

Cliff Diving

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ACT ONE

SCENE 1

VERN'S PATIO.

VERN is working on his barbecue. FRANK stands distracted and aloof.

VERN

Hell, Frank, it's just dreams. If they were anything good you'd remember 'em when you were awake. Frank! You listening to me?

FRANK

I just never had one keep coming back, that's all.

VERN

Buddy, be happy something keeps coming back! (Pause) You're beard getting heavier? Frank?

FRANK

I don't know. I shave every morning, same as usual.

VERN

I shave in the morning, but now I gotta shave at night, too, if I want you know...anyway, Gwen says my face is like sandpaper and when I checked, the hair does seem to be heavier, like it's growing faster during the day. Hell, when I was seventeen I would have killed for that. Now, it's just a pain in the ass.

FRANK

I can never see his face.

VERN

Were you listening to me at all?

FRANK

Mike keeps saying over and over, "Don't shoot, don't shoot" and I can see a car and hear the rain and even see this guy holding a gun, but I can't see his face. It's just a big blur, you know. I can't see his face.

VERN

Has this guy been drinking?

FRANK

How the hell should I know if he's been drinking! It's a dream, Vern, you said that yourself !

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Well, don't bite my head off. You're the one with the nightmares.

(doorbell rings)

Would you get that. Now that Jenn lives on campus she thinks she should be treated like a house guest. Hell, I told her, this isn't a bed and breakfast but Miss College Student still won't carry a key.

(FRANK EXITS and VERN turns TV up)

I tell you, Woodson, it's going to be a great afternoon for the Buckeyes, I can feel it in my bones.

(TV buzzes and he bangs it)

I hope to hell Gwen paid that damn cable.

(bangs it again)

Frank, you having trouble with your cable? (yelling) Frank? You having trouble with your cable.

FRANK (O.V.)

I can hear you just fine.

VERN

All right. All right.

(bangs it one last time)

FRANK

(Returning)

She needed five bucks for the movies.

VERN

Christ, she thinks this place is a god damn drive-thru. You know, who thought we'd be driving right up to these little machines and watching them spit out money, only this money machine is me.

(Hands FRANK the money)

I hope to hell she paid that cable bill.

FRANK

Maybe it's the set.

VERN

What's wrong with my set.

FRANK

You've had it forever.

VERN

I like this set. I own it outright which is why I probably like it and why it will probably break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

It's as old as the kids.

VERN

Fine, it doesn't borrow money from me. Whoever thought we'd be paying money to watch these things anyway. Good, there it is. So, where's my beer and how many you want?

FRANK

Coffee's fine. Cream, no sugar.

VERN

You're fucking weird today, Woodson.

FRANK

Hell, I know where it is.

(FRANK picks up the thermos and pours himself a cup of coffee)

VERN

How many points. Football, Remember?

FRANK

Gimme three.

VERN

Ohio State's been playing like shit and you want three?

FRANK

(Pause)Okay, I'll take Michigan and give you three.

VERN

Oh, a couple of bad breaks and you turn on us.

FRANK

Christ Vern, you just said the team looked like shit !

VERN

Look Buddy, it was just a dream. Your eyes were closed and your brain was asleep. Now you're awake and it's Saturday and you're here at your best buddy's house to watch a little football and lose a little money.

FRANK

I'm fine. Ohio State by eight.

(FRANK stares blankly at VERN)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Wait a minute, buddy, I don't own anything but a billy club, a utility knife and a cracked pistol Gwen's brother brought back from Germany when he was in the infantry.

FRANK

I never said it was you.

VERN

But you never said it wasn't.

FRANK

I can't see the face.

VERN

But you do see a big fucking shotgun don't you.

(to the audience as JURY)

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I want it on the record here and now that Vern Wiley never has, and never will own a big fucking shotgun.

(laughing and grabbing Frank)

He owns the shotgun. (laughs) Hell, he owns a dozen shotguns, a few rifles and God knows how many----

(FRANK starts walking away)

I'm just kidding, buddy.

(FRANK exits)

Frank, where you going?... the game's just starting !

(TV blares then goes blank)

Shit!

SCENE 2

WOODSON TV ROOM. MORNING.

ANNIE is in front of the TV, drinking coffee and watching the "Soaps" while she does her warm up exercises as MICHAEL creeps up behind her.

MICHAEL

Boo!

(ANNIE throws him to the floor, and then sees his face)

That's some welcome home.

ANNIE

JEEEEZUZ, Michael, don't you ever do that again!

MICHAEL

I certainly won't. Ouch !

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

It serves you right.

MICHAEL

Why? What sins have I committed lately?

ANNIE

Sit over here and let me rub your neck

MICHAEL

How did you know my neck hurt?

ANNIE

It's suppose to. I mean if I did it right it's suppose to hurt like hell, right here.

MICHAEL

Ouch !

ANNIE

I did it right.

MICHAEL

Are we still related?

ANNIE

You're obviously my stupid older brother.

MICHAEL

Obviously, so why were you trying to kill me?

ANNIE

--You don't just sneak up behind me...people...women...--

MICHAEL

--I'm your brother --

ANNIE

--when they don't know what's going on...

MICHAEL

This is our home. Mama Bear, Papa Bear, and me, cute little baby bear, remember?

ANNIE

Otherwise you might just get your neck broken.

MICHAEL

You use to love me scaring you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

You loved it. I peed my pants.

MICHAEL

Maybe you should have kicked me to death or permanently crippled me so I'm no longer a threat to--

ANNIE

Oh, Michael, I missed you so much!

(ANNIE alternately kisses him, then shoves him away and goes to get coffee all in one motion.)

MICHAEL

And then again maybe you should just get me a cup of coffee. So, I guess you hated the horror movies too?

ANNIE

You're lucky I didn't die right there in the theatre.

MICHAEL

You shouldn't drink that stuff. It'll make you jumpy.

ANNIE

Sixteen is jumpy!

MICHAEL

Who told you that?

ANNIE

Vern Riley.

MICHAEL

Nostradamus of the Midwest speaks again !

ANNIE

You live in a world of total unreality. I know what's real.

MICHAEL

So, tell me, what's real.

ANNIE

Everyday - sometimes two or three times a day, perfectly innocent women, just like me, get raped or killed or worse right in their own living room, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, just brushing their hair or taking their clothes out of the dryer?

MICHAEL

What's happening here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

Here is everywhere and everywhere is here, Michael.
(Gets a cup of coffee and turns up the TV audio
which becomes a tug of war between them)

MICHAEL

This is not reality.
(MICHAEL turns off the TV)

ANNIE

Or maybe you want to know about the girl in my dance class
that left one night on her bike and never got home and later
they found her body stuffed in the trash.

MICHAEL

Jesus, Annie --

ANNIE

Is that real enough for you - Mister Emergency Room!

MICHAEL

Look, I'm sorry I scared you, I promise I won't sneak up
behind you anymore, and (pause) I'm sorry about your friend--

ANNIE

---Good, 'cause it was her brother that did it!
(ANNIE turns on the TV)

MICHAEL

You win! I'm incredibly stupid. But I'm home now and I want
to spend some time with you before Mom comes home? What time
does she get off work?

ANNIE

She comes in by 4, but she won't talk to you.

MICHAEL

She hates me too?

ANNIE

No, she loves you, too, but she'll still go right up into
that kitchen after she's kissed you hello, and stay up there
cooking and cleaning, chopping and scrubbing with the radio
blasting in her ears 'til he gets home.

MICHAEL

Who's "he"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

I hate you're being so far away.

MICHAEL

Annie? Who's HE!

ANNIE

HE is Dad -- Frank George Woodson -- and why do you have to live in hell.

MICHAEL

It's only Cincinnati and why are you talking like this.

ANNIE

It's prison, exile...the Gulag and this is the way I talk.

MICHAEL

They like me there. You used to like me.

ANNIE

Here. I liked you here. We need you here, Michael. We need you here right now!

MICHAEL

It's only a few hours away. Once you get your license you can come down to visit.

ANNIE

You could get a job here tomorrow. There's lots of sick babies, I ought to know, half the girls in my class are having them.

MICHAEL

Annie, slow down, please, you're scaring me. I'm home. I'm home.

ANNIE

How long?

MICHAEL

I am yours completely...

ANNIE

How long.

MICHAEL

'Til Wednesday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

That's not long enough!

MICHAEL

For what?

ANNIE

It's not enough time.

MICHAEL

Talk to me.

ANNIE

I won't let you go back. I'll keep you here, like a hostage. I saw that on the TV. A woman kept a man tied up in her house for three months.

MICHAEL

It was a movie.

ANNIE

Maybe.

MICHAEL

Look, that hospital is the best place for me. I thought you'd be happy for me.

ANNIE

You said it was the biggest hospital, not the best, and Dad says you could empty bed pans anywhere!

MICHAEL

(Hands in the air)

Okay, I give up.....what do you want?

ANNIE

Here.

(ANNIE holds out a scarf)

MICHAEL

No games.

ANNIE

Take it.

(MICHAEL takes the scarf)

And make it so tight I can't see anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

(in fake pirate's accent)

I'll make it so tight, me lassie, yer eye's'll pop out of yer head and roll out all over the floor.

ANNIE

Spin me around, just the way you use to, and no more bad accents.

(MICHAEL spins her around)

Now pick out a volume from the encyclopedia.

MICHAEL

Any one of them?

ANNIE

In your head! Just the letters. (Pause)Got it?

MICHAEL

Yep.

ANNIE

What is it?

MICHAEL

"K."

ANNIE

No, not that one!

MICHAEL

"R." for ridiculous.

ANNIE

Turn out the light.

(MICHAEL turns it off)

Ouch !

MICHAEL

Annie?

ANNIE

No, I'm fine. I've found it. You'll see. It's right here and I've found it in the dark.

(MICHAEL turns on the light)

See it was too dark to cheat unless I was a bat.

MICHAEL

You are a bat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

I told you it'd work.

MICHAEL

"R."for ridiculous. What's going on here?

ANNIE

It's your turn now.

MICHAEL

Annie, I protest. It makes me sick to spin around.

ANNIE

Humor me. It's important, Michael. Please. Just humor me.

SCENE 3 LIGHTS UP VERN'S PATIO

VERN

(TV buzzes then goes black)

Damn it ! (kicks it)Always goes out when something good finally happens. I bought it, damn it, and I want it to work now.

(kicks it and it goes on)

Holy shit! It worked. Frank, I kicked the son-of-a-bitch when it was dead and it worked. And Frank, you just lost your shirt to old Uncle Vern.

SCENE 4

WOODSON BACKYARD. SUMMER.

Radio music plays as CATHERINE sorts clothes. FRANK slips up behind her and holds her passionately.

FRANK

Guess who?

CATHERINE

One of the Everly brothers...or both!

FRANK

Don't get funny.

(kisses her passionately)

You smell like clean white sheets.

CATHERINE

The neighbors can see us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Who cares.

CATHERINE

We're not newlyweds anymore.

FRANK

Pretend we are.

CATHERINE

Vern's been over here twice looking for you.

FRANK

I worked overtime.

CATHERINE

That's the third time this week.

FRANK

Idol hands are the devil's workshop.

CATHERINE

Vern is making me crazy. What's so funny?

FRANK

(laughing) Vern.

CATHERINE

What?

FRANK

He wants me to vote for Nixon.

CATHERINE

Richard Nixon?

FRANK

I told him it was crazy, but he says he's got a bet on it and he wants me to help him win.

CATHERINE

What doesn't he bet on. Personally, I think Kennedy's wonderful.

FRANK

Personally, I think you're wonderful. Did I tell you that you smell like my mother, but better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

I'm sorry I never met her. (Kisses) And don't be jealous about Kennedy, I told him I was a one man woman.

FRANK

I'm glad you're not my mother. (Kissing her) And you stay away from that Kennedy. I may vote for him, but I won't let him spend one minute alone with my beautiful wife.

CATHERINE

Why don't you take a nap with Michael. You must be tired.

FRANK

I'd rather take one with you.

CATHERINE

He misses you. He says he wants to go to work with his Daddy.
(Takes his hands)
Frank, you're hands- They're bleeding again.

FRANK

I got some gloves right here somewhere.

CATHERINE

Can't they give you something. It makes me cry.

FRANK

If you want to make a good mold, you got to rub it with your hands. If you want a man with smooth hands, you shouldn't have married me.

CATHERINE

Isn't there some machine that could do it?

FRANK

Not if you want it to come out so right that maybe someday, if they walk on the moon, it'll be because of Frank Woodson.

CATHERINE

The moon.

(FRANK holds his finger up)

And you're working on it?

FRANK

Shhhhhh...security.

CATHERINE

You're such a dreamer. I love you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

We'll get there.

CATHERINE

You've only been there seven years, Frank, and your hands are already worn to the bone.

FRANK

Hell, if these wear out, I'll buy myself another pair.

CATHERINE

Don't joke about your hands, Frank. I want them around me forever.

FRANK

I'll go see Mike.

CATHERINE

And no football talk either, he needs his nap. Frank....that part about walking on the moon, that was wonderful.

SCENE 5

VERN'S PATIO. FALL.

VERN

Hey, Woodson, get me another beer while you're in there, Right there behind all that damn apple juice Gwen loves so much. Twenty-six years of marriage and now she's telling me what I really need is apple juice. Hell, what I really needed was for you to voted for Nixon back in '60 like I told you. I mean, just think about it -- no Cuban missiles, no Dallas, no Viet Nam. Thinking about it makes me tingle all over Frank. Nobody shot in the head, nobody bleeding to death in the back of a kitchen, no bullets whizzing off some motel balcony. No riots, no POW's, MIA's and a dozen more letters I never understood. It's the final fantasy without that two gun Texan running a war where we're the damned Indians. Why you just know Nixon would have bombed those little guys right back to the stone age right off the bat and made my life a hell of a lot easier. No war on poverty, drugs crime, teenage mothers with pimple faced fathers who don't pay child support, hell they don't pay taxes! A world you could love, Frank, like something on TV. No armies in the streets, just the rest of the world at our feet and the right guys always win. That's the way it was supposed to be, Buddy. Rubber mills and steel plants belching out smoke and you and me with jobs for a lifetime. Women waiting for men to open car doors and men sitting back in their chairs waiting for another beer. I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN (cont'd)

think about that world every damn day these damn hemorrhoids are pulling me in one direction and migraines in the other. I'm telling you my insides would be normal if you had just done your job and voted for Richard Milhouse Nixon like I told you. My wife thinks apple juice can cure the world, but take it from me -- it was Nixon. No buddy, I know Caty made you vote for that guy -- and I admit that he was good looking -- not that I look at men that way, thank you. No, not me. But just because that man could make a woman feel like a woman which is something Gwen reminds me I can't we didn't have to vote for him and start all that stuff in motion. It could have been different, Woodson. I have to believe that. Apple juice? Won't help this man in the bedroom or the bathroom. But you could have made it different buddy and you let me down. You let us all down, and we won't forget it.

SCENE 6

WOODSON TV ROOM.

MICHAEL flails in the dark by the bookcase. ANNIE is very animated.

ANNIE

You're almost there. Just put your hands out.

MICHAEL

How can you tell where I am in the dark. Oh! Here it is!

ANNIE

I told you. Now just feel with your fingers.

MICHAEL

What?

ANNIE

XYZ... at the end...feel it?

MICHAEL

This is silly.

ANNIE

Go to the end. Now!

MICHAEL

Enough, Annie, No more games !

(MICHAEL takes off the blindfold, flips on the light and confronts ANNIE facing him with a shotgun)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

She's got a lump in her breast and she thinks she can get rid of it by the television!

MICHAEL

What?

(ANNIE will go and get the tape and put it in the TV but never totally let down her guard with the gun)

ANNIE

Mom's got this lump in her breast, and she doesn't think anybody knows about it, so she comes down here in the middle of the night when you can hear him snoring and takes out this videotape out right behind XY and Z, and puts it in the machine. Then she takes down her robe and presses her chest up against the screen, and plays it over and over again all night long while this man talks about the healing power of the Lord and Jesus coming into your heart and closing your wounds, and she never says a word but she just stays there half the night. Then she finally stops and pulls up her robe and puts this tape back behind the shelf and goes upstairs so he never even knows she's been gone.

(MICHAEL goes to move towards ANNIE and she shoves the gun threateningly in his face)

MICHAEL

Are you sure?

ANNIE

You think I'd make up my mother dying?

MICHAEL

Annie, please, put the gun down and we'll talk about it.

ANNIE

Who would make up something like that except someone sick and she's the one who's sick and needs you....we both need you...but she can't let him know it, and you can't tell him either. You've gotta promise that !

(prodding him with the gun)

Promise?

MICHAEL

Please, put the gun down--

ANNIE

--Say, promise!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

I promise I'll take her down to Cincinnati and she'll have the best doctors--

ANNIE

--No!

MICHAEL

I can't do it all by myself.

ANNIE

She won't let anyone else touch her there but him.

(distracted and upset)

I've seen pictures locked in the cedar chest. She pretends to be smiling, but she doesn't have anything on, and I know he made her do it and that's why she can't leave him, even if she wants to and I know she wants to since she couldn't want to stay here with him anymore.

MICHAEL

They're married.

ANNIE

You haven't seen them! In some she's even pregnant !

MICHAEL

I don't want to and you shouldn't either. It's between them.

ANNIE

He must have forced her.

MICHAEL

No, it's not like that, not when people really love each other.

ANNIE

But they couldn't....She couldn't want to.

(In MICHAEL arms now)

MICHAEL

You'll see...Shhhhhh, you'll see. I'm home now and everything's going to be just fine.

SCENE 7

LIMBO.

In the transitional darkness there is some football talk, then LIGHTS UP on

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

an empty space where a younger
CATHERINE holds a crying baby.

CATHERINE

Oh, no,no,no, don't cry, sweetie. It's just a silly game that
the big men play. No one gets hurt.

(yelling out an imaginary window)

Frank! Is he all right? Good. See, your big brother's going
to be just fine. You should see him with all that long hair
under his helmet. Seems so funny to see the boys with hair
like that...I wonder what they'll be doing when you're all
grown up.

(Sound of cheers and screams,the baby cries)

Oh, no, no,no, don't cry. It's just a silly little game with
a pigskin...pigskin almost as smooth as your skin. Oink!
Oink! Oink! This little piggy went to market, this little
piggy stayed home...this little piggy went, "Wah, Wah,
Wah...all the way home....You are so dear...so very sweet. I
promise nothing in this whole wide world is ever going to
hurt you. That's what parents are for...Frank? Where are you
going with him? Is he hurt? You said he couldn't get hurt.
Frank, please, wait for us. (runs out)

SCENE 8

VERN'S PATIO.

VERN is alone and yells offstage.

VERN

Hey, Frank, get me another beer.
(pulls out binoculars)

FRANK

(Hands VERN a beer and puts down coffee)
They started already?

VERN

I gave my permission since you weren't here.
(hands him binoculars)

FRANK

Hell VERN, you can see 'em from here without these.

VERN

Don't get so huffy. I can't see 'em from here.

FRANK

Gwen said you needed glasses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Yeah,. Gwen goes back to school and suddenly I'm still the dummy.

FRANK

Here.

VERN

Nah., I can see.

FRANK

Take it round the end.

VERN

Look at that.

FRANK

Don't drop it!

VERN

You got it Mikey!

TOGETHER

Now gooooooooooooo!

FRANK

Damn!

VERN

It's just practice.

FRANK

They hit him out of bounds for Christ sake.

VERN

It's just practice, I tell you.

FRANK

Practicing hitting him out of bounds is what it is...he's down !

VERN

He's up and okay. Let me get you a beer.

FRANK

Nah....this is fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Fifty pounds more and you got some dynamite stuff for Cleveland.

FRANK

Fuck Cleveland. They wear out the good ones then trade 'em.

VERN

They were the best, Frank.

FRANK

When your friend Nixon was in kneepants.

VERN

My friend. Hell, you said you even voted for him this time.

FRANK

I lied.

VERN

You didn't for Nixon.

FRANK

I didn't vote.

VERN

I don't know what you're upset about. I mean, everybody does that stuff. Hell, it's the American way to be the biggest and the best whether you're born that way or not. Just look at those cheerleaders. The biggest--

FRANK

(Interrupting angrily)

--He doesn't need that shit!

VERN

Look, I'm not talking about being all fucked up like Fitzpatrick. I mean that guy doesn't know what the world looks like moving in one direction. I'm not talking hippie, but good solid drugs that put meat on the bones - naturally. All those guys in the big leagues must be taking them. I mean...they're animals.

FRANK

He doesn't need it.

VERN

They'll plow him down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

(waves letter) He's going to be an Admiral.

VERN

The kid made the Naval Academy and you didn't tell me.

FRANK

It just came. Mike doesn't even know.

VERN

(Hugs him) Fantastic! Whoooo-eee. An Admiral. Bet you're glad my boy Nixon's in there now. Hell, by the time Mike's done this war's going to be just another bad dream. I can't wait to see his face. Let's celebrate.

FRANK

Coffee's fine, I'm freezing my ass off out here.

VERN

Hell, if you wanted to keep warm you should have taught the kid golf. Frank, I envy you. I got three girls and each one is smarter than the other. My wife goes back to school and I get to be the dummy. Pretty funny, huh? We been neighbors for a dozen years and the only thing that never changes is your wife. Woman's a saint. Saint Catherine. I drink to her.

FRANK

Everything changes. You just don't notice.

VERN

You coming over tomorrow for pot luck?

FRANK

I gotta put up Annie's swing set

VERN

Hell, it won't take long. You gotta come. Gwen's pot roast won't be the same after tomorrow.

FRANK

I promised Caty.

VERN

Frank, look!

FRANK

Oh, God, he can't be down now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

It's okay, believe me, I can see it from here.

FRANK

You can't see a damn thing.

(running into the black)

Don't move him, you stupid sons-of-bitches, don't move him 'til I get there !

VERN

Jesus Frank, that's why they got coaches.

(follows him into the blackness)

SCENE 9

LIMBO

SPOTLIGHT on ANNIE who is wrapping a rope around her chest.

ANNIE

Everyone smiles and says that real ballerinas are better off without breasts. They say that, but they don't even go to the ballet. No, they just get that stupid smile on their face and say, "Everybody knows you don't want those big ones on stage." - but they don't really know anything about what you need on the stage. They don't know anything about me at all. (Pause) When I think of those pictures in the cedar chest, I'm glad I don't have anything up here at all, because then they'll be nothing to lose. It can't hurt so much when there's nothing to lose. I wonder if she knows that? I wonder. (Buzz saw sound)

SCENE 10

WOODSON TV ROOM

CATHERINE is cleaning and does not look up when FRANK walks through the room with a long package.

CATHERINE

You're late.

FRANK

I went shopping.

(CATY stops him, takes the bag and unwraps it, revealing a rifle)

CATHERINE

We don't need another gun in this house, Frank.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

You won't see it.

CATHERINE

There are children in this house, Frank !

FRANK

They wouldn't touch it, you know that.

CATHERINE

Not here, please.

FRANK

Things are crazy out there Caty, you know that. You see them on TV. Nobody knows why it happens and nobody knows how to stop it but I know that I need to take care of you. All of you.

CATHERINE

This is my house, too.

FRANK

That's my job, Caty. To take care of my family.

CATHERINE

(Weakly) Frank...why...

(FRANK moves to her and puts his fingers up to her mouth)

FRANK

It's not criminal to want to protect your family.

CATHERINE

I don't understand any of it either, but it's out there and I'm in here, and if you keep bringing these guns into our house there won't be any difference.

FRANK

Trust me.

(FRANK takes her hand but CATY pulls away)

CATHERINE

I've got to check the turkey.

FRANK

Please, don't be mad at me. There are some very sick people out there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

There have always been sick people out there, but this is not a fort, and we are not being attacked.

FRANK

You don't know that!

(CATY starts to leave when FRANK pulls her
desperately into his arms)

I'd die if anything happened to you. Any of you.

CATHERINE

(PAUSE) Okay. But you can't keep them out where we can see them -- or where any one of us can ever find them.

FRANK

You won't, I promise.

CATHERINE

-- Let me finish! You hide them and you hide them good, and then you remember that I hate every one of them. (pause) And then we'll never talk about this again.

FRANK

(taking her hand)

I can see every turkey you've ever cooked these hands. All the little burns and bruises. You're the only woman I know who can turn a turkey into a weapon.

CATHERINE

You're the one who stuck the needle through your hand sewing in the stuffing.

FRANK

I told you I couldn't sew.

CATHERINE

I thought all soldiers had to learn to sew their own socks.

FRANK

I sewed my feet, every time, I swear it's true. I'd never lie to you, Caty.

(Holding her)

You should have been my commanding General.

CATHERINE

I wouldn't have let you go. I wouldn't have let any of you go.

(They embrace and lights out)

SCENE 11**VERN'S PATIO**

VERN stands alone barbecuing burgers and watching TV as background

VERN

I tell you Frank, it's the shit in the cattle that makes 'em grow so big and I'm going to make me a million introducing it to all those little people over there... and don't start telling me I'm stupid 'til you hear the whole damn plan. Thank you. (Pause) Frank? Frank? Are you listening to anything I'm saying?

(FRANK comes out holding a stuffed squirrel)

FRANK

What the hell is this?

VERN

Where'd you find that !

FRANK

Shoot it or eat it, but don't stuff it Vern.

VERN

I couldn't eat it and I never really wanted to shoot it, but since it was the first and only thing I will ever hunt...I decided to keep it.

FRANK

It has a god damn hole in its head.

VERN

I know that. Closest thing I ever hunted in the city was a sewer rat and that rat was this big!

FRANK

But you kept it...and stuffed it for God's sake?

VERN

I don't do many things right, Frank. Hell, if Gwen had been able to change her own tires I probably still wouldn't have gotten laid. I know it's ugly, but it's mine.

FRANK

At least you didn't go making it into some god damn lamp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

That was low, Frank. I hid this is my secret place which no one is suppose to be able to find, including you, so how'd you find it?

FRANK

I was looking for something to read.

VERN

In back of the downstairs john?

FRANK

That's where I hide things. I forgive you for stuffing it.
(flipping the TV)
Mike said there was some big demonstration today. You know where it was?

VERN

Anyway, my plan is to stop this war with some cattle and let those people start eating themselves into democracy and big tits.

FRANK

What are you talking about?

VERN

I mean, it's not too smart taking on this whole big country unless you're crazy or want something pretty bad, right?

FRANK

Where's is this damn thing--

VERN

They can't all be crazy, I thought, so I figured if I put my mind to it, I could find the one thing that could stop this war without blowing every other kid in America's brains out, and that's when I decided that they're probably just hungry for some big American cheeseburgers.

FRANK

First of all, Vern, it's not even a war, and second of all it sure doesn't have anything to do with cheeseburgers and big tits.

VERN

How can you be so sure. Look at those guys, you think they know what the hell they're doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

I was a prisoner of war.

VERN

Police Action. Undeclared War. Korea. Bob Hope... what the hell's the difference, Frank, they still want to fry your brains if they catch you.

FRANK

But not over cheeseburgers. Where the hell's that damn march.

VERN

Hey, Buddy, calm down, you don't think they put every little march on TV. Anyway, nothing's going to happen, believe me, your kid's solid gold.

FRANK

They went out hours ago.

VERN

The kid's solid gold, I tell you. His head's on straight. He gets enough meat. It makes all the difference in the world. I'm telling you I could probably win some damn peace prize.

FRANK

Good, then you can have it stuffed to match that squirrel.
(FRANK pushes VERN and exits)

SCENE 12

LIMBO.

A chopping sound continues throughout the monologue.

ANNIE

Sometimes I can't put a piece of meat in my mouth. My throat gets tight and I can see the animal eyes staring back at me from the lines in the red meat. Then I stop eating anything for long periods of time and my head gets very light and my skin tingles all over...like people talk about what happens to you on drugs, but I don't know anything about drugs 'cause I'm too frightened to try any. Not that I'm so good. No, I'm just scared of flipping out. I think it must be a lot easier to flip out with that stuff inside you and I need to be in control at all times...except when I won't eat...and my head gets light and I just think I could float off this earth. I think that's just cheating a little. I remember my Aunt's Irish husband. He kept talking about how he wished he'd have the guts to stop eating 'til the British left Northern

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE (cont'd)

Ireland. But he never did...and finally, he just stopped coming to the house. (Pause) Sometimes the meat becomes all I can dream about and I think I'll just go crazy if I don't run down to the drive-thru and get myself one of those big juicy burgers with blood dripping all over those big spongy white buns, and even though I know it can't be really good for me, I eat it anyway, since I'm not sure what's really good for me at all. Sometimes in the middle of the night, I find myself standing in a long line like some kind of sleep-eater with no mind of my own anymore and I don't care, no, I don't care at all. It doesn't make me want to love anymore when I'm hungry. No, sometimes, I think it makes me want to love less.

SCENE 13

WOODSON TV ROOM

FRANK

(rubbing his hands)

Damn it !

CATHERINE

Frank?

FRANK

It's nothing.

CATHERINE

They're bleeding.

FRANK

They get that way when it's cold.

CATHERINE

It's not cold, Frank.

MICHAEL

Annie, bring the first aid kit.

FRANK

If I want help I'll go to a doctor!

MICHAEL

Do you have one?

FRANK

No! And I don't want a son who's a nurse!
(exits to VERN)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Leave him alone.

MICHAEL

Maybe Annie's right.

CATHERINE

About what, she spouts something new everyday.

MICHAEL

That I really don't know him anymore.

CATHERINE

He wouldn't hurt a fly. You know that.

MICHAEL

He just seems so much more angry now, like it never stops.

CATHERINE

He just wants the world to be right, really he does. He just wants things to be settled. Everything's moving too fast, that's all.

MICHAEL

Is that what he says?

CATHERINE

I know it's what he thinks.

MICHAEL

I try to remember the way he was before....I try to tell Annie, but she doesn't listen. She says --

CATHERINE

--He's still that man, Michael, really. He loves everybody, just like you. That's where you get it from, you know. From your father, never forget that. (Pause)But right now, well, right now he's just a little...undone.

MICHAEL

But....

CATHERINE

No more talk. You're just home for a few days and you shouldn't be worrying about us. It's your holiday, and I'm going to make everything you like to eat and we'll watch television and play games and meet your young woman....what's her name? No, don't tell me, Kim! I remember

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

see, and don't you worry, everything's going to be just the way you remember it. You'll see. Just the way it always was.

SCENE 14

VERN'S PATIO

VERN's holding his hands up in the air
in surrender

VERN

So shoot me! I bought a little Japanese car. Hell, you act like I just sold some fucking secrets to the Russians.

(FRANK is lost in thought as VERN approaches)

Face it Frank, they make good stuff, that's the reality.

FRANK

(pushing him)

Your fucking job's a reality too! What the hell are you going to do when they start making molds better than you do !

VERN

No way, Buddy boy. Cars is one thing. Hell, these little guys don't even have a social life. You can buy a car that's been made any fucking day of the week and it's going to be right. But molds, that's different. That takes heart. Hell, that's genius.

FRANK

I know about their minds. I can tell you all about them.

VERN

I'm talking cars, Frank. Just cars. C-A-R-S.

FRANK

Sure, you think it's just cars now, but those guys can put their mind to do anything they want. I know. They could live on a few grains of rice and some turnips and never break.

VERN

Christ, Frank, they were Koreans, not Japanese. They're not the same. That was then...this is now and everybody wants to live like we do.

FRANK

I had to eat bugs and I was happy to have one. Just one.

VERN

If I hear that damn bug story one more time I'm going to explode! The Germans locked people up, hell they even burned 'em up and you're not worried about them. It wasn't even a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN (cont'd)

real war Frank and you came back alive...maybe a little crazy but still alive. Damn it, buddy, give it up.

FRANK

You don't know shit, Vern. I'm telling you. It's not just one little car.

VERN

(Taking FRANK'S hands)

These are works of art, Frank. They should be in a god damn museum. Nobody else can do what we can. That's our truth buddy, our real security.

FRANK

You can't be sure. It's just a little wooden mold.

VERN

No, it's not. That's where you've lost your faith, buddy. It's America.

FRANK

I use to think these could make a difference. I use to feel good when I got up in the morning because it would make a difference. Now I look around and everybody's moving out and I don't know anybody anymore. Sometimes in the middle of the night I wake up and the bed's full of sweat so bad I have to take a shower. And then I stand by my window and look at all those big empty factories and I cry. There's nothing coming out of those buildings anymore. No smoke, no light, nothing. So I get back into bed and I try to sleep. I try not to think about it. But I can't stop thinking. Because all that smoke meant guys like me were working, and now I wonder where those guys are now and whether they're standing in some window in the moonlight thinking about me. I wonder where I'm going to be tomorrow. Someday I think I'll wake up and all those buildings will be gone and no one will ever say a word about them again.

VERN

Hell, it's a rock and a hard place. I only need ten more years.

FRANK

Everything changes. You can't be sure of anything.

VERN

I'm sure we're never going to be apes again.

FRANK

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Apes.....like where we started. I mean I know we're not going backwards so we must be getting better.

FRANK

I promised myself my kid wouldn't have to work in those plants, Vern, but I never knew they might not be there.

VERN

He won't. He's smart. Look at his Dad. It's all up, buddy. All up from here.

FRANK

You know what, Vern, you don't know shit.

SCENE 15

WOODSON TV ROOM. NIGHT.

CATHERINE comes down and pulls out a videotape behind the bookcase. She goes to TV, places the tape in the VCR, puts her chest up against the screen and the voice of the faith healer begins. FRANK stands in the shadows, prowling with a gun. ANNIE is downstage during her series of monologues which overlap and are simultaneous with the voice of the TV Faith Healer.

ANNIE

Sometimes I can't even put a piece of meat in my mouth without getting all choked up so tight I think I'll die.

TV VOICE

And in the name of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, we ask THY help our father to help make these wretched bodies whole again.

ANNIE

The smell of death drifting into my nose and choking me all up, filling my lungs with their death smell and gagging me again and again 'til I can't stop.

TV VOICE

Yes, whole again as they were in the beginning and as they shall surely be in the end. Take our earthly bodies from our meager grasp and fill them with the love of our Heavenly Father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

Then my head gets all light again and I can go on.

TV VOICE

Fill us with the joy of your healing even as you have filled our hearts with the joy of your love. We ask this in the name of your dear son, Jesus, who died for our eternal glory. Let us say Amen.

ANNIE

Sometimes, I just feel that big lump in my throat, so big that I just know I must die...die..die.

TV VOICE

To all those in pain, to all those in need, I say that the loving God does truly heal...heal...heal
(overlapping with Catherine's voice)

CATHERINE

Heal...heal...heal.

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

WOODSON TV ROOM.

VERN

I say stretch his ass five more inches and the Brown's will be paying his way through college.

MICHAEL

I'm not playing pro ball Mr. Wiley.

VERN

Christ, boy, it's VERN, remember me, I changed your diapers.

FRANK

He doesn't need pro ball.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Hell, nobody needs to get their head knocked in. But think of the money...the excitement...the women, for Christ sake.

FRANK

The kid's not going to break any of his bones up in Cleveland.

VERN

Hell, he can be a god damn Admiral any day. You can only play football when you're young.

MICHAEL

I know that Mr..(Pause)..VERN...but I think you have to love it to play pro.

VERN

You hear that Frank? The kid's a fucking romantic.The only thing you have to love is...what is it Frank?

FRANK

Staying alive.

VERN

Yeah, staying alive.

MICHAEL

That's why I don't think I'd be good in the pros.

VERN

Look, nobody gets killed playing pro ball, just a little beat up, that's all, and nobody has to love it, they just have to love the money. You gotta have a job, right Frank?

MICHAEL

I'll have to think about it. I got exams to get over.

FRANK

Don't worry. You 're going to do fine.

VERN

Don't listen to him, with this war getting worse, you do well on those tests.

MICHAEL

I better pick up Annie at her ballet lesson.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Yeah, you go get your sister.

(MICHAEL exits)

I wish you wouldn't talk about the war around him.

VERN

Hell, not to worry. I told you, fatten him up and they'll snap him up in Cleveland. Special dispensation for football players. We need our heroes.

FRANK

I just want him safe.

VERN

(pause) Frank?

FRANK

What?

VERN

I don't mean to get personal, but lately, seems like it takes me three hours just to piss in the morning. Gwen swears I fell asleep at the john last week.

FRANK

Go to a doctor.

VERN

I don't like doctors. They're always poking around and asking questions. What about you?

FRANK

What's the hurry anyway?

VERN

Right! I mean what's the doctor going to do. That's just what I said.

(CATHERINE comes running in very upset)

FRANK

What's wrong!

VERN

Someone hurt?

CATHERINE

It's Annie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

What's wrong, god damn it !

CATHERINE

She's all right now.

VERN

What's happened?

CATHERINE

He didn't really do anything to her, she just seems scared more than anything else.

FRANK

Who didn't do anything?

VERN

Somebody hurt Annie?

CATHERINE

This man...no one she knew...came at her in the parking lot.

FRANK

Did he touch her!

CATHERINE

He pulled down his pants in front of her

VERN

Jeezus...

CATHERINE

...and peed.

VERN

Blow the fucker's face off.

FRANK

Damn it!

CATHERINE

She's fine now.

FRANK

Where is she?

CATHERINE

She's still at the police station. I sent Michael there to stay with her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

I don't want her at the police station. I want her home!

CATHERINE

She has to identify him.

FRANK

She's doesn't have to do anything, damn it.

CATHERINE

But they told me--

FRANK

-- I tell you she's not looking at anybody. Not anybody, damn it !

VERN

It's that sex stuff again, Frank.

FRANK

It's not sex, it's sick and I'm gonna kill that son-of-a-bitch.

SCENE 2

LIMBO.

ANNIE

When you're away in a high, high place, like you'd be with God when you marry him the way the Nun's do, then I think you wouldn't be afraid anymore or have dreams of blackened children with bloated tongues or men with guns firing into crowds of people with their eyes popping out or piles and piles of bones as high as mountains with no one left to climb them but not as high as God is...When you're trapped in a clock where women bury their breasts and men wear masks wondering where the time's gone, then there's no place high enough for God. Yes, Yes, Yes, I'd like to marry God and dance for him 'til my feet bleed red and He would kiss me and make them well 'til the next time. 'Amen.

SCENE 3

VERN'S PATIO.

FRANK anxiously paces.

VERN

I'm telling you, Frank, the world's filled with a lot of very sick people, and the worst part is - you can't tell who

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN (cont'd)

they are. You know what I mean? I mean, I worked with the son-of-a-bitch everyday. Ate with him, hell I even pissed next to him, but I didn't see it. And the worse part, he'll get off. And what can they do, I mean, when you think about it they can't even fry a guy - even a little creep like that one, just for pulling his prick out in public. I know, I know, but what can you say. Hell, it's hard enough frying cop-killers for God's sake and this guy is normal.

(FRANK stops and stares at VERN)

I don't mean I personally think he's normal. To tell you the truth, I don't always know what's normal myself anymore. But I agree that this guy isn't normal.

FRANK

I don't want to hear any of that fucking psychology! Not one word of it. I don't want to know what made him do it. I don't care about his rotten, fucking life. I only know that he ruined my baby....and that's all I want to know.

(FRANK exits and VERN tries to follow, then freezes)

VERN

Frank, you'll see. She'll be okay. She's just a kid and kid's bounce right back. You'll see. Frank, she won't remember a thing.

SCENE 4

CATHERINE IN LIMBO

She is brushing her hair in front of a small mirror as ANNIE stands and watches her.

ANNIE

Did you see me do it?

CATHERINE

No, I was in my bed...

ANNIE

Then maybe I made it up.

CATHERINE

You were suppose to be playing with your dolls out on that little sun porch right off our bedroom. I was laying down in our bed reading ...when suddenly you came right back around through the bedroom door again. Well I knew I hadn't seen you come back out the other way so the only answer had to be that you --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

--jumped off the roof.

CATHERINE

You really don't remember?

ANNIE

I hate high places and you never let me play out there.

CATHERINE

Not after that. You came right through that door with your dolls and said you were going to play, then ten minutes later you came right through that door again and there was only one way off that porch and it was straight down.

ANNIE

Seems too daring for me.

CATHERINE

That's what I thought. It must have been ten or twelve feet straight down. I was scared to death.

ANNIE

And I didn't break anything?

CATHERINE

When I finally got my wits back I asked you if you were hurt and you said you thought you'd cut your tongue off and then you stuck it straight out. It was bloody and you were scared. I put an ice cube on your tongue and you sat shivering in my lap for a while, then you said quite calmly that it was a whole lot faster going down that you'd thought and you didn't ever want to do it again 'cause next time you'd bite your tongue off for sure and it wasn't worth it for such a short ride.

ANNIE

Was Dad angry? I mean I'll bet he was really mad. I don't remember -- but I'll bet he was.

CATHERINE

No.

ANNIE

He wasn't? Not even a little?

CATHERINE

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

How come?

CATHERINE

I never told him.

ANNIE

None of it?

(They both laugh and freeze then blackout during
TV VOICE)

TV VOICE

To all those in pain...to all those in need...I say that God
does truly heal...heal...heal...

SCENE 5

WOODSON TV ROOM

MICHAEL

(running in and falling to the floor)
Give me a break, I'm too old for this !

ANNIE

(chasing him and falling to the floor)
Nooooooo.

MICHAEL

Annie? Are you okay? Annie? Was that a cry of pain or
pleasure?

ANNIE

I hit my funnybone...but it's not.

MICHAEL

Let me see.

ANNIE

No, I'm fine, what do you care anyway.

MICHAEL

Come here and let me see.

ANNIE

It stings.

(MICHAEL examines ANNIE's arm and then speaks in
a faked German accent)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

I zink it vill have to come OFF! I'll call zee butcher!

ANNIE

Bull shit...

MICHAEL

Come on, there's nothing broken.

ANNIE

Of course there isn't. You think I'm made of glass?

MICHAEL

Out there you said it was your leg.

ANNIE

Out there it was my leg. (laughing) In here, it's my funny bone.

MICHAEL

I'll massage the leg and you get the laughs.

(MICHAEL rubs ANNIE's leg)

So?

ANNIE

So, what?

MICHAEL

So, you get these a lot?

ANNIE

What's alot?

MICHAEL

Do they bother you?

ANNIE

I survive.

MICHAEL

I could have my friend Kim look at it when she comes to visit.

ANNIE

Why do you call her your friend?

MICHAEL

Because she is my friend besides being a helluva good doctor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

You don't have to use bad language.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

ANNIE

So, do you have sex with her?

MICHAEL

Why don't you ask me if I voted for Ronald Reagan or whether I believe in God?

ANNIE

I don't care about those.

MICHAEL

Didn't anyone ever tell you that you're never suppose to ask people about their sex lives, political preferences or their religious beliefs.

ANNIE

So, you do have sex with her!

MICHAEL

We love each other. You'd see that if you came to visit.

ANNIE

I don't want to know about love--

MICHAEL

--What's wrong with love?

ANNIE

It's stupid.

MICHAEL

Look, Annie I know you'd like Kim if you met her.

ANNIE

You don't know that. You don't know anything about what I'd like.

MICHAEL

She wants to talk to you. Get to know you.

ANNIE

-- I don't have anything to say to her. I don't have anything to say to anyone!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

That's not what Mom says.

ANNIE

Mom doesn't know anything about me. She thinks everything I do is wonderful. She doesn't know me at all and she has absolutely no taste.

MICHAEL

Hey, you're good and you're going to be great. Even I could see that.

ANNIE

If I live that long.

MICHAEL

You're just sixteen.

ANNIE

You are so dumb. You can't just be good to be a great dancer and sixteen is old for a ballerina.

MICHAEL

You just turned sixteen. You're life's just starting, everything's ahead of you.

ANNIE

Everybody 's not like you, Michael. Some of us just don't have as many things in our heads as you do. If I don't do this, I don't do anything and I'll die if I stay here another year.

MICHAEL

They're your parents, they're not going to throw you out on the streets.

ANNIE

You don't understand anything do you. I want to be gone from here next year, and I can only do that if I'm great.
(Pause) Oh, shit, if I were Catholic I could take the vows and join a convent.

MICHAEL

Annie, you've got the world at your feet.

ANNIE

That isn't funny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Move to Cincinnati, stay with us if you're so damn unhappy here!

ANNIE

You don't know anything about here, and I don't want to know anything about Cincinnati, thank you.

MICHAEL

Please... don't be mad.

ANNIE

(Pause) Will you ever come back here?

MICHAEL

I have a home now.

ANNIE

Then you're gone for good.

MICHAEL

You know when you get serious you still screw your eyes up like you did when you were a kid.

ANNIE

I'm not a kid and this isn't like anyplace you remember !

MICHAEL

Hey, want to see my old scar. You always loved it.
(pulls pant leg up)

ANNIE

It's disgusting. I forgot how ugly it is...like a giant zipper.

(ANNIE curiously touches it)

Did he break it?

MICHAEL

Who?

ANNIE

Dad.

MICHAEL

Annie, he wouldn't hurt me. He loves me and you.

ANNIE

He yells all the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

He just talks loud, it doesn't mean anything.

ANNIE

Whenever Mom's gone, he takes out one of his guns and sits in front of the TV, for hours and hours, just watching the news channel and rubbing the barrel over and over.

MICHAEL

Don't worry so much--

ANNIE

--I know, I've watched him through that window--

MICHAEL

--it'll make you crazy.

ANNIE

You tell me that all the time, but you don't want to live here either.

MICHAEL

Look. Look! Here's where they put the pin. I was in a cast for five months.

ANNIE

How did it happen?

MICHAEL

You've heard the story a hundred times.

ANNIE

Tell me again, please.

MICHAEL

There they were at the game. Mom wearing a big pom-pom corsage, Dad trying hard not to worry 'til I finally caught that one magical pass, the one I'd been missing the whole game and started running like my heart would burst.

(The lighting reveals the dream sequence. FRANK's arm is around CATHERINE who wears a pom-pom corsage)

The rain made the field slick and fast. My feet were flying through the mud. I could feel Dad at the back of my neck, His hands guiding mine into the air, pressing the ball to my chest, like it was meant to be in that place. The other coach screaming, "Get the son of a bitch, "His boys dropping away ' til there was no one left in front of me. The field was clear now...I was going all the way. The other coach was running

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

now too, screaming, "Crush him now, crush him, "but they couldn't touch me. My body so light I was able to fly. Dad beaming as if I'd found the sun. The block came roaring out of the rain like a freight train. My leg cracked, my body fell, burying my face in the mud. I was drowning, dying I thought. Then he was there, touching my face with those big rough hands now soft by my cheek, holding my face away from the leg. "Don't look," he said, "don't look." he cried sweetly and firmly so I willingly obeyed. The others were there now, but I didn't see them or feel them as they started to lift me off the field. It was just him and me and his hands holding my face up, his eyes giving me the strength I had never known before. "Don't look," he said. And I didn't.

SCENE 6

VERN'S PATIO

FRANK

What are they doing?

VERN

Cliff diving.

FRANK

That's what I thought.

(Goes to turn it off)

VERN

No, leave it, the game starts as soon as this is over.

FRANK

Why?

VERN

They're trying to hit that little square of water at the bottom -see it right there! Whooooah.....splash. Just like that !

FRANK

That's crazy.

VERN

It's a sport, that's all. They've been doing it for hundreds of years. They don't think a thing about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Maybe they should. I mean, I'm not interested in seeing some crazy bastards get killed on live TV.

VERN

They don't get killed. It's a sport. They dive right into that spot where the water's deep and the tide is perfect.

FRANK

Perfect! Who the hell'd teach'em to do a crazy thing like that?

VERN

Their fathers and their father's fathers and..it's tradition I tell you. They don't think a thing about it anymore

FRANK

I still say it's nuts and if you want to sit and watch this you must be as sick as they are.

(getting up and taking the paper)

Call me when the game comes on.

VERN

Hey, buddy, don't get so excited. It's just another sport.

FRANK

I don't want to watch crazy people get killed.

VERN

Who would do it if they got killed.

FRANK

Sometime, somebody had to miss.

VERN

I tell you I never saw one miss.

FRANK

Before TV someone had to miss. In the beginning, before they knew exactly where that perfect little spot was, someone had to miss.

VERN

Ah, forget it --(turns it off)

FRANK

-- Miss and splatter their insides all over those rocks--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

-- Okay. You win. It's off.

(FRANK continues walking out leaving VERN behind again)

What the hell's wrong with you Woodson. I do what you want and you still leave. What the hell do you want?

SCENE 7

LIMBO. DREAM SEQUENCE

MICHAEL

May I?

ANNIE

Of course.

(MICHAEL twirls ANNIE then disappears)

Michael? Michael? Where are you?

MICHAEL

Here. Here. Give me your hand and we'll fly to the stars.

ANNIE

No, I must stay here...with them. I must stay with them.

MICHAEL

But you'll die here.

ANNIE

No, I'll take her and we'll fly to the sun.

MICHAEL

Your wings will melt before you reach it. You'll fall and both of you will die. Give me your hand, dear Annie, give me your hand and let me save you.

ANNIE

If you teach me how to fly, I can save them both. I know I can.

MICHAEL

I can't. Believe me. I've tried.

ANNIE

Please, please, dance with me, across the lake, Michael, across the sky blue lake with me. Dance with me dear Michael, dance with me, now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

There isn't anymore time.

ANNIE

There's always more time. You've always said that. There's always more time.

FRANK

Promise me.

CATHERINE

Anything.

FRANK

Promise you'll never leave me.

CATHERINE

I'll never --

ANNIE

Stop ! Michael, tell her to leave now before it's too late. Tell her Michael, I can't hold them apart much longer. I can't!

MICHAEL

It's all right.

(ANNIE takes MICHAEL's hand as CATY moves away)

ANNIE

I'm afraid.

MICHAEL

Don't worry, Annie, we'll fly to the sun.

ANNIE

I'm too afraid.

MICHAEL

No, you said it yourself.

ANNIE

You'll all die here-- and leave me alone.

MICHAEL

We're young, Annie--

ANNIE

--MICHAEL !

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
...and there's always more time.

ANNIE
Don't leave me, Michael !

MICHAEL/ FRANK/
CATHERINE
There's always more time.

ANNIE
No.....No...No..

MICHAEL/ FRANK/
CATHERINE
...always more time....always more time...always more time...
(MICHAEL, FRANK and CATY disappear. ANNIE pulls
out a gun and fires blankly into the darkness)

ANNIE
No more time....(shot) no more time....(shot)....no more
time....(shot)

SCENE 8

WOODSON TV ROOM

CATHERINE
I think Michael looks so well, don't you?

FRANK
You know what I had to do to get that appointment to the
academy?

CATHERINE
He has what he wants. He takes care of people. He takes care
of himself.

FRANK
He empties bed pans.

CATHERINE
Medicine's wonderful and he seems so happy.

FRANK
He empties bed pans.

CATHERINE
He hated it there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

He told you that?

CATHERINE

He told us both.

FRANK

When he left, he never said a word before that.

CATHERINE

He's a good boy, Frank, a fine boy, he cares deeply.

FRANK

He's a god damn nurse! Caty, a male nurse. They have to put the word in front of it because women are suppose to be nurses.

CATHERINE

People change, Frank. You always said our children are just loaned to us.

FRANK

I heard that somewhere. I didn't know what it meant when I said it. It sounded fine when I heard it, when he was still young...when it didn't matter.

CATHERINE

It makes him happy to take care of people. (Pause) I think I'll die if you don't start talking to each other.

FRANK

No, Caty, please, don't say that honey. I gotta have you when everything else is gone.

CATHERINE

You can have all of us. Just talk to him, please.
(Time change as MICHAEL comes running in
breathless)

MICHAEL

Did you hear! It's all over the radio. There's martial law up on the campus. You can't move anywhere and the highways are crawling with cops.

FRANK

Police and leave that damn thing off !

MICHAEL

Don't you want to hear? It's all over the news--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

--No!

CATHERINE

Your father and--

MICHAEL

--They shot four students, Mom.

CATHERINE

We heard it was soldiers.

MICHAEL

No, it was students and they were just going to class.

FRANK

They weren't just going to class, damn it, or they wouldn't be dead.

(CATHERINE crosses and leaves. MICHAEL moves to the TV)

Leave that damn thing off !

MICHAEL

You don't want to find out what happened, do you? You don't give a damn-

FRANK

-- I don't like dead soldiers any better than I like dead students!

MICHAEL

But that's what you expect, isn't it. That's what they deserved, isn't it, for not listening --

FRANK

--And just what the hell do you expect? You think they're playing games up there? You think they want to be on that campus getting shit thrown at 'em by some kids that - -

MICHAEL

--They didn't ask for soldiers.

FRANK

-- Soldiers get what they're given and they don't complain, and those students shouldn't complain when they -

MICHAEL

--Disagree? That's what this is really all about, isn't it? Stand up and disagree and get your fucking brains blown out,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

that's the way you really feel, too isn't it, and if I had been up there today ---

FRANK

If you had just stayed in that damned Academy, you wouldn't be worried about them and we wouldn't be worried about you.

MICHAEL

Look at me, damn it, for once just look at me and then tell me just who the hell was I going to kill?

FRANK

I went in and I didn't complain. And I won't complain about the ones who don't go, but I won't have them shoving it down my throat. Because I don't know what I would have done if I could have got out of that shit hole war and everything else would have turned out the same.

CATHERINE

Michael! Frank? It was four students. I just heard it on the radio.

FRANK

(Pause) Don't look at me that way.

MICHAEL

You heard it wrong, that's all.

FRANK

I don't have to defend myself to you.

MICHAEL

Look, no one needed to shoot them to shut them up.
(MICHAEL turns to leave and FRANK explodes)

FRANK

I want some respect, God damn it! I deserve some respect from my son and I want that respect now, damn it--

CATHERINE

(pulling FRANK off MICHAEL)
--Oh, God, Frank, please, don't hurt him, please let him go, Frank --

FRANK

You don't know everything. They weren't just students or they wouldn't be dead now and you don't go up against soldiers unless you're ready to take the consequences. You're not just a student when you stand up to a soldier with a loaded gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

This was their own backyard, their own school, they thought they were home. Don't you see, they thought they were safe.

FRANK

(Pause)Soldiers don't carry empty guns, don't ever forget that. And no matter who's carrying one, you be real scared.

SCENE 9

VERN'S PATIO. TWILIGHT.

ANNIE

Have you seen my Dad?

VERN

My hands are all rubbed off you know. See?

ANNIE

Has he been here?

VERN

He doesn't come around much anymore. Not since they laid me off.

ANNIE

Michael's at the airport and I can't drive yet.

MICHAEL

I wish he would come by. There's a lot of good games to watch.

ANNIE

I don't know where he went.

VERN

Hell, those sons-of-bitches threw me out like I never worked there a day...and they knew I only had fourteen months to my retirement. I'd have gone to the end for them if they'd asked me. I never made any trouble, but they probably don't even know what I look like. Might as well have shot me on the floor. Now Gwen's gone,too, can't blame her. Hell, she learned how to change her own tires years ago. No, your Daddy doesn't want to look at me,'cause I'm almost dead.

ANNIE

I'm sure you'll find something else, Mr. Wiley.

(VERN grabs her arm)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Don't be sure of anything 'til after it happens.

ANNIE

You're hurting me.

VERN

Bloody raw meat for fingers. No pension. No future. Look at this face and kiss it good-bye. (releases)

ANNIE

You're still young, Mr. Wiley. You'll find something.

VERN

You sound like those government squirts who think we 're all going grow up to be god damn little computer programmers.

ANNIE

I have to go now.
(ANNIE starts to leave)

VERN

Annie? I've been thinking about taking up cliff diving. Would you pay to watch me dive off a cliff two hundred feet up in the air?

ANNIE

I really don't know. I don't think so. I'd be too scared.

VERN

Hell, that'd be two of us. But I'll bet I'd be on television and some jerk like me would be watching, and he'd be thinking, that son-of-a-bitch is the bravest man in the world...and he'd just be some dumb shit out-of-work mold maker.

ANNIE

I'm sorry, but I have to find him. (exit)

VERN

Tell your father to stop by anytime.

SCENE 10

LIMBO.

CATHERINE is getting ready for bed. She is brushing her hair. FRANK watches unseen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Did I ever tell you what kept me alive in that bamboo room? It wasn't just the bugs filling up my stomach. No, it wasn't just knowing how to keep my body alive in a world that didn't care about one more body. It was the thought that a man like me could be here with a woman like you and that these hands could be doing something really useful. Did I ever tell you that I slept with the night light 'til I was nearly ten and wet the bed almost that long? I didn't want to. I was ashamed. But mostly I was afraid. (Pause) My father... My father beat me... after church, to put the fear of God in me, but I ended up loving God and hating him, then hating just about everything. My father was a mean man, and he beat my mother red. Oh, Mom would lie and say it was the bed sheets that put the welts around her arms and legs and the blue across her eyes but I knew. I still remember those eyes, so full of fear of him and overflowing with that strange crooked love she felt for him and the me in him I hated, like this fold in my chin. My mother was a beautiful woman and she smelled of fresh chocolates. In the summer she'd hold me against her skin and my legs would stick to the plastic she'd managed to spread over everything and she'd hug me so tight I thought I'd burst. (Pause) I was afraid of wanting to kill him. I was afraid she would never leave him. I was afraid she would. In the end it really didn't matter. A chunk of overpass killed them both in an instant. I never knew the exact time, I was already a prisoner of that bamboo room. When I was away all I dreamed of was coming home so I could finally tell her how much I really cared, but by the time I finally got my leave they were both dead and buried and I thought I was dead, too, except for the thought of you. In seven months I was a soldier, an orphan, a prisoner for life, and I'd never even voted for President or slept with a woman. I didn't know if you really existed at all. But on those long terrible nights I would dream you up- or die. I went away to war to get away from the beatings, only to find more beatings and that terrible silence, Oh, God, no one ever told me how long silence can be. I went away so I could come back to talk to somebody, but when I came home there was nobody to talk to- and the fear was there all the time now. When I met you, I promised to love you forever and I have. I tried to be a good husband, a good father, but I'm afraid the world is moving faster than my age. And I'm just terribly afraid that most of the time most of the time I'm just trying to keep up with the time before. I tell you these things every night hoping you will hear. It's as loud as I can say them. I never learned to shout love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Frank? Are you coming to bed? It's so quiet. You haven't fallen asleep, have you?

SCENE 11

WOODSON TV ROOM.

MICHAEL

I don't want to play anymore.

ANNIE

Why not?

MICHAEL

Because you always win.

ANNIE

That's because I always cheat. But I promise I won't this time.

MICHAEL

You're supposed to be learning how to stay in school, not how to cheat at cards.

ANNIE

The hell with school. It's not real life anyway.

MICHAEL

And what's real life anyway, Miss Ballerina?

ANNIE

(Pause) Do you see people die?

MICHAEL

Yes.

ANNIE

What's it like?

MICHAEL

Well it's not like TV or the movies.

ANNIE

So, what's it like?

MICHAEL

Annie, come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

No... tell me.

MICHAEL

People die in their sleep...on the operating table...holding your hand.

ANNIE

Does it ever look like it's right?

MICHAEL

What's right?

ANNIE

You know, like it's the right thing to do.

MICHAEL

Sometimes, Annie, what's wrong?

ANNIE

Can you rub my neck again, you know.... here. It's all tight again.

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL starts to rub her neck)

You're a regular knot farm.

ANNIE

So, what do they look like?

MICHAEL

Who?

ANNIE

When they're dead?

MICHAEL

Relax, Annie.

ANNIE

Do they smile? Can dead people smile?

MICHAEL

Sometimes. Can't you think of something else to talk about at 2 in the morning?

ANNIE

No, I've got you here and I want to talk all night...or 'til blood runs from our eyes and we drop over in our tracks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Just my luck I get an insomniac for a baby sister.

ANNIE

Tell me how it felt when you played football and they all cheered.

MICHAEL

It was a whole lot better than dying. Okay, it was good, sometimes it was great, but it was scary, too, all those people screaming at me but never seeing me at all, and Mom and Dad, smiling like I was the only one in the world.

ANNIE

Sometimes I think they're really happy...and then I think about all those guns--

MICHAEL

-- he just thinks he needs them- but he doesn't even load them. Come on sneeziks...you've kept me up long enough --

ANNIE

He says what's the use of having a gun if it isn't loaded!

MICHAEL

Annie--

ANNIE

--He hides them everywhere, and she pretends she doesn't see any of them. It's their little game, and then I pretend that I'm not here at all because I'm so terribly afraid that if I make one mistake, one wrong move, It'll start it all and I won't be able to stop it and I really think we're all going to end up dead --

MICHAEL

No one's going to hurt you. I promise.

ANNIE

You saw it too, didn't you? That's why you left, isn't it?

MICHAEL

--- He's never touched you, has he? He's never hurt you, has he? I swear I'll kill him if he's hurt you. I shoot him dead.

SCENE 12

VERN'S PATIO.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

(holding a phone) Damndest thing just happened. My cousin Ralph's sister just called to say Ralph's been killed, crushed to death when he fell off the back of his sanitation truck. He was just suppose to ride along and pick up the bags, but something went wrong and when they stopped, there was nothing in the back but Ralph's shoe. God, I wish I knew who to call. Everybody's gone. Gwen, the kids...I don't know who to call.

SCENE 13**LIMBO.**

CATHERINE

You're too old for these games. And I get dizzy when you tie bandanas around my eyes and spin me around.

ANNIE

Promise me....

CATHERINE

You're so serious. What did I do to have such a serious little girl?

ANNIE

Promise me you'll never die.

CATHERINE

(pause)I can't promise that. No one can.

ANNIE

You could if you wanted to.

CATHERINE

You're too old to lie to.

ANNIE

If you really loved me, you wouldn't die and leave me.

CATHERINE

You're suppose to grow up and leave me. And I'm suppose to die first. It's only unnatural the other way around.

ANNIE

Well, I don't think any of it is natural at all. Michael !

CATHERINE

Annie !

SCENE 14

LIMBO.DREAM SEQUENCE.

ANNIE runs in with an imaginary football and CATHERINE follows her followed by MICHAEL and FRANK.

MICHAEL

Circle around if you're going to play, around to the left.

FRANK

She's going to get hurt.

ANNIE

Bullshit!

CATHERINE

Annie!

ANNIE

It's just words. Throw it to me now!

VERN

(walking thru)

If she's breaks something she can't be a ballerina.

ANNIE

Here! Catch this Mr. Ballerina's father.

CATHERINE

Let her go, Frank, she can already out run both of us.

VERN

Don't say I didn't warn you. (exits)

FRANK

If she breaks something don't say I was a bad father.

MICHAEL

You're a great father, damn it, but you can't pass a football burying it in your arms.

CATHERINE

Come on Frank, pass it to your old lady, huh!

FRANK

Make fun of me, will you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Whoa...that man can pass.

ANNIE

I want it to be my turn.

FRANK

Hang on there, hang on.

ANNIE

Come on, I'm getting old.

MICHAEL

Circle around the other way, Annie, and watch the block.

VERN

I hope she doesn't break her leg, Frank, you better watch out.

ANNIE

It doesn't matter, Mr. Wiley. It doesn't matter what happens. Michael can fix it. Michael can fix anything.

SCENE 15

VERN'S PATIO

VERN

I'll tell you something old buddy. You never heard anybody but yourself. Always complaining and bitching. Your job, your house, your kids all falling apart - and nothing ever was but you. One a little dancing angel and the other with hands like magic and you storing guns in your house like the Russians had your address. Maybe we're always in some kind of war, but I'm a casualty in the service of my country, and nobody gives a rat's ass...not even a tiny little rat. I listened to all your talk about the bamboo room and eating bugs while my whole life's falling apart and no one's even thinking about giving me a purple heart. Christ, in a little while no one will even remember my name. Shit, Frank Woodson, you had it all and you were nothing! So take your damn steak off my grill and go home...And...And...don't you ever have a nice day again, you hear me!

SCENE 16

WOODSON TV ROOM. EVENING.

CATHERINE is cleaning up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

You shouldn't use that language around your sister.

MICHAEL

I don't think there's much she doesn't know. It's a little scary.

CATHERINE

It's just TV talk, it doesn't mean anything. Oops.
(CATHERINE starts to fall)

MICHAEL

Be careful.

CATHERINE

I'm fine.

MICHAEL

Are you all right?

CATHERINE

I'm fine, really.

MICHAEL

You're cooking like it's Thanksgiving.

CATHERINE

It's just that we never seem to be together anymore and I wanted this time to be special.

MICHAEL

Just being here with you is special.

CATHERINE

You always liked turkey and stuffing.

MICHAEL

I always liked your turkey and stuffing. I remember once you said you were going to start raising your own so they'd come out just the way you wanted.

CATHERINE

I can't remember....but I heard they're pretty stupid.

MICHAEL

You did all right with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

You were very smart. Both of you. And you turned out fine -- no, better than fine...and Annie, too. She'll be grown up soon and out on her own and then my job will be done.

MICHAEL

Just like that!

CATHERINE

Michael?

MICHAEL

Everything's all done, right?

CATHERINE

I just meant--

MICHAEL

--everyone's out on their own, fold up the tents and put Mama out to pasture.

CATHERINE

I just thought you wouldn't be needing me that way anymore.

MICHAEL

I will always need you.

CATHERINE

I better check on the--

MICHAEL

--Annie says you've got a lump.

CATHERINE

Annie's just a child.

MICHAEL

You just said she's ready to go out on her own.

CATHERINE

She has a child's imagination, that's all I meant.

MICHAEL

Where is it?

CATHERINE

She doesn't understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Where is it?

CATHERINE

Annie watches too much TV.

MICHAEL

Then look me in the eye and tell me it isn't true.

CATHERINE

She just gets frightened.

MICHAEL

And you? How frightened are you?

CATHERINE

It's nothing, really.

MICHAEL

If it isn't true, tell me now.

CATHERINE

I know you want to heal the whole world, but you shouldn't worry about me. I'm just fine. You know me. Just fine.

MICHAEL

Then just tell me NO and I'll forget it. Look me in the eye Mom and tell me no and I'll forget it right now.

CATHERINE

Do you really think I could die and leave turkey uncooked?

MICHAEL

How long has it been there Mom and how big is that lump now?

CATHERINE

It's nothing to worry about, Michael, really. I can take care of it honey.

MICHAEL

NO! You are not the doctor, and there is something to worry about because Annie and I want you to be with us, need you to be with us, now and for a thousand other days that are just as special because you're alive.

CATHERINE

Shhhhhh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

I won't let this go. Not this. I can't.

CATHERINE

I wanted today to be special. I wanted this visit to be wonderful.

MICHAEL

I can't.

CATHERINE

I wanted to give you something you could always remember.

MICHAEL

You don't have to die!

CATHERINE

Shhhh...

MICHAEL

You don't have to die.

CATHERINE

He doesn't know. I don't want him to worry.

MICHAEL

Nobody's worth dying for, not even him.

CATHERINE

You don't understand. His hands tremble all the time and the medicine doesn't stop the bleeding anymore. Since Vern's gone he only has me to talk to but he won't. He's afraid of everything -- even me. He talks me leaving him for another man -- a man with more hair and a better job, a man with a job they can't take away. A man who's only in his head but nothing I say seems to make that man go away. He worries about everything and talks about nothing. I worry about him but I don't really know how to save him anymore. Maybe I never did. But I tried. God knows I tried.

(CATHERINE puts her hand up to her breast)

MICHAEL

Let me try to save you, like you saved me.

CATHERINE

Remember how thin my legs used to be? You always complained your mother had the skinniest legs in the world. Straight as telephone poles you'd say. "Collect call from Michael. Will you accept the charges?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Don't you want to live?

CATHERINE

If I could just help him through this now.

MICHAEL

Damn him, Mom, don't you want to be there for us!

CATHERINE

Yes...yes, I do want to be there for you. I want to see you and Annie grow up and old and yes, to find out what you will do with your lives and who you will love. I do want to be there to see that. Yes, I must be there if I can to see your children if you have them and whether they'll have your curly hair or Annie's dark eyes. Yes, I need to be there til the end of time as long as time can be if I'm there with my children because I love you more than me--

MICHAEL

Mom, no.

CATHERINE

Oh, I know that's not right to feel that way, but I do. I always have even when it looked like I was just thinking about him I was thinking about the two of you, trying to hold this house together, him together for you. But that's not enough now. Oh, God, it's not enough for this. Oh, please Michael help me. Help me now.

(CATHERINE unbuttons her blouse. MICHAEL looks away as he places his hand on her breast)

(Pause) Did you find it?

MICHAEL

Your heart's beating so loud I can feel it through your skin.

CATHERINE

Don't be angry with me, please. I couldn't stand to lose you too.

MICHAEL

Never.

CATHERINE

Promise.

MICHAEL

I swear. Shhhhh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

(Pause) Tell me it's gone.
(long siege of quiet)
Michael?

MICHAEL

I've found it.

CATHERINE

-- oh, no....

MICHAEL

-- Oh God, I've found it.

CATHERINE

-- No, please.

MICHAEL

-- I've found it.

FRANK

Who's there?

CATHERINE

Oh, God, NO!

FRANK

Don't move damn it, I've got a gun.

CATHERINE

Don't shoot Frank! Please don't shoot.

FRANK

Damn it I can't find the light!

(CATHERINE and MICHAEL freeze in silhouette)
ANNIE flips on a blinding white light which
freezes the others as she circles, pointing her
shotgun at FRANK who is standing in his pajamas
pointing his shotgun at MICHAEL and CATY)

ANNIE

Freeze sucker!

FRANK

What's going on here? Caty?

CATHERINE

Annie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Give me that damn gun girl! This isn't no joke.

ANNIE

Don't move or I'll blow your head off Daddy. You do believe that don't you? That I could do that?

FRANK

What the hell's happening here Caty? Why's your blouse all -- what was that boy doing to you. Why's she got a gun?

CATHERINE

He's not a boy Frank. He's our son.

ANNIE

He's trying to save her. But you wouldn't know what that means, would you?

FRANK

I want to know what is --

ANNIE

Freeze I said! Now give me your gun.

FRANK

I will not.

ANNIE

Oh, yes you will. Because my gun is bigger. That is the law isn't it. The one with the biggest gun wins?

MICHAEL

Put the gun down, Annie.

ANNIE

Don't move, damn it! Or I'll blow your head off too.

MICHAEL

I don't believe you.

ANNIE

Believe me brother. Take his gun and put it over there right now while you still can walk.

(FRANK moves towards ANNIE)

FRANK

Be a good girl and give me that gun now before you hurt yourself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

No! I will not be a good. I will not hurt myself anymore but I will not be good or quiet one more second, damn you. Damn all of you. I won't shut up or disappear. And if you move, any of you, I swear I'll shoot. And you can bet it's true because I am my father's daughter. Everybody says that since I've been born so I must have it in me.

FRANK

I never shot anybody.

ANNIE

But you hurt us all.

FRANK

I never shot anybody. I just have those guns to protect you.

CATHERINE

Your father wouldn't hurt you. He loves you....

ANNIE

Stay right where you are!

CATHERINE

He loves you Annie. Tell her Michael. Tell her the truth.

ANNIE

Yeah, Michael, tell the truth about that lump in her breast.

CATHERINE

How did you know?

ANNIE

Tell me how I've been thinking about my Mom dying for weeks knowing she's coming down here trying to heal herself so he won't worry.

FRANK

What lump in your breast Caty?

MICHAEL

He does love us Annie, it's just not the way we wanted it.

CATHERINE

Say it Frank. Tell Annie how much you love her and Michael.

FRANK

I love you Annie. You know I always loved --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

--no, no , no , don't tell me that damn it! It's just words.

FRANK

It's not.

ANNIE

It has to be if it hurts that much.

FRANK

You know I --

(FRANK moves toward ANNIE but she waves the gun
at him)

ANNIE

Don't move one step closer because I don't care anymore. I just want it to stop. I just want all this pain to stop. I just want it to be over, don't you see. I can't stand his love. It's killing me. It's killing you. It's killing her and I can't live without her.

MICHAEL

We all love you, Annie.

FRANK

I would never hurt your Mother.

CATHERINE

Your father loves all of us.

ANNIE

Bullshit!

FRANK

(Pause) God help me, if I'm lying. I did everything for you. I love you. All of you. I only wanted you to have a better life than I did. I only wanted you to feel safer than I did.

ANNIE

Well I didn't. I don't. I never will feel safe as long as those damn guns and you are here together.

FRANK

I just wanted you to feel safe.

ANNIE

Tell him Michael. Tell him how safe we feel. Tell him, damn it !

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

It's a scary world out there.

ANNIE

Worse than in here?

MICHAEL

It wasn't right to do what he did, making this place what he did, but I really think he didn't understand.

FRANK

There's a lot to be afraid of out there. You tell her Caty. You tell her.

MICHAEL

We 're not afraid of what's out there Dad.

(ANNIE shoves the gun into MICHAEL's face)

ANNIE

Tell him who we're afraid of.

MICHAEL

We're afraid..

ANNIE

Of who Michael?

MICHAEL

We're afraid of you Dad.

ANNIE

LOUDER!

MICHAEL

We're afraid of you, Dad.

FRANK

Of me?

MICHAEL

And the guns. We're afraid every time we're in this house. Every moment we're in this house we're afraid.

FRANK

In this house?

ANNIE

You tell him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Of whether you're going to finally come home one day and just explode.

ANNIE

You tell him.

FRANK

Me?

MICHAEL

And takes us all with you.

ANNIE

You tell him.

FRANK

Caty?

ANNIE

Take us all with you. Yes, Daddy. Afraid all the time.
(MICHAEL comes to ANNIE and takes the gun from her and take her in his arms)

FRANK

Is this true Caty? Are you really afraid of me?

CATHERINE

Yes.

FRANK

All the time?

CATHERINE

Take Annie and get your coats.

ANNIE

I won't leave you here.

CATHERINE

I said to go now. I am all right. I am fine. I am safe. But I need to speak to your father alone. So take the guns and put them away and then get your coats and wait in the car.
(ANNIE turns and leaves)

MICHAEL

Mom ---

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

I am fine Michael. Take care of your sister. Now.

(FRANK is slumping into the chair now, as if all the wind has collapsed from his body.)

FRANK

You have a lump in your breast?

CATHERINE

Yes I do.

FRANK

I can't bear to lose you Caty.

CATHERINE

I know.

FRANK

What went wrong? You never said anything.

CATHERINE

I tried. Maybe I didn't. I don't know. I was just so scared.

FRANK

Of me? You were afraid of me hurting you?

CATHERINE

All of us. I was afraid for all of us.

FRANK

Oh, God. Oh, God Caty, I never would have hurt you. You were my Angel.

CATHERINE

I wanted to be your angel Frank. I did. I wanted to be married to you forever. When we met and married it made me feel so loved, so important, so alive.

FRANK

They hate me.

CATHERINE

They're afraid.

FRANK

They don't love me do they?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

They wanted to. I wanted to. But you were so filled with anger there wasn't any room for love. For them. Even me.

FRANK

I thought you had your job here with me and you were happy.

CATHERINE

You took my job with you when you went to a place I couldn't go. You went alone.

FRANK

I would never hurt you. Or them.

CATHERINE

I signed on for life but they deserve better. Our children deserve better.

FRANK

You felt the lump, Michael felt the lump and Annie knew too.

CATHERINE

Yes.

FRANK

But not me.

CATHERINE

No.

FRANK

Why not me?

ANNIE (OV)

Mom? You said you would come?

CATHERINE

I will be right there. Just another minute I promise. I am fine.

FRANK

Why not me?

CATHERINE

When I felt this lump I didn't know whether it was my curse or my escape.

FRANK

I was just trying to do what a man's supposed to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

I know.

ANNIE

Mom?

FRANK

Caty?

CATHERINE

I have to go to the children, Frank.

FRANK

I don't want you to die. No matter what you think of me I don't want you to die.

CATHERINE

I don't want to either.

(CATHERINE starts for the door then stops)

I used to think it would be a relief to finally have you blow up and shoot someone even if it was me just to have it over. I was wrong. I should have told you. I should have made you go with me and get some help. I like to think that would have made a difference. Frank? Do you think it can make a difference?

(FRANK jumps up and grabs CATY by the arm. CATY stiffens and pulls away.)

FRANK

Don't keep the kids waiting. They'll get scared.

CATHERINE

We'll call. There's food in the frig.

FRANK

Hey, I'll watch some TV. Lots of good games on today and you know that can keep me busy for hours.

CATHERINE

You all right?

FRANK

Hell, Frank Woodson is all right and don't you worry. You worry about those children, not me.

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL returns.)

Mom?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Your mother's coming right now. Aren't you.

CATHERINE

Yes. I'm coming right now honey.

(CATY runs towards the car lights. FRANK grabs
MICHAEL.)

FRANK

You get the best doctor you can find.

MICHAEL

We'll talk later.

FRANK

Promise me! Here, you take the money, I don't care what it costs, you just save her.

MICHAEL

I'll do my best. I promise --

FRANK

(pushing him off) Now you get going right now cause you're sister and mother don't like to be kept waiting. Never keep them waiting.

MICHAEL

Dad?

FRANK

Never keep them waiting.
(FRANK starts for the TV)

MICHAEL

You sure you should be alone right now?

FRANK

Hell, son, I'm not alone. I always got Vern.

MICHAEL

Vern's dead.

FRANK

Don't keep those girls waiting, son. I raised you better than that.

(MICHAEL leaves. FRANK listens as the car pulls away then turns the sound up. VERN appears, pops a beer and sits down)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN
Ohio State/Michigan. Both winners on the right day. Beer?

FRANK
They're gone.

VERN
They'll come back.

FRANK
It's not the same.

VERN
Nothing is buddy.

FRANK
She has a lump in her breast, Vern.

VERN
She's a strong woman.

FRANK
I'm scared Vern.

VERN
Shit Frank, we're all scared. Goes with the territory. Just like those damn cliff divers. But if we just stick together we can get it all back again.

FRANK
You couldn't even shoot a squirrel.

VERN
I shot one. That was enough for me.

FRANK
I never would have hurt them Vern. Never.

VERN
You never would have wanted to buddy.

FRANK
You should have seen the look in Annie's eyes. Never saw anything like it.

VERN
They love you buddy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

No, there was no love in her eyes. Just fear and Caty's too. More afraid of me than cancer. Can you imagine. Even my own son looking at me like a stranger. Just pure fear and hate and anger and God knows what else. I'll dream that look forever.

(FRANK turns off the TV)

VERN

Hey, buddy, where're you going? The games not over yet.

(FRANK starts walking off)

If they're good dreams you'll remember. The rest just disappears.

(VERN grabs FRANK and turns him around staring at him)

You gotta have hope Frank. A man can't live without hope. I'm telling you it's all coming back. The factories, the good jobs, the women to love us and the children to look up to us. We can get it if we just work hard enough.

(FRANK turns and starts walking off)

I'm telling you it can be better, but I can't do it alone.

(FRANK stops a moment)

Frank?

(FRANK then walks quickly off leaving VERN standing alone)

Jesus, buddy, I thought that's what you wanted me to say.

BLACK OUT

END OF PLAY