

“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”

By Edward Albee

Little Theatre of Owatonna

Auditions February 19 & 20 6-8:30pm
at the Sharon Stark Auditorium at West Hills

Cast of Characters

(as described by Edward Albee)

MARTHA: A large, boisterous woman, fifty-two, looking somewhat younger. Ample, but not fleshy.

GEORGE: Her husband, forty-six. Thin; hair going gray.

HONEY: Twenty-six; a petite blond girl, rather plain.

NICK: Twenty-eight, her husband. Blond, well put-together, good-looking.

Audition Scenes

GEORGE: Pages 44-45

MARTHA: Page 76, Page 78

GEORGE AND MARTHA: Pages 7-13, Pages 67-69

GEORGE AND NICK: Pages 17-22, Pages 48-54

MARTHA AND NICK: Pages 77-80

GEORGE, MARTHA, NICK, AND HONEY: Pages 14-17, Pages 54-62, Pages 86-91

Rehearsals will start March 6th.

Performance dates are April 21-23 & 28-30, 2023

If you have any questions, please contact the Director, Jeffrey Jackson at jjackson.owatonna@gmail.com or at (507) 475-0172.

NICK. I didn't say that ... I said she gets sick quite easily.

GEORGE. Oh. I thought that by sick you meant ...

NICK. Well, it's true ... She ... she does throw up a lot. Once she starts ... there's practically no stopping her ... I mean, she'll go right on ... for hours. Not all the time, but ... regularly.

GEORGE. You can tell time by her, hunh?

NICK. Just about.

GEORGE. Drink?

NICK. Sure. *(With no emotion, except the faintest distaste, as George takes his glass to the bar.)* I married her because she was pregnant.

GEORGE. *(Pause.)* Oh? *(Pause.)* But you said you didn't have any children ... When I asked you, you said ...

NICK. She wasn't ... really. It was a hysterical pregnancy. She blew up, and then she went down.

GEORGE. And while she was up, you married her.

NICK. And then she went down. *(They both laugh, and are a little surprised that they do.)*

GEORGE. Uh ... Bourbon *is* right.

NICK. Uh ... yes, Bourbon.

GEORGE. *(At the bar, still.)* When I was sixteen and going to prep school, during the Punic Wars, a bunch of us used to go into New York on the first day of vacations, before we fanned out to our homes, and in the evening this bunch of us used to go to this gin mill owned by the gangster-father of one of us — for this was during the Great Experiment, or Prohibition, as it is more frequently called, and it was a bad time for the liquor lobby, but a fine time for the crooks and the cops — and we would go to this gin mill, and we would drink with the grown-ups and listen to the jazz. And one time, in the bunch of us, there was this boy who was fifteen, and he had killed his mother with a shotgun some years before — accidentally, completely accidentally, without even an unconscious motivation, I have no doubt, no doubt at all — and this one evening this boy went with us, and we ordered our drinks, and when it came his turn he said, I'll have bergin ... give me some bergin, please ... bergin and water. Well, we all laughed ... he was blond and he had the face of a cherub, and we all laughed, and his cheeks went red and the color rose in his neck, and the assistant crook who had taken our order told people at the next table what the boy had said, and then they laughed, and then more people were told and the laughter grew, and more people and more laughter, and no one was laughing more than us, and none of us laughing more than the boy

who had shot his mother. And soon, everyone in the gin mill knew what the laughter was about, and everyone started ordering bergin, and laughing when they ordered it. And soon, of course, the laughter became less general, but it did not subside, entirely, for a very long time, for always at this table or that someone would order bergin and a new area of laughter would rise. We drank free that night, and we were bought champagne by the management, by the gangster-father of one of us. And of course, we suffered the next day, each of us, alone, on his train, away from New York, each of us with a grown-up's hangover ... but it was the grandest day of my ... youth. (*Hands Nick a drink on the word.*)

NICK. (*Very quietly.*) Thank you. What ... what happened to the boy ... the boy who had shot his mother?

GEORGE. I won't tell you.

NICK. All right.

GEORGE. The following summer, on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket and his father on the front seat to his right, he swerved the car, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into a large tree.

NICK. (*Faintly pleading.*) No.

GEORGE. He was not killed, of course. And in the hospital, when he was conscious and out of danger, and when they told him that his father *was* dead, he began to laugh, I have been told, and his laughter grew and he would not stop, and it was not until after they jammed a needle in his arm, not until after that, until his consciousness slipped away from him, that his laughter subsided ... stopped. And when he was recovered from his injuries enough so that he could be moved without damage should he struggle, he was put in an asylum. That was thirty years ago.

NICK. Is he ... still there?

GEORGE. Oh, yes. And I'm told that for these thirty years he has ... not ... uttered ... one ... sound. (*A rather long silence; five seconds, please.*) MARTHA! (*Pause.*) MARTHA!

NICK. I told you ... she's making coffee.

GEORGE. For your hysterical wife, who goes up and down.

NICK. Went. Up and down.

GEORGE. Went. No more?

NICK. No more. Nothing.

GEORGE. (*After a sympathetic pause.*) The saddest thing about men ... Well, no, one of the saddest things about men is the way they age ... some of them. Do you know what it is with insane peo-

ACT THREE
THE EXORCISM

Martha enters, talking to herself.

MARTHA. Hey, hey ... Where is everybody...? *(It is evident she is not bothered.)* So? Drop me; pluck me like a goddamn ... whatever-it-is ... creeping vine, and throw me over your shoulder like an old shoe ... George? *(Looks about her.)* George? *(Silence.)* George! What are you doing; hiding, or something? *(Silence.)* GEORGE!! *(Silence.)* Oh, fa Chri ... *(Goes to the bar, makes herself a drink and amuses herself with the following performance.)* Deserted! Abandon-ed! Left out in the cold like an old pussycat. HA! Can I get you a drink, Martha? Why, thank you, George; that's very kind of you. No, Martha, no; why I'd do anything for you. Would you, George? Why I'd do anything for you, too. Would you, Martha? Why, certainly, George. Martha, I've misjudged you. And I've misjudged you, too, George. WHERE IS EVERYBODY!!! "Hump the Hostess!" *(Laughs greatly at this, falls into a chair; calms down, looks defeated, says, softly.)* Fat chance. *(Even softer.)* Fat chance. *(Baby-talk now.)* Daddy? Daddy? Martha is abandon-ed. Left to her own vices at ... *(Peers at a clock.)* ... something o'clock in the old A.M. Daddy White-Mouse; do you really have red eyes? Do you? Let me see. Ohhhhh! You do! You do! Daddy, you have red eyes ... because you cry all the time, don't you, Daddy. Yes; you do. You cry alllll the time. I'LL GIVE ALL YOU BASTARDS FIVE TO COME OUT FROM WHERE YOU'RE HIDING!! *(Pause.)* I cry all the time too, Daddy. I cry alllll the time; but deep inside, so no one can see me. I cry all the time. And Georgie cries all the time, too. We both cry all the time, and then, what do we do, we cry, and we take our tears, and we put 'em in the icebox, in the goddamn ice trays *(Begins to laugh.)* until they're frozen *(Laughs even more.)* and then ... we put them ... in our ... drinks. *(More laughter, which is something else, too. After sobering silence. Sadly.)* I've got windshield wipers on my eyes, because I married you ... baby!... Martha, you'll be a

MARTHA. (*Still braying.*) I wasn't talking about your potential; I was talking about your goddamn performance.

NICK. (*Softly.*) Oh.

MARTHA. (*She softer, too.*) Your potential's fine. It's dandy. (*Wiggles her eyebrows.*) Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such a dandy potential in a long time. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop.

NICK. (*Snapping it out.*) Everybody's a flop to you! Your husband's a flop, *I'm* a flop ...

MARTHA. (*Dismissing him.*) You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops. (*More or less to herself.*) I disgust me. I pass my life in crummy, totally pointless infidelities ... (*Laughs ruefully.*) *would-be* infidelities. Hump the Hostess? That's a laugh. A bunch of boozed-up ... impotent lunk-heads. Martha makes goo-goo eyes and the lunk-heads grin, and roll their beautiful, beautiful eyes back, and grin some more, and Martha licks her chops, and the lunk-heads slap over to the bar to pick up a little courage, *and* they pick up a little courage, and they bounce back over to old Martha, who does a little dance for them, which heats them all up ... mentally ... and so they slap over to the bar again, and pick up a little more courage, and their wives and sweethearts stick their noses up in the air ... right through the ceiling, sometimes ... which sends the lunk-heads back to the soda fountain again where they fuel up some more while Martha-poo sits there with her dress up over her head ... suffocating — you don't know how *stuffy* it is with your dress up over your head — suffocating! waiting for the lunk-heads; so, *finally* they get their courage up ... but that's all, baby! Oh my, there is sometimes some very nice potential, but, oh my! My, my, my. (*Brightly.*) But that's how it is in civilized society. (*To herself again.*) All the gorgeous lunk-heads. Poor babies. (*To Nick, now; earnestly.*) There is only one man in my life who has ever ... made me happy. Do you know that? One!

NICK. The ... the what-do-you-call-it? ... uh ... the lawn mower, or something?

MARTHA. No; I'd forgotten him. But when I think about him and me it's almost like being a voyeur. Hunh. No; I didn't mean him; I meant George, of course. (*No response from Nick.*) Uh ... George; my husband.

NICK. (*Disbelieving.*) You're kidding.

MARTHA. Am I?

NICK. You must be. Him?

MARTHA. Him.

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

ACT ONE

FUN AND GAMES

Set in darkness. Crash against front door. Martha's laughter heard. Front door opens, lights are switched on. Martha enters, followed by George.

- MARTHA. Jesus ...
GEORGE. ... Shhhhhhh ...
MARTHA. ... H. Christ ...
GEORGE. For God's sake, Martha, it's two o'clock in the ...
MARTHA. Oh, George!
GEORGE. Well, I'm *sorry*, but ...
MARTHA. What a cluck! What a cluck you are.
GEORGE. It's late, you know? Late.
MARTHA. *(Looks about the room. Imitates Bette Davis.)* What a dump. Hey, what's that from? "What a dump!"
GEORGE. How would I know what ...
MARTHA. Aw, come on! What's it from? *You* know ...
GEORGE. ... Martha ...
MARTHA. WHAT'S IT FROM, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?
GEORGE. *(Wearily.)* What's what from?
MARTHA. I just told you; I just did it. "What a dump!" Hunh? What's that from?
GEORGE. I haven't the faintest idea what ...
MARTHA. Dumbbell! It's from some goddamn Bette Davis picture ... some goddamn Warner Brothers epic ...

GEORGE. *I can't remember all the pictures that ...*

MARTHA. Nobody's asking you to remember every goddamn Warner Brothers epic ... just one! One single little epic! Bette Davis gets peritonitis in the end ... she's got this big black fright wig she wears all through the picture and she gets peritonitis, and she's married to Joseph Cotten or something ...

GEORGE. ... *Somebody* ...

MARTHA. ... *somebody* ... and she wants to go to Chicago all the time, 'cause she's in love with that actor with the scar ... But she gets sick, and she sits down in front of her dressing table ...

GEORGE. What actor? What scar?

MARTHA. *I can't remember his name, for God's sake. What's the name of the picture?* I want to know what the name of the *picture* is. She sits down in front of her dressing table ... and she's got this peritonitis ... and she tries to put her lipstick on, but she can't ... and she gets it all over her face ... but she decides to go to Chicago anyway, and ...

GEORGE. *Chicago!* It's called *Chicago*.

MARTHA. Hunh? What ... what is?

GEORGE. The picture. It's called *Chicago* ...

MARTHA. Good grief! Don't you know *anything*? *Chicago* was a thirties musical, starring little Miss Alice Faye. Don't you know *anything*?

GEORGE. Well, that was probably before my *time*, but ...

MARTHA. Can it! Just cut that out! This picture ... Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store ...

GEORGE. She works in a grocery store?

MARTHA. She's a housewife; she buys things ... and she comes home with the groceries, and she walks into the modest living room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotten has set her up in ...

GEORGE. Are they married?

MARTHA. (*Impatiently.*) Yes. They're married. To each other. Cluck! And she comes in, and she looks around, and she puts her groceries down, and she says, "What a dump!"

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) Oh.

MARTHA. (*Pause.*) She's discontent.

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) Oh.

MARTHA. (*Pause.*) Well, what's the name of the picture?

GEORGE. I really don't know, Martha ...

MARTHA. Well, think!

GEORGE. I'm tired, dear ... it's late ... and besides ...
MARTHA. I don't know what you're so tired about ... you haven't
done anything all day; you didn't have any classes or anything ...
GEORGE. Well, I'm tired ... If your father didn't set up these
goddamn Saturday night orgies all the time ...
MARTHA. Well, that's too bad about you, George ...
GEORGE. (*Grumbling.*) Well, that's how it is, anyway.
MARTHA. You didn't *do* anything; you never *do* anything; you
never *mix*. You just sit around and *talk*.
GEORGE. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to act
like you? Do you want me to go around all night *braying* at every-
body, the way you do?
MARTHA. (*Braying.*) I DON'T BRAY!
GEORGE. (*Softly.*) All right ... you don't bray.
MARTHA. (*Hurt.*) I do not *bray*.
GEORGE. All right. I said you didn't *bray*.
MARTHA. (*Pouting.*) Make me a drink.
GEORGE. What?
MARTHA. (*Still softly.*) I said, make me a drink.
GEORGE. (*Moving to the portable bar.*) Well, I don't suppose a
nightcap'd kill either one of us ...
MARTHA. A nightcap? Are you kidding? We've got guests.
GEORGE. (*Disbelieving.*) We've got what?
MARTHA. Guests. GUESTS.
GEORGE. GUESTS!
MARTHA. Yes ... guests ... people ... We've got guests coming
over.
GEORGE. When?
MARTHA. NOW!
GEORGE. Good Lord, Martha ... do you know what time it ...
Who's coming over?
MARTHA. What's-their-name.
GEORGE. Who?
MARTHA. WHAT'S-THEIR-NAME!
GEORGE. Who what's-their-name?
MARTHA. I don't know what their name is, George ... You met
them tonight ... they're new ... he's in the math department, or
something ...
GEORGE. Who ... who are these people?
MARTHA. You met them tonight, George.
GEORGE. I don't remember meeting anyone tonight ...

MARTHA. Well you did ... Will you give me my drink, please ...
He's in the math department ... about thirty, blond, and ...
GEORGE. ... and good-looking ...
MARTHA. Yes ... and good-looking ...
GEORGE. It figures.
MARTHA. ... and his wife's a mousey little type, without any
hips, or anything.
GEORGE. (*Vaguely.*) Oh.
MARTHA. You remember them now?
GEORGE. Yes, I guess so, Martha ... But why in God's name are
they coming over here now?
MARTHA. (*In a so-there voice.*) Because Daddy said we should be
nice to them, that's why.
GEORGE. (*Defeated.*) Oh, Lord.
MARTHA. May I have my drink, please? Daddy said we should
be nice to them. Thank you.
GEORGE. But why now? It's after two o'clock in the morning,
and ...
MARTHA. Because Daddy said we should be nice to them!
GEORGE. Yes. But I'm sure your father didn't mean we were sup-
posed to stay up all *night* with these people. I mean, we could have
them over some Sunday or something ...
MARTHA. Well, never mind ... Besides, it *is* Sunday. Very early
Sunday.
GEORGE. I mean ... it's ridiculous ...
MARTHA. Well, it's *done!*
GEORGE. (*Resigned and exasperated.*) All right. Well ... where are
they? If we've got guests where are they?
MARTHA. They'll be here soon.
GEORGE. What did they do ... go home and get some sleep first,
or something?
MARTHA. They'll *be* here!
GEORGE. I wish you'd *tell* me about something sometime ... I
wish you'd stop *springing* things on me all the time.
MARTHA. I don't *spring* things on you all the time.
GEORGE. Yes, you do ... you really do ... you're always *spring-*
ing things on me.
MARTHA. (*Friendly-patronizing.*) Oh, George!
GEORGE. Always.
MARTHA. Poor Georgie-Porgie, put-upon-pie, (*As he sulks.*)
Awwwwww ... what are you doing? Are you sulking? Hunh? Let

me see ... are you sulking? Is that what you're doing?

GEORGE. *(Very quietly.)* Never mind, Martha ...

MARTHA. AWWWWWWWWWW!

GEORGE. Just don't bother yourself ...

MARTHA. AWWWWWWWWWW! *(No reaction.)* Hey! *(No reaction.)* HEY! *(George looks at her, put-upon.)* Hey. *(She sings.)*

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf ...

Ha, ha, ha, HA! *(No reaction.)* What's the matter ... didn't you think that was funny? Hunh? *(Defiantly.)* I thought it was a scream ... a real scream. You didn't like it, hunh?

GEORGE. It was all right, Martha ...

MARTHA. You laughed your head off when you heard it at the party.

GEORGE. I smiled. I didn't laugh my head off ... I smiled, you know? ... it was all right.

MARTHA. *(Gazing into her drink.)* You laughed your goddamn head off.

GEORGE. It was all right ...

MARTHA. *(Ugly.)* It was a scream!

GEORGE. *(Patiently.)* It was very funny; yes.

MARTHA. *(After a moment's consideration.)* You make me puke!

GEORGE. What?

MARTHA. Uh ... you make me puke!

GEORGE. *(Thinks about it ... then ...)* That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha.

MARTHA. That wasn't *what*?

GEORGE. ... a very nice thing to say.

MARTHA. I like your anger. I think that's what I like about you most ... your anger. You're such a ... such a simp! You don't even have the ... the what? ...

GEORGE. ... guts? ...

MARTHA. PHRASEMAKER! *(Pause ... then they both laugh.)*

Hey, put some more ice in my drink, will you? You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that, hunh?

GEORGE. *(Takes her drink.)* I always put ice in your drink. You eat it, that's all. It's that habit you have ... chewing your ice cubes ... like a cocker spaniel. You'll crack your big teeth.

MARTHA. THEY'RE MY BIG TEETH!

GEORGE. Some of them ... some of them.

MARTHA. I've got more teeth than you've got.
GEORGE. Two more.
MARTHA. Well, two more's a lot more.
GEORGE. I suppose it is. I suppose it's pretty remarkable ... considering how old you are.
MARTHA. YOU CUT THAT OUT! *(Pause.)* You're not so young yourself.
GEORGE. *(With boyish pleasure, a chant.)* I'm six years younger than you are ... I always have been and I always will be.
MARTHA. *(Glumly.)* Well ... you're going bald.
GEORGE. So are you. *(Pause ... they both laugh.)* Hello, honey.
MARTHA. Hello. C'mon over here and give your mommy a big sloppy kiss.
GEORGE. ... oh, now ...
MARTHA. I WANT A BIG SLOPPY KISS!
GEORGE. *(Preoccupied.)* I don't *want* to kiss you, Martha. Where *are* these people? Where are these *people* you invited over?
MARTHA. They stayed on to talk to Daddy ... They'll be here ... *Why* don't you want to kiss me?
GEORGE. *(Too matter-of-fact.)* Well, dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited ... I'd get beside myself, and I'd take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and then our little guests would walk in, and ... well, just think what your father would say about *that*.
MARTHA. You pig!
GEORGE. *(Haughtily.)* Oink! Oink!
MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA! Make me another drink ... lover.
GEORGE. *(Taking her glass.)* My God, you can swill it down, can't you?
MARTHA. *(Imitating a tiny child.)* I'm firsty.
GEORGE. Jesus!
MARTHA. *(Swinging around.)* Look, sweetheart, I can drink you under any goddamn table you want ... so don't worry about me!
GEORGE. Martha, I gave you the prize years ago ... There isn't an abomination award going that you ...
MARTHA. I swear ... if you existed I'd divorce you ...
GEORGE. Well, just stay on your feet, that's all ... These people are your guests, you know, and ...
MARTHA. I can't even see you ... I haven't been able to see you for years ...
GEORGE. ... if you pass out, or throw up, or something ...
MARTHA. ... I mean, you're a blank, a cipher ...

GEORGE. ... and try to keep your clothes on, too. There aren't many more sickening sights than you with a couple of drinks in you and your skirt up over your head, you know ...

MARTHA. ... a zero ...

GEORGE. ... your *heads*, I should say ... *(The front doorbell chimes.)*

MARTHA. Party! Party!

GEORGE. *(Murderously.)* I'm really looking forward to this, Martha ...

MARTHA. *(Same.)* Go answer the door.

GEORGE. *(Not moving.)* You answer it.

MARTHA. Get to that door, you. *(He does not move.)* I'll fix you, you ...

GEORGE. *(Fake-spits.)* ... to you ... *(Door chime again.)*

MARTHA. *(Shouting ... to the door.)* C'MON IN! *(To George, between her teeth.)* I said, get over there!

GEORGE. *(Moves a little toward the door, smiling slightly.)* All right, love ... whatever love wants. *(Moving toward the door.)* Isn't it nice the way some people have manners, though, even in this day and age? Isn't it nice that some people won't come breaking into other people's houses even if they *do* hear some subhuman monster yowling at 'em from inside...?

MARTHA. FUCK YOU! *(Simultaneously with Martha's last remark, George flings open the front door. Honey and Nick are framed in the entrance. There is a brief silence, then ...)*

GEORGE. *(Ostensibly a pleased recognition of Honey and Nick, but really satisfaction at having Martha's explosion overheard.)* Ahhhhhh-hhhhhhh!

MARTHA. *(A little too loud ... to cover.)* HI! Hi, there ... c'mon in!

HONEY and NICK. *(Ad lib.)* Hello, here we are ... hi ... *(Etc.)*

GEORGE. *(Very matter-of-factly.)* You must be our little guests.

MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA! Just ignore old sour-puss over there.

C'mon in, kids ... give your coats and stuff to sour-puss.

NICK. *(Without expression.)* Well, now, perhaps we shouldn't have come ...

HONEY. Yes ... it *is* late, and ...

MARTHA. Late! Are you kidding? Throw your stuff down anywhere and c'mon in.

GEORGE. *(Vaguely ... walking away.)* Anywhere ... furniture, floor ... doesn't make any difference around this place.

NICK. *(To Honey.)* I told you we shouldn't have come.

MARTHA. *(Stentorian.)* I said c'mon in! Now c'mon!

MARTHA. Very good, George.
GEORGE. Thank you, Martha.
MARTHA. Really good.
GEORGE. I'm glad you liked it.
MARTHA. I mean ... You did a good job ... you really fixed it.
GEORGE. Unh-hunh.
MARTHA. It's the most ... life you've shown in a long time.
GEORGE. You bring out the best in me, baby.
MARTHA. Yeah ... pigmy hunting!
GEORGE. PIGMY!
MARTHA. You're really a bastard.
GEORGE. I? I?
MARTHA. Yeah ... you.
GEORGE. Baby, if quarterback there is a pigmy, you've certainly changed your style. What are you after now ... giants?
MARTHA. You make me sick.
GEORGE. It's perfectly all right for you ... I mean, you can make up your own rules ... you can go around like a hopped-up Arab, slashing away at everything in sight, scarring up half the world if you want to. But someone else try it ... no sir!
MARTHA. You miserable ...
GEORGE. (*Mocking.*) Why baby, I did it all for you. I thought you'd like it, sweetheart ... it's sort of to your taste ... blood, carnage and all. Why, I thought you'd get all excited ... sort of heave and pant and come running at me, your melons bobbling.
MARTHA. You've really screwed up, George.
GEORGE. (*Spitting it out.*) Oh, for God's sake, Martha!
MARTHA. I mean it ... you really have.
GEORGE. (*Barely contained anger now.*) You can sit there in that chair of yours, you can sit there with the gin running out of your mouth, and you can humiliate me, you can tear me apart ... ALL NIGHT ... and that's perfectly all right ... that's OK ...
MARTHA. YOU CAN STAND IT!
GEORGE. I CANNOT STAND IT!
MARTHA. YOU CAN STAND IT!! YOU MARRIED ME FOR IT!! (*A silence.*)
GEORGE. (*Quietly.*) That is a desperately sick lie.
MARTHA. DON'T YOU KNOW IT, EVEN YET?
GEORGE. (*Shaking his head.*) Oh ... Martha.
MARTHA. My arm has gotten tired whipping you.
GEORGE. (*Stares at her in disbelief.*) You're mad.

MARTHA. For twenty-three years!

GEORGE. You're deluded ... Martha, you're deluded.

MARTHA. IT'S NOT WHAT I'VE WANTED!

GEORGE. I thought at least you were ... on to yourself. I didn't know. I ... didn't know.

MARTHA. (*Anger taking over.*) I'm on to myself.

GEORGE. (*As if she were some sort of bug.*) No ... no ... you're sick.

MARTHA. (*Rises — screams.*) I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK!

GEORGE. All right, Martha ... you're going too far.

MARTHA. (*Screams again.*) I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK. I'LL SHOW YOU.

GEORGE. (*He shakes her.*) Stop it! (*Pushes her back in her chair.*) Now, stop it!

MARTHA. (*Calmer.*) I'll show you who's sick. (*Calmer.*) Boy, you're really having a field day, hunh? Well, I'm going to finish you ... before I'm through with you ...

GEORGE. ... you and the quarterback ... you both gonna finish me...? And you'll wish you'd never mentioned our son!

MARTHA. (*Dripping contempt.*) You ...

GEORGE. Now, I said I warned you.

MARTHA. I'm impressed.

GEORGE. I warned you not to go too far.

MARTHA. I'm just beginning.

GEORGE. (*Calmly, matter-of-factly.*) I'm numbed enough now, to be able to take you when we're alone. I don't listen to you ... or when I *do* listen to you, I sift everything, I bring everything down to reflex response, so I don't really *hear* you, which is the only way to manage it.

MARTHA. Nuts!

GEORGE. Well, you can go on like that as long as you want to. And, when you're done ...

MARTHA. Have you ever listened to your sentences, George? Have you ever listened to the way you talk? You're so frigging ... convoluted ... that's what you are. You talk like you were writing one of your stupid papers.

GEORGE. I've got to find some way to really get at you.

MARTHA. You've got at me, George ... you don't have to do anything. Twenty-three years of you has been quite enough. You know what's happened, George? You want to know what's *really happened*? (*Snaps her fingers.*) It's snapped, finally ...

GEORGE. Come off it, Martha.

MARTHA. I've tried ... I've really tried.

GEORGE. (*With some awe.*) You're a monster ... you *are*.

MARTHA. I'm loud, and I'm vulgar, and I wear the pants in this house because somebody's got to, but I am *not* a monster. I am *not*.

GEORGE. You're a spoiled, self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden ...

MARTHA. SNAP! It went snap. Look, I'm not going to try to get through to you anymore ... I'm not going to try. There was a second back there, maybe, there was a second, just a second, when I could have gotten through to you, when maybe we could have cut through all this crap.

GEORGE. I don't believe you ... I just don't believe you. There is no moment ... there is no moment anymore when we could ... come together.

MARTHA. (*Armed again.*) Well, maybe you're right, baby. You can't come together with nothing, and you're nothing! SNAP! It went snap tonight at Daddy's party. (*Dripping contempt, but there is fury and loss under it.*) I sat there at Daddy's party, and I watched you ... I watched you sitting there, and I watched the younger men around you, the men who were going to go somewhere. And I sat there and I watched you, and *you weren't there!* And it snapped! It finally snapped! And I'm going to howl it out, and I'm not going to give a damn what I do, and I'm going to make the damned biggest explosion you ever heard.

GEORGE. (*Very pointedly.*) You try it and I'll beat you at your own game.

MARTHA. (*Hopefully.*) Is that a threat, George? Hunh?

GEORGE. That's a threat, Martha.

MARTHA. (*Fake-spits at him.*) You're going to get it, baby.

GEORGE. Be careful, Martha ... I'll rip you to pieces.

MARTHA. You aren't man enough ... you haven't got the guts.

GEORGE. Total war?

MARTHA. Total. (*Silence. They both seem relieved ... elated. Nick reenters.*)

NICK. (*Brushing his hands off.*) Well ... she's ... resting.

GEORGE. (*Quietly amused at Nick's calm, off-hand manner.*) Oh?

MARTHA. Yeah? She all right?

NICK. I think so ... now. I'm ... terribly sorry ...

MARTHA. Forget about it.

GEORGE. Happens all the time around here.

NICK. She'll be all right.

MARTHA. She's lying down? You put her upstairs? On a bed?

MARTHA. *Some men would give their right arm for the chance!*
GEORGE. *(Quietly.)* Alas, Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat more private portion of the anatomy.
MARTHA. *(A snarl of dismissal and contempt.)* NYYYYYAAAAH-HHHH!
HONEY. *(Rising quickly.)* I wonder if you could show me where the ... *(Her voice trails off.)*
GEORGE. *(To Martha, indicating Honey.)* Martha ...
NICK. *(To Honey.)* Are you all right?
HONEY. Of course, dear. I want to ... put some powder on my nose.
GEORGE. *(As Martha is not getting up.)* Martha, won't you show her where we keep the ... euphemism?
MARTHA. Hm? What? Oh! Sure! *(Rises.)* I'm sorry, c'mon. I want to show you the house.
HONEY. I think I'd like to ...
MARTHA. ... wash up? Sure ... c'mon with me. *(Takes Honey by the arm. To the men.)* You two do some men talk for a while.
HONEY. *(To Nick.)* We'll be back, dear.
MARTHA. *(To George.)* Honestly, George, you burn me up!
GEORGE. *(Happily.)* All right.
MARTHA. You really do, George.
GEORGE. OK, Martha ... OK. Just ... trot along.
MARTHA. You really do.
GEORGE. OK. OK. Vanish.
MARTHA. *(Practically dragging Honey out with her.)* C'mon.
GEORGE. Vanish. *(The women have gone.)* So? What'll it be?
NICK. Oh, I don't know ... I'll stick to bourbon, I guess.
GEORGE. *(Takes Nick's glass, goes to portable bar.)* That what you were drinking over at Parnassus?
NICK. Over at...?
GEORGE. Parnassus.
NICK. I don't understand.
GEORGE. Skip it. *(Hands him his drink.)* One bourbon.
NICK. Thanks.
GEORGE. It's just a private joke between li'l ol' Martha and me. *(They sit.)* So? *(Pause.)* So ... you're in the math department, eh?
NICK. No ... uh, no.
GEORGE. Martha said you were. I think that's what she said. *(Not too friendly.)* What made you decide to be a teacher?
NICK. Oh ... well, the same things that ... uh ... motivated you,

I imagine.

GEORGE. What were they?

NICK. *(Formal.)* Pardon?

GEORGE. I said, what were they? What were the things that motivated me?

NICK. *(Laughing uneasily.)* Well ... I'm sure I don't know.

GEORGE. You just finished saying that the things that motivated you were the same things that motivated me.

NICK. *(With a little pique.)* I said I *imagined* they were.

GEORGE. Oh. *(Off-hand.)* Did you? *(Pause.)* Well ... *(Pause.)* You like it here?

NICK. *(Looking about the room.)* Yes ... it's ... it's fine.

GEORGE. I mean the University.

NICK. Oh ... I thought you meant ...

GEORGE. Yes ... I can see you did. *(Pause.)* I meant the University.

NICK. Well, I ... I like it ... fine. *(As George just stares at him.)* Just fine. *(Same.)* You ... you've been here quite a long time, haven't you?

GEORGE. *(Absently, as if he had not heard.)* What? Oh ... yes. Ever since I married ... uh, What's-her-name ... uh, Martha. Even before that. *(Pause.)* Forever. *(To himself.)* Dashed hopes, and good intentions. Good, better, best, bested. *(Back to Nick.)* How do you like that for a declension, young man? Eh?

NICK. Sir, I'm sorry if we ...

GEORGE. *(With an edge in his voice.)* You didn't answer my question.

NICK. Sir?

GEORGE. Don't you condescend to me! *(Toying with him.)* I asked you how you liked that for a declension: good; better; best; bested. Hm? Well?

NICK. *(With some distaste.)* I really don't know what to say.

GEORGE. *(Feigned incredulousness.)* You really don't know what to say?

NICK. *(Snapping it out.)* All right ... what do you want me to say? Do you want me to say it's funny, so you can contradict me and say it's sad? Or do you want me to say it's sad so you can turn around and say, no, it's funny. You can play that damn little game any way you want to, you know!

GEORGE. *(Feigned awe.)* Very good! Very good!

NICK. *(Even angrier than before.)* And when my wife comes back, I think we'll just ...

GEORGE. *(Sincere.)* Now, now ... calm down, my boy. Just ...

calm ... down. *(Pause.)* All right. *(Pause.)* You want another drink? Here, give me your glass.

NICK. I still have one. I *do* think that when my wife comes back ...

GEORGE. Here ... I'll freshen it. Give me your glass. *(Takes it.)*

NICK. What I mean is ... you two ... you and your wife ... seem to be having *some* sort of a ...

GEORGE. Martha and I are having ... nothing. Martha and I are merely ... exercising ... that's all ... we're merely walking what's left of our wits. Don't pay any attention to it.

NICK. *(Undecided.)* Still ...

GEORGE. *(An abrupt change of pace.)* Well, now ... let's sit down and talk, hunh?

NICK. *(Cool again.)* It's just that I don't like to ... become involved ... *(An afterthought.)* uh ... in other people's affairs.

GEORGE. *(Comforting a child.)* Well, you'll get over that ... small college and all. Musical beds is the faculty sport around here.

NICK. Sir?

GEORGE. I said, musical beds is the faculty ... Never mind. I wish you wouldn't go "Sir" like that ... not with the question mark at the end of it. You know? Sir? I know it's meant to be a sign of respect for your *(Winces.)* elders ... but ... uh ... the way you do it ... uh ... Sir?... Madam?

NICK. *(With a small, noncommittal smile.)* No disrespect intended.

GEORGE. How old *are* you?

NICK. Twenty-eight.

GEORGE. I'm forty-something. *(Waits for reaction ... gets none.)* Aren't you surprised? I mean ... don't I look older? Doesn't this ... *gray* quality suggest the fifties? Don't I sort of fade into backgrounds ... get lost in the cigarette smoke? Hunh?

NICK. *(Looking around for an ashtray.)* I think you look ... fine.

GEORGE. I've always been lean ... I haven't put on five pounds since I was your age. I don't have a paunch, either ... What I've got ... I've got this little distension just below the belt ... but it's hard ... It's not soft flesh. I use the handball courts. How much do *you* weigh?

NICK. I ...

GEORGE. Hundred and eighty-five, hundred and ninety ... something like that? Do you play handball?

NICK. Well, yes ... no ... I mean, not very well.

GEORGE. Well, then ... we shall play sometime. Martha is a hundred and twenty-five ... years *old*. She weighs somewhat more than that. How old is *your* wife?

NICK. (*A little bewildered.*) She's twenty-six.

GEORGE. Martha is a remarkable woman. I would imagine she weighs around a hundred and ten.

NICK. Your ... wife ... weighs...?

GEORGE. No, no, my boy. Yours! *Your* wife. *My* wife is Martha.

NICK. Yes ... I know.

GEORGE. If you were married to Martha you would know what it means. (*Pause.*) But then, if I were married to your wife I would know what that means, too ... wouldn't I?

NICK. (*After a pause.*) Yes.

GEORGE. Martha says you're in the Math Department, or something.

NICK. (*As if for the hundredth time.*) No ... I'm not.

GEORGE. Martha is seldom mistaken ... maybe you *should* be in the Math Department, or something.

NICK. I'm a biologist. I'm in the Biology Department.

GEORGE. (*After a pause.*) Oh. (*Then, as if remembering something.*) OH!

NICK. Sir?

GEORGE. You're the one! You're the one's going to make all that trouble ... making everyone the same, rearranging the chromosomes, or whatever it is. Isn't that right?

NICK. (*With that small smile.*) Not exactly: chromosomes.

GEORGE. I'm very mistrustful. Do you believe ... (*Shifting in his chair.*) ... do you believe that people learn nothing from history? Not that there is nothing to learn, mind you, but that people learn nothing? I am in the History Department.

NICK. Well ...

GEORGE. I am a Doctor. A.B. ... M.A. ... Ph.D. ... ABMAPHID! Abmaphid has been variously described as a wasting disease of the frontal lobes, and as a wonder drug. It is actually both. I'm really very mistrustful. Biology, hunh? (*Nick does not answer ... nods ... looks.*) I read somewhere that science fiction is really not fiction at all ... that you people are rearranging my genes, so that everyone will be like everyone else. Now, I won't have that! It would be a ... shame. I mean ... look at me! Is it really such a good idea ... if everyone was forty-something and looked fifty-five? You didn't answer my question about history.

NICK. This genetic business you're talking about ...

GEORGE. Oh, that. (*Dismisses it with a wave of his hand.*) That's very upsetting ... very ... disappointing. But history is a great deal

more ... disappointing. I am in the History Department.

NICK. Yes ... you told me.

GEORGE. I know I told you ... I shall probably tell you several more times. Martha tells me often, that I am *in* the History Department ... as opposed to *being* the History Department ... in the sense of *running* the History Department. I do not run the History Department.

NICK. Well, I don't run the Biology Department.

GEORGE. You're twenty-one!

NICK. Twenty-eight.

GEORGE. Twenty-eight! Perhaps when you're forty-something and look fifty-five, you will run the History Department ...

NICK. ... Biology ...

GEORGE. ... the Biology Department. I *did* run the History Department, for four years, during the war, but that was because everybody was away. Then ... everybody came back ... because nobody got killed. That's New England for you. Isn't that amazing? Not one single man in this whole place got his head shot off. That's pretty irrational. (*Broods.*) Your wife doesn't have any hips ... has she ... does she?

NICK. What?

GEORGE. I don't mean to suggest that I'm hip-happy ... I'm not one of those thirty-six, twenty-two, seventy-eight men. Nosiree ... not me. Everything in proportion. I was implying that your wife is ... slim-hipped.

NICK. Yes ... she is.

GEORGE. (*Looking at the ceiling.*) What are they *doing* up there? I assume that's where they are.

NICK. (*False heartiness.*) You know women.

GEORGE. (*Gives Nick a long stare of feigned incredulity ... then his attention moves.*) Not one son-of-a-bitch got killed. Of course, nobody bombed Washington. No ... that's not fair. You have any kids?

NICK. Uh ... no ... not yet. (*Pause.*) You?

GEORGE. (*A kind of challenge.*) That's for me to know and you to find out.

NICK. Indeed?

GEORGE. No kids, hunh?

NICK. Not yet.

GEORGE. People do ... uh ... have kids. That's what I meant about history. You people are going to make them in test tubes,

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NICK. Not yet.

GEORGE. People do ... uh ... have kids. That's what I meant about history. You people are going to make them in test tubes,

aren't you? You biologists. Babies. What will become of the tax deduction? Has anyone figured that out yet? (*Nick, who can think of nothing better to do, laughs mildly.*) But you *are* going to have kids ... anyway. In spite of history.

NICK. (*Hedging.*) Yes ... certainly. We ... want to wait ... a little ... until we're settled.

GEORGE. And this ... (*With a hand sweep taking in not only the house, but the whole countryside.*) ... this is your heart's content — Illyria ... Penguin Island ... Gomorrah ... You think you're going to be happy here in New Carthage, eh?

NICK. (*A little defensively.*) I hope we'll stay here.

GEORGE. And every definition has its boundaries, eh? Well, it isn't a bad college, I guess. I mean ... it'll do. It isn't M.I.T ... it isn't U.C.L.A ... it isn't the Sorbonne ... or Moscow U., either, for that matter.

NICK. I don't mean ... forever.

GEORGE. Well, don't you let that get bandied about. The old man wouldn't like it. Martha's father expects loyalty and devotion out of his ... staff. I was going to use another word. Martha's father expects his ... staff ... to cling to the walls of this place, like the ivy ... to come here and grow old ... to fall in the line of service. One man, a professor of Latin and Elocution, actually fell in the cafeteria line, one lunch. He was buried, as many of us have been, and as many more of us will be, under the shrubbery around the chapel. It is said ... and I have no reason to doubt it ... that we make excellent fertilizer. But the old man is not going to be buried under the shrubbery ... the old man is not going to die. Martha's father has the staying power of one of those Micronesian tortoises. There are rumors ... which you must not breathe in front of Martha, for she foams at the mouth ... that the old man, her father, is over two hundred years old. There is probably an irony involved in this, but I am not drunk enough to figure out what it is. How many kids you going to have?

NICK. I ... I don't know ... My wife is ...

GEORGE. Slim-hipped. (*Rises.*) Have a drink.

NICK. Yes.

GEORGE. MARTHA! (*No answer.*) DAMN IT! (*To Nick.*) You asked me if I knew women ... Well, one of the things I do *not* know about them is what they talk about while the men are talking. (*Vaguely.*) I must find out some time.

MARTHA'S VOICE. WHADD'YA WANT?

NICK. *Have you been trying for years?*
GEORGE. *(After a long pause ... looking at him.)* Accommodation, malleability, adjustment ... those do seem to be in the order of things, don't they?
NICK. Don't try to put me in the same class with you!
GEORGE. *(Pause.)* Oh. *(Pause.)* No, of course not. Things are simpler with you ... you marry a woman because she's all blown up ... while I, in my clumsy, old-fashioned way ...
NICK. There was more to it than that!
GEORGE. Sure! I'll bet she has money, too!
NICK. *(Looks hurt. Then, determined, after a pause.)* Yes.
GEORGE. Yes? *(Joyfully.)* YES! You mean I was right? I hit it?
NICK. Well, you see ...
GEORGE. My God, what archery! First try, too. How about that!
NICK. You see ...
GEORGE. There were other things?
NICK. Yes.
GEORGE. To compensate.
NICK. Yes.
GEORGE. There always are. *(Sees that Nick is reacting badly.)* No, I'm sure there are. I didn't mean to be ... flip. There are *always* compensating factors ... as in the case of Martha and myself ... Now, on the surface of it ...
NICK. We sort of grew up together, you know ...
GEORGE. ... it looks to be a kind of knock-about, drag-out affair, on the *surface* of it ...
NICK. We knew each other from, oh God, I don't know, when we were *six*, or something ...
GEORGE. ... but somewhere back there, at the beginning of it, right when I first came to New Carthage, back then ...
NICK. *(With some irritation.)* I'm sorry.
GEORGE. Hm? Oh. No, no ... *I'm sorry.*
NICK. No ... it's ... it's all right.
GEORGE. No ... you go ahead.
NICK. No ... please.
GEORGE. I insist ... You're a guest. You go first.
NICK. Well, it seems a little silly ... now.
GEORGE. Nonsense! *(Pause.)* But if you were six, she must have been four, or something.
NICK. Maybe I was eight ... she was six. We ... we used to play ... doctor.

GEORGE. That's a good healthy heterosexual beginning.

NICK. *(Laughing.)* Yup.

GEORGE. The scientist even then, eh?

NICK. *(Laughs.)* Yeah. And it was ... always taken for granted ... you know ... by our families, and by us, too, I guess. And ... so, we did.

GEORGE. *(Pause.)* Did what?

NICK. We got married.

GEORGE. When you were eight?

NICK. No. No, of course not. Much later.

GEORGE. I wondered.

NICK. I wouldn't say there was any ... particular *passion* between us, even at the beginning ... of our marriage, I mean.

GEORGE. Well, certainly no surprise, no earth-shaking discoveries, after Doctor, and all.

NICK. *(Uncertainly.)* No ...

GEORGE. Everything's all pretty much the same, anyway ... in *spite* of what they say about Chinese women.

NICK. What is that?

GEORGE. Let me freshen you up. *(Takes Nick's glass.)*

NICK. Oh, thanks. After a while you don't get any drunker, do you?

GEORGE. Well, you *do* ... but it's different ... everything slows down ... you get sodden ... unless you can upchuck ... like your wife ... then you can sort of start all over again.

NICK. Everybody drinks a lot here in the East. *(Thinks about it.)* Everybody drinks a lot in the Middle-west, too.

GEORGE. We drink a great deal in this country, and I suspect we'll be drinking a great deal more, too ... if we survive. We should be Arabs or Italians ... the Arabs don't drink, and the Italians don't get drunk much, except on religious holidays. We should live on Crete, or something.

NICK. *(Sarcastically ... as if killing a joke.)* And that, of course, would make us cretins.

GEORGE. *(Mild surprise.)* So it would. *(Hands Nick his drink.)* Tell me about your wife's money.

NICK. *(Suddenly suspicious.)* Why?

GEORGE. Well ... don't then.

NICK. What do you want to know about my wife's money for? *(Ugly.)* Hunh?

GEORGE. Well, I thought it would be nice.

NICK. No, you didn't.

GEORGE. (*Still deceptively bland.*) All right ... I want to know about your wife's money because ... well, because I'm fascinated by the methodology ... by the pragmatic accommodation by which you wave-of-the-future boys are going to take over.

NICK. You're starting in again.

GEORGE. Am I? No I'm not. Look ... Martha has money, too. I mean, her father's been robbing this place blind for years, and ...

NICK. No, he hasn't. He has not.

GEORGE. He hasn't?

NICK. No.

GEORGE. (*Shrugs.*) Very well ... Martha's father has *not* been robbing this place blind for years, and Martha does not have any money. OK.?

NICK. We were talking about *my* wife's money ... not yours.

GEORGE. OK ... talk.

NICK. No. (*Pause.*) My father-in-law ... was a man of the Lord, and he was very rich.

GEORGE. What faith?

NICK. He ... my father-in-law ... was called by God when he was six, or something, and he started preaching, and he baptized people, and he saved them, and he traveled around a lot, and he became pretty famous ... not like some of them, but he became pretty famous ... and when he died he had a lot of money.

GEORGE. God's money.

NICK. No ... his own.

GEORGE. What happened to God's money?

NICK. He spent God's money ... and he saved his own. He built hospitals, and he sent off Mercy ships, and he brought the out-houses indoors, and he brought the people outdoors, into the sun, and he built three churches, or whatever they were, and two of them burned down ... and he ended up pretty rich.

GEORGE. (*After considering it.*) Well, I think that's very nice.

NICK. Yes. (*Pause. Giggles a little.*) And so, my wife's got some money.

GEORGE. But not God's money.

NICK. No. Her own.

GEORGE. Well, I think that's very nice. (*Nick giggles a little.*) Martha's got money because Martha's father's second wife ... not Martha's mother, but after Martha's mother died ... was a very old lady with warts who was very rich.

NICK. She was a witch.

GEORGE. She was a *good* witch, and she married the white mouse ... (*Nick begins to giggle.*) ... with the tiny red eyes ... and he must have nibbled her warts, or something like that, because she went up in a puff of smoke almost immediately. POUF!

NICK. POUF!

GEORGE. POUF! And all that was left, aside from some wart medicine, was a big fat will ... A peach pie, with some for the township of New Carthage, some for the college, some for Martha's daddy, and just this much for Martha.

NICK. (*Quite beside himself.*) Maybe ... maybe my father-in-law and the witch with the warts should have gotten together, because he was a mouse, too.

GEORGE. (*Urging Nick on.*) He was?

NICK. (*Breaking down.*) Sure ... he was a church mouse! (*They both laugh a great deal, but it is sad laughter ... eventually they subside, fall silent.*) Your wife never mentioned a stepmother.

GEORGE. (*Considers it.*) Well, maybe it isn't true.

NICK. (*Narrowing his eyes.*) And maybe it is.

GEORGE. Might be ... might not. Well, I think your story's a lot nicer ... about your pumped-up little wife, and your father-in-law who was a priest ...

NICK. He was not a priest ... he was a man of God.

GEORGE. Yes.

NICK. And my wife wasn't pumped up ... she blew up.

GEORGE. Yes, yes.

NICK. (*Giggling.*) Get things straight.

GEORGE. I'm sorry ... I will. I'm sorry.

NICK. OK.

GEORGE. You realize, of course, that I've been drawing you out on this stuff, not because I'm interested in your terrible lifehood, but only because you represent a direct and pertinent threat to my lifehood, and I want to get the goods on you.

NICK. (*Still amused.*) Sure ... sure.

GEORGE. I mean ... I've warned you ... you stand warned.

NICK. I stand warned. (*Laughs.*) It's you sneaky types worry me the most, you know. You ineffectual sons of bitches ... you're the worst.

GEORGE. Yes ... we are. Sneaky. An elbow in your steely-blue eye ... a knee in your solid gold groin ... we're the worst.

NICK. Yup.

GEORGE. Well, I'm glad you don't believe me ... I know you've got history on your side, and all ...

NICK. Unh-unh. *You've* got history on *your* side ... I've got biology on mine. History, biology.

GEORGE. I know the difference.

NICK. You don't act it.

GEORGE. No? I thought we'd decided that you'd take over the History Department first, before you took over the whole works. You know ... a step at a time.

NICK. (*Stretching ... luxuriating ... playing the game.*) Nyaah ... what I thought I'd do is ... I'd sort of insinuate myself generally, play around for a while, find all the weak spots, shore 'em up, but with my own name plate on them ... become a sort of a fact, and then turn into a ... a what...?

GEORGE. An inevitability.

NICK. Exactly ... An inevitability. You know ... Take over a few courses from the older men, start some special groups for myself ... plow a few pertinent wives ...

GEORGE. Now that's it! You can take over all the courses you want to, and get as much of the young elite together in the gymnasium as you like, but until you start plowing pertinent wives, you really aren't working. The way to a man's heart is through his wife's belly, and don't you forget it.

NICK. (*Playing along.*) Yeah ... I know.

GEORGE. And the women around here are no better than putas — you know, the South American ladies of the night. You know what they do in South America ... in Rio? The putas? Do you know? They hiss ... like geese ... They stand around in the street and they hiss at you ... like a bunch of geese.

NICK. Gangle.

GEORGE. Hm?

NICK. Gangle ... gangle of geese ... not bunch ... gangle.

GEORGE. Well, if you're going to get all cute about it, all ornithological, it's gaggle ... not gangle, *gaggle*.

NICK. Gaggle? Not Gangle?

GEORGE. Yes, gaggle.

NICK. (*Crestfallen.*) Oh.

GEORGE. Oh. Yes ... Well they stand around on the street and they hiss at you, like a bunch of geese. All the faculty wives, downtown in New Carthage, in front of the A&P, hissing away like a bunch of geese. That's the way to power — plow 'em all!

NICK. (*Still playing along.*) I'll bet you're right.

GEORGE. Well, I am.

NICK. And I bet your wife's the biggest goose in the gangle ...
gaggle, isn't she...? Her father president, and all.

GEORGE. You bet your historical inevitability she is!

NICK. Yessirree. (*Rubs his hands together.*) Well, now, I'd just better get her off in a corner and mount her like a goddamn dog, eh?

GEORGE. Why, you'd certainly better.

NICK. (*Looks at George a minute, his expression a little sick.*) You know, I almost think you're serious.

GEORGE. (*Toasting him.*) No, baby ... *you* almost think you're serious, and it scares the hell out of you.

NICK. (*Exploding in disbelief.*) ME!

GEORGE. Yes ... you.

NICK. You're kidding!

GEORGE. (*Like a father.*) I wish I were ... I'll give you some good advice if you want me to ...

NICK. Good advice! From you? Oh boy! (*Starts to laugh.*)

GEORGE. You haven't learned yet ... Take it wherever you can get it ... Listen to me, now.

NICK. Come off it!

GEORGE. I'm giving you good advice, now.

NICK. Good God...!

GEORGE. There's quicksand here, and you'll be dragged down, just as ...

NICK. Oh boy...!

GEORGE. ... before you know it ... sucked down. (*Nick laughs derisively.*) You disgust me on principle, and you're a smug son of a bitch personally, but I'm trying to give you a survival kit. DO YOU HEAR ME?

NICK. (*Still laughing.*) I hear you. You come in loud.

GEORGE. ALL RIGHT!

NICK. Hey, Honey.

GEORGE. (*Silence. Then quietly.*) All right ... OK. You want to play it by ear, right? Everything's going to work out anyway, because the timetable's history, right?

NICK. Right ... right. You just tend to your knitting, grandma. ... I'll be OK.

GEORGE. (*After a silence.*) I've tried to ... tried to reach you ... to ...

NICK. (*Contemptuously.*) ... make contact?

GEORGE. Yes.

NICK. (*Sniff.*) ... communicate?

GEORGE. Yes. Exactly.

NICK. Aw ... that *is* touching ... that is ... downright moving ... that's what it is. (*With sudden vehemence.*) UP YOURS!

GEORGE. (*Brief pause.*) Hm?

NICK. (*Threatening.*) You heard me!

GEORGE. (*At Nick, not to him.*) You take the trouble to construct a civilization ... to ... to build a society, based on the principles of ... of principle ... you endeavor to make communicable sense out of natural order, morality out of the unnatural disorder of man's mind ... you make government and art, and realize that they are, must be, both the same ... you bring things to the saddest of all points ... to the point where there *is* something to lose ... then all at once, through all the music, through all the sensible sounds of men building, attempting, comes the *Dies Irae*. And what is it? What does the trumpet sound? Up yours. I suppose there's justice to it, after all the years ... Up yours.

NICK. (*Brief pause ... then applauding.*) Ha, ha! Bravo! Ha, ha! (*Laughs on. And Martha reenters, leading Honey, who is wan but smiling bravely.*)

HONEY. (*Grandly.*) Thank you ... thank you.

MARTHA. Here we are, a little shaky, but on our feet.

GEORGE. Goodie.

NICK. What? Oh ... OH! Hi, Honey ... you better?

HONEY. A little bit, dear ... I'd better sit down, though.

NICK. Sure ... c'mon ... you sit by me.

HONEY. Thank you, dear.

GEORGE. (*Beneath his breath.*) Touching ... touching.

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Well? Aren't you going to apologize?

GEORGE. (*Squinting.*) For what, Martha?

MARTHA. For making the little lady throw up, what else?

GEORGE. I did not make her throw up.

MARTHA. You most certainly did!

GEORGE. I did not!

HONEY. (*Papal gesture.*) No, now ... no.

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Well, who do you think did ... Sexy over there? You think he made his *own* little wife sick?

GEORGE. (*Helpfully.*) Well, you make *me* sick.

MARTHA. THAT'S DIFFERENT!

HONEY. No, now. I ... I throw up ... I mean, I get sick ... occasionally, all by myself ... without any reason.

GEORGE. Is that a fact?

song-writer yet. (*Jiggles the ice in her glass.*) CLINK! (*Does it again.*)
CLINK! (*Giggles, repeats it several times.*) CLINK!... CLINK!...
CLINK!... CLINK! (*Nick enters while Martha is clinking; he stands
in the hall entrance and watches her; finally he comes in.*)

NICK. My God, you've gone crazy too.

MARTHA. Clink?

NICK. I said, you've gone crazy too.

MARTHA. (*Considers it.*) Probably ... probably.

NICK. You've all gone crazy: I come back downstairs, and what happens ...

MARTHA. What happens?

NICK. ... my wife's gone into the can with a liquor bottle, and she winks at me ... winks at me!...

MARTHA. (*Sadly.*) She's never wunk at you; what a shame ...

NICK. She is lying down on the floor again, the tiles, all curled up and she starts peeling the label off the liquor bottle, the brandy bottle ...

MARTHA. ... we'll never get the deposit back that way ...

NICK. ... and I ask her what she's doing, and she goes: shhhhhh!
nobody knows I'm here; and I come back in here, and you're sitting there going Clink!, for God's sake. Clink!

MARTHA. CLINK!

NICK. You've all gone crazy.

MARTHA. Yes. Sad but true.

NICK. Where is your husband?

MARTHA. He is vanish-ed. Pouf!

NICK. You're all crazy: nuts.

MARTHA. (*Affects a brogue.*) Awww, 'tis the refuge we take when the unreality of the world weighs too heavy on our tiny heads. (*Normal voice again.*) Relax; sink into it; you're no better than anybody else.

NICK. (*Wearily.*) I think I am.

MARTHA. (*Her glass to her mouth.*) You're certainly a flop in some departments.

NICK. (*Wincing.*) I beg your pardon...?

MARTHA. (*Unnecessarily loud.*) I said, you're certainly a flop in some ...

NICK. (*He, too, too loud.*) I'm sorry you're disappointed.

MARTHA. (*Braying.*) I didn't say I was disappointed! Stupid!

NICK. You should try me some time when we haven't been drinking for ten hours, and maybe ...

MARTHA. (*Still braying.*) I wasn't talking about your potential; I was talking about your goddamn performance.

NICK. (*Softly.*) Oh.

MARTHA. (*She softer, too.*) Your potential's fine. It's dandy. (*Wiggles her eyebrows.*) Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such a dandy potential in a long time. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop.

NICK. (*Snapping it out.*) Everybody's a flop to you! Your husband's a flop, *I'm* a flop ...

MARTHA. (*Dismissing him.*) You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops. (*More or less to herself.*) I disgust me. I pass my life in crummy, totally pointless infidelities ... (*Laughs ruefully.*) *would-be* infidelities. Hump the Hostess? That's a laugh. A bunch of boozed-up ... impotent lunk-heads. Martha makes goo-goo eyes and the lunk-heads grin, and roll their beautiful, beautiful eyes back, and grin some more, and Martha licks her chops, and the lunk-heads slap over to the bar to pick up a little courage, *and* they pick up a little courage, and they bounce back over to old Martha, who does a little dance for them, which heats them all up ... mentally ... and so they slap over to the bar again, and pick up a little more courage, and their wives and sweethearts stick their noses up in the air ... right through the ceiling, sometimes ... which sends the lunk-heads back to the soda fountain again where they fuel up some more while Martha-poo sits there with her dress up over her head ... suffocating — you don't know how *stuffy* it is with your dress up over your head — suffocating! waiting for the lunk-heads; so, *finally* they get their courage up ... but that's all, baby! Oh my, there is sometimes some very nice potential, but, oh my! My, my, my. (*Brightly.*) But that's how it is in civilized society. (*To herself again.*) All the gorgeous lunk-heads. Poor babies. (*To Nick, now; earnestly.*) There is only one man in my life who has ever ... made me happy. Do you know that? One!

NICK. The ... the what-do-you-call-it? ... uh ... the lawn mower, or something?

MARTHA. No; I'd forgotten him. But when I think about him and me it's almost like being a voyeur. Hunh. No; I didn't mean him; I meant George, of course. (*No response from Nick.*) Uh ... George; my husband.

NICK. (*Disbelieving.*) You're kidding.

MARTHA. Am I?

NICK. You must be. Him?

MARTHA. Him.

NICK. (*As if in on a joke.*) Sure; sure.

MARTHA. You don't believe it.

NICK. (*Mocking.*) Why, of course I do.

MARTHA. You always deal in appearances?

NICK. (*Derisively.*) Oh, for God's sake ...

MARTHA. ... George who is out somewhere there in the dark ... George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK. (*Echoing, still not believing.*) Sad.

MARTHA. ... whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: Yes, this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK. (*Puzzled.*) Sad.

MARTHA. ... who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension ...

NICK. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

MARTHA. Some day ... hah! some *night* ... some stupid, liquor-ridden night ... I will go too far ... and I'll either break the man's back ... or push him off for good ... which is what I deserve.

NICK. I don't think he's got a vertebra intact.

MARTHA. (*Laughing at him.*) You don't, huh? You don't think so. Oh, little boy, you got yourself hunched over that microphone of yours ...

NICK. Microscope ...

MARTHA. ... yes ... and you don't see anything, do you? You see everything but the goddamn mind; you see all the little specks and crap, but you don't see what goes on, do you?

NICK. I know when a man's had his back broken; I can see that.

MARTHA. Can you!

NICK. You're damn right.

MARTHA. Oh ... you know so little. And you're going to take over the world, hunh?

NICK. All right, now ...

MARTHA. You think a man's got his back broken 'cause he makes like a clown and walks bent, hunh? Is that *really* all you know?

NICK. I said, all *right!*

MARTHA. Ohhhh! The stallion's mad, hunh. The gelding's all upset. Ha, ha, ha, HA!

NICK. (*Softly, wounded.*) You ... you swing wild, don't you.

MARTHA. (*Triumphant.*) HAH!

NICK. Just ... anywhere.

MARTHA. HAH! I'm a Gatling gun. Hahahahahahahahaha!

NICK. (*In wonder.*) Aimless ... butchery. Pointless.

MARTHA. Aw! You poor little bastard.

NICK. Hit out at everything. (*The door chimes chime.*)

MARTHA. Go answer the door.

NICK. (*Amazed.*) What did you say?

MARTHA. I said, go answer the door. What are you, deaf?

NICK. (*Trying to get it straight.*) You ... want me ... to go answer the door?

MARTHA. That's right, lunk-head; answer the door. There must be something you can do well; or, are you too drunk to do that, too? Can't get the latch up, either?

NICK. Look, there's no need ... (*Door chimes again.*)

MARTHA. Answer it! (*Softer.*) You can be houseboy around here for a while. You can start off being houseboy right now.

NICK. Look, lady, I'm no flunky to you.

MARTHA. (*Cheerfully.*) Sure you are! You're ambitious, aren't you, boy? You didn't chase me around the kitchen and up the goddamn stairs out of mad, driven passion, did you now? You were thinking a little bit about your career, weren't you? Well, you can just houseboy your way up the ladder for a while.

NICK. There's no limit to you, is there?

MARTHA. (*Calmly, surely.*) No, baby; none. Go answer the door.

NICK. (*Considers, gives in, moves toward the door. Chimes again.*) I'm coming, for Christ's sake!

MARTHA. (*Claps her hands.*) Ha HA! Wonderful; marvelous. (*Sings.*) "Just a gigolo, everywhere I go, people always say ..."

NICK. STOP THAT!

MARTHA. (*Giggles.*) Sorry, baby; go on now; open the little door.

NICK. (*With great rue.*) Christ. (*He flings open the door, and a hand thrusts into the opening a great bunch of snapdragons; they stay there for a moment. Nick strains his eyes to see who is behind them.*)

MARTHA. Oh, how lovely!

GEORGE. (*Appearing in the doorway, the snapdragons covering his face; speaks in a hideously cracked falsetto.*) Flores; flores para los

HONEY. (*Giggling a little as she and Nick advance.*) Oh, dear.
GEORGE. (*Imitating Honey's giggle.*) Hee, hee, hee, hee.
MARTHA. (*Swinging on George.*) ... you cut that out!
GEORGE. (*Innocence and hurt.*) Martha! (*To Honey and Nick.*)
Martha's a devil with language; she really is.
MARTHA. Hey, *kids* ... sit down.
HONEY. (*As she sits.*) Oh, isn't this lovely.
NICK. (*Perfunctorily.*) Yes indeed ... very handsome.
MARTHA. Well, thanks.
NICK. (*Indicating the abstract painting.*) Who ... who did the...?
MARTHA. That? Oh, that's by ...
GEORGE. ... some Greek with a mustache Martha attacked one
night in ...
HONEY. (*To save the situation.*) Oh, ho, ho, ho, HO.
NICK. It's got a ... a ...
GEORGE. A quiet intensity?
NICK. Well, no ... a ...
GEORGE. Oh. (*Pause.*) Well, then, a certain noisy relaxed quality,
maybe?
NICK. (*Knows what George is doing, but stays grimly, coolly, polite.*)
No. What I meant was ...
GEORGE. How about ... uh ... a quietly noisy relaxed intensity.
HONEY. Dear! You're being joshed.
NICK. (*Cold.*) I'm aware of that. (*A brief, awkward silence.*)
GEORGE. (*Truly.*) I *am* sorry. (*Nick nods condescending forgiveness.*)
What it is, actually, is it's a pictorial representation of the order of
Martha's mind.
MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA! Make the kids a drink, George. What
do you want, kids? What do you want to drink, hunh?
NICK. Honey? What would you like?
HONEY. I don't know, dear ... A little brandy, maybe. "Never
mix — never worry." (*She giggles.*)
GEORGE. Brandy? Just brandy? Simple; simple. (*Moves to the
portable bar.*) What about you ... uh ...
NICK. Bourbon on the rocks, if you don't mind.
GEORGE. (*As he makes drinks.*) Mind? No, I don't mind. I don't
think I mind. Martha? Rubbing alcohol for you?
MARTHA. Sure. "Never mix — never worry."
GEORGE. Martha's tastes in liquor have come down ... simpli-
fied over the years ... crystallized. Back when I was courting
Martha — well, I don't know if that's exactly the right word for it

— but back when I was courting Martha ...

MARTHA. (*Cheerfully.*) Screw, sweetie!

GEORGE. (*Returning with Honey and Nick's drinks.*) At any rate, back when I was courting Martha, she'd order the damnedest things! You wouldn't believe it! We'd go into a bar ... you know, a bar ... a whiskey, beer, and bourbon bar ... and what she'd do would be, she'd screw up her face, think real hard, and come up with ... brandy Alexanders, crème de cacao frappés, gimlets, flaming punch bowls ... seven-layer liqueur things.

MARTHA. They were good ... I liked them.

GEORGE. Real lady-like little drinkies.

MARTHA. Hey, where's my rubbing alcohol?

GEORGE. (*Returning to the portable bar.*) But the years have brought to Martha a sense of essentials ... the knowledge that cream is for coffee, lime juice for pies, and alcohol (*Brings Martha her drink.*) pure and simple ... here you are, angel ... for the pure and simple. (*Raises his glass.*) For the mind's blind eye, the heart's ease, and the liver's craw. Down the hatch, all.

MARTHA. (*To them all.*) Cheers, dears. (*They all drink.*) You have a poetic nature, George ... a Dylan Thomas-y quality that gets me right where I live.

GEORGE. Vulgar girl! With guests here!

MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA! (*To Honey and Nick.*) Hey; hey! (*Sings, conducts with her drink in her hand. Honey joins in toward the end.*)

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf ...

(*Martha and Honey laugh; Nick smiles.*)

HONEY. Oh, wasn't that funny? That was so funny ...

NICK. (*Snapping to.*) Yes ... yes, it was.

MARTHA. I thought I'd bust a gut; I really did ... I really thought I'd bust a gut laughing. George didn't like it ... George didn't think it was funny at all.

GEORGE. Lord, Martha, do we have to go through this again?

MARTHA. I'm trying to shame you into a sense of humor, angel, that's all.

GEORGE. (*Over-patiently, to Honey and Nick.*) Martha didn't think I laughed loud enough. Martha thinks that unless ... as she demurely puts it ... that unless you "bust a gut" you aren't amused. You know? Unless you carry on like a hyena you aren't having any fun.

HONEY. Well, I certainly had fun ... it was a *wonderful* party.
NICK. (*Attempting enthusiasm.*) Yes ... it certainly was.
HONEY. (*To Martha.*) And your father! Oh! He is so marvelous!
NICK. (*As above.*) Yes ... yes, he is.
HONEY. Oh, I tell you.
MARTHA. (*Genuinely proud.*) He's quite a guy, isn't he? Quite a guy.
GEORGE. (*At Nick.*) And you'd better believe it!
HONEY. (*Admonishing George.*) Ohhhhhhhhhh! He's a wonderful man!
GEORGE. I'm not trying to tear him down. He's a god, we all know that.
MARTHA. You lay off my father!
GEORGE. Yes, love. (*To Nick.*) All I mean is ... when you've had as many of these faculty parties as I have ...
NICK. (*Killing the attempted rapport.*) I rather appreciated it. I mean, aside from enjoying it, I appreciated it. You know, when you're new at a place ... (*George eyes him suspiciously.*) Meeting everyone, getting introduced around ... getting to know some of the men ... When I was teaching in Kansas ...
HONEY. You won't believe it, but we had to make our way all by *ourselves* ... isn't that right, dear?
NICK. Yes, it is ... We ...
HONEY. ... We had to make our own way ... I had to go up to wives ... in the library, or at the supermarket ... and say, "Hello, I'm new here ... you must be Mrs. So-and-so, Doctor So-and-so's wife." It really wasn't very nice at all.
MARTHA. Well, *Daddy* knows how to run things.
NICK. (*Not enough enthusiasm.*) He's a remarkable man.
MARTHA. You bet your sweet life.
GEORGE. (*To Nick ... a confidence, but not whispered.*) Let me tell you a secret, baby. There are easier things in the world, if you happen to be teaching at a university, there are easier things than being married to the daughter of the president of that university. There are easier things in this world.
MARTHA. (*Loud ... to no one in particular.*) It *should* be an extraordinary opportunity ... for *some* men it would be the chance of a lifetime!
GEORGE. (*To Nick ... a solemn wink.*) There are, believe me, easier things in this world.
NICK. Well, I can understand how it might make for some ... awkwardness, perhaps ... conceivably, but ...

MARTHA. *Some men would give their right arm for the chance!*
GEORGE. *(Quietly.)* Alas, Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat more private portion of the anatomy.
MARTHA. *(A snarl of dismissal and contempt.)* NYYYYYAAAAH-HHHH!
HONEY. *(Rising quickly.)* I wonder if you could show me where the ... *(Her voice trails off.)*
GEORGE. *(To Martha, indicating Honey.)* Martha ...
NICK. *(To Honey.)* Are you all right?
HONEY. Of course, dear. I want to ... put some powder on my nose.
GEORGE. *(As Martha is not getting up.)* Martha, won't you show her where we keep the ... euphemism?
MARTHA. Hm? What? Oh! Sure! *(Rises.)* I'm sorry, c'mon. I want to show you the house.
HONEY. I think I'd like to ...
MARTHA. ... wash up? Sure ... c'mon with me. *(Takes Honey by the arm. To the men:)* You two do some men talk for a while.
HONEY. *(To Nick.)* We'll be back, dear.
MARTHA. *(To George.)* Honestly, George, you burn me up!
GEORGE. *(Happily.)* All right.
MARTHA. You really do, George.
GEORGE. OK, Martha ... OK. Just ... trot along.
MARTHA. You really do.
GEORGE. OK. OK. Vanish.
MARTHA. *(Practically dragging Honey out with her.)* C'mon.
GEORGE. Vanish. *(The women have gone.)* So? What'll it be?
NICK. Oh, I don't know ... I'll stick to bourbon, I guess.
GEORGE. *(Takes Nick's glass, goes to portable bar.)* That what you were drinking over at Parnassus?
NICK. Over at...?
GEORGE. Parnassus.
NICK. I don't understand.
GEORGE. Skip it. *(Hands him his drink.)* One bourbon.
NICK. Thanks.
GEORGE. It's just a private joke between li'l ol' Martha and me. *(They sit.)* So? *(Pause.)* So ... you're in the math department, eh?
NICK. No ... uh, no.
GEORGE. Martha said you were. I think that's what she said. *(Not too friendly.)* What made you decide to be a teacher?
NICK. Oh ... well, the same things that ... uh ... motivated you,

GEORGE. Yes. Exactly.

NICK. Aw ... that *is* touching ... that is ... downright moving ... that's what it is. (*With sudden vehemence.*) UP YOURS!

GEORGE. (*Brief pause.*) Hm?

NICK. (*Threatening.*) You heard me!

GEORGE. (*At Nick, not to him.*) You take the trouble to construct a civilization ... to ... to build a society, based on the principles of ... of principle ... you endeavor to make communicable sense out of natural order, morality out of the unnatural disorder of man's mind ... you make government and art, and realize that they are, must be, both the same ... you bring things to the saddest of all points ... to the point where there *is* something to lose ... then all at once, through all the music, through all the sensible sounds of men building, attempting, comes the *Dies Irae*. And what is it? What does the trumpet sound? Up yours. I suppose there's justice to it, after all the years ... Up yours.

NICK. (*Brief pause ... then applauding.*) Ha, ha! Bravo! Ha, ha! (*Laughs on. And Martha reenters, leading Honey, who is wan but smiling bravely.*)

HONEY. (*Grandly.*) Thank you ... thank you.

MARTHA. Here we are, a little shaky, but on our feet.

GEORGE. Goodie.

NICK. What? Oh ... OH! Hi, Honey ... you better?

HONEY. A little bit, dear ... I'd better sit down, though.

NICK. Sure ... c'mon ... you sit by me.

HONEY. Thank you, dear.

GEORGE. (*Beneath his breath.*) Touching ... touching.

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Well? Aren't you going to apologize?

GEORGE. (*Squinting.*) For what, Martha?

MARTHA. For making the little lady throw up, what else?

GEORGE. I did not make her throw up.

MARTHA. You most certainly did!

GEORGE. I did not!

HONEY. (*Papal gesture.*) No, now ... no.

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Well, who do you think did ... Sexy over there? You think he made his *own* little wife sick?

GEORGE. (*Helpfully.*) Well, you make *me* sick.

MARTHA. THAT'S DIFFERENT!

HONEY. No, now. I ... I throw up ... I mean, I get sick ... occasionally, all by myself ... without any reason.

GEORGE. Is that a fact?

NICK. You're ... you're delicate, Honey.

HONEY. (*Proudly.*) I've always done it.

GEORGE. Like Big Ben.

NICK. (*A warning.*) Watch it!

HONEY. And the doctors say there's nothing wrong with me ... organically. You know?

NICK. Of course there isn't.

HONEY. Why, just before we got married, I developed ... appendicitis ... or everybody *thought* it was appendicitis ... but it turned out to be ... it was a ... (*Laughs briefly.*) ... false alarm. (*George and Nick exchange glances.*)

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Get me a drink. (*George moves to the bar.*) George makes everybody sick ... When our son was just a little boy, he used to ...

GEORGE. Don't, Martha ...

MARTHA. ... he used to throw up all the time, because of George ...

GEORGE. I said, don't!

MARTHA. It got so bad that whenever George came into the room he'd start right in retching, and ...

GEORGE. ... the real reason (*Spits out the words.*) our son ... used to throw up all the time, wife and lover, was nothing more complicated than that he couldn't stand you fiddling at him all the time, breaking into his bedroom with your kimono flying, fiddling at him all the time, with your liquor breath on him, and your hands all over his ...

MARTHA. YEAH? And I suppose that's why he ran away from home twice in one month, too. (*Now to the guests.*) Twice in one month! Six times in one year!

GEORGE. (*Also to the guests.*) Our son ran away from home all the time because Martha here used to corner him.

MARTHA. (*Braying.*) I NEVER CORNERED THE SON OF A BITCH IN MY LIFE!

GEORGE. (*Handing Martha her drink.*) He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd say, "Mama's always coming at me." That's what he'd say.

MARTHA. Liar!

GEORGE. (*Shrugging.*) Well, that's the way it was ... you were always coming at him. I thought it was very embarrassing.

NICK. If you thought it was so embarrassing, what are you talking about it for?

HONEY. (*Admonishing.*) Dear...!
MARTHA. Yeah! (*To Nick.*) Thanks, sweetheart.
GEORGE. (*To them all.*) I didn't want to talk about him at all ...
I would have been perfectly happy not to discuss the whole subject
... I never want to talk about it.
MARTHA. Yes you do.
GEORGE. When we're alone, maybe.
MARTHA. We're alone!
GEORGE. Uh ... no, Love ... we've got guests.
MARTHA. (*With a covetous look at Nick.*) We sure have.
HONEY. Could I have a little brandy? I think I'd like a little brandy.
NICK. Do you think you should?
HONEY. Oh yes ... yes, dear.
GEORGE. (*Moving to the bar again.*) Sure! Fill 'er up!
NICK. Honey, I don't think you ...
HONEY. (*Petulance creeping in.*) It will steady me, *dear*. I feel a
little unsteady.
GEORGE. Hell, you can't walk steady on half a bottle ... got to
do it right.
HONEY. Yes. (*To Martha.*) I love brandy ... I really do.
MARTHA. (*Somewhat abstracted.*) Good for you.
NICK. (*Giving up.*) Well, if you think it's a good idea ...
HONEY. (*Really testy.*) I know what's best for me, dear.
NICK. (*Not even pleasant.*) Yes ... I'm sure you do.
HONEY. (*George hands her a brandy.*) Oh, goodie! Thank you. (*To
Nick.*) Of course I do, dear.
MARTHA. You two men have it out while we were gone? George
tell you his side of things? He bring you to tears, hunh?
NICK. Well ... no ...
GEORGE. No, what we did, actually, was ... we sort of danced
around.
MARTHA. Oh, yeah? Cute!
HONEY. Oh, I love dancing.
NICK. He didn't mean that, Honey.
HONEY. Well, I didn't think he did! Two grown men dancing ...
heavens!
MARTHA. You mean he didn't start in on how he would have
amounted to something if it hadn't been for Daddy? How his high
moral sense wouldn't even let him *try* to better himself? No?
NICK. (*Qualified.*) No ...
MARTHA. And he didn't run on about how he tried to publish a

goddamn book, and Daddy wouldn't let him.
NICK. A book? No.
GEORGE. Please, Martha ...
NICK. (*Egging her on.*) A book? What book?
GEORGE. (*Pleading.*) Please. Just a book.
MARTHA. (*Mock incredulity.*) Just a book!
GEORGE. Please, Martha!
MARTHA. (*Almost disappointed.*) Well, I guess you didn't get the whole sad story. What's the matter with you, George? You given up?
GEORGE. (*Calm ... serious.*) No ... no. It's just I've got to figure out some new way to fight you, Martha. Guerrilla tactics, maybe ... internal subversion ... I don't know. Something.
MARTHA. Well, you figure it out, and you let me know when you do.
GEORGE. (*Cheery.*) All right, Love.
HONEY. Why don't we dance? I'd love some dancing.
NICK. Honey ...
HONEY. I would! I'd love some dancing.
NICK. Honey ...
HONEY. I *want* some! I want some dancing!
GEORGE. All right...! For heaven's sake ... we'll have some dancing.
HONEY. (*All sweetness again. To Martha:*) Oh, I'm so glad ... I just love dancing. Don't you?
MARTHA. (*With a glance at Nick.*) Yeah ... yeah, that's not a bad idea.
NICK. (*Genuinely nervous.*) Gee.
GEORGE. Gee.
HONEY. I dance like the wind.
MARTHA. (*Without comment.*) Yeah?
GEORGE. (*Picking a record.*) Martha had her daguerreotype in the paper once ... oh 'bout twenty-five years ago ... Seems she took second prize in one o' them seven-day dancin' contest things ... biceps all bulging, holding up her partner.
MARTHA. Will you put a record on and shut up?
GEORGE. Certainly, Love. (*To all.*) How are we going to work this? Mixed doubles?
MARTHA. Well, you certainly don't think I'm going to dance with *you*, do you?
GEORGE. (*Considers it.*) Nooooooo ... not with him around ... that's for sure. And not with twinkle-toes here, either.

HONEY. I'll dance with anyone ... I'll dance by myself.
NICK. Honey ...
HONEY. I dance like the wind.
GEORGE. All right, kiddies ... choose up and hit the sack. *(Music starts ... Second movement, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.)*
HONEY. *(Up, dancing by herself.)* De, de de da da, da-da de, da da-da de da ... wonderful...!
NICK. Honey ...
MARTHA. All right, George ... cut that out!
HONEY. Dum, de de da da, da-da de, dum, de da da da ... Wheeeee...!
MARTHA. Cut it out, George!
GEORGE. *(Pretending not to hear.)* What, Martha? What?
NICK. Honey ...
MARTHA. *(As George turns up the volume.)* CUT IT OUT, GEORGE!
GEORGE. WHAT?
MARTHA. *(Gets up, moves quickly, threateningly, to George.)* All right, you son of a bitch ...
GEORGE. *(Record off, at once. Quietly.)* What did you say, Love?
MARTHA. You son of a ...
HONEY. *(In an arrested posture.)* You stopped! Why did you stop?
NICK. Honey ...
HONEY. *(To Nick, snapping.)* Stop that!
GEORGE. I thought it was fitting, Martha.
MARTHA. Oh you did, hunh?
HONEY. You're always at me when I'm having a good time.
NICK. *(Trying to remain civil.)* I'm sorry, Honey.
HONEY. Just ... leave me alone!
GEORGE. Well, why don't you choose, Martha? *(Moves away from the phonograph ... leaves it to Martha.)* Martha's going to run things ... the little lady's going to lead the band.
HONEY. I like to dance and you don't want me to.
NICK. I like you to dance.
HONEY. Just ... leave me alone. *(She sits ... takes a drink.)*
GEORGE. Martha's going to put on some rhythm she understands ... *Sacre du Printemps*, maybe. *(Moves ... sits by Honey.)* Hi, sexy.
HONEY. *(A little giggle-scream.)* Oooooohhhhh!
GEORGE. *(Laughs mockingly.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Choose it, Martha ... do your stuff!
MARTHA. *(Concentrating on the machine.)* You're damn right!

GEORGE. *(To Honey.)* You want to dance with me, angel-tits?
NICK. What did you call my wife?
GEORGE. *(Derisively.)* Oh boy!
HONEY. *(Petulantly.)* No! If I can't do my interpretive dance, I don't want to dance with anyone. I'll just sit here and ... *(Shrugs ... drinks.)*
MARTHA. *(Record on ... a jazzy slow pop tune.)* OK stuff, let's go. *(Grabs Nick.)*
NICK. Hm? Oh ... hi
MARTHA. Hi. *(They dance, close together, slowly.)*
HONEY. *(Pouting.)* We'll just sit here and watch.
GEORGE. That's right!
MARTHA. *(To Nick.)* Hey, you *are* strong, aren't you?
NICK. Unh-hunh.
MARTHA. I like that.
NICK. Unh-hunh.
HONEY. They're dancing like they've danced before.
GEORGE. It's a familiar dance ... they both know it ...
MARTHA. Don't be shy.
NICK. I'm ... not ...
GEORGE. *(To Honey.)* It's a very old ritual, monkey-nipples ... old as they come.
HONEY. I ... I don't know what you mean. *(Nick and Martha move apart now and dance on either side of where George and Honey are sitting; they face each other, and while their feet move but little, their bodies undulate congruently ... It is as if they were pressed together.)*
MARTHA. I like the way you move.
NICK. I like the way you move, too.
GEORGE. *(To Honey.)* They like the way they move.
HONEY. *(Not entirely with it.)* That's nice.
MARTHA. *(To Nick.)* I'm surprised George didn't give you his side of things.
GEORGE. *(To Honey.)* Aren't they cute?
NICK. Well, he didn't.
MARTHA. That surprises me. *(Perhaps Martha's statements are more or less in time to the music.)*
NICK. Does it?
MARTHA. Yeah ... he usually does ... when he gets the chance.
NICK. Well, what do you know.
MARTHA. It's really a very sad story.
GEORGE. You have ugly talents, Martha.

NICK. Is it?
MARTHA. It would make you weep.
GEORGE. Hideous gifts.
NICK. Is that so?
GEORGE. Don't encourage her.
MARTHA. Encourage me.
NICK. Go on. *(They may undulate toward each other and then move back.)*
GEORGE. I warn you ... don't encourage her.
MARTHA. He warns you ... don't encourage me.
NICK. I heard him ... tell me more.
MARTHA. *(Consciously making rhymed speech.)*
Well, Georgie-boy had lots of big ambitions
In spite of something funny in his past ...
GEORGE. *(Quietly warning.)* Martha ...
MARTHA.
Which Georgie-boy here turned into a novel ...
His first attempt and also his last ...
Hey! I rhymed! I rhymed!
GEORGE. I warn you, Martha.
NICK. Yeah ... you rhymed. Go on, go on.
MARTHA. But Daddy took a look at Georgie's novel ...
GEORGE. You're looking for a punch in the mouth ... You know that, Martha.
MARTHA. Do tell!... and he was very shocked by what he read.
NICK. He was?
MARTHA. Yes ... he was ... A novel all about a naughty boy-child ...
GEORGE. *(Rising.)* I will not tolerate this!
NICK. *(Offhand, to George.)* Oh, can it.
MARTHA. ... ha, ha! Naughty boychild who ... uh ... who killed his mother and his father dead.
NICK. *(Remembering something related.)* Hey ... wait a minute ...
GEORGE. STOP IT, MARTHA!
MARTHA. And Daddy said ... Look here, I will not let you publish such a thing ...
GEORGE. *(Rushes to phonograph ... rips the record off.)* That's it! The dancing's over. That's it. Go on, now!
NICK. What do you think you're doing, hunh?
HONEY. *(Happily.)* Violence! Violence!
MARTHA. *(Loud: a pronouncement.)* And Daddy said ... Look here,

kid, you don't think for a second I'm going to let you publish this crap, do you? Not on your life, baby ... not while you're teaching here ... You publish that goddamn book and you're out ... on your ass!

GEORGE. DESIST! DESIST!

MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA!

NICK. *(Laughing.)* De ... sist!

HONEY. Oh, violence ... violence!

MARTHA. Why, the idea! A teacher at a respected, conservative institution like this, in a town like New Carthage, publishing a book like that? If you respect your position here, young man, young ... whippersnapper, you'll just withdraw that manuscript ...

GEORGE. I will not be made mock of!

NICK. He will not be made mock of, for Christ's sake. *(Laughs. Honey joins in the laughter, not knowing exactly why.)*

GEORGE. *(Infuriated.)* I will not! *(All three are laughing at him.)*

MARTHA. *(Her own voice now.)* And you want to know the clincher? You want to know what big brave Georgie did?

GEORGE. *(Advancing on her.)* You will not say this!

NICK. *(Sensing the danger.)* Hey.

MARTHA. The hell I won't. Keep away from me, you bastard! *(Backs off a little.)* He caved in is what he did. He came home and he threw the book in the fireplace and burned it!

GEORGE. *(On her.)* I'LL KILL YOU! *(Grabs her by the throat. They struggle.)*

NICK. HEY! *(Comes between them.)*

HONEY. *(Wildly.)* VIOLENCE! VIOLENCE! *(George, Martha, and Nick struggle ... yells, etc.)*

MARTHA. COWARD!

GEORGE. YOU SATANIC BITCH!

NICK. STOP THAT! STOP THAT!

HONEY. VIOLENCE! VIOLENCE! *(The other three struggle. George's hands are on Martha's throat. Nick grabs him, tears him from Martha, throws him on the floor. George, on the floor; Nick over him; Martha to one side, her hand on her throat.)*

NICK. That's enough now!

HONEY. *(Disappointment in her voice.)* Oh ... oh ... oh ... *(George drags himself into a chair. He is hurt, but it is more a profound humiliation than a physical injury.)*

GEORGE. *(They watch him ... a pause ...)* All right ... all right ... very quiet now ... we will all be ... very quiet.

MARTHA. *(Softly, with a slow shaking of her head.)* Coward.

Fucking ... coward!

NICK. *(Softly to Martha.)* OK now ... that's enough. *(A brief silence. They all move around a little, self-consciously, like wrestlers flexing after a fall.)*

GEORGE. *(Aside.)* That wasn't fair, you know.

MARTHA. Tough. *(Composure seemingly recovered, but there is a great nervous intensity.)*

GEORGE. Well! That's one game. What shall we do now, hunh? *(Martha and Nick laugh nervously.)* Oh come on ... let's think of something else. We've played Humiliate the Host ... we've gone through that one ... what shall we do now?

NICK. Aw ... look ...

GEORGE. AW LOOK! *(Whines it.)* Awww ... looooook. *(Alert.)* I mean, come on! We must know other games, college-type types like us ... that can't be the ... limit of our vocabulary, can it?

NICK. I think maybe ...

GEORGE. Let's see now ... what else can we do? There are other games. How about ... how about ... Hump the Hostess? HUNH? How about that? How about Hump the Hostess? *(To Nick.)* You wanna play that one? You wanna play Hump the Hostess? HUNH? HUNH?

NICK. *(A little frightened.)* Calm down, now. *(Martha giggles quietly.)*

GEORGE. Or is that for later ... mount her like a goddamn dog?

HONEY. *(Wildly toasting everybody.)* Hump the Hostess!

NICK. *(To Honey ... sharply.)* Just shut up ... will you? *(Honey does, her glass in mid-air.)*

GEORGE. You don't wanna play that now, hunh? You wanna save that game till later? Well, what'll we play now? We gotta play a game.

MARTHA. *(Quietly.)* Portrait of a man drowning.

GEORGE. *(Affirmatively, but to none of them.)* I am not drowning.

HONEY. *(To Nick, tearfully indignant.)* You told me to shut up!

NICK. *(Impatiently.)* I'm sorry.

HONEY. *(Between her teeth.)* No you're not.

NICK. *(To Honey, even more impatiently.)* I'm sorry.

GEORGE. *(Claps his hands together, once, loud.)* I've got it! I'll tell you what game we'll play. We're done with Humiliate the Host ... this round, anyway ... we're done with that ... and we don't want to play Hump the Hostess, yet ... not yet ... so I know what we'll play ... We'll play a round of Get the Guests. How about that? How about a little game of Get the Guests?

MARTHA. *(Turning away, a little disgusted.)* Jesus, George.

GEORGE. You'll have a ball.

MARTHA. (*Tenderly; moves to touch him.*) Please, George, no more games; I ...

GEORGE. (*Slapping her hand with vehemence.*) Don't you touch me! You keep your paws clean for the undergraduates! (*Martha makes a cry of alarm, but faint. George grabs her hair, pulling her head back.*) Now, you listen to me, Martha; you have had quite an evening ... quite a night for yourself, and you can't just cut it off whenever you've got enough blood in your mouth. We are going on, and I'm going to have at you, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. Now I want you to get yourself a little alert. (*Slaps her lightly with his free hand.*) I want a little life in you, baby. (*Again.*)

MARTHA. (*Struggling.*) Stop it!

GEORGE. (*Again.*) Pull yourself together! (*Again.*) I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, and I want you up for it. (*Again; he pulls away, releases her; she rises.*)

MARTHA. All right, George. What do you want, George?

GEORGE. An equal battle, baby; that's all.

MARTHA. You'll get it!

GEORGE. I want you mad.

MARTHA. I'M MAD!!

GEORGE. Get madder!

MARTHA. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

GEORGE. Good for you, girl; now, we're going to play this one to the death.

MARTHA. Yours!

GEORGE. You'd be surprised. Now, here come the tots; you be ready for this.

MARTHA. (*She paces, actually looks a bit like a fighter.*) I'm ready for you. (*Nick and Honey reenter; Nick supporting Honey, who still retains her brandy bottle and glass.*)

NICK. (*Unhappily.*) Here we are.

HONEY. (*Cheerfully.*) Hip, hop. Hip, hop.

NICK. You're a bunny, Honey? (*She laughs greatly, sits.*)

HONEY. I'm a bunny, Honey.

GEORGE. (*To Honey.*) Well, now; how's the bunny?

HONEY. Bunny funny! (*She laughs again.*)

NICK. (*Under his breath.*) Jesus.

GEORGE. Bunny funny? Good for bunny!

MARTHA. Come on, George!

GEORGE. *(To Martha.)* Honey funny bunny! *(Honey screams with laughter.)*

NICK. Jesus God ...

GEORGE. *(Slaps his hands together, once.)* All right! Here we go! Last game! All sit. *(Nick sits.)* Sit down, Martha. This is a civilized game.

MARTHA. *(Cocks her fist, doesn't swing. Sits.)* Just get on with it.

HONEY. *(To Nick.)* Hello, dear.

MARTHA. It's almost dawn, for God's sake ...

HONEY. *(Ibid.)* Hello, dear.

GEORGE. *(To Nick.)* Well, speak to your wifelet, your little bunny, for God's sake.

NICK. *(Softly, embarrassed.)* Hello, Honey.

GEORGE. Awww, that was nice. I think we've been having a ... a real good evening ... all things considered ... We've sat around, and got to know each other, and had fun and games ... curl-up-on-the-floor, for example ...

HONEY. ... the tiles ...

GEORGE. ... the tiles ... Snap the Dragon.

HONEY. ... peel the label ...

GEORGE. ... peel the ... what?

MARTHA. Label. Peel the label.

HONEY. *(Apologetically, holding up her brandy bottle.)* I peel labels.

GEORGE. We all peel labels, sweetie; and when you get through the skin, all three layers, through the muscle, slosh aside the organs *(An aside to Nick.)* them which is still sloshable — *(Back to Honey.)* and get down to bone ... you know what you do then?

HONEY. *(Terribly interested.)* No!

GEORGE. When you get down to bone, you haven't got all the way, yet. There's something inside the bone ... the marrow ... and that's what you gotta get at. *(A strange smile at Martha.)*

HONEY. Oh! I see.

GEORGE. The marrow. But bones are pretty resilient, especially in the young. Now, take our son ...

HONEY. *(Strangely.)* Who?

GEORGE. Our son ... Martha's and my little joy!

NICK. *(Moving toward the bar.)* Do you mind if I...?

GEORGE. No, no; you go right ahead.

MARTHA. George ...

GEORGE. *(Too kindly.)* Yes, Martha?

MARTHA. Just what are you doing?

GEORGE. Why, Love, I was talking about our son.
MARTHA. Don't.
GEORGE. Isn't Martha something? Here we are, on the eve of our boy's homecoming, the eve of his twenty-first birthday, the eve of his majority ... and Martha says don't talk about him.
MARTHA. Just ... don't.
GEORGE. But I want to, Martha! It's very important we talk about him. Now bunny and the ... well, whichever he is ... here don't know much about Junior, and I think they should.
MARTHA. Just ... don't.
GEORGE. (*Snapping his fingers at Nick.*) You. Hey, you! You want to play bringing up baby, don't you!
NICK. (*Hardly civil.*) Were you snapping at me?
GEORGE. That's right. (*Instructing him.*) You want to hear about our bouncy boy.
NICK. (*Pause, then, shortly.*) Yeah; sure.
GEORGE. (*To Honey.*) And you, my dear? You want to hear about him, too, don't you.
HONEY. Whom?
GEORGE. Martha's and my son. Do you want to talk about him, Martha, or shall I? Hunh?
MARTHA. (*A smile that is a sneer.*) Don't, George.
GEORGE. All rightie. Well, now, let's see. He's a nice kid, really, in spite of his home life; I mean, most kids'd grow up neurotic, what with Martha here carrying on the way she does; sleeping 'til four in the P.M., climbing all over the poor bastard, trying to break the bathroom door down to wash him in the tub when he's sixteen, dragging strangers into the house at all hours ...
MARTHA. (*Rising.*) OK. YOU!
GEORGE. (*Mock concern.*) Martha!
MARTHA. That's enough!
GEORGE. Well, do you want to take over?
HONEY. (*To Nick.*) Why would anybody want to wash somebody who's sixteen years old?
NICK. (*Slamming his drink down.*) Oh, for Christ's sake, Honey!
HONEY. (*Stage whisper.*) Well, why?!
GEORGE. Because it's her baby-poo.
MARTHA. ALL RIGHT!! (*By rote; a kind of almost-tearful recitation.*) Our son. You want our son? You'll have it.
GEORGE. You want a drink, Martha?
MARTHA. (*Pathetically.*) Yes.

NICK. *(To Martha kindly.)* We don't have to hear about it ... if you don't want to.

GEORGE. Who says so? You in a position to set the rules around here?

NICK. *(Pause; tight-lipped.)* No.

GEORGE. Good boy; you'll go far. All right, Martha; your recitation, please.

MARTHA. *(From far away.)* What, George?

GEORGE. *(Prompting.)* "Our son ..."

MARTHA. All right. Our son. Our son was born in a September night, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty ... one ... years ago.

GEORGE. *(Beginning of quiet asides.)* You see? I told you.

MARTHA. It was an easy birth ...

GEORGE. Oh, Martha; no. You labored ... how you labored.

MARTHA. It was an easy birth ... once it had been ... accepted, relaxed into.

GEORGE. Ah ... yes. Better.

MARTHA. It was an easy birth, once it had been accepted, and I was young.

GEORGE. And I was younger ... *(Laughs quietly to himself.)*

MARTHA. And I was young, and he was a healthy child, a red, bawling child, with slippery, firm limbs ...

GEORGE. ... Martha thinks she saw him at delivery ...

MARTHA. ... with slippery, firm limbs, and a full head of black, fine, fine hair which, oh, later, later, became blond as the sun, our son.

GEORGE. He was a healthy child.

MARTHA. And I had wanted a child ... oh, I had wanted a child.

GEORGE. *(Prodding her.)* A son? A daughter?

MARTHA. A child! *(Quieter.)* A child. And I had my child.

GEORGE. Our child.

MARTHA. *(With great sadness.)* Our child. And we raised him ...

(Laughs, briefly, bitterly.) yes, we did; we raised him ...

GEORGE. With teddy bears and an antique bassinet from Austria ... and *no nurse.*

MARTHA. ... with teddy bears and transparent floating goldfish, and a pale blue bed with cane at the headboard when he was older, cane which he wore through ... finally ... with his little hands ... in his ... sleep ...

GEORGE. ... nightmares ...

MARTHA. ... *sleep* ... He was a restless child.

GEORGE. (*Soft chuckle, head-shaking of disbelief.*) ... Oh Lord ...
 MARTHA. ... sleep ... and a croup tent ... a pale green croup tent, and the shining kettle hissing in the one light of the room that time he was sick ... those four days ... and animal crackers, and the bow and arrow he kept under his bed ...
 GEORGE. ... the arrows with rubber cups at their tip ...
 MARTHA. ... at their tip, which he kept beneath his bed ...
 GEORGE. Why? Why, Martha?
 MARTHA. ... for fear ... for fear of ...
 GEORGE. For fear. Just that: for fear.
 MARTHA. (*Vaguely waving him off; going on.*) ... and ... and sandwiches on Sunday night, and Saturdays ... (*Pleased recollection.*) ... and Saturdays the banana boat, the whole peeled banana, scooped out on top, with green grapes for the crew, a double line of green grapes, and along the sides, stuck to the boat with toothpicks, orange slices ... SHIELDS.
 GEORGE. And for the oar?
 MARTHA. (*Uncertainly.*) A ... carrot?
 GEORGE. Or a swizzle stick, whatever was easier.
 MARTHA. No. A carrot. And his eyes were green ... green with ... if you peered so deep into them ... so deep ... bronze ... bronze parentheses around the irises ... such green eyes!
 GEORGE. ... blue, green, brown ...
 MARTHA. ... and he loved the sun!... He was tan before and after everyone ... and in the sun his hair ... became ... fleece.
 GEORGE. (*Echoing her.*) ... fleece ...
 MARTHA. ... beautiful, beautiful boy.
 GEORGE. *Absolve. Domine, animas omnium fidelium defunctorum ab omni vinculo delictorum.*
 MARTHA. ... and school ... and summer camp ... and sledding ... and swimming ...
 GEORGE. *Et gratis tua illis succurrente, mereantur evadere iudicium ultionis.*
 MARTHA. (*Laughing, to herself.*) ... and how he broke his arm ... how funny it was ... oh, no, it hurt him!... but, oh, it was funny ... in a field, his very first cow, the first he'd ever seen ... and he went into the field, to the cow, where the cow was grazing, head down, busy ... and he moo'd at it! (*Laughs, ibid.*) He moo'd at it ... and the beast, oh, surprised, swung its head up and moo'd at him, all three years of him, and he ran, startled, and he stumbled ... fell ... and broke his poor arm. (*Laughs, ibid.*) Poor lamb.

GEORGE. *Et lucis aeternae beatitudine perfrui.*

MARTHA. George cried! Helpless ... George ... cried. I carried the poor lamb. George snuffling beside me, I carried the child, having fashioned a sling ... and across the great fields.

GEORGE. *In Paradisum deducant te Angeli.*

MARTHA. And as he grew ... and as he grew ... oh! so wise he walked evenly between us ... *(She spreads her hands.)* ... a hand out to each of us for what we could offer by way of support, affection, teaching, even love ... and these hands, still, to hold us off a bit, for mutual protection, to protect us all from George's ... weakness ... and my ... necessary greater strength ... to protect himself ... and us.

GEORGE. *In memoria aeterna erit justus: ab auditione mala non timebit.*

MARTHA. So wise; so wise.

NICK. *(To George.)* What is this? What are you doing?

GEORGE. Shhhhh.

HONEY. Shhhhh

NICK. *(Shrugging.)* OK.

MARTHA. So beautiful; so wise.

GEORGE. *(Laughs quietly.)* All truth being relative.

MARTHA. It is true! Beautiful; wise; perfect.

GEORGE. There's a real mother talking.

HONEY. *(Suddenly; almost tearfully.)* I want a child.

NICK. Honey ...

HONEY. *(More forcefully.)* I want a child!

GEORGE. On principle?

HONEY. *(In tears.)* I want a child. I want a baby.

MARTHA. *(Waiting out the interruption, not really paying it any mind.)* Of course, this state, this perfection ... couldn't last. Not with George ... not with George around.

GEORGE. *(To the others.)* There; you see? I knew she'd shift.

HONEY. Be still!

GEORGE. *(Mock awe.)* Sorry ... mother.

NICK. Can't you be still?

GEORGE. *(Making a sign at Nick.)* *Dominus vobiscum.*

MARTHA. Not with George around. A drowning man takes down those nearest. George tried, but, oh, God, how I fought him. God, how I fought him.

GEORGE. *(A satisfied laugh.)* Ahhhhhhh.

MARTHA. Lesser states can't stand those above them. Weakness, imperfection cries out against strength, goodness and innocence.



Little Theatre of Owatonna

Audition Number

AUDITION FORM

Show: _____

Dates: _____

Full Name: _____

Age: _____ Height: _____

Phone (s): _____ Email: _____

Recent Theatre Experience or Roles: Attach resume if you'd like.

_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____

Role You're Auditioning for: _____

2nd Choice: _____ 3rd Choice: _____

Would you consider other roles? YES NO

Anything else you'd like us to know?

Other opportunities with us:

If not cast as a performer, are you interested in helping with the production in another area? YES NO

Other Theatre Skills – Circle any that apply:

- SET PAINTING ARTISTIC EFFECTS MAKEUP HAIR SPECIAL EFFECTS PROPS
- SEWING/COSTUMES SET BUILDING FRONT OF HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY MUSIC LIGHTBOARD
- SPOTLIGHT SOUND BOARD LIGHT/SOUND DESIGN STAGE CREW GENERAL AWESOMENESS

Your preferred contact info:

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City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Text: YES NO

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Potential medical or other conditions to note:

Are you currently performing/ rehearsing anything now? If so, please note any possible scheduling conflicts below.

Are there any other potential scheduling conflicts you are currently aware of? Please list below.

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Thank you for auditioning!