fault, Chris!

CHRIS                 Mine! What did *I* do?

DEIRDRE             You shouldn't be here! You should have never come!

CHRIS                 I have a right to be here! This is my family, too!

DEIRDRE             You don't care about Dad! All you care about is your stupid acting career!

CHRIS                 That's bullshit! Why do you think I'm here, huh?

*STAN groans.*



STAN                    Oh God ...

DEIRDRE              It's okay, Dad, just relax. RELAX!

CHRIS                  You don't think he's going to ...

DEIRDRE              Don't say it!

CHRIS                  Hey Dad ... I know this probably isn't the best time but I just want to say that ... all my life, I never felt like you really loved me ...

DEIRDRE              Not now, Chris!

CHRIS                  This might be our last chance.

DEIRDRE              Oh shit, you're right. Dad ... Daddy? Somehow ... I felt like you never really saw me. I mean, do you see me? I'm right here. Can you see me?

CHRIS                  Do you love me?

DEIRDRE              Can you see me?

*ABBY enters.*

ABBY                    Dr. Charles is on his way. He just has to pick something up first. How's he doing?

DEIRDRE              Fine. He's fine!

CHRIS                  Don't give up, Dad. Please. I'll do the part, I promise. I'll play Biff.

ABBY                    Stan, did you hear that? Chris is going to do the play! Isn't that wonderful? Shit, this is it, isn't it, he's dying.

*STAN sits up.*

STAN                    I'm okay.

DEIRDRE              You're alive!

ABBY                    Stan, don't do that! You scared the wife out of me!

STAN                    I just want ...

ABBY                    Yes, what do you want? Tell us.

STAN I want ...

ABBY I can't hear you, you have to talk louder.

CHRIS Mom, stop!

DEIRDRE Everyone shhhh! Let Dad speak.

STAN I just want ... to be left alone.

*Pause.*

ABBY Well, personally I think that's very telling. His dying wish is to never see us again.

STAN How did the horse do?

CHRIS She ran fourth.

STAN *Damnit.*

ABBY What do you mean? We lost?

STAN She must've been bumped. That jockey has a history of that kind of thing. Completely incompetent.

ABBY That stupid jockey!

STAN I need to lie down ...

*STAN rises, to leave.*

ABBY Do you need any help?

STAN No no, I'll be all right ...

*STAN exits.*

CHRIS I give up, Mom. I can't fight anymore.

ABBY That's a good thing to learn at your age, honey.

CHRIS What are we going to do?

ABBY Don't worry. It's like my mother always used to say, things will look better in the morning. Actually, she said a lot of things which turned out not to be true. I'll go and see how Stan's doing ...

*ABBY exits.*

DEIRDRE            I'm pregnant.

CHRIS                What? Seriously?

DEIRDRE            Don't tell Mom and Dad, okay?

CHRIS                Who's the father?

DEIRDRE            His name's Andrew. We're getting married. Just as soon as he leaves his wife.

CHRIS                Jesus, Deirdre.

DEIRDRE            Oh and I dropped out of school. Promise you won't say anything, okay? Promise!

CHRIS                Okay, okay, I promise.

*DEIRDRE exits. CHRIS is still for a moment, then picks up the copy of Death of a Salesman and begins to read.*

CHRIS                'I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and every time I come back here I know that all I've done is waste my life.'

*CHRIS stares out. Lights fade.*