

JUST A RUMOR
A New Fiction Based on The Sacred Truths of Old Hollywood

By Gary Lyons and Doug DeVita
Based on an idea by Gary Lyons

Contact:
Doug DeVita
info@smithscripts.co.uk
doug.devita@gmail.com
www.dougdevitaplays.com

OR

Gary Lyons
shmageggs@gmail.com



CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Rosalynne Buchanan	A movie star from the Golden Age	58/78	F
Alice Watson	Ross's British, no-nonsense companion	63/83	F
Lesley Harding Harris	Gray Harris' widow, a former actress	58/78	F
Frank Bonnar	A film director from the Golden Age	60/80	M
Jamie/Bunny/Male Star	Various roles played by the same actor	30s	M

SYNOPSIS

Rosalynne (Ross) Buchanan and Graham (Gray) Harris are two Hollywood legends whose dynamic on-screen chemistry sparked an off-screen affair lasting 25 years. (Think Hepburn and Tracy) In 1968, a few weeks after completing their latest film together, Gray Harris dies in the early hours of the morning in the house they both share. Ross has no choice but to inform Gray's wife Lesley of his death. What happens when Ross and Lesley meet for the first time is the premise of *Just A Rumor*, a play that explores the nature of love, celebrity, gossip, truth, and how to get a dead movie star out of the kitchen.

SETTING

Most of the action takes place in the living room of a cottage on Frank Bonnar's estate in Bel Air, California. Other scenes take place on palettes which can slide on an off in front of the main set. 1968, and 1988.

RECOGNITION

Semi-Finalist

Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference

ACT ONE

The tastefully furnished living room of a guest cottage on the estate of Frank Bonnar, famous film director, in Bel Air, California circa 1968. Prominent among the furniture is a black leather armchair. Downstage right is the entrance to the cottage; further up the same wall are four steps leading to a landing, then another 10 or so steps leading to the upstairs bedrooms, out of sight. Along the back wall is an enormous picture window framed with bookshelves. Along the stage left wall is a swinging door, which is the entrance to the kitchen.

The door to the kitchen is swinging shut. The only illumination comes from a nightlight, and the sliver under the kitchen door. We hear the sound of someone rattling around in the kitchen, and then the sound of a teacup smashing, followed by the thud of a body hitting the floor.

ROSS (O.S.)

Gray? ... Gray?

Rosalynne (Ross) Buchanan, 58, legendary film star, comes down the stairs and goes into the kitchen. She is wearing white silk pajamas.

ROSS (O.S., CONT'D)

Oh, Gray. My darling, beautiful Gray. Not quite the way you imagined it.

A palette slides on. Lights up on Alice Watson, Ross's paid companion. It is 1988. She is in a hospital bed, wearing a neck brace and has an IV attached. She is British, 83. Her pain medication causes her mind to wander.

ALICE

I was the first one she called. Before the others, and of course, before... The secret of a good Yorkshire pudding is in the dripping. It must be very hot... the phone rang at 3:15 in the morning. It was Ross. I knew what it was, what had happened... we were all expecting that call... Kit loved my Yorkshire puddings.

I have always looked after the stars. After Kit died, I got a call from Greta Garbo: “Alice, I want you.” I had quite a reputation for discretion, you see, but she didn’t seem my type – I’m not a lesbian – but she just sat there looking out her window all day. Ross and Gray were much more fun... you must let the batter stand, covered, for at least half an hour...

Lights cross fade to Ross, in the living room and on the phone.

ROSS

It’s Ross... yes... just now... of course I’m sure... I heard him rattling about in the kitchen, and then this goddamn awful thud... I’m fine... no really, I’m fine. I guess I have my father to thank for that, and I can’t fall apart right now, I have so much to do, so many calls to make... yes, yes I know... well she may be the first on your list, but she isn’t first on mine... I know she’s Gray’s wife, but Gray wasn’t her husband... Look, I’ve got to go, I’ve got those calls to make... well, we’re all going to miss him... yes, but it’s a shock just the same...

Lights cross fade to Alice.

ALICE

I was only a couple of minutes away, in a cottage that backed onto Frank Bonnar’s estate... I used to do some acting myself, you know, before I went to work with Kit. Kit loved my Yorkshire puddings... As I drove up to their cottage, I could see the lights were on in Frank’s house but that wasn’t unusual for that time of the morning at Frank’s, especially at the weekend. When I got there, Ross was on the phone, sitting, with a large scotch... I prefer making individual puddings, in a muffin tin. I can’t bear it when someone serves you a slice of Yorkshire pudding. I like a crust all the way round...

Lights cross fade back to Ross.

ROSS

Well, it’s a tricky situation, Bill, I’m at the cottage on Frank’s estate... there’s his wife, and his children... No, I’ve only spoken to Lesley once... About five years ago when Gray collapsed. The conversation was, how should I put it, brief. I called her, and then left him in the hospital... Well I’m sure she’s more than willing to play the grieving widow now after so many years playing the devoted wife... So I need a favor? Would you handle the press? ...You were the first one I thought of because of how you handled the Victor Brent situation... Thank you, I’d rather not have to deal with the coroner right now... Oh, that’s a good idea. I’ll get Frank and Alice to help... I think the three of us can manage. It’ll be just like that scene in “The Turkey’s in the Oven”... Thank you... Yes, but it’s a shock just the same... Well, we’re all going to miss him.... Goodbye Bill, and thanks again.

She picks up a pad and crosses off a name.
Alice, now 63, enters from the kitchen. She is wearing a simple skirt and a cardigan sweater over her blouse.

ALICE

I've covered him with a blanket. What do you want to do now?

ROSS

Thank you, Alice. As soon as Frank gets here, we'll move him upstairs.

ALICE

Do you think the three of us can handle it?

ROSS

Of course we can. Frank can take his feet, and we'll take his top half, we'll get him upstairs with no problems. Gray, Ruth and I did it quite easily with Jimmy when we made "The Turkey's In The Oven."

ALICE

That was a movie.

ROSS

Contrary to popular belief, movies are a lot harder than real life. It took 17 takes.

ALICE

That was 1940. You were 30 then. You're nearly, what? How old are you saying you are now?

ROSS

Five years younger than you're saying you are. Now get me a scotch.

Alice crosses to the wet bar and prepares a drink for Ross, and one for herself.

ALICE

I think you're handling this very well.

ROSS

What choice do I have?

ALICE

(She picks up Ross's pad.)

I could make some of these calls if you need me to.

ROSS

Thank you, Alice, but I need something to take my mind off how painful this is.

ALICE

He was difficult, but I did love him. I'm going to miss the old bugger.

ROSS

I need some ice.

ALICE

I'll get you some. And I'll make some sandwiches.

ROSS

I'm not hungry.

ALICE

But I am and you will be. And so will Frank.

ROSS

Isn't he on one of his diets?

ALICE

Exactly.

(She starts to exit to the kitchen, and turns back.)

Chicken, or ham?

ROSS

I don't care. I'm not hungry.

ALICE

I'll make ham. I'm sure Frank's had plenty of chicken already tonight.

Alice exits as Ross starts to make another call. Lights shift to as Frank Bonnar, 80 (60 in the main body of the play), debonair director from Hollywood's golden years, rides in on another palette. It is 1988. He is lounging under an umbrella by his pool, watching a young hunk, offstage, frolicking in the water.

He is dressed in a pastel colored polo shirt,
loose linen pants, and loafers without socks.

FRANK

I was the first one she called. I was the closest. It was a call I was expecting, but it's always a shock just the same. The coroner's report said he died on Monday, September 16, 1968, but in fact it was the early hours of Sunday morning the 15th. I was relieved that I didn't get that call while we were shooting. The studio wouldn't insure Gray, you know, his health was so precarious, but I wouldn't do the picture without Gray Harris and Ross Buchanan. So Ross and I vouched for him, professionally and financially. We all knew it would be their last film together. If it wasn't for Ross, I don't think he would have made it through the picture. She helped him with his lines, got him to the set on time, and was even there for him off camera when she wasn't scheduled to shoot that day. He knew he was running out of time. He did most of his scenes in one take; I hardly gave him any direction at all. When we finished principal photography, he hugged me and thanked me. It was the last time I saw him on the set. When I got to the cottage, Ross was sitting in Gray's chair, devastated. She looked so small and vulnerable — not "Ross the Boss," as we so "lovingly" called her.

Cross fade to Ross, smoking, on the phone.

ROSS

... I'm doing fine. I've had so many calls to make that I can't think about anything else right now, which is just as well. I'm so sorry for you, you must feel awful... Yes, it is the end of an era, I'm just not sure which one: his, mine or yours... You were more than an agent, Sam, you were a good friend to him as well... Yes, you're right, we were all good friends... No, no Sam, you don't have to come, Alice is here already, and Frank should be here any minute... Well, it is the weekend, and you know what that means at Frank's house... Apparently so, age hasn't affected that part of his career...

Frank enters in a dressing gown, pajamas, and slippers. Ross motions him into the room and continues talking.

ROSS (CONT'D)

...No, not yet... I know I have to call her — call Lesley; it's the next call I'm going to make... I think awkward is an understatement, but it has to be done... I must go, Sam, Frank just got here... Yes, but it's a shock just the same... Well, we're all going to miss him... Yes, life. And death... Goodbye.

She hangs up the phone. She and Frank look at each other for a moment.

FRANK

This sucks, doesn't it?

ROSS

You bet.

FRANK

I'm so sorry, Ross.

ROSS

You must feel awful, you were such good friends.

FRANK

Good friends.

ROSS

Good friends.

FRANK

Is Alice here?

ROSS

She's in the kitchen. She's making sandwiches. I told her not to.

FRANK

Why?

ROSS

Because you're on a diet and I'm not hungry.

FRANK

But you will be.

ROSS

There's also a dead body in the kitchen.

FRANK

That's a terrible way to talk about Alice.

They both laugh. Alice enters with a carving knife.

ALICE

I heard that. Now get in here and start slicing the ham.

FRANK

That's a terrible way to talk about Gray.

ALICE

That's not funny.

There's an awkward silence, and then all three start laughing. They recover, make an attempt at being serious, and then start laughing again.

FRANK

We are awful.

ROSS

No, we're not.

ALICE

Yes, we are.

ROSS

No, we're not. Gray would be the first one to see the funny side of all this. It's good to laugh with good friends. And Gray was my best friend. Now, I don't know about you but I'm starving. Where are those sandwiches?

ALICE

I told you you'd be peckish. You finish your calls; Frank, come and help me in the kitchen.

FRANK

(Saluting her.)

Yes, sir.

Alice and Frank exit into the kitchen. Ross calls after them.

ROSS

And I'll have the potato salad and some cheese. Oh – don't forget the cookies and the bundt!

FRANK

(Re-entering.)

“Scarlett, if you keep eating like this you’ll grow as fat as Mammy, and then I’ll divorce you.”

ROSS

“As god is my witness” I should have played that part!

FRANK

But Clark Gable looked better in pants.

ALICE

(Re-entering.)

And you wanted to get in them.

ROSS

You weren’t missing much. He was a lousy lay.

Frank and Alice both give Ross a look.

ROSS (CONT’D)

So I’ve heard.

FRANK

Not after he took his teeth out. ... So I’ve heard.

ALICE

Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn.

ROSS

I’m famished. Will you two get a move on?

FRANK

After you, Mammy.

ALICE

After you, Prissy.

Alice pushes Frank into the kitchen and follows him as Ross calls after them.

ROSS

Where’s that ice?

She gets up and goes to the phone. The lights fade to a tight spot on her as she picks up the receiver. She ponders a moment, and then quickly puts it back.

ROSS (CONT'D)

I'm not going to make that call. Why should I? I don't have to explain anything. Not to her, anyway. She said it was just some gossip she'd heard. And now the whole town's talking. I'm fed up with this small town mentality. Nobody's seen anything. It's just silly people with nothing better to do than spread silly rumors. All in the name of religion and morality. What's immoral about loving someone? What's immoral about sharing their life, being there for them, and them being there for you? What's immoral about waking up next to the person you love and looking forward to spending another day with them? Having breakfast together, talking about all the little things that don't mean a thing but mean so much. Those little looks you swap as you pass on the stairs, in the hallway, in the bathroom or in the kitchen. What's immoral about the most important person in your life falling asleep in your arms? If that's immoral, then okay, I'm immoral. We're all immoral. We're all irreligious. I believe that when two people are in love, God is with them. God is happy. God blesses that love. Yes, that's what I believe. And you better believe it too, Mrs! Okay, I'm ready to make that call.

She starts to pick up the phone.

FRANK (O.S.)

And cut!

The lights change. We are now on the set of "Love Without Approval." Frank enters, dressed in regular clothes.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Ross, dear, that was lovely. Just lovely.

ROSS

Just lovely? I know what "just lovely" means from you, Frank. I noticed Agnes Moorehead didn't get a "just lovely" from you yesterday.

FRANK

Look, Ross. Mary's talking out loud to convince herself. And she does. She's about to call Mrs. Brewton, the town gossip...

ROSS

Yes, I realize that, Frank, but I'm finding it terribly hard to do it without sounding self-righteous and pompous.

FRANK

Yes, I realize that. But don't you think Mary has a right to be self-righteous and pompous here?

ROSS

Mary has a right to defend her son, but I'm not sure she'd go about it this way in a small town like South Bend, Indiana.

FRANK

When Sumner came to me with this script, he told me he based the character of Mary on you and the stories you've told about those crazy parents of yours shaking up Waterbury, that small town you grew up in.

ROSS

They weren't crazy, Frank. They were free thinkers. And that was 1920, not 1968. They were ahead of their time.

FRANK

So is this movie. We're dealing with a subject matter that a lot of people consider taboo. That's why I said I would only make this movie with you and Gray. If I may stand on my soapbox for one moment, it's the self-righteous and pompous who need to see "Love Without Approval." The free thinkers aren't staying home on Saturday night watching "My Three Sons."

ROSS

At least "My Three Sons" is a good title. It gives you a hint of what to expect.

FRANK

And you don't think "Love Without Approval" does?

ROSS

You know I don't. I've told Sumner it's got to be changed. Especially if you want to get those self-righteous, pompous asses in those seats.

FRANK

Right now I'm more concerned about getting a certain self-righteous, pompous actress back on the set.

ROSS

That's a terrible way to talk about Agnes Moorehead.

FRANK

Miss Moorehead, I'll have you know, is making something very special out of Mrs. Brewton.

ROSS

Dear Agnes. Bewitched, Bothered and Be-type cast!!

FRANK

Typecast or not, she's doing it with grace and charm, very few lines and no complaints. Now let's try this scene again.

ROSS

I don't see the point. I'm still not sure how to play it. And unless you can come up with one of your brilliant directorial insights, it'll be exactly the way I did it before.

FRANK

And that's exactly how I want you to do it, only this time do it as if you were talking about someone close to you in your real life, not your son Steven in the movie. Do it as if you were talking about Gray.

He walks away.

ROSS

Oh. That's brilliant.

The lights shift again as Alice reenters pushing a tea trolley laden with an ice bucket, a plate of sandwiches, plates, cups, a pot of tea, and Ross's scotch.

ALICE

Well thank you, but I've only made some sandwiches. Brilliant's a bit over the top, don't you think? It's not like I made you my Yorkshire pudding. Now my Yorkshire pudding – that is brilliant. I made some coffee. I thought I'd make a pot of tea as well, since there was water on the boil. Would you like a cup? There's the bundt, and some cookies, too.

ROSS

(Holding up her glass of scotch.)

Where's the ice?

Alice picks up the ice bucket and puts ice cubes into Ross's drink. She leaves the bucket on the wet bar as Ross takes a swig from her glass.

ALICE

(Offering Ross the plate of sandwiches.)

I think you should have one of these first. I don't want to be carting two bodies upstairs.

ROSS

Thank you, Alice, for your concern. I'm very touched.

(She takes another swig of scotch, and then takes a sandwich.)

What's happened to Frank?

ALICE

He said he wanted to have a moment alone with Gray, to pay his respects.

Frank enters, wolfing down a sandwich.

FRANK

Good God, that's the most hideous thing I've ever seen.

ROSS

That's what dead bodies look like, Frank.

ALICE

You forget you're used to dead bodies, Ross. That crazy father of yours has a lot to answer for.

FRANK

I'm referring to that blanket you've thrown over him. Promise me that if I drop dead, you won't cover me with anything that's plaid.

ALICE

I'm sorry Frank. I didn't mean to offend your highly developed sense of style. Next time someone drops dead in the kitchen, I'll make sure I have a Liberty print on hand.

ROSS

We thought it would be better to cover Gray until we moved him.

ALICE

Frank says we'll never be able to move him. He's too heavy. And he knows all about picking up heavy men.

FRANK

More than you do, anyway.

ALICE

I am not a lesbian!

ROSS

Stop it, you two. C'mon, I want to get Gray upstairs sooner rather than later. With the three of us it'll be easy.

FRANK

Are you out of your fucking mind? It's going to take a lot more than two alteh-kakas and a movie star to lift him.

ROSS

Language!

FRANK

Sorry, two homosexuals and a movie legend to lift him.

ALICE

I am NOT a lesbian!

ROSS

Of course you're not, dear. Now let's move him. The longer we leave him, the harder it'll be.

FRANK

That's not been my experience.

ROSS

That was a cheap, unnecessary joke.

ALICE

Did you see his last movie?

ROSS

We've got to get Gray upstairs!

FRANK

Are you sure we should move him? Aren't we supposed to leave him until the coroner comes?

ALICE

You did call the coroner?

ROSS

I left that to Bill at MGM. I called him before I called you two. Now let's get him out of the kitchen and into the bedroom.

She goes into the kitchen making a grand,
movie star exit.

ALICE

I thought she called me first.

FRANK

I thought she called me first.

ALICE

Bugger you. Why would she call you first?

ROSS (O.S.)

I called a lot of people first. Now will you get in here!

They give each other a knowing look and exit
into the kitchen.

ROSS (O.S.)

Now Frank, you take his legs and we'll grab under his arms.

(We hear huffs, puffs, and sighs of
frustration.)

Oh come on Frank, put a bit more muscle into it.

(Sound of a body being dropped.)

This isn't working. All right Frank, as you can't seem to manage his lower half, you lift
him under his arms, and we'll take his legs.

Some more sounds of struggling, and then
another thud.

FRANK (O.S.)

I told you that the three of us would not be able to lift him.

ROSS (O.S.)

It's you Frank! You're not pulling your weight.

ALICE (O.S.)

We need someone with a bit more brawn.

There is a third thud, and then Frank flounces in
from the kitchen.

FRANK

That's it! I'm a movie director, not a grip!

(He heads straight for the sandwiches and starts eating another one.)

If you need a shlepper, then call central casting. Why do we have to move him anyway?

ALICE

(Following Frank into the living room.)

I thought it would be quite obvious to you Frank, with your impeccable sense of style – Gray clashes with the floor tiles!

ROSS

(Standing in the doorway.)

For God's sake, will you two stop it? Bill thought it would be better to get him upstairs before the coroner gets here.

FRANK

Fuck Bill. He doesn't have to lift him.

ROSS

Language!

(She goes back into the kitchen and continues talking.)

I don't know why it's so hard to move him. It was so easy when we made "The Turkey's in the Oven."

ALICE

Jimmy was playing dead. Gray is dead.

FRANK

Once a heavyweight, always a heavyweight. Well, I've had it. I give up. You want someone with brawn? Wait till his fucking wife gets here.

ROSS

Shit!

(She bursts through the kitchen door and races towards the phone.)

Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit! I forgot to call his goddamn wife.

FRANK

Language.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

Lights up on Lesley Harding Harris, Gray's widow. She is 78, attractive but not a beauty, well dressed. She is sitting in Gray's chair, which was given to her sometime after Gray's death. It is 1988.

LESLEY

I was the first one she called. Well, I was his wife, mother of his children. I knew why she was calling, because after all, why else would Rosalynne Buchanan be calling Mrs. Lesley Harris at four in the morning? I was prepared; I knew he was very ill. The conversation was brief; I thanked her and said I would be there within the hour. Although we lived quite near, I had many calls to make: our children, family and friends; and besides, I wanted time to get ready. I needed to make the right impression. I'd never met her, you see. I'd seen her movies, and the movies that she made with Gray. The only time I'd ever seen her in person was when she was first starting out on Broadway years ago in Mother Of The Year. Terrible play, but you could see early signs of the great actress she was going to become.

Cross fade to the living room. The kitchen door opens. Ross holds the door open and with a grand, sweeping gesture indicates for Alice and Frank to pass through.

ROSS

And ACTION!

FRANK (O.S.)

This is the most fucking ridiculous thing I have ever had to do in my whole fucking life!

Alice appears butt first through the open door pulling Gray's still blanketed feet. She has removed her cardigan. They have somehow managed to get Gray's body onto the tea trolley. Frank appears at the other end, holding onto Gray's torso. Throughout the continuation of this speech they "wheel" Gray's body across the room to the stairs, Ross moving furniture out of the way as they do.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Look at this – I'm a fucking Oscar winning director wheeling a fucking Oscar winning actor, who dropped dead on the fucking kitchen floor, on a fucking old tea trolley, wrapped in a fucking awful plaid blanket, being fucking "directed" by a fucking Oscar winning actress, who wouldn't have gotten that fucking Oscar if it hadn't been for my fucking brilliant direction, thank you very much, and all because some fucking publicity head at fucking MGM, who still owes me for saving his fucking ass on that fucking Ida Lupino fiasco, I'll have you know, wants to cover up a fucking twenty-five year affair that everybody fucking knows about anyway, by making his fucking wife, who wouldn't fucking divorce him, believe that he'd fucking died in his fucking bed. Alone.

ALICE

Are you quite finished, Frank?

FRANK

No, I'm fucking not!

(Continuing his rant.)

And that fucking wife of his is about to descend on us in fifteen fucking minutes and we still have to get him up the fucking stairs, down a fucking hallway and into his fucking bedroom! And it's four o' fucking clock in the fucking morning! And I should be at home, fucking!

And they have reached the stairs.

ROSS

There, I told you it would work. I don't see why you need to get so worked up, Frank, it's not like you had to get him across the living room all by yourself.

ALICE

Yes, you did have some assistance. It's not easy holding someone's legs whilst pulling them backwards.

FRANK

"Whilst" I could come up now with "a cheap, unnecessary joke," Little Miss Muffin here appears to have beaten me to it.

ROSS

You were both marvelous. I couldn't have done it without you.

FRANK

Yes. Well, now that you've got him here, how do you plan on getting him up the fucking stairs?

ALICE

Frank, can't you think of another expletive? You of all people should know that less is more.

FRANK

Oh, don't you fucking start!

ROSS

I've got it! I'm going to get some string and tie up this end of the blanket, like a bratwurst. Then with Gray secure inside, you and Alice hold the other end of the blanket while I pull the trolley out from underneath his body.

(She snaps her fingers.)

That way we'll have him on the first landing just like that. It's brilliant.

ALICE

There's some string in the kitchen.

Ross exits into the kitchen to get the string.

FRANK

(Calling after Ross.)

That's fine, but what about the next flight of stairs up to his bedroom?

(To Alice.)

It must be ten steps.

ALICE

Frank, you're being deliberately difficult.

FRANK

I'm not being deliberately difficult, I'm being deliberately practical. It nearly killed the three of us getting him onto that fucking trolley, and we had to use the fucking ironing board to get him there. So how the hell are we going to get him up a fucking flight of stairs? Can't we just put his holiness in his chair over there?

ALICE

Frank, don't be ridiculous.

FRANK

I'm not being ridiculous! If we prop him up, wrapped in the blanket with a slice of the bundt, a cup of coffee and his favorite book, it'll look like he just died in his chair.

ALICE

Frank, you aren't helping the situation.

FRANK

I think it's a brilliant solution to this whole ridiculous farce.

ALICE

You of all people should know that when Ross gets like this it's just better to shut up and follow fucking instructions!

FRANK

(Gasping in mock horror.)

Uhhhhhhhhhhh! Ooooh, I'm telling Miss Buchanan you swore while she was out of the room!

ALICE

You do, and I'll tell her that you slept with her first husband.

FRANK

Everybody knows that!

ALICE

But they don't know you were dressed as Norma Shearer at the time.

Ross enters with some string, some tape and a pair of scissors.

ROSS

Here we are. I found this tape as well – I thought I could use it to put over both your mouths.

FRANK

Just for the record, Ross, I'd like it noted that all three of us have used expletives to make a fucking point.

Gray's corpse emits a weird, whale like noise from one of his orifices – Director's choice. They all look at Gray with various looks of astonishment.

FRANK (CON'TD)

I stand corrected – all four of us.

Cross fade back to Lesley.

LESLEY

Thank God it wasn't me who discovered the body. I've never been good around death. I must say it was all very civil.

As soon as I got there, Ross took me upstairs to Gray's bedroom and left me alone with him. The room was lit by some candles. He looked at peace, but his face still had that impish quality that attracted me when we first met in that stock company, when he told me he was in love with me and wanted to marry me. Ross told me he died in his bed. She said she'd heard the sound of breaking glass, that he must have been pouring himself some water. Gray always did keep a pitcher of water by his bed. Mind you, I don't recall seeing any signs of water or broken glass, but I didn't think about that at the time. I just sat there looking at him. I took his hand, and then I found myself talking to him. It was almost surreal. There I was, in a bedroom that wasn't ours, saying things that I couldn't say to him when he was alive. How strange that his death would give me the courage to tell him the truth after all those years. Looking back, I must have sounded like I was spouting dialog from some clichéd tearjerker...

Cross fade to Ross "on set" in an appropriate costume.

ROSS

There's never a good time to say these things but this seems to be as good a time as any. Seeing you here, now, I know I have to face the truth, and the truth has made me realize this: I love you. There is nothing, nothing you could do that will change that. The truth, and this particular truth, isn't easy. It sure isn't easy for me. I guess I should have known all along but a part of me wanted to believe it was just a rumor. But this truth changes everything; or maybe it changes nothing because now I know I will always love you no matter what. I know in my heart that you are a good person, a good soul, and I accept you for everything you are, even if you may have done some things that other people find difficult to accept. Well, that's their problem. They don't know the true meaning of love. Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get, only with what you are expecting to give – which is everything. Love means never having to say...

(She stops suddenly.)

Oh Frank, this is just goddamn awful.

FRANK (O.S.)

And cut! What is it now, Ross?

ROSS

This is ridiculous! I'm just going on and on with this claptrap, spouting cliché after cliché. This is a mother talking to her son, not Lana Turner talking to John Gavin in "Imitation of Life."