

PHILLIE'S TRILOGY
A Comedy (ish)

By Doug DeVita

Contact:

917.584.2907

doug@dougdevitaplays.com

www.dougdevitaplays.com



CAST / 4 W, 3 M, with doubling (see below):

Philip McDougal*	A writer coping with loss	M	49/57
Veronica McDougal*	Philip's mother; a frustrated '70s housewife	F	52/54
Barbara Quigley*	Philip's childhood friend; coping with divorce	F	49/57
Grace Bradley	Barbara's mother; coping with memory loss	F	76
Phillie McDougal	Philip as a child; precocious, mouthy, insecure	M	12/14
Barbie Bradley	Barbara as a child; smart, overweight	F	12/14
Keith Quigley*	Phillie and Barbie's friend; fatherless, troubled	M	12/14
Jude Quigley*	Barbara and Keith's son: angry, troubled	M	14
Younger Grace*	Veronica's best friend; possibly pregnant	F	39
Pete McDougal*	Phillie's father; no-nonsense ad exec	M	55
Sheila Roth*	Philip's no nonsense agent, a "broad"	F	60 ish

*** Doubling:**

Philip/Pete

Veronica/Sheila

Younger Grace/Barbara

Keith/Jude

SYNOPSIS

Growing up gay in the “fabulous” '70s was no picnic for the precocious budding writer Phillie McDougal. Through nuns, priests, bullying classmates, parents – and years later the realization his best friend may not be the person he thought she was – he lived to tell the tales, with results no one bargained for. Including him.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:

- READING: Scrap Mettle Arts, New York, NY • Directed by Sarah Stites, 2016
- READING: The Great Griffon "Seeking The Queer Voice" Reading Series, New York, NY • Directed by James Phillip Gates, 2017
- FESTIVAL PRODUCTION: Fresh Fruit Festival, New York, NY • Directed by Dennis Corsi, 2017

RECOGNITION

WINNER

Outstanding Production
Fresh Fruit Award of Distinction

WINNER

Scrap Mettle Arts
Emerging Playwrights Competition

SEMI-FINALIST

Barrington Stage Company
Burman New Play Award

Normal Avenue New American Play Series

Campfire Theatre Festival

ACT 1, PART 1: CHECKING THE BASEMENT FOR LEAKS

The finished basement of the McDougal's home in Plandome, Long Island, a Thursday afternoon in late November, 1972. Two banquettes flanking a bar. A sliding glass door, slightly open. Veronica McDougal, 52, on the stairs; Grace Bradley, 39, behind the bar, mixing a pitcher of martinis.

VERONICA

PHILLIE! GRACE AND I ARE GOING TO CHECK THE BASEMENT FOR LEAKS, SO STAY OUT OF HERE UNTIL WE'RE DONE!

(To Grace.)

Honest to God, I don't know what I'm going to do with that kid. Phillie used to be such an agreeable little boy, but ever since he turned 12 he's been out of control.

GRACE

(As she's mixing the drinks.)

So what happened? Why did they call you to come down to the school?

VERONICA

He hit Sister Mary Dolores John this afternoon. Clocked her right across the kisser.

GRACE

You're kidding!

VERONICA

Nope. She took his notebook and began reading it. He grabbed it, she slapped him and he slapped her right back.

GRACE

You know you're out of olives, right? Onion, or Twist?

VERONICA

GODDAMNIT, PHILLIE! HAVE YOU BEEN EATING MY OLIVES AGAIN?

GRACE

I don't think he's up there, Vee. I saw him, Barbie, and Keith Quigley heading to the brook before I came over here.

VERONICA

And I'll just bet he took my olives with him.

Grace serves the martinis while Veronica lights two cigarettes, a la Paul Henreid, and hands one to Grace.

GRACE

I like onions better with gin anyway. Phillie's got guts, I'll say that for him. Sister Mary Dolores John scares the bejesus out of me.

VERONICA

Not me. She lied, Grace. She stood there and said Phillie just walked up to her and hit her for no reason. I looked her right in the eye and said "Do you think I'm stupid, Sister? I know Philip has a temper, but I'm pretty Goddamn sure he wouldn't have hit you if he hadn't been provoked." Oh yes, Grace, I said "Goddamn" to a nun. You should have seen her face; I could see she was sending us both straight to hell. But without so much as a blink she said "I just asked to see his notebook and he slapped me." "And you didn't touch him?" "Oh no, Mrs. McDougal, I never touch the children."

GRACE

Well, that's just baloney. Robert always used to complain about her hitting him. Of course, Robert probably deserved it.

VERONICA

Probably. Anyway, so I'm looking at her, at Phillie, and at that new pastor, what's his name?

GRACE

Father Mondello.

VERONICA

Yeah, Mondello. So I'm looking at her, at Phillie, and that new gas-bag Mondello. "OK, Sister, if you didn't touch him, would you mind explaining to me why the side of his face is black and blue?" I had her there. "You wanna rethink your story now, Sister?" Mondello just started sputtering, actually sputtering like pea soup on the boil. "Now, Sister, I don't condone what Philip did, but Mr. McDougal and I will see to it he's punished appropriately."

GRACE

What are you going to do?

VERONICA

Nothing. I'm not even telling Pete. Phillie will apologize tomorrow morning and that will be that.

So anyway, I leaned right into that smirking, sanctimonious puss of hers and said “But listen to me, Sister, and listen good: this is not the first time Philip has complained about your hitting him. It’s not even the first time I’ve heard complaints about your “touching the children,” as you call it. Ten years ago you slapped my daughter Celia because she was left-handed. You think I’ve forgotten that? I’m tired of your bullshit. Mr. McDougal writes big checks every year to help maintain this school; Father, if I find out that Sister Mary Dolores John or any of your faculty ever touches my son again, those checks will stop. And Sister, your sanctimonious ass, as the kids say, will be grass. I don’t have seven lawyers in my family for nothing.”

GRACE

Too bad your father wouldn’t let you go to college. You’d’ve made a terrific lawyer too.

VERONICA

I know. That’s why I swore I’d let my kids do whatever they want. Celia wants to be a painter, I let her be a painter. And if Phillie wants to be a writer, then I want him to be a damn good one, not some hack who dreams of glory while pushing Rice-A-Roni for a living like his father. I don’t want anything standing in his way.

GRACE

Did they say anything?

VERONICA

I didn’t give them a chance. I just took the notebook from her clammy little hands, gave it back to Phillie, and we left.

GRACE

Well, it’s about time someone said something. I’d never have the nerve.

VERONICA

I would have pulled him out of there this afternoon, but we’ve poured so much money into that school Pete would kill me.

GRACE

It *is* one of the top schools in Nassau, Vee. That’s why we all moved out here, isn’t it?

VERONICA

I don’t know. Maybe. What kills me is she actually got to read some of what’s in that notebook. I’ve been trying to get a peek into that thing for years and I can’t get it away from him.

GRACE

What about when he’s sleeping? That’s when I go through Barbie’s stuff. Mostly empty Twinkie and Ring-Ding wrappers.

VERONICA

Please, Grace, do you think I'm an idiot? He's a sneaky one. He's got a hiding place somewhere. I've torn his room apart and I'll be damned if I can find it.

GRACE

Barbie just leaves clues everywhere. It's like she wants to be fat and torture me with it.

VERONICA

Well, if you didn't buy the junk in the first place...

GRACE

Al likes Twinkies and Ring-Dings.

VERONICA

And Barbie has Al's metabolism, Grace!

GRACE

Metabo what?

VERONICA

Metabolism. It's a physiological thing. You and I have high metabolisms so we don't gain weight. Barbie and Al have low metabolisms so they have to watch what they eat.

GRACE

How do you know these things?

VERONICA

Carol Channing on Merv Griffin.

GRACE

Well, I'll be damned. Good to know. Next time Barbie goes on and on about being an actress, I can point out how thin Carol Channing is. Not that we'd ever let her go into show business anyway.

VERONICA

Why not, if that's what she wants to do?

GRACE

You've already talked me into letting her go to college if she wants, Vee. But if she does, I'd rather she study something useful, like teaching.

VERONICA

Well, you know what I think about that, but she's your kid. Anyway, what were we talking about? Oh yeah, Phillie and that damned nun. He's so much harder to deal with than Celia was when she was his age, and she was no picnic either.

GRACE

Boys are difficult, Vee. I've just about given up on Robert.

VERONICA

At least he's going away to college next year. I've got six more years of this with Phillie.

GRACE

I'm just praying Robert doesn't get some girl pregnant.

VERONICA

Yeah, do you really think I have to worry about that? The last McDougal is a queer.

GRACE

My daughter is fat. You know what it's like to shop at Lane Bryant for a 12 year old girl?

VERONICA

At least Barbie speaks to you. You think boys are difficult? Wait until she's 15.

GRACE

Sometimes I think I'll be stuck with Barbie forever. Do you know how hard it is to marry off a fat girl?

VERONICA

Talk to me when she meets some guy and elopes to California the day after she graduates art school, as far away from me as she can get. I haven't even met my son-in-law.

GRACE

This isn't a contest, Vee.

They start to laugh.

VERONICA

Can you believe us?

GRACE

I know. I mean, I love my kids, but sometimes I wonder if I only love them out of some sense of obligation.

VERONICA

Sometimes I wonder why I even had a kid when I was 40.

GRACE

I always assumed Phillie was an accident.

VERONICA

Oh no, I wanted him, Grace. Pete wanted me to go back to work so we could afford to move out here to Plandome; I wanted to stay in Bayside, so I got pregnant on purpose.

GRACE

On purpose?

VERONICA

I poked holes in his rubbers.

GRACE

(She thinks about that, and then looks at Veronica, shocked.)

Oh!

VERONICA

Didn't matter. Pete came up with "The San Francisco Treat" and now twelve years later I'm 52, living in a neighborhood where I don't really belong and I'm the oldest mother in St. Mary's PTA. Pour me another one of those. It's cold in here.

(She notices the open door.)

Goddammit! I keep telling Phillie to close that damn door.

Keith Quigley, 12, appears at the door.

KEITH

Hello, Mrs. McDougal.

VERONICA

Jesus! Keith Quigley! You scared the shit out of me.

KEITH

I'm sorry. I was just wondering if you've seen Phillie and Barbie? I'm "it" and I've been looking for them for half an hour.

VERONICA

I'm sorry, Keith, I'm not sure where they are. Have you tried down by the brook?

KEITH

That's where we started.

GRACE

Maybe they've gone to my house?

KEITH

I checked there. Nope. I gotta go meet my mother at work.

VERONICA

How's your cousin Candy?

KEITH

They think they got it all. We'll know better in a couple of weeks.

GRACE

What a shame about her leg.

KEITH

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

She's in our prayers, Keith. You all are.

KEITH

Thank you, Mrs. Bradley. I really gotta go now, my mom said we have to get to the hospital before dinner. You'll let Barbie and Phillie know?

VERONICA

Go on, honey, I'll let them know.

Keith goes.

GRACE

Such an awful thing to happen to a child.

VERONICA

Almost makes me feel bad I can't stand Candy's mother.

GRACE

Veronica!

VERONICA

Oh come on, Grace. You can't stand Maureen Ruggerio either. You've said so yourself.

GRACE

But it's still awful. It's bad enough we have to worry about broken bones, chicken pox, upset stomachs, colds, science fairs... But your child losing a leg?

They both take long drags on their cigarettes.

VERONICA

What kind of God gives a kid cancer?

They sit quietly for a bit, then Grace blurts out:

GRACE

I'm pregnant, Vee.

Veronica takes one more drag on her cigarette, stubs it out, and lights another.

VERONICA

Did you watch "Maude" last week?

GRACE

Father Mondello told us we'd be excommunicated if we watch that show!

VERONICA

Yeah, and then he goes and gives "Best Halloween Costume" to Jamie Furlong wearing Lorraine's sweater vest and a gray wig. Father Mondello can go to hell.

GRACE

VEE!

VERONICA

I'm sick of it. Phillie built a piano out of oak tag and didn't even get an honorable mention.

GRACE

He was kind of cute.

VERONICA

Cute? His costume was genius. But Phillie's a little "different" so they give the prize to some stupid trust-funded surgeon's kid parading around as a TV abortionist? They think we don't notice shit like that?

GRACE

Calm down, Vee!

VERONICA

I know, I just get so frustrated sometimes. If I'd known what having this kid was going to be like... I'm sorry, Grace, I didn't mean to go on like that. Does Al know?

GRACE

I haven't told anyone yet. Not even my mother.

VERONICA

How old are you now?

GRACE

I'm almost 40.

VERONICA

Think about it, Grace. Do you really want to be the oldest mother in St. Mary's PTA?

GRACE

What else am I going to do? I can't very well disappear for 9 months and then put it up for adoption, can I?

VERONICA

Come on, Grace, it's 1972, not 1872. You've got options. If Maude can have one...

GRACE

That's a mortal sin!

VERONICA

You still believe all that?

GRACE

Don't you?

VERONICA

I don't know.

GRACE

You go to mass every week, you take Communion...

VERONICA

I don't know what I believe anymore. All those kids my mother had, all the ones she buried, the priests and the nuns telling us it was God's will, and I believed it, every single word of it. And today a nun lies to me? Flat out lies, and the pastor would've let her get away with it if I hadn't said anything? *I've* played by the rules. I've done what's expected. And what have I got? A husband who's never home, a daughter who barely speaks to me, a son I don't understand and who's probably queer... It's hell, Grace. Especially since I know it doesn't have to be that way anymore. I could leave Pete. I could get a job like Brenda Quigley did when Keith's father left them. Or I could go back to school, get a degree in... something. But maybe I'm too old. And maybe, just maybe, Phillie really does need me.

GRACE

Of course he does!

VERONICA

I don't know what Pete knows or thinks, but truthfully, if the kid's queer, he's queer. I don't really care. Wouldn't be the first in the family... Pete's nephew Glen. And my oldest sister Vivian. I think.

GRACE

I've wondered about her.

VERONICA

We all have. It's a tough, lonely life, and he'll need someone who believes in him. Or can at least fake it. Does that make me an awful Catholic? And if it does, then do I *really* want to be Catholic anymore?... I'm sorry, Grace, I'm just going on and on... So? What are you going to do about the baby?

GRACE

I don't know.

VERONICA

Just think about it.

GRACE

It is legal in New York now, isn't it?

VERONICA

My nephew Michael is a doctor. He's very discreet.

GRACE

I guess it wouldn't hurt just to talk to him. I'll think about it. Good Lord, look at the time! I've got to get dinner on the stove.

VERONICA

Jesus, me too.

They sip their drinks and smoke their cigarettes contemplatively, not making any effort to leave.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

You know, I don't feel like cooking. Let's take the kids to Scobee.

GRACE

But that's all the way in Little Neck!

VERONICA

So? I like their burgers.

(She swigs the rest of her martini.)

I'll drive.

Veronica stubs out her cigarette. Grace puts hers in the ashtray, absentmindedly leaving it still burning. They start up the stairs.

GRACE

What about Pete and Al?

VERONICA

Leave a note and let 'em nuke a Swanson's.

GRACE

You can't nuke a Swanson's, Vee. Trust me, I know.

And they're gone. A moment, then one of the banquette seats lifts up. Phillie, 12, climbs out with his notebook and a jar of olives, stubs out Grace's still burning cigarette as if it's something he does every day (which it is), and opens the other banquette.

PHILLIE

(Whispering.)

It's okay, Barbie. They're gone.

Barbie, also 12, climbs out. She's pudgy, but pretty. He writes in his notebook; she stuffs a Twinkie in her mouth. The lights fade.

ACT 1, PART 2: WRESTLING MATCH

SCENE 1: A WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON IN LATE JUNE, 1974

In the dark between scenes, we hear six gunshots ring out, followed by dramatic music, and a crash.

MONTY BARAGON

Mildred!

Lights come up on Veronica, now 54, cigarette in hand and reading a newspaper. Phillie, now 14, on the floor with a well-worn copy of "Harriet The Spy," and his notebook. "Mildred Pierce" is on TV; he's reading, and mouthing along to the movie.

VERONICA

How was school today?

PHILLIE

(Not looking up from his book.)

Shhhh! I'm watching this.

VERONICA

Phillie, I asked you a question. How was school today?

PHILLIE

(Quickly, impatiently.)

I don't want to talk about it.

MILDRED PIERCE

"I can't get you out of this, Veda."

VERONICA

Jesus, Phillie, stop mouthing all the lines!

VEDA PIERCE

"You've got to help me. Give me another chance. It's your fault I'm the way I am!"

VERONICA

Turn that Goddamn TV off! You've seen that movie 5,000 times! If you're going to read then *read*. Although, don't you think you're a little too old for that book now?

PHILLIE

I like it. Harriet's a spy, like me.

(He realizes what he's said.)

I mean, she's a writer. Like me.

Veronica stares at him a moment, but the phone rings before she can say anything, and she starts upstairs. It stops before she's even halfway up. Sighing, she turns and comes back down.

MILDRED PIERCE

“Darling, I’m sorry. I did the best I could.”

VEDA PIERCE

“Don’t worry about me, mother. I’ll get by.”

VERONICA

Phillie, I told you to turn that thing off!

PHILLIE

(Not looking up from the book, he picks up the remote and turns off the TV.)

It’s over now anyway. I’m freezing.

VERONICA

I don’t care how cold you are, Phillie, it’s hot as hell out and I’m not turning off the air.

PHILLIE

Sister Irmalita Simon said if we think it’s too hot, we should “all spend at least one day a week without air conditioning to remember the suffering of St. Joan at the stake.”

VERONICA

Sister Irmalita Simon has a couple of screws loose if you ask me. Go and get a sweater if you’re cold.

Phillie gets up and heads to the stairs. He and Veronica see his notebook on the floor at the same time he realizes he’s left it. They eye each other warily as he grabs it.

PHILLIE

(As he stomps up the stairs.)

Nice try, mom.

VERONICA

(To herself.)

Dammit!

(To Phillie.)

PHILLIE! The whole damn house is shaking. Can’t you go up the stairs like a normal person?

PHILLIE (OFF)

NO, I CAN’T!

VERONICA

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT INVITED TO THAT PARTY TONIGHT, DON'T
TAKE IT OUT ON ME! IF YOU'RE

VERONICA

MAD, GET GLAD, DAMMIT!

PHILLIE

MAD, GET GLAD, DAMMIT!

VERONICA

WATCH YOURSELF, PHILIP!

(To herself.)

Who the hell lets their kid throw a party on a Wednesday night anyway?

(She looks at her watch.)

4:30. Oh, what the hell.

(She takes a jar of olives out of the
fridge, and mixes herself a martini.)

THANKS FOR LEAVING ME AN OLIVE!

PHILLIE

YOU'RE WELCOME!

Phillie pounds back down the stairs. He's
wearing a cardigan.

VERONICA

You want a Coke?

PHILLIE

No.

VERONICA

No, what?

PHILLIE

No, thank you.

VERONICA

Phillie, I know you're upset about that party, and I understand / why

PHILLIE

/ No, you don't.

VERONICA

Yes, I do, honey. I really do.

PHILLIE

I am telling you right now: when she dies I am not going to her funeral.

VERONICA

Candy Ruggerio is not going to die, Phillie.

PHILLIE

Of course she is, Mom, she's got cancer. Why do you think she won class president?

VERONICA

It might have had something to do with the campaign slogans you wrote for her.

PHILLIE

Nope. She's got cancer and everybody feels sorry for her and she gets everything she wants and she will until the day she dies.

VERONICA

Well, she's not going to die today.

PHILLIE

She's a bitch. And I am not going to her funeral.

VERONICA

So don't go to her funeral. But don't call her a bitch.

PHILLIE

Why not? You call Mrs. Ruggerio a bitch all the time.

VERONICA

If I talked to my mother the way you talk to me

VERONICA

I wouldn't be alive today!

PHILLIE

You wouldn't be alive today!

PHILLIE

I'm the only one in the WHOLE GODDAMN CLASS SHE DIDN'T INVITE TO HER GODDAMN PARTY!

VERONICA

Watch your language! And you don't like anyone anyway!

PHILLIE

THAT'S NOT THE POINT, MOM!

VERONICA

I told you, Phillie, you have two choices: you can just show up, or forget it and I'll take you into the city to see whatever show or movie you want.

PHILLIE

Any movie I want to see?

VERONICA

I am not taking you to see "The Exorcist!"

PHILLIE

Then forget it. I don't want to go to the movies. I don't want to see a show. I don't want to go to that party. I just want / to

VERONICA

/ Sit home and sulk. Fine. Be that way. Honest to God, Phillie, I don't know what I'm going to do with you. Why do you let those kids get under your skin like this?

PHILLIE

They're all creeps. I am not going to graduation tomorrow either.

VERONICA

You are going even if I have to drag you there and Krazy Glue your ass to the pew.

PHILLIE

You wouldn't dare!

VERONICA

Oh no? Try me.

PHILLIE

You spent too much money on that graduation gown to ruin it with Krazy Glue.

VERONICA

What the hell is wrong with you today? You've been a pain in the ass ever since you got home from school.

PHILLIE

NOTHING!

VERONICA

Sister Mary Dolores John didn't talk to you, did she?

PHILLIE

NO! She hasn't spoken to me since last year.

VERONICA

Good. Look, honey, how can I help you if you don't tell me what's wrong?

PHILLIE

(Turning the TV back on.)

It's time for Lucy.

VERONICA

(Taking the remote away from him.)

I am sick and tired of these reruns of reruns of shows you've seen a million times already! Now you are going to tell me what the hell is wrong / before I

PHILLIE

/ I HATE IT HERE!

VERONICA

I hate it here too, Phillie, but this is where your father wants to live so this is what you're stuck with until you're 18.

PHILLIE

Then I am not going to St. Mary's Boys High School.

VERONICA

Oh, yes you are. Your father's put too much money into that school so / you and Celia

PHILLIE

/ It's always about money with you. It's not like we're poor.

VERONICA

Yes, Phillie, we have money, but that doesn't mean I want to waste it! You are going to St. Mary's for high school. It's been paid for. End of discussion.

PHILLIE

Then I'm going away to college.

VERONICA

Fine.

PHILLIE

And after / that I'm going

VERONICA

/ After that you can go to Timbuktu and do whatever you Goddamn please. I can't wait until we ship you off to Los Angeles next week and you're Celia's problem for the summer.

PHILLIE

You and me both, sweetheart!

VERONICA

That's it! Get out of my sight before I...

Barbie knocks at the sliding door. She's lost a lot of weight but may still have a few more curves than Grace likes. Phillie lets her in.

PHILLIE

Hey.

BARBIE

Hey. Hi, Mrs. McDougal. My Nonna Lina's here and mom wants to know if you can come over for dinner tonight? She said to call her.

VERONICA

Isn't that nice. Phillie?

PHILLIE

I don't care.

(Veronica shoots him a look.)

Yes, I think that would be nice.

VERONICA

I'm going say yes then. Damn, I keep telling your father we need an extension down here.

PHILLIE

He said to just put one in, he doesn't care.

VERONICA

He said no such thing!

PHILLIE

I heard him, he said "Do whatever you want, Veronica, it's fine with me." You just don't want to spend the money.

VERONICA

Philip Michael McDougal! I swear to God, one of these days... When did you hear him say that? Phillie?

The phone rings.

BARBIE

That's probably my mother.

VERONICA

(Stomping up the stairs just like Phillie.)

We'll talk about this later, Philip.

BARBIE

Ooh, she called you Philip Michael! You're in trouble now.

PHILLIE

Yeah, I almost blew it.

Barbie hops onto one of the banquettes.

BARBIE

She still thinks these things hide water pipes?

PHILLIE

Yup.

She lights a cigarette, offers one, he declines.

BARBIE

You'd be a lot cooler if you smoked.

PHILLIE

I don't care.

BARBIE

Up to you.

PHILLIE

I'm never going to smoke. It's not good for you.

BARBIE

I don't care. I've lost a lot of weight since I started.

PHILLIE

I don't need to lose weight. I have a high metabolism. You don't.

BARBIE

Shut up. Okay, so what the hell happened this morning? You were in with Father Mondello for more than half an hour.

PHILLIE

I didn't have anything to confess so I made something up.

BARBIE

And?

PHILLIE

And what?

BARBIE

Honestly, Phillie, you are so dense sometimes. WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?

PHILLIE

I told him I had an impure thought. I thought he'd just give me a lecture and a few Hail Mary's, but he kept asking questions.

BARBIE

Like?

PHILLIE

Have I ever seen a grown man naked? Have I ever touched another boy? Do I get excited when I see another boy or a man in a bathing suit? Really weird shit.

BARBIE

I heard Jamie Furlong went to Mondello's room last fall, and all kinds of stuff went on.

PHILLIE

Well, I'm not an altar boy. But it was still weird. I just kept making things up but he wouldn't stop. I told him about Jamie's boner in math class last week.

BARBIE

What'd he do?

PHILLIE

He started breathing heavy and then suddenly gasped. I think he was jerking off.

BARBIE

IN THE CONFESSIONAL!?! Ewwww, gross.

PHILLIE

Then he just looked at me, gave me ten rosaries and closed the window.

BARBIE

Guy's a creep. My mother likes him.

PHILLIE

Everybody likes him. He looks like Chad Everett and gives short sermons.

BARBIE

You think he's that good looking?

PHILLIE

Don't you?

BARBIE

No way. You gonna tell your parents?

PHILLIE

Nope. My mom'll blow up and my dad'll just act like it's my fault.

BARBIE

Yeah, don't tell them, it'll only make it worse.

The doorbell rings.

PHILLIE

I don't ever want to see Father Mondello again. I don't ever want to see any of them again.

BARBIE

What about tonight?

PHILLIE

I wasn't invited. You know that.

BARBIE

She said I could bring a date. I could bring you. She'd die.

PHILLIE

Poor choice of words, Barbie. No thanks, I don't want to go.

BARBIE

Yes, you do. Even with your windows closed I heard you screaming about it all afternoon.

PHILLIE

I wanted to be invited. Doesn't mean I wanted to go.

BARBIE

Oh. Well, maybe I won't go. We could go to the movies or something?

VERONICA (OFF)

PHILLIE, KEITH QUIGLEY'S HERE.

BARBIE

Oh for chrissakes, what the hell does he want?

PHILLIE

How the hell would I know?

(He shouts upstairs.)

OK. TELL HIM TO COME DOWN.

BARBIE

Are you crazy?

She bolts out, slamming the sliding doors shut
just as Keith comes downstairs.

KEITH

Hey.

PHILLIE

Hey.

KEITH

Barbie just left?

PHILLIE

Yeah.

KEITH

(Obviously disappointed.)

Oh.

PHILLIE

You like her, don't you?

KEITH

She's alright.

PHILLIE

You like her! You loooove her!

KEITH

I do not!

Keith punches Phillie and they wrestle. Loudly.

VERONICA

I'M TRYING TO TALK UP HERE! KEEP IT DOWN, BOYS!

Laughing, Phillie undoes Keith's belt buckle.

KEITH

Your mom's upstairs!

PHILLIE

She's talking to Mrs. Bradley. They'll be yakking for hours!

Phillie reaches for Keith's zipper.

KEITH

No, don't.

PHILLIE

You wanna go to the pool house instead?

KEITH

No, Phillie. I... uhm... I don't want to do that anymore.

Keith re-buckles his belt.

PHILLIE

Then what the hell did you come over here for?

KEITH

Barbie's mother said she was here.

Trying to save face, Phillie grabs the martini, takes a swig, and eats the olive.

PHILLIE

Oh. Martini?

KEITH

Uhm, no thanks. You got a Coke?

Sure.

PHILLIE

Phillie gets two Cokes, picks up the cigarette, takes a puff, and chokes. He stubs it out.

I didn't know you smoked.

KEITH

What? Oh, yeah, since 5th grade.

PHILLIE

My cousin should have invited you to her party tonight. It wasn't really her. Bitsy Ford told her not to. Bitsy doesn't like you.

KEITH

I don't like her either.

PHILLIE

My mother said you can come as our guest.

KEITH

No, thank you.

PHILLIE

Are you going to the Graduation Dance on Saturday?

KEITH

My parents are taking me to see *Over Here* on Saturday night.

PHILLIE

What's that?

KEITH

A show. On Broadway. With The Andrews Sisters.

PHILLIE

Who?

KEITH

Never mind.

PHILLIE

KEITH

I saw *Grease* on Broadway. It was okay. Is Barbie going with you?

PHILLIE

Where?

KEITH

Over There.

PHILLIE

OVER HERE! No.

KEITH

So she's going to the dance?

PHILLIE

I don't know. Want me to ask her?

KEITH

I don't care. I was just wondering. You're not dating her, or anything?

PHILLIE

No.

KEITH

If you change your mind about the party, bring your trunks. They opened the pool today.

PHILLIE

I've got my own pool. With a slide. Remember?

KEITH

Okay. Well.

PHILLIE

See ya.

KEITH

Yeah. See ya.

(He hesitates, and then blurts out.)

Why doesn't Barbie like me anymore?

PHILLIE

I don't know. Ask her. You know where she lives.

Phillie picks up his notebook and starts writing.

KEITH

You shouldn't smoke, you know. They say it causes cancer.

PHILLIE

(Dismissively.)

Yeah. I know.

Keith goes. A moment, and then Veronica starts down the stairs. The phone rings. She turns around. Phillie continues writing for a bit.

VERONICA

... PHILLIE! CANDY RUGGERIO'S ON THE PHONE!

PHILLIE

TAKE A MESSAGE!

Veronica storms down the stairs.

VERONICA

You get your ass up there and talk to her, young man!

PHILLIE

NO!

VERONICA

MOVE IT!

PHILLIE

You really should put in that extension or get an answering machine, like the Bradley's.

VERONICA

(She swats his backside.)

Go talk to Candy, and if she invites you to that party you say yes. And take a shower, you stink. We have to be next door at 5:30. And don't try and fool me with your father's Aqua Velva again. GO! NOW!

Phillie stomps up the stairs.

PHILLIE

Okay, okay, okay!

Veronica picks up her martini and sees the glass is empty.

VERONICA
GODDAMMIT, PHILLIE, STOP EATING MY OLIVES!

She lights a cigarette, and pours another drink.

SCENE 2: 8:30 THAT NIGHT.

In the darkness between scenes, the sounds of a party can be heard faintly in the distance. Above the music we hear a group of kids shouting “Spruce! Spruce! Spruce! A moment, then we hear the sound of a door slam. Moonlight streams through the sliding glass doors.

PHILLIE
(Offstage.)

Mom?

(He races down the stairs.)

Mom? Mom?

(He opens the sliding glass doors.)

MOM!

VERONICA (OFF)
I’m over here, on Grace’s back porch. What the hell are you doing home so early?

PHILLIE
MOM! COME HOME. PLEASE?

He turns on a couple of lights, drops a paper shopping bag onto a banquette seat, and starts to cry. A moment, then Veronica enters through the sliding glass door.

VERONICA
Phillie, how many times do I have to tell you to close this damn... JESUS! You’re soaking wet! What the hell happened?

She rushes to him, leaving the door open.

PHILLIE
Oh, mom, it was awful. The only reason Candy invited me was because she hasn’t written her valedictorian speech and wants me to write it for her.

VERONICA

Goddamn it.

PHILLIE

And then York Crowley said “My, Phillie, you’re looking mighty ‘spruce’ tonight,” and before I knew it everyone was calling me ‘Spruce.’ Jamie Furlong pulled me into the pool and held me under until I bit him in the balls.

VERONICA

Maureen just let them do that?

PHILLIE

Mrs. Ruggerio was upstairs. Mrs. Quigley was supposed to be watching us but she was... well, you know how she gets. I got out of the pool and left. They were all laughing at me.

VERONICA

(She starts up the stairs.)

I’m going to call that bitch and give her a piece of my mind. What was she thinking, leaving Brenda in charge of a bunch of teenagers?

PHILLIE

NO! Mom, don’t. You’ll only make it worse!

VERONICA

I can’t just let Maureen get away with that! She knows her sister’s a drunk.

PHILLIE

You always interfere and you always make it worse.

VERONICA

(Coming back down the stairs.)

You are not writing that speech for Candy.

PHILLIE

No shit, Sherlock. And I am not going to graduation either. END OF DISCUSSION!

VERONICA

(Giving in.)

Okay, okay, okay, you win. You really bit Jamie in the balls?

PHILLIE

Yeah.

VERONICA

I'd have slugged him, but good for you. That probably hurt a lot more, anyway. Go upstairs and get changed. I'll take you to Swenson's.

Barbie runs in through the open door. Her hair is sopping wet, as are her clothes over the wet bathing suit she has on underneath.

BARBIE

PHILLIE?

PHILLIE

What are you doing here?

VERONICA

PHILLIE!

BARBIE

I wanted to make sure you're okay. Are you okay?

VERONICA

You're a good friend, Barbie. Isn't she, Phillie?

PHILLIE

I never said she wasn't.

(To Barbie.)

I'm okay. You can go back to the party now.

VERONICA

Philip! Don't be rude.

BARBIE

I don't want to go back to that party. They're all a bunch of creeps. Ya wanna watch TV?

PHILLIE

We're going to Swenson's.

BARBIE

Oh. Okay.

VERONICA

Phillie, what is the matter with you? Ask her if she wants to come with us.

PHILLIE

Mrs. Bradley doesn't want her eating ice cream anymore, mom!

VERONICA

(Going up the stairs.)

I'm sure she won't mind this one time. Come on, you need to get out of those wet things. I ought to give Lorraine Furlong the bill for that outfit. 75 bucks down the drain...

And she's gone. Barbie takes a pack of cigarettes out of her pocket, and lights one.

BARBIE

You know you don't help yourself running away like that all the time.

PHILLIE

I don't care. I hate them all. I. HATE. THEM!

BARBIE

Calm down, Phillie. You always get so hysterical. They're not worth it. But you probably shouldn't have told Jamie you told Mondello about his boner.

PHILLIE

He called me a faggot.

BARBIE

You're too sensitive. You should've just said you were going to the dance on Saturday and left it at that. No one cares you're going to see the Andrews Sisters.

PHILLIE

Keith would've known I was lying.

BARBIE

So what? He's such a dork.

VERONICA (OFF)

PHILLIE! YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF THOSE WET CLOTHES! WE'RE MEETING GRACE AND HER MOTHER IN THE DRIVEWAY IN 10 MINUTES! AND BARBIE, YOU SHOULD GO HOME AND GET CHANGED TOO!

They ignore her.

BARBIE

Great. Now my mom and Nonna Lina are gonna fight over every spoonful I eat.

PHILLIE

At least Lina Lamont lets you eat ice cream.

BARBIE

Yeah, but I'm gonna hear about it all summer. And don't call my grandmother "Lina Lamont" to her face anymore. She hates that. You gonna write that speech for Candy?

PHILLIE

No way.

BARBIE

Good. I should have been valedictorian anyway.

PHILLIE

You don't have cancer.

They giggle as Phillie takes Barbie's cigarette and stubs it out. She notices the bag.

BARBIE

(As she takes a book out of the bag.)

So what did Jamie Furlong give you that got you so pissed off?

PHILLIE

Leave that alone!

BARBIE

"The Joy of Gay Sex?" What the hell is this?

PHILLIE

(Grabbing the book from her.)

SHHHHH! Why would he give this to *me*? Everyone knows about him and Mondello, and he gives this to me? Look what he wrote:

(Opening the book.)

"Congratulations, Cocksucker! See ya in high school, faggot!" I'm so embarrassed!

BARBIE

Why? He's the one who bought it, not you. I'm surprised he had the nerve.

PHILLIE

Oh. Yeah. Well. Put it back in the bag, I don't want my parents to see it.

BARBIE

Why don't you just throw it out?

PHILLIE

I don't want the garbage man to see it either.

BARBIE

Oh. Good point. I know! Let's throw it in Jamie's trash can. Serve him right.

VERONICA

PHILIP MICHAEL MCDUGAL, GET YOUR ASS UP HERE AND GET OUT OF THOSE GODDAMN WET CLOTHES RIGHT NOW!

PHILLIE

IN A MINUTE!!!

(He lowers his voice.)

I think I'll just hide it here until later, and then burn it.

He tries taking the book from her to hide in the banquette, but she holds on to it, thumbing through it in increasingly wide-eyed wonder.

BARBIE

This book is gross.

PHILLIE

I'll bet Keith Quigley wants you to do *that* to him.

BARBIE

I don't want to do that to *him*.

Veronica starts down the stairs. The kids freeze. The phone rings. Veronica turns around and goes back up, sighing in frustration.

PHILLIE

That was close. You really don't like him anymore, do you?

BARBIE

(She goes back to looking at the book.)

Who?

PHILLIE

Keith.

BARBIE

He's okay, I guess, but he's just so... boring. Oh my God, look at that!

PHILLIE

He is kind of good looking, isn't he? Better looking than me, anyway.

BARBIE

I don't think so. JESUS! *That* looks like it hurts!

PHILLIE

(Almost too nonchalantly, turning to hide his erection.)

It does, doesn't it?

BARBIE

(Suddenly kissing him.)

Phillie?

PHILLIE

What are you doing?

BARBIE

This is nice, isn't it?

(She kisses him again, perhaps with tongue, and reaches for his crotch.)

See? They're all wrong about you.

PHILLIE

C'mon, Barbie, that's enough.

Veronica comes down the stairs, holding a towel and a robe. Phillie drops the book, sits on it, and crosses his legs.

VERONICA

Barbie, your mother's on the phone. She wants to talk to you. Phillie, you wait here.

Barbie goes upstairs.

PHILLIE

I swear to God, mom, she started it! It was gross, like kissing an ashtray!

VERONICA

(She starts to undress him.)

C'mon, let's get you out of these wet things.

PHILLIE

Mom!

VERONICA

NOW! Underwear too.

PHILLIE

MOM!

VERONICA

Oh come on, I'm your mother; you don't have anything I haven't seen a million times already. Underwear. NOW!

She holds up the robe to shield him as he hands her the remaining items of his clothing. She hands him a dry pair of underwear.

PHILLIE

Why did you bring my robe? Aren't we going to Swenson's?

VERONICA

No... Phillie, Grace thinks Lina just had a stroke. She's taking her to the hospital. Barbie's going to stay with us until Mr. Bradley gets back from his business trip and they can get in touch with Robert, wherever the hell he is.

PHILLIE

He's in Europe.

VERONICA

Yes, Phillie, Grace knows that. She just doesn't know where in Europe he is at the moment.

PHILLIE

Oh. Is Lina Lamont going to die?

VERONICA

I don't know. But yes, it's a possibility. You really should call her Mrs. Pecorelli. She hates when you call her Lina Lamont.

PHILLIE

I know. And I don't care. She doesn't like me anyway. She called me a spoiled brat tonight. And a... What does "piccolo fanook" mean?

VERONICA

Never mind.

PHILLIE

Anyway, I hate her.

VERONICA

She's still Grace's mother, Phillie. She's had a harder life than you will ever know, and she deserves your respect, at least.

PHILLIE

Well, you certainly don't respect her. I heard you the other day when Mrs. Bradley said her mother was coming to stay with them for the summer. Your exact words: "You're going to have a horrible summer, Grace," and then she / said

VERONICA

/ That's enough, Phillie... How do you know what we were talking about?

PHILLIE

Uhm... I... I have 20/20 hearing.

VERONICA

You know, Lina's right, you are a spoiled brat.

PHILLIE

You mean Mrs. Pecorelli.

VERONICA

Yes. *Mrs. Pecorelli* is right: you are a spoiled brat.

PHILLIE

And who's fault is that, Mrs. Pierce?

VERONICA

Phillie... Just... Stop. You know, I hope you have seven kids just like you.

PHILLIE

I'm not ever having kids.

VERONICA

Even better!

VERONICA

I wouldn't wish even one of you on *any* mother!

PHILLIE

I wouldn't wish even one of you on *any* mother!

PHILLIE

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'd be sorry for Barbie if she dies, though. And Mrs. Bradley.

VERONICA

It's hard when a parent gets older and... dies, even when you don't get along with them.

PHILLIE
Like you and Grandpa Mike?

VERONICA
Yes.

PHILLIE
Mom?... Don't smoke anymore, okay?

He hugs her tightly.

VERONICA
Okay, that's enough, Phillie.
(She sees and picks up the book.)
"The Joy of..." What the hell is this? Never mind, I don't want to know.

She drops the book. Barbie comes downstairs.

PHILLIE
I'm sorry, Barbie.

VERONICA
Are you okay, honey?

BARBIE
Yes.

PHILLIE
How long does she have to stay?

VERONICA
(Shooting him a look.)
As long as she needs.
(To Barbie.)
I'll get Celia's old room ready while you go get your things. Then maybe I'll make us all Ice Cream Sodas? How about that?

PHILLIE
Chocolate!

VERONICA
Whatever Barbie wants.

BARBIE
(Absentmindedly.)
Yeah, Chocolate's fine, thank you... But no whipped cream on mine?

VERONICA

(Hugging her.)

It's going to be fine, honey. Don't worry. Your grandmother is a strong woman.

(To Phillie, pointing to the book.)

Don't ever let your father see that.

She exits upstairs. An awkward silence.

PHILLIE

She's so weird sometimes, like she gets bent out of shape about the dumbest things, and then stuff you think's gonna make her blow her top...

BARBIE

Yeah. Parents are weird. Like my mom, just now. She was just so... cold and matter of fact. "Do this, do that, don't be any trouble for Mrs. McDougal..." My Nonna Lina loves me. She loves me more than she loves my brother. She lets me eat ice cream...

PHILLIE

So does my mom.

Keith appears at the sliding glass door. Phillie sees him, and deliberately kisses Barbie. Keith stands there silently, watching.

PHILLIE

Barbie?... What does "piccolo fanook" mean?

BARBIE

...Jamie Furlong.

PHILLIE

I thought so.

Phillie kisses her again, then holds her, stroking her hair as she cries. Keith leaves, as Phillie stares after him wistfully.

SCENE 3: 2:30 IN THE MORNING.

The only illumination is from lights above the bar. Pete McDougal, 55, is reading Phillie's notebook, sipping a scotch. The door at the top of the stairs opens slowly. Pete shuts off the bar lights.

Phillie comes quietly down the stairs, tiptoes over to one of the banquettes, turns on a flashlight, and sees it's open.

PHILLIE

Shit. Shit, shit, shit!

PETE

(Flicking on the lights and holding up the notebook.)

Is this what you're looking for?

PHILLIE

That's my stuff. You're reading my stuff. No one reads my stuff.

PETE

(Picking up a book.)

Or is it this? "The Joy of Gay Sex," Philip?

PHILLIE

Oh. Shit.

PETE

...30 years ago today I was bare-assed naked in a navel hospital in France, alive in a room full of dying men. The aftermath of D-Day. You know about D-Day, don't you?

(Phillie nods.)

Good to know all the money I'm shelling out for your education isn't going to waste. That was complete and utter hell. I took four bullets, Philip, in both my legs, my shoulder – one missed my heart by just a quarter of an inch. Not even your mother knows how close that bullet came. It was a real trip, I'm telling you. I was in that hospital for more than 2 months, guys dying all around me, my buddies, dying, never sure whether I'd make it or not, bombs going off in the distance every day, all the time thinking "dear God, let me survive. Let me survive. Veronica is waiting for me, just let me survive."

(He opens "The Joy of Gay Sex.")

"Congratulations, Cocksucker." I didn't survive all that for this, Philip. I didn't work my ass off, get us where we are, give you everything you have, for this.

(He indicates the banquettes.)

I didn't build these places for you to hide "your stuff" from your mother so you could come down here in the middle of the night, jerk off to fairy porn, and then write about it.

PHILLIE

Jamie Furlong gave it to me for graduation. I was going to throw it out tomorrow.

PETE

After you rubbed a few out tonight. Who's Jamie Furlong?

PHILLIE

Some kid I go to school with. Dr. Furlong is his dad.

PETE

Oh, yeah, Jim Furlong. Stay away from that Jamie, Philip.

PHILLIE

I try to, Dad, but he's / always

PETE

/ Don't lie to me, Philip. I know you've been sucking each others cocks.

PHILLIE

WE HAVE NOT!

PETE

Lower your voice, do you want to wake your mother?

(He reads out loud from the notebook.)

"He said he didn't want to anymore. I'm so mad at him. He liked it, I know he did."
Well? What do you have to say for yourself?

PHILLIE

It wasn't Jamie.

PETE

Then who was it?

(Phillie remains silent.)

Who was it, Philip? Answer me.

PHILLIE

Keith Quigley. Barbie and I go to school with him, too.

PETE

Is he the one whose father took a powder?

PHILLIE

Yes.

PETE

Stay away from that faggot too. I mean it.

PHILLIE

Keith Quigley isn't a faggot. He likes Barbie.

PETE

Any guy who sucks another guy's cock is a faggot, Philip.

PHILLIE

We're not going to do it anymore anyway.

PETE

Philip, have I ever hit you?

PHILLIE

No, sir.

PETE

Have I ever threatened to hit you?

PHILLIE

No, sir.

PETE

Then listen to me: no son of mine is going to be a faggot, or hang around with one. You will stay away from both Keith Quigley and Jamie Furlong, or I will beat the living shit out of you. Am I clear?

PHILLIE

Yes.

PETE

Yes, what?

PHILLIE

Yes, sir.

PETE

One more thing: don't ever go to confession with Father Mondello again.

PHILLIE

YOU READ THAT, TOO!?! HOW DARE YOU!

PETE

Watch the tone, Philip. Has he ever touched you?

PHILLIE

I'm not an altar boy.

PETE

I know that, Phillie. Is that Keith kid one?

PHILLIE

Yes, sir. Both he and Jamie are. Please, Dad, don't say anything! PLEASE!

PETE

You're not lying to me? Father Mondello never touched *you*?

PHILLIE

No, I swear to God, Dad, he didn't.

PETE

(To himself.)

What the hell is going on in that school? I thought we'd be safe out here ...

(He makes a decision.)

You are not going to an all-boys high school.

PHILLIE

Do you mean it?

PETE

I'll pull a few strings, get you into Hunter.

PHILLIE

Hunter?

PETE

A college prep school in the city. It's going co-ed this fall. It'll be better for you.

PHILLIE

Mom's gonna have a fit.

PETE

Don't you worry about her, she'll be fine. So? Don't you have something to say?

PHILLIE

THANK GOD!!!

PETE

How about "Thanks, DAD! I'll never suck another cock again as long as I live?"

PHILLIE

Thanksdadi'llneversuckanothercockagainaslongasilive.

PETE

Because if I find out you've brought any more boys into the pool house, I'll haul what's left of your ass right into military school.

PHILLIE

Yes, sir.

PETE

(Pouring a scotch for Phillie.)

Here. It's time you learned to drink like a man.

PHILLIE

(Taking a sip.)

Yechhh.

PETE

You'll get used to it. Goddamn, it's cold down here.

PHILLIE

Mom likes it like this. Put a sweater on.

PETE

Jesus! You sound just like her.

PHILLIE

Do not!

The basement door opens.

VERONICA (OFF)

What's going on down there?

PETE

Philip and I are checking the basement for leaks, Vee. Go back to bed. We'll be up soon.

The door slams shut.

PHILLIE

She's pissed.

PETE

She'd be a whole lot more pissed if she knew what you hide down here.

(He hands him "The Joy of Gay Sex.")

Burn this in the trash can. I don't want the garbage man seeing it.

PHILLIE

Now?

PETE

In the morning. And don't let your mother see you.

PHILLIE

Dad?

PETE

Yes?

PHILLIE

What are you going to do about Father Mondello?

PETE

What are *you* going to do?

PHILLIE

I'm a kid, Dad!

PETE

You slugged Sister Mary Dolores John, didn't you?

PHILLIE

Mom said she wasn't going to tell you about that!

PETE

(He picks up the notebook.)

"I got so mad I hit her right back. It felt good."

PHILLIE

YOU WANT ME TO SLUG FATHER MONDELLO!?!

PETE

Shhhhh! I didn't say that, Phillie, did I?

(He takes a box from his briefcase.)

You want to be a writer? Be a writer. Take no prisoners.

PHILLIE

What does that mean?

PETE

(Handing the box to Phillie.)

If you're going to write, then write. Every single day. And don't let anyone push you around. Ever.

PHILLIE

(He takes a pen from the box.)

Philip Michael McDougal. Writer. St. Mary's Eighth Grade Graduation, June, 1974.
Thanks, Dad.

PETE

You're welcome.

PHILLIE

Dad? Do you like writing for advertising?

PETE

(He takes a folder and hands it to Phillie.)

You tell me.

PHILLIE

What's this?

PETE

This tells us all about our new client, their product, and how they think we can sell it.

PHILLIE

(Reading the brief.)

Potato chips in a can? Yechhh.

PETE

By next summer I'll have that crap at every Fourth of July barbecue in America.

PHILLIE

So?

PETE

So write a commercial for me, or write a short story about Father Mondello. Your choice.

PHILLIE

If I write the commercial, I have to do what this thing tells me?

PETE

Yes.

PHILLIE

Then I'm going to write the story. I'm never going to write what other people tell me to.

PETE

Yeah, let me know how that works out.

(Taking a book from his briefcase.)

I was going to give this to you to read on the plane on your way out to visit your sister next week, but I think you'd better start reading it now.

PHILLIE

"The Great Gatsby?" Like the movie?

PETE

It's my favorite book. It's high time you read it, especially if you're serious about becoming a writer. You should always be reading the great authors. Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Shaw. There's a truth to their work that you must always aspire to. Tell the truth – *your* truth – whatever it is. It might hurt you temporarily, but in the long run your work will be better for it. And that's what will last. And it's a damned sight better than writing about canned potato chips and boxed rice.

Phillie thumbs through the book.

PHILLIE

Mrs. Pecorelli had a stroke tonight. Mom says she might die.

PETE

Everybody dies, Phillie. Even nasty old bags like Mrs. Pecorelli; it's not true when they say only the good die young.

PHILLIE

I don't like her, either. I wish mom wouldn't smoke.

PETE

(Pouring them each another short one.)

Me too, Phillie. Me too. Finish your scotch and go to bed.

He puts his arm around Phillie, and they sit, quietly sipping their drinks.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT 2: SPRUCE & MAPLE GROW APART

We see Phillie and Barbie, now 15, wearing bathing suits. He's writing, she's slathering herself with baby oil. He tries to open a bag of Doritos and can't. She takes it, opening it effortlessly. He offers her some, she declines. The light is diffuse, and they sound slightly distant, as if lost in a dream or a memory.

BARBIE

What'cha writing?

PHILLIE

Short story.

BARBIE

Can I read it?

PHILLIE

No.

BARBIE

Are you writing about me?

PHILLIE

No.

BARBIE

Oh. Why not?

PHILLIE

It's not about you.

BARBIE

Everything is about me!

PHILLIE

Not this.

SCENE 1: EARLY EVENING ON A LATE SUMMER MONDAY, 2009

The lights are slowly fading up on the adult Philip in his apartment in NYC.

Now 49, he is paunchy, balding, in his robe, and is sitting on the floor. Just as he did as a child, he is both reading and watching TV; this time he's reading one of his old notebooks and watching "Wheel of Fortune." He's also sipping a martini. His apartment is a mess: moving boxes, empty take out containers and dirty dishes scattered everywhere, an open laptop is on the sofa, and two bags of cremation ash are on a coffee table.

BARBIE

You should write about me becoming a big star and you write all my movies.

PHILLIE

(He smirks and rolls his eyes.)

You're gonna burn with that much baby oil.

BARBIE

It's after 4:00. I'll be fine. Are you going to Candy's funeral tomorrow?

PHILLIE

No.

BARBIE

Keith's going to be mad at you.

PHILLIE

So what? He hasn't talked to me since last summer. Since when do you care what he thinks anyway?

BARBIE

I don't.

PHILLIE

You going?

BARBIE

My mom says I have to.

PHILLIE

Well, my mom says I don't.

BARBIE

I was hoping we could go together. I hate funerals.

PHILLIE

I'm going into the city tomorrow to meet my new friend David and bum around. Maybe we'll go see "Jaws," since you won't go with me.

BARBIE

Phillie... you're so... different now. Ever since you started going to school in the city, you've become so distant. Don't you like me anymore?

PHILLIE

(Putting down his notebook.)

That's a stupid question. Of course I do. You're my best friend. But I can have other friends, can't I? I just never liked Candy. And Keith doesn't like me anymore.

The intercom buzzes, jolting Philip out of the memory. He goes to the door.

CONTESTANT

I'll buy an "I," Pat.

PHILIP

(He stops to shout at the TV.)

Why are you buying a vowel? Spin the wheel, get the money!

CONTESTANT

I'll buy another vowel. "E?"

PHILIP

What is wrong with you? "T!" Ask for a "T!"

(Pushing the intercom buzzer.)

Yes?

DOORMAN

Sheila is coming up.

PHILIP

Oh. Shit. Yeah, thanks Jimmy.

He refreshes his drink.

CONTESTANT

I'll buy another vowel. "A!"

PHILIP

Seriously? You can't get this? SOLVE THE FUCKING PUZZLE!

CONTESTANT

I'll solve the puzzle, Pat. RICE-A-RONI, THE SAN FRANCISCO BREAK!

PHILIP

THE SAN FRANCISCO TREAT, YOU IDIOT! SAN. FRANCISCO. TREAT!

(He turns a cremation bag around.)

Oh, dad, don't look.

Sheila Roth, 60, barges in.

SHEILA

Hello, I'm Sheila, your agent, remember me? The one who got Mitchell to give you that three-book deal with Schuster? Remember him? Your editor? We were supposed to have lunch with him today? Where the hell were you, Philip?

PHILIP

That was today?

SHEILA

You've played that game one too many times.

PHILIP

I overslept. What time is it?

SHEILA

You know what time it is: four months to due day.

PHILIP

Martini?

SHEILA

Who the hell drinks martinis in the summer?

PHILIP

They were my mother's favorite. G&T, then?

SHEILA

No. Thanks. "Wheel Of Fortune," Philip?

PHILIP

My father's favorite. After my mom died, Celia and I watched it with him every night.

SHEILA

Okay. Sorry. But Philip, honey... your parents... they're gone. You have a contract and a deadline that's not going away WILL YOU TURN THAT THING OFF?

(Taking a manuscript from her bag.)

I've read it.

PHILIP

And?

SHEILA

Are you going to make the December deadline?

PHILIP

Yes, I'm going to make the December deadline!

SHEILA

(Opening one of the multi-tabbed pages.)

Not if you keep writing shit like this. "If we're lucky, the people we loved stick around until we're ready for them to leave. If we're lucky, they leave before things become impossible." You're kidding me with this, right?

PHILIP

I told you it was a rough draft. Did you show it to "His Heinous Gayness?"

SHEILA

Mitchell hates when you call him that.

PHILIP

Like I care. Did you show him the draft?

SHEILA

No, I didn't. I couldn't. Philip, honey, as your agent, as your friend, I keep telling you: You want a best-seller in the adult market, you gotta take the gloves off. Here's an idea: Let Spruce & Maple grow up.

PHILIP

Oh, God!

SHEILA

No, listen to me, I've been thinking about this.

PHILIP

I hate whenever you've "been thinking about this."

SHEILA

What was your favorite book as a kid?

PHILIP

“Harriet The Spy.” Why?

SHEILA

Have you ever wondered what happened to Harriet after she grew up?

PHILIP

Sometimes.

SHEILA

The first “Spruce & Maple” book came out when... ‘85? ‘86?

PHILIP

‘84.

SHEILA

Okay, think about this: the first kids to read those books are all pushing 40 now.

PHILIP

Yeah, so?

SHEILA

It’s a built in audience. Once marketing makes ‘em realize they’re dying to know what happened to Spruce & Maple after they grew up. Hmm?

PHILIP

I was afraid this was where you were going. No. No, no, no, no, no.

SHEILA

Why not?

PHILIP

Because Barbie... That one about the priest and the altar boys really upset her. I promised her I wouldn’t write another one after that.

SHEILA

Yeah, that one was a kid lit groundbreaker and you haven’t written anything even half as truthful since.

PHILIP

Barbie is my oldest friend, Sheila. She's... the Bradleys are almost family. One of the last connections I have to my mother... to my parents.

SHEILA

Isn't that why you're moving to L.A.? To be near your sister? And would an old friend, excuse me, almost family, ask you to give up a lucrative career?

PHILIP

She didn't ask. I offered. Besides, I was getting tired of writing those books.

SHEILA

Yeah. You know, Philip, I've been to at least three Christmas parties here where all your "old friend" did was snipe at you while you and your mother buried yourselves in booze. When was the last time you even saw her?

PHILIP

My mother's memorial.

SHEILA

So, February. It's almost September. Just sayin'...

(Back to the manuscript.)

This crap has no teeth, and if those kids books had one thing going for them, they had teeth. Tiny little baby teeth, but teeth. Give 'em a full set of permanent incisors now.

PHILIP

I said no. I need to move away from those books if I want to be taken seriously.

SHEILA

Yeah, yeah, yeah, "Serious Writer Syndrome." That's all in your head, honey. You write a best-seller, you're taken seriously. Period. The end.

PHILIP

I've still got four months.

SHEILA

Look, Philip, I took you on because those books had such a "take no prisoners" 'tude I believed you could make the jump from kid lit. Eight years and two flops later you haven't delivered. I still believe in you, but honey, you haven't had a best-seller since your last "Spruce & Maple" book ten years ago. In the kid's market!

PHILIP

Don't hold back, Sheila.

SHEILA

Have I ever? The bottom line is you sell books, you make money. You make money, I make money. I love ya but I love money more, and I haven't gotten much of that kind of love back from you. You gotta stop with this pseudo-Fitzgerald shit. No one's buying it.

(She sees the boxes/bags of ash.)

Jesus H. Christ, is that them?

PHILIP

My parents? Yeah.

SHEILA

Creepy.

PHILIP

Celia's coming next month. We're going to scatter their ashes in Manhasset Bay, clean out the house, and put it on the market before I head out to L.A.

SHEILA

And I became a literary agent. What was I thinking? 6% on that house, this apartment and a condo on Long Boat Key? I'd be set for life.

PHILIP

Not the way you spend. Now get out of here so I can put some "teeth" into this thing.

SHEILA

Think about what I said, Philip.

(Poking his stomach.)

And lay off the Rice-A-Roni.

PHILIP

Jeez, you sound like my shrink.

SHEILA

I should make as much money from you as that broad. I just don't want to hear you bitch when you see your publicity photos. And take a shower. You stink.

PHILIP

Story of my life: bending over for strong women.

SHEILA

Yeah, you'd think that would be an interesting story. So write it. And write it better. Just out of curiosity, have you told Barbie you're moving out to Los Angeles?

PHILIP

She didn't take it very well.

SHEILA

You were expecting hugs and a party? You know, Philip, you're never going to get away from whatever it is you're trying to get away from, so you might as well just face it. And then write it. Isn't that what Fitzgerald did?

PHILIP

He drank, too.

SHEILA

Just sayin'. December, Philip. This bag cost me a fortune.

She exits. He goes over to his father's ashes, and stares at them.

PHILLIE (V.O.)

Then I'm going to write the story. I'm never going to write what other people tell me to.

PETE (V.O.)

Yeah, let me know how that works out.

PHILIP

Fuck.

He puts down the notebook and rips open a box of Rice-A-Roni as the lights fade.

SCENE 2: LATE MORNING ON AN EARLY FALL SUNDAY, 2009.

Bright, leaf-dappled sunlight streams onto Grace's back porch. Grace, now 76, is asleep. Veronica appears, as if in Grace's dream, and talks to her. We hear both Younger and Older Grace's responses in a voice over.

VERONICA

So. Have you thought about what you're going to do about that baby?

GRACE (V.O.)

I don't know, Vee. I just don't know. What would Father Mondello say?

VERONICA

Who says you have to tell that blowhard? We've had this discussion before, remember? My nephew Michael can take care of it, and no one but us ever needs to know.

A car drives up and doors slam. We hear the adult Barbie, now known as Barbara, yelling at her son teen-aged son, Jude.

BARBARA (OFF)

Jude, calm down. I don't understand where all this anger is coming from! Really, what were you expecting? Raffi Hagopian is a junior, you're a freshman. You should be thrilled you came in second...

VERONICA

I'm calling my nephew.

Jude, 14 and the spitting image of Keith, enters in a rage. He kicks the chaise as he passes, waking Grace. Veronica disappears.

JUDE

Where the fuck were you?

GRACE

What? What? What?

Jude storms into the house, slamming the kitchen door. Barbara, 49, enters carrying grocery bags. She is now painfully thin, and looks harried.

BARBARA

Jude! Apologize to your grandmother!

JUDE (OFF)

Sorry.

GRACE

That kid's a brat.

BARBARA

He's upset, mom, he just lost the race. And where the hell were you? I told you I'd pick you up from church after Jude's track meet!

GRACE

I didn't know where you were, so I walked home.

BARBARA

Why didn't you call me? Isn't that why I gave you a cell phone?

GRACE

I don't know how to use that thing. What's the big deal? It's a nice day, it's not that far.

BARBARA

(Putting the grocery bags on the table.)

It's more than a mile, Mom! What if it were raining? Or snowing?

GRACE

Snowing? In September? Please, Barbie doll, I'm fine! What's all this?

BARBARA

Stuff for later. Can you help me get it ready? Philip will be here in a few minutes.

GRACE

Phillie's coming? I like Phillie.

BARBARA

Yes, mom, I told you. He wants something. I can always tell.

GRACE

You never told me he was coming, Barbie.

BARBARA

I most certainly... Yes, he's coming. But he likes to be called Philip now. Remember what a big deal he made out of it last Christmas?

GRACE

(Lighting a cigarette.)

So? You don't like being called Barbie anymore. Philip. Sure.

BARBARA

MOM!

GRACE

WHAT?

BARBARA

(Taking the cigarette from her.)

What did I tell you about smoking in the house?

GRACE

I'm on the porch. And it's still *my* house, Barbie doll.

BARBARA

I keep telling you, Jude is allergic to cigarette smoke.

GRACE

Your husband left, Barbie. You don't have to cover for his no-smoking baloney anymore.

BARBARA

Keith is an oncologist, mom. I think he knows something about the link between smoking and cancer. He had a right to live in a smoke free environment.

GRACE

Not when he's living in my house. I've been smoking for 60 years and I'm just fine.

BARBARA

Yeah, the jury's still out on that. And my kid *is* allergic to cigarette smoke!

GRACE

Whatever you say, Barbie doll. Phillie was always such a nice little boy. Why you didn't marry him when he asked you I'll never know.

BARBARA

Philip never asked me to marry him. He's gay, remember?

GRACE

But you two slept together, didn't you?

BARBARA

MOM!

GRACE

New Years Eve, 84? 85? Wasn't it you two, or was it Robert and that putana he got pregnant? Someone was making a lot of noise when we got home that night.

BARBARA

Oh dear God! That's enough, mom!

GRACE

No, I'm pretty sure it was you two. I mean, why would Robert be sneaking over to Veronica's house at four in the morning?

BARBARA

Just forget it, okay?

GRACE

Well, someone wanted to marry you. Who was it if it wasn't Phillie?

BARBARA

I was engaged to Thad, mom, and he broke it off!

GRACE

That's right! Thad, that guy you met at law school. Why didn't you marry him? I told you Keith was not marriage material.

BARBARA

And I told you I don't want to talk about Thad, or Philip, or why I married Keith, okay? Why do you have to bring it up all the time? Just stop.

GRACE

You've got such a lovely figure now. Why do you hide it with those awful blue jeans? They do nothing for you, especially from behind. Phillie's coming?

BARBARA

Philip! I am never going to get used to calling him that. Yes, mom, he was stopping next door first, to "check the basement for leaks." He should've been here by now.

GRACE

(Miming knocking back a drink.)

That's code, Barbie doll.

BARBARA

Yes, mom, I know.

A crash inside the house.

JUDE (OFF)

FUCK! FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK!

BARBARA

Oh God! Jude, watch your language! What happened?

JUDE

(Coming to the door.)

Nothing.

GRACE

If you broke another one of my Hummels I'll beat you within an inch of your life!

(To herself.)

Little brat's been a pain in my ass since he was born.

She takes out a pack of cigarettes, notices
Barbara staring at her, and puts it down.

JUDE

(To Grace.)

It's not one of your damn Hummels.

(To Barbara.)

I knocked into your china cabinet. A bunch of those purple glasses broke.

BARBARA

Not my Amethyst Waterford Goblets! Jesus, Jude, you've got to get your anger under control. We'll talk about this later, after your Uncle Philip leaves.

JUDE

That faggot is not my uncle.

BARBARA

JUDE! Don't you ever call him that!

JUDE

Why not? Dad calls him a faggot all the time.

BARBARA

That doesn't mean you should. Am I clear?

JUDE

Yeah, sure, whatever.

BARBARA

Go upstairs and take a shower. And stay in your room until I call you down. GO! NOW!
Mom, would you mind putting out the snacks while I clean up that mess? Phillie, dammit
PHILIP will be here in a minute.

Barbara pushes Jude back inside. Grace takes
the snacks out of the bag one by one.

GRACE

Gluten-free Chips with No Trans-Fats? Dairy-free Tofu Onion Dip with No Trans-Fats?
Extra Mild, Fat-Free Salsa? Fat-free Cheddar Cheese? Meatless Salami? BARBIE, I
TOLD YOU TO GET SOMETHING TASTY!

BARBARA (OFF)

It's better for you, mom!

Grimacing with disgust, Grace puts the stuff back in the bag. Looking to see if Barbara is watching, she lights a cigarette and takes a drag. She exhales happily. A moment, and then:

BARBARA (OFF)

I CAN SMELL THAT, YOU KNOW!!!

GRACE

(Muttering.)

I can't smoke. I can't drink. I can't do anything in my own house anymore.

Taking one last drag, she puts the cigarette on a plate, but doesn't stub it out. She sits, picks up her book and reads. Philip enters, swigging from a water bottle and carrying a cake box. He's wearing a pair of cargo pants, and the pockets are stuffed. We see Phillie stubbing out Grace's cigarette in the past, while Philip stubs it out in the present. The memory ends, and Philip puts the cake box on the table.

PHILIP

(Quietly.)

Hi, Grace.

GRACE

(Startled.)

Who are you? BARBIE?

PHILIP

It's okay, Grace, it's me, Philip. Remember me? I used to live next door, we get together at my apartment in the city every year for Christmas?

GRACE

Philip? Oh, yeah, Phillie! You got so fat! You used to be such a skinny little thing! Your mom and I used to call you "Mr. Malnutrition."

PHILIP

Yes, you did.

GRACE

Where's Veronica? I haven't seen her around. Did she go down to Florida early this year?

PHILIP

She died, Grace. Last winter.

GRACE

I knew that. Dammit, I knew that. And your father too. Right after.

PHILIP

Pete never got over her dying first.

GRACE

I miss them. We were friends for so long. And now I'm the only one left. Al went first. Did you know that? Of course you knew that. 15 years ago now. Heart attack. Dead before he hit the floor. Only 67. I miss them all.

PHILIP

I miss Al too. He was the only dad in the neighborhood who didn't seem to mind I cared more about Mickey Mouse than Mickey Mantle.

GRACE

It hurts like hell, doesn't it, Pete?

PHILIP

(Gently taking her hand.)

Pete was my father, Grace.

GRACE

Of course. You're Phillie. You look so much like him, it's as if he were sitting right in front me, like the old days. Except he kept his hair, didn't he?

PHILIP

Yes, he did. They're still around, Grace. They haunt me. They're in my dreams. Almost every night. Last night I dreamt we were all together, on the boat. You, Al, Celia, all of us, and we were going to scatter their ashes in the bay, but they were there. Pete and Al were knocking back scotch after scotch, my mother was mixing martinis, screaming at me to stop eating her olives. Everyone was laughing and having a good time, but Barbara kept lecturing us to "be quiet, this is a solemn occasion." My father said "They're my ashes, Barbie, I'll laugh about it if I want. Go ahead, Philip, toss 'em! You've been dying to do it for years, here's your chance!" And all I wanted to do was get off that boat, just get away from all the laughter and the pain.

GRACE

I have those dreams. I think everybody does. That's what hurts the most: they're not here when I wake up, ya know?

PHILIP

Yeah, I do.

GRACE

Your mother was my closest friend. When we first moved here, I didn't know you don't set up your chairs on the front lawn and talk to neighbors as they pass, like we did in Ozone Park. But your mom, she didn't ignore me like everyone else. She just sat down and talked to me, invited me in for coffee, and we were friends from then on. Was it coffee? Or was it martinis? She liked her martinis. She was from Queens, too, and she hated it out here. Like me at first. But we got used to it. It was good for you kids... probably... I dream about the baby, too. I dream about both of them, it's terrible. I didn't want to have it.

PHILIP

Both of them? I don't understand.

Barbara enters and quietly watches them.

GRACE

Your mother wanted me to have an abortion, she even made an appointment with your cousin, but I lost that baby before I could even see him. And then that mess when Barbara was in law school...

PHILIP

What mess?

BARBARA

Mom! That's enough, you're boring Philip.

PHILIP

Sssh, Barbara. She needs to talk. What mess at Harvard, Grace?

BARBARA

When Thad broke off our engagement. You remember how badly I took that.

GRACE

She gets so upset whenever I bring that up.

(To Philip.)

Who are you?

BARBARA

It's Philip, mom. I told you he was coming.

GRACE

That's not Phillie. Phillie is a skinny little thing.

BARBARA

How about a nice long nap?

GRACE

Don't treat me like a child, Barbie doll. I hate this. I know who you are, Phillie. I can't count on remembering everything anymore, but I know who you are.

BARBARA

C'mon, let me take you upstairs.

GRACE

(Brushing Barbara aside.)

I can go by myself, Barbie. She's like a helicopter, Phillie. She hovers and buzzes, and she won't let me smoke in my own house.

And she's gone. An awkward pause.

BARBARA

Any leaks?

PHILIP

(Taking a swig from his water bottle.)

Nah, it's fine. Dry as a bone.

BARBARA

I'll just bet.

Philip takes a jar of olives from his pocket. A bookmark has gotten stuck to the jar. Popping an olive in his mouth, he offers her one. She shakes her head "no." He then takes a rock hard packet of Twinkies out of another pocket and offers it to her.

PHILIP

Look what was still in the banquettes: they must be 35 years old.

BARBARA

No. Thank you.

(Seeing the bookmark.)

What's that?

PHILIP

The bookmark? It was still in the banquettes too. I'd almost forgotten it. My mom gave it to me for my thirteenth birthday. She said the quote meant something / to her.

BARBARA

(Seeing the grocery bags.)

/ Goddammit, I told her to take out those snacks! I'm sure she's developing Alzheimer's.

PHILIP

Of course you are.

BARBARA

I'm taking her to be tested next week. C'mere and help me with this stuff.

She starts unloading the bags. Philip tries to open a bag of chips. He still can't do it. She automatically opens it for him. He opens the salsa and scoops some onto a chip.

PHILIP

Good God, what is this crap?

BARBARA

Organic Salsa and Gluten-free Chips. They're baked, not fried.

PHILIP

Oh. Needs salt.

BARBARA

I don't keep salt in the house. I have some Lemon Pepper Mrs. Dash...

PHILIP

(Taking a salt packet out of his pocket.)

The only useful thing I learned from that unfortunate year in the Boy Scouts: be prepared.

BARBARA

Salt is very bad for you, Philip. You use far too much; you always have.

PHILIP
(Dumping the salt into the salsa.)

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BARBARA

PHILLIE!

PHILIP

PHILIP! Now it's edible.

(Tasting it.)

Kind of.

BARBARA
(Picking up the cake box.)

What's this?

PHILIP

I brought a cake for your mom.

BARBARA

Is it vegan?

PHILIP

It's a carrot cake. I guess so.

BARBARA

Not the same thing. Does it have gluten in it?

PHILIP

How the hell would I know? I just went to Whole Foods, pointed and said "Put it in a box." Your mother likes carrot cake, remember?

BARBARA

I'm sorry, Philip, but Jude is allergic to gluten.

PHILIP

So? We can have some, right?

BARBARA

Don't you get it? My mom is a messy eater.

PHILIP

And...?

BARBARA

Crumbs! Jude could inhale them.

PHILIP

You're kidding me.

BARBARA

Jude has some very serious food allergies and we've had to make a lot of adjustments to the way we eat. And, I might add, it's helped to keep the weight off.

PHILIP

God, your mother did such a number on you.

BARBARA

And yours didn't? So? To what do I owe the pleasure of your company today? I assume you want something from me, why else would you have deigned to come out here?

PHILIP

What's that supposed to mean?

BARBARA

Oh come on, Philip. You never come out here unless you absolutely have to. What do you want?

PHILIP

To torture you with Twinkies, salt, and carrot cake, obviously.

Jude enters from the house, now dressed in jeans and a T-shirt. His headphones are on, and he's immersed in his phone. Barbara quickly hides the cake in an ice chest.

BARBARA

Very funny. Jude! I thought I told you to stay upstairs until I called you. Jude?

JUDE

I'M GOING TO SPENCER'S.

BARBARA

Wait a minute. I SAID WAIT A MINUTE!

Barbara yanks off his headphones.

JUDE

MOM!

BARBARA

We've got company. You haven't even said hello to your Uncle Phillie.

PHILIP

I am not his uncle!

JUDE

He's not my uncle!

PHILIP

I'm only his Godfather. AND IT'S PHILIP! Barbie doll.

BARBARA

Okay, okay, okay! Jeez. But say hello to each other, at least!

PHILIP

Hello, kid.

JUDE

How's it goin'?

PHILIP

How's high school?

JUDE

Okay, I guess.

PHILIP

Cool.

JUDE

Yeah. Can I go now?

BARBARA

Jude!

PHILIP

It's alright, Barbara.

BARBARA

No, it's not alright. Jude, you knew Philip was coming over today, I told you not to make plans with Spencer.

JUDE

I told you our biology project is due tomorrow! We gotta finish it.

BARBARA

And I told the two of you to work on it yesterday!

JUDE

You won't let him come over here.

BARBARA

Jude, that's not what I said. If you want to work in the den, that's fine. But I don't want him upstairs anymore.

JUDE

Anyway, we had track practice yesterday!

BARBARA

That didn't seem to do much good now, did it?

PHILIP

Jesus, Barbara! Let him go.

BARBARA

No, Philip, you don't understand. He does this all the time. He waits until the last minute, goes into a panic, and then *I'm* up until all hours helping him get it done.

PHILIP

Oh come on, who doesn't wait until the last minute? I seem to remember you pulling a project or two out of your ass the night before.

JUDE

Oh, burn!

He and Philip do a fist bump.

BARBARA

Yeah, but I was an A student. He isn't.

(To Jude.)

We've had this discussion over and over. You need to work harder to keep your grades up or I will ground you from all extra-curricular activities. I mean it. End of discussion.

PHILIP

My God, you sound like my mother!

BARBARA

Do not.

PHILIP

Do too.

BARBARA

Well, I'm not sure that's such a bad thing in this case. Honestly, Philip, he knows every single statistic about every single player of every single sport, but when it comes to his schoolwork it all goes in one ear and out the other.

PHILIP

So? I know every single score from every single Broadway musical and every single fact about every single performer. "Between October 12th, 1950, and May 3rd, 1952, Ethel Merman played 644 performances of *Call Me Madam* at the Imperial Theatre in New York. She never missed a single one, which drove her standby, Elaine Stritch, to drink."

JUDE

Wow. That's so gay.

PHILIP

Statistics, kid. It's a guy thing.

Philip starts another fist bump, but Jude just stares at him awkwardly.

JUDE

Yeah, okay, whatever. I gotta go. Spencer hates to be kept waiting!

BARBARA

You are staying here and getting reacquainted with your unc... With Philip.

JUDE

Do you want me to fail again?

BARBARA

If that's what it takes to get it through your thick skull, then yes. I'm not too crazy about that Spencer anyway. There's just something about that kid I don't trust. I knew I should've put you in St. Mary's, despite what your father said.

JUDE

Why you always gotta harsh my buzz?

Philip laughs out loud. Barbara glares at him.

PHILIP

Sorry.

BARBARA

(To Jude.)

You're not smart enough to realize Spencer is a bad influence on you.

PHILIP

Jesus, Barbara! Cut the kid some slack! Just let him go finish his project. Kid, as your Godfather, I hereby give you permission to go to Spencer's.

BARBARA

Not so fast. Thank Philip first. If it were up to me you wouldn't be going at all and have to face the consequences tomorrow morning.

JUDE

Thanks, Philip.

PHILIP

No prob, kid.

BARBARA

And give me a hug.

JUDE

Mom!

BARBARA

Give me a hug or you can't go, no matter what your "Godfather" says.

JUDE

(Giving her a perfunctory hug.)

There. Bye.

BARBARA

(Grabbing and tickling him.)

Give me a real hug. That's better. God, what am I going to do with you? You used to be such a sweet little boy, I don't know what happened. I prayed to St. Jude for years before I had you. You're my little hopeless cause. God, what are we going to do with your hair? Can't you comb it once in a while? For me?

JUDE

Mom! Stop!

PHILIP

There's nothing wrong with your hair, kid. Maybe some highlights in a year or two.

JUDE

Whatever.

BARBARA
(Glaring at Philip.)

Okay. Give me a kiss and then you can go.

JUDE
(Giving her a quick peck and bolting off.)

Bye!

BARBARA
Be home by five. We're eating at 5:00 sharp!

JUDE (OFF)
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BARBARA
And don't let Mrs. Kenny give Spencer any Ring-Dings while you're there. Remember what happened last time? Stay out of their kitchen!

JUDE (FURTHER OFF)
Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever!

PHILIP
What was that smell?

BARBARA
He thinks he doesn't have to shower if he covers himself with Axe.

PHILIP
It was something more than that. Kinda like weed.

BARBARA
Jude does not smoke weed, Philip. He doesn't smoke anything. His father would kill him.

PHILIP
Well, if he lit a joint and opened a beer he'd smell like a gay bar.

BARBARA
He's not gay, he's 14.

PHILIP
I never said he was!

BARBARA
Remember when you were 14? Two words: Aqua Velva.

PHILIP

But my mother never let me get away with that. What's wrong with Spencer?

BARBARA

I don't know, it's just a feeling I have. He's a little too... he's just got this view of the world that's really skewed. And don't give him any more ideas, Philip.

PHILIP

What ideas?

BARBARA

Highlights.

PHILIP

All the kids highlight their hair now.

BARBARA

Unless I'm absolutely sure there's no gluten in the dye, I can't take the risk he'll get sick.

PHILIP

Are you crazy? Do you know for sure he has Celiac's, or is this another one of your Munchausen's-by-proxy diagnoses?

BARBARA

What's *that* supposed to mean?

PHILIP

That afternoon you all went to see whatever show that was and he stayed with me? I fed him those grilled cheese sandwiches? You decided he was "lactose intolerant" before you even got off the Triborough Bridge.

BARBARA

He was throwing up in the car all the way home!

PHILIP

That's what kids do, Barbara! God, what is up your ass today? I mean, you were cranky at the track this morning, but...

BARBARA

I'm very angry with you.

PHILIP

What'd I do now?

BARBARA

You don't return my phone calls, you don't reply to my emails, you're moving halfway around the world...

PHILIP

California is not halfway around the world, / Barbara

BARBARA

/ You never talk to me anymore.

PHILIP

I tried talking to you this morning.

BARBARA

Really, Philip? In the middle of a race my kid was losing?

PHILIP

Really, Barbara? You think driving to Long Island at the crack of dawn to watch a bunch of smelly boys run around in circles is why I came out here today?

BARBARA

No, you want something. But I hoped you'd want to support the Godson you never see.

PHILIP

I did support him!

BARBARA

Screaming "You're behind, honey! Catch up, catch up" is not supporting him.

PHILIP

(He giggles.)

I thought it was kind of funny, actually.

BARBARA

It was embarrassing. Did you see the look Bitsy Ford shot us?

PHILIP

Good old Bitsy Ford. Still a nasty, raging cu / (nt)

BARBARA

/ PHILIP! You know I hate that / word

PHILIP

/ curmudgeon.

BARBARA

She's a judge now. I have to make nice with her. Honestly, Phillie, why do you have to be so... loud all the time?

She punches him in the arm.

PHILIP

OW! Because it's my solemn duty to make sure this branch of the McDougals dies out in a blaze of loud, gay glory. And it's Philip! Get it?

He punches her right back. Hard.

BARBARA

OW! Got it.

PHILIP

Good. I still don't get why you're being such a bitch today. You've been especially awful since your mother mentioned Harvard.

BARBARA

She just reminded me I got dumped. Again. Keith and I... The divorce is getting ugly.

PHILIP

Wait. WHAT? Divorce?

BARBARA

You don't even *listen* to my voicemails, do you?

PHILIP

I don't listen to anyone's voicemails. It gets too overwhelming. Texts. I read text messages. Sometimes. So that's why he wasn't at the track this morning.

BARBARA

He really is on call this weekend.

PHILIP

I thought it was because he's still avoiding me.

BARBARA

He's not avoiding you, Philip, he's just...

PHILIP

...still pissed I testified against Bishop Mondello.

BARBARA

If you hadn't written that damn book, you wouldn't have had to testify at all.

Phillie and Keith appear as Philip has another memory.

PHILLIE

Why did you come over last night? Did you change your mind when you saw what Jamie gave me?

KEITH

I told you, I don't want to do that anymore. I just wanted to make sure you were okay. You're my friend, Phillie. I like you.

PHILLIE

Yeah, right.

KEITH

I do, just... I don't want to do that with you anymore. They were all being so mean to you last night. I really just wanted to let you know I didn't like them calling you "Spruce" and I told them so.

PHILLIE

You were just following Barbie.

KEITH

That's not true. And I thought you said you weren't dating her, anyway.

PHILLIE

I'm not. I just kissed her because I wanted to piss you off.

KEITH

Why are you being such a dick?

PHILLIE

You have to go now. My dad doesn't want me hanging around faggots.

KEITH

Look who's talking!

PHILLIE

What d'ya think Barbie would say if she knew what we did?

KEITH

(Getting frighteningly angry.)

If you ever tell her... I swear to God if you ever tell *anyone* what we did, I'll kill you.

PHILLIE

How about I just tell her what you and Father Mondello do?

Keith goes to slug Phillie, and Philip is once again jolted out of the memory, this time by Barbara's voice.

BARBARA

Philip? Are you even listening to me? HELLO?

PHILIP

I didn't even mention Keith in "that damn" book.

BARBARA

Oh please, everyone knew who you were writing about.

PHILIP

Yeah. I was writing about Mondello. The altar boy wasn't Keith. Specifically. Or even Jamie, for that matter.

BARBARA

All of those "Spruce and Maple" books... it was like you were only writing them to settle old scores.

We see Phillie and Barbie, and hear the taunts of a bunch of school boys.

BOYS (OFF)

Spruce! Spruce! Spruce!

BARBIE

Ignore 'em.

BOY 1 (OFF)

My Spruce, you were looking mighty spruce last night!

BOY 2 (OFF)

That vest was really spruce, Sprucie!

BOY 1 (OFF)

Hey Spruce, did your fat girlfriend make you feel better last night?

PHILLIE

Ignore 'em.

BOY 2 (OFF)

Yeah, did the Barbie Doll hold your hand and suck your dick?

BARBIE

Go to hell, York!

BOYS (OFF)

Spruce and the Barbie Doll! Spruce and the Barbie Doll!

PHILLIE

She's not my girlfriend!

BOY 1 (OFF)

Of course she isn't! Homos don't have girlfriends! They have *girl* friends!

PHILLIE

Hey Jamie, did Mondello hold your hand while you sucked his dick last night?

Back to the present.

PHILIP

I told my truth in those books. And they helped a lot of boys like me – and girls like you, don't forget. They still do.

BARBARA

It wouldn't have hurt you any to lie a little about me.

PHILIP

Maple wasn't you, Barbara.

BARBARA

Tell that to Bitsy Ford. She still calls me "Maple" whenever I'm in her courtroom.

PHILIP

If you hadn't gotten so drunk at your wedding and told her you were "Maple," / she never

BARBARA

/ I've told you I have absolutely no recollection of *ever* telling anyone I was Maple.

PHILIP

Yeah, yeah, yeah. The yin-yang of us for 25 years now.

(Changing the subject.)

Tell me what's going on with you and Keith? C'mon Barbara. Spill.

BARBARA

(She tears up a little.)

I couldn't take it anymore. The drinking, the mood swings... the constant fighting... The final straw... He beat the crap out of Jude after he failed his first biology exam. Mom got in the way, and he hit her too. It was an accident, but... I filed for divorce the next day.

PHILIP

I hate to say I told you so...

BARBARA

Then don't.

PHILIP

He's a deeply troubled man, Barbara. You knew that going into it.

BARBARA

He loved me ever since we were kids, and I thought... well, I don't know what I thought.

PHILIP

You thought "I'm racing towards 30 and I'm still single and this guy wants me." It made my head spin how fast you zoomed in on him after Thad dumped you.

(Lowering his voice.)

And we... you know...

BARBARA

You can say it out loud. She knows. She's asleep, anyway. I hope.

PHILIP

She knows about us? AND YOU NEVER TOLD ME? I'm so embarrassed!

BARBARA

Will you be quiet? You're going to wake her. I need her sleep!

PHILIP

(Scooping a chip into the "onion dip.")

God, this dip is worse than the salsa!

He pours another salt packet into the dip.

BARBARA

PHILIP, STOP THAT!

PHILIP

Will you be quiet? You're going to wake your mom. You need her sleep!

BARBARA

You can be such a bitch sometimes. Oh Phillie... why do we always fall in love with the wrong men?

PHILIP

You know you didn't love Keith. You just felt sorry for him.

BARBARA

I did love him. I really thought I did.

PHILIP

But not enough.

BARBARA

I don't know if anyone could ever love him enough. His mother never really recovered after his dad left, and living with an aunt and uncle who didn't really want them there, especially after Candy died... No one really cared about him, except Father Mondello.

PHILIP

Fatherless boys were Mondello's kryptonite. Fatherless boys. Altar boys. Boys.

BARBARA

Mondello might have done some horrible things to Jamie, but he never touched you.

PHILIP

I know! The bastard!

BARBARA

How can you joke about that? And he never touched Keith either. Mondello treated him like a son. Which is more than his own father ever did.

PHILIP

You don't really believe that, do you?

BARBARA

We tried. We failed. And now I'm alone for the first time in years. I have no one.

PHILIP

You have your kid. You have your mother. And, I hesitate to point out, your brother.

BARBARA

God, I hate being almost 50 and having to start all over again. Do you ever look at yourself and wonder "How the hell did this happen to me?"

PHILIP

Every morning I look in the mirror, and think “Should I shave today? What’s the point? I’m not leaving the apartment.” And my mother’s eyes are staring back at me with that piercing glare. “What the hell have you done to yourself? Look at you! You’re fat, you drink too much, you eat too much. Get up off your ass and finish writing that Goddamned book!” And my lips move, but it’s my dad’s voice screaming “Back off, Veronica. You’re dead. Stay dead.” Then I make a martini, write a line, make another martini, write another line, I nuke a big ol’ bowl of Rice-A-Roni for breakfast, maybe write another paragraph or two, and go back to bed until 5:00. Cocktail hour. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. Sometimes I don’t wash. Or rinse. Just repeat. The whole shit show of my life on an endless, horrifying loop. I don’t know why I’m telling you this. I haven’t even told my shrink. I probably should, but she scares the crap out of me.

BARBARA

What do you need her for? You know I’m here for you. Talk to me, I’m your friend. We need each other, probably more than we ever did before. You do drink and eat too much. Even just cutting down the salt would help.

PHILIP

Oh God, will you please just drop it? It’s been a rough year, ya know? First my mom, then my dad, and the new book.

He shoves another handful of chips into his mouth. Barbara moves the bag away from him.

BARBARA

You’re stress eating. Jeez, Phillie! You’re only one box of Rice-A-Roni away from a heart attack!

PHILIP

PHILIP! And before I have that heart attack... Look, I know this probably isn’t the best time, but... I do have to ask you a huge favor.

BARBARA

I knew it!

The faint sound of kids having an argument can be heard a few blocks away.

PHILIP

What would you think of a new Spruce and Maple book, / this time from

BARBARA

/ No.

PHILIP

Let me finish. This time from an adult perspective? No priests, no altar boys, no Keith, I promise.

BARBARA

No.

PHILIP

You know, Barbara, I gave up a lot when I stopped writing those books.

The sounds escalate into a fight.

BARBARA

I never asked you to give them up. That was your decision.

PHILIP

You didn't stop me, either.

BARBARA

I just don't understand why you have to write about Spruce and Maple again. What can you possibly say that you haven't already said?

Grace enters.

GRACE

Pete? Pete McDougal? What are you doing here? Is Veronica with you?

BARBARA

Oh great, now she's awake. It's Philip, Mom. Pete and Veronica are / dead

GRACE

/ I KNOW, BARBIE! I just forgot. I'm sorry, Phillie.

PHILIP

It's okay, Grace. Dreams. Remember?

GRACE

Yeah. Dreams... I'm hungry.

BARBARA

We're eating at five. Have some chips and salsa.

GRACE

That fat-free stuff? Just because you have to watch your weight doesn't mean I have to eat that garbage. Can't you buy anything tasty? Can't you buy some salt, at least?

BARBARA

I told you, mom, it's better for you. You'll live longer.

The fight gets louder, then abruptly stops.

GRACE

I'm 76 years old, Barbie. How much longer do you expect me to live?

BARBARA

There's no reason why you can't live well into your 90s.

GRACE

I'd rather kick the bucket right now if I have to eat this tasteless shit for the next 20 years.

Philip palms a few salt packets into her hand.

BARBARA

I saw that.

GRACE

Why Barbara broke off your engagement, I'll never know.

BARBARA

We were never engaged, mom! How many times do I have to tell you? See, Philip, I told you: she's starting to show signs of Alzheimer's.

GRACE

I don't have Alzheimer's, Barbie Doll, I'm old. I forget things! You like Tofu, Phillie? 'Cause that's what she's making for dinner. Tofu burgers. Yum. See, I remembered that.

Philip takes a swig from his bottle. It's empty.

PHILIP

Jesus, I need a drink. How about I make us some martinis?

GRACE

You may look like your father, but you think like your mother.

PHILIP

(To Barbara.)

You got any gin?

No.

BARBARA

I do.

GRACE

She goes into the house.

I give up. Make 'em weak, at least.

BARBARA

No such thing. I need to know about the book.

PHILIP

You know, you're right. This is not a good time to talk about this.

BARBARA

I have a due date and I'm running out of time.

PHILIP

Phillip. I told you I don't want to talk about this. When are you going to grow up and realize not everything is always about what you want?

BARBARA

The phone rings.

Look, Barbara, I know you're hurting. I know your life is pretty messed up right now. My life is pretty messed up, too. I need to have something succeed again. I need to write.

PHILIP

It was that agent of yours who pushed you into this, wasn't it? I don't like her. She's too bossy. I mean it Philip: no more Maple. Find someone else to write about.

BARBARA

Philip picks up his jacket.

Barbie? It's Suzanne Hagopian!

GRACE (OFF)

Oh, Jesus! What the hell does she want?

BARBARA

(To Philip, as if to a dog.)

Stay there. We're not done yet. And don't get my mother too drunk.

She heads into the house, nearly knocking over Grace and her a tray of cocktail necessities.

GRACE

BARBIE! Be careful! Who is Suzanne Hagopian?

BARBARA

Not now, mom.

GRACE

What's the matter with her?

PHILIP

I know, right? She's a real pain in the ass today.

GRACE

I think it's all that rabbit food she eats.

(Noticing he's put on his jacket.)

You're not leaving already, are you?

PHILIP

I think I'm going to head back into the city, Grace. Try and beat the Sunday afternoon traffic on the L.I.E.

GRACE

Please Phillie, don't go. You're the closest thing to the old days I've got left... Please?

PHILIP

...Ok. One drink.

GRACE

Good. Sorry Phillie, I don't have olives. I like onions with my gin.

PHILIP

(Pulling the olives out of his pocket.)

No worries, I've got some. You got any ice?

GRACE

Yeah.

BARBARA (OFF)

Of course we're insured!

GRACE

(Opens the ice chest and sees the cake.)

Uh oh. That doesn't sound good. What's this?

PHILIP

It's a carrot cake. I didn't know about Jude's allergy.

GRACE

(Taking the cake and ice from the chest.)

Oh, that. Pfff. That's no reason we can't have some!

PHILIP

(Making the drinks.)

That's what I said!

BARBARA (OFF)

Take Raffi to North Shore, and have my husband paged. He'll get him seen quickly.

GRACE

Your mom and I used to do this every afternoon after you kids went out to play. We told you we were "checking the basement for leaks" and then we'd talk for hours.

BARBARA (OFF)

Dr. Quigley, please... His wife. It's an emergency.

Philip serves the drinks, Grace serves the cake.

GRACE

She was so smart, Phillie, she always knew just what to do. After Al died she took me to Florida with her for the winter, you knew that, right? She was always there for me. Always. I miss her so much... And that mess at Harvard... I thought Barbie was never going to get over it, but your mother... Oh, I'm not supposed to talk about that. It reminds her. She doesn't like that, she'll yell at me.

PHILIP

Don't worry, Grace, I know all about it. I won't let her yell at you. She's having too much fun yelling at me today, anyway.

GRACE

You know about the baby?

PHILIP

Baby?

GRACE

The baby she was going to have with that Thad guy.

PHILIP

Thad? Are you telling me *Thad* got her pregnant?

BARBARA (OFF)

I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR PATIENTS, KEITH, WE'RE BEING SUED! GET YOUR ASS OVER TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM AND MAKE SURE RAFFI HAGOPIAN GETS TAKEN CARE OF IMMEDIATELY!

GRACE

That brat takes after his uncle Robert. Trouble from day one.

PHILIP

What happened to the baby, Grace?

GRACE

Oh, Phillie! Father Mondello said I was risking the fires of hell.

PHILIP

Father Mondello fucked little boys. I wouldn't give much credence to anything he said about the fires of hell.

GRACE

I believe in hell, and being punished for my sins. I'm not like your mother that way.

PHILIP

My mother?

GRACE

Barbie asked her to call your cousin.

Barbara enters, in a rage.

BARBARA

I'm gonna kill him. Jude and that Spencer just beat the crap out of the kid who won the race this morning. I have to go find him and then meet Keith and Suzanne at the hospital...

(She sees the cake crumbs everywhere.)

FUCK! FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK! Goddamn it, Philip, I knew this would happen! CRUMBS! CRUMBS! LOOK AT THEM! CRUMBS EVERYWHERE! GODDAMNMIT, LOOK AT HER! SHE'S A MESS, THE PORCH IS A MESS, EVERYTHING IS A GODDAMN FUCKING CRUMMY MESS!

GRACE

Calm down, Barbie doll, it's only cake. I'll clean it up.

BARBARA

YOU'D BOTH BETTER GET THIS PORCH SPOTLESS BEFORE I GET BACK. I AM NOT GOING TO HAVE JUDE INHALING ALL THAT GLUTEN AND GETTING SICK ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE!

PHILIP

(Very quietly.)

You had an abortion, Barbara?

BARBARA

What?

PHILIP

My cousin Michael aborted Thad's baby?

BARBARA

MOM!

GRACE

I'm sorry, Barbie. He said he knew. I messed up.

PHILIP

But you never slept with Thad. Isn't that what you told me?

(Barbara stays silent.)

You didn't sleep with him, did you?

(She still says nothing.)

You didn't... So then: whose baby was it?

GRACE

Oh, my God.

PHILIP

It was mine, wasn't it, Barbara? Wasn't it?

BARBARA

...Yes.

PHILIP

And you never told me?

BARBARA

No.

PHILIP

And you knew about this, Grace?

GRACE

I didn't know the baby was yours, Phillie.

PHILIP

You knew we'd slept together. It never crossed your mind it might have been mine?

(To Barbara.)

Why didn't you say anything?

BARBARA

I wanted to tell you, but... I was so mixed up... I was so overwhelmed with the bar exam, you were on that book tour, and after... it just never seemed like a good time... and... neither of us were in a position to be a good parent. What were you going to do? Strap a screaming baby on your back while you toured the country signing your kiddie books?

PHILIP

But why didn't you just tell me? Why have you been lying to me all these years?

BARBARA

I never lied! I just... omitted some information.

PHILIP

Oh, please Barbara, don't go all lawyer on me. It's still a lie! Do you think I would have tried to stop you?

BARBARA

I don't know.

PHILIP

Seriously? I've never wanted kids. I just don't understand why you didn't let me be a part of the decision.

BARBARA

Why? You had nothing to do with it.

PHILIP

Really?

BARBARA

I mean it was my body, my decision.

PHILIP

Oh don't give me that crap. I did have something to do with it. That baby was half... mine... Oh... No... Oh my God... I get it. You didn't want to have *my* child.

Barbara waits a long time before speaking.

BARBARA

Do you understand what *your* mother went through with you? Do you know how hard it was for *me* to watch while everyone picked on you? Made fun of you? Beat you up? I didn't want that for my child. No mother wants that for their child.

The phone rings. Barbara ignores it.

PHILIP

(Surprisingly calm.)

Fuck you, Barbara.

BARBARA

Calm down, Philip.

PHILIP

(He remains calm and deliberate.)

I'm perfectly calm. I just want to hear you say it: You didn't want to have my child.

The phone stops ringing.

BARBARA

Please, Philip, you don't understand!

PHILIP

Say it, Barbara. You didn't want to have a faggot's child.

Barbara's cell phone rings. She answers.

BARBARA

I can't talk right now, Keith. Philip is flipping out. I'll get there as / soon

PHILIP

(Taking the phone from Barbara.)

/ She'll call you back, Keith.

BARBARA

Philip!

PHILIP

Let your Goddamned husband take care of things for a change.

BARBARA

I can't talk to you when you get hysterical like this.

Philip has another memory. Barbara and Barbie's lines should come right on top of each others.

BARBIE

Calm down, Phillie. You always get so hysterical. They're not worth it. But you probably shouldn't have told Jamie you told Mondello about his boner.

PHILLIE

He called me a faggot.

BARBIE

You're too sensitive. You should've just said you were going to the dance on Saturday and left it at that. No one cares you're going to see the Andrews Sisters.

The memory fades.

PHILIP

(Calmly handing back her phone.)

I'm not hysterical. I'm angry. You've never understood the difference. I just want you to say it: You didn't want to have a faggot's child.

BARBARA

Philip, you know I love you. You know I don't care if you're gay, straight, or whatever. Do you think I'd let you near Jude if I did?

Philip stands up. He speaks with a measured, but growing intensity.

PHILIP

You did not want to have my child. For Christ's sake, Barbara, just admit it. You did not want to have a faggot's child!

GRACE

Phillie! Barbara! Stop this before you both say things you don't mean!

PHILIP

And you both let my mother arrange the abortion. Did she know whose baby it was?

BARBARA

...Yes.

He says nothing for a long while, then quietly turns to leave.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

That's, right, Philip! Run away. Like you always do.

Another memory. Again, Barbara and Barbie's lines should come right on top of each others.

BARBIE

You know you don't help yourself running away like that all the time.

He stops and turns to her.

PHILIP

(He takes the bookmark from his pocket.)

That afternoon when were hiding from Keith in the banquettes? Remember that? All these years, we thought my mother talked your mother into having an abortion.

BARBARA

I don't remember.

PHILIP

Of course you do. I mean, why else would you have gone to my mother for help?

BARBARA

Philip, please, don't.

PHILIP

You're not a very good actress, Barbara. It's probably better you went into law.

GRACE

But I didn't have an abortion. I lost that baby.

PHILIP

I know that now, Grace. But you never told us. Why should you? You didn't know we'd heard you.

(To Barbara.)

And I, at least, have never forgotten what we heard. My mom was talking about me, about me being "queer," and I remember her saying "He'll need someone who believes in him." Those words have stayed with me for 37 years. "He'll need someone who believes in him. Or can at least fake it." And then a few months later, she gave me this.

(Reading the bookmark.)

“If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. Henry David Thoreau.” ...And all this time I thought “she’s not faking it. She does believe in me.”

GRACE

Your mother loved you very much, Phillie.

Veronica appears in another memory.

VERONICA

Your father and I are very proud of you and your success with this book.

PHILIP (V.O.)

Really?

VERONICA

Of course we are. But listen to me: you can’t rest on your laurels. I will do everything in my power to support you in any way I can, but you can’t let anything stand in the way of your success. You can’t be distracted by relationships and responsibilities you just can’t handle. New friends, old friends – they’re nice to have, but they can’t be your primary focus anymore. Look what happened to your father. All his plans to be a novelist, those dreams that swept me off my feet, and in the end... he writes to sell things.

Philip comes back into the present.

PHILIP

Did she believe in me? Was she faking it? I’ll never know for sure now, but at least I can sort of understand her motives.

(To Barbara.)

But I will never understand why you never told me. I feel like such a fool. And I don’t think if I can ever forgive your hypocrisy.

Jude enters and watches quietly, unseen by the others. He’s gulping down a Ring-Ding.

BARBARA

My hypocrisy?

PHILIP

“You know I don’t care if you’re gay, straight, or whatever.” Please. You just couldn’t stand anyone knowing you’d slept with a faggot and had his child.

(Softly, almost tenderly.)

But you did. And you did have a faggot's child.

BARBARA

Keith is not gay, no matter how much you want him to be. You think I don't know you've always been in love with him?

PHILIP

Oh, Barbie... I'm not in love with him. I feel sorry for him. All the lies you both told yourselves for so long... I told you we sucked each others cocks when we were kids.

BARBARA

You never told / me that

PHILIP

/ We were both high as kites, and you just laughed it off. "Just boys fooling around once or twice, it didn't mean anything."

BARBARA

Shut up.

PHILIP

It was Keith's idea.

BARBARA

That's not true.

PHILIP

He "seduced" me one afternoon in my pool. We both had erections, probably from the friction going down that slide. Or maybe, as Mondello suggested that day in the confessional, our bathing suits excited us. Whatever. He took me into the pool house, pulled down my trunks and went down on me. I liked it. Then I went down on him. He liked it. We "fooled around" for nearly a year after that, until he noticed you'd lost all that weight and I didn't mean anything to him anymore.

BARBARA

You're lying!

PHILIP

I am just rectifying information I omitted telling you. Mondello taught him well. He was a good little cock sucker. You should have seen the look on his face every time he jizzed in my mouth.

GRACE

Oh, Phillie!

PHILIP

And as my father said: "Any guy who sucks another guy's cock is a faggot."

BARBARA

Stop it, Philip.

PHILIP

(Indicating his parent's house.)

On my way over here, after I "checked the basement for leaks," I saw the pool house had been broken into. It smelled like crotch and weed. Instead of freaking out over Jude stuffing Ring-Dings in his mouth, I'd pay more attention to what those Leopold and Loeb's are doing when they're not taking their aggressive denial out on some kid who's won a race and / pissed them off.

BARBARA

/ I mean it, Philip. Shut up!

PHILIP

Is it just "boys fooling around" when it's your son?

BARBARA

I SAID SHUT UP! My son is not gay. My husband is not gay.

PHILIP

Keep telling yourself that. Jury's still out on those kids; they might only be sociopathic potheads. But deep down, you know the truth: Keith is gay. You know it and he knows it, and it's killing you both.

BARBARA

You wanna talk truth? Okay, you're right. I didn't want to have your child. Your mother didn't want me to have your child. Are you happy now, you Goddamn fucking faggot?

GRACE

Barbara!

Stunned silence; Philip stands quietly, a strange smile slowly crossing his face.

PHILIP

Thank you. You've finally said it. You gave me what I came for. I might not like it, but I certainly got it... I'll dedicate the books to you, Keith and Jude.

BARBARA

Don't you dare write about this.

Sue me.

PHILIP

Don't you think I won't!

BARBARA

Goodbye, Maple. Go to hell.

PHILIP

I really didn't know the baby was yours, Phillie!

GRACE

I know you believe you didn't. Goodbye, Grace.

PHILIP

Wow. You are all fucked up.

JUDE

(He is high as a kite.)

They all turn and see Jude. Philip takes a piece of the carrot cake and flings it at him.

Here, kid. Breathe some cake.

PHILIP

Philip exits.

OH MY GOD, JUDE! YOU'RE IN THE CRUMB ZONE! DON'T BREATHE!

BARBARA

Oh, Barbara... just... stop it.

GRACE

SCENE 3: EARLY EVENING ON A LATE SPRING TUESDAY, YEARS LATER.

EVENT COORDINATOR (V.O.)

Barnes & Noble Santa Monica EVENTS is pleased to present Newbery Award Winning author Philip McDougal, reading from the third and final installment of his "Spruce & Maple Grow Up" trilogy: "Spruce and Maple Grow Apart," winner of this year's National Book Award. Starting now on the second floor.

Philip is at a podium in a Barnes & Noble in Santa Monica. He's reading from a book. Sheila is standing to the side.

PHILIP

“And in that one instant, the last few years of doubt were confirmed, the past he wanted to remember was shattered, the children he and Maple had been were gone forever. No matter how hard Maple tried to make amends, no matter how many times she tried to apologize, they were just Bruce and Mabel now, indistinguishable from any other middle aged childhood friends who’d stayed too long at the party.”

He is unaware Barbara has entered.

SHEILA

I don’t think you should be here.

BARBARA

I have to see him.

SHEILA

You lost your lawsuit, so unless you’re going to buy Philip’s books – which I doubt – you have no reason to be here. Don’t mess with him, Barbara.

PHILIP

“Torn between honoring memories and promises made as a child, and the fierce betrayals he never saw coming, betrayals which were fierce to him at least, and which ensured an end that needn’t have been but was nonetheless inevitable... The road ahead was his and his alone. Because he was alone, he was certain of this now. And while he was haunted by the memories, this knowledge led him to a certain kind of peace unlike any he was prepared for, but within the parameters of this new world, he could, he would move on. Move on and, yes, even flourish.”

He closes the book to applause.

EVENT COORDINATOR (V.O.)

Mr. McDougal will now sign all three of the books in the “Spruce & Maple Grow Up” series. You may purchase your copies at the register across the aisle to your left.

BARBARA

Phillie?

PHILIP

Oh my God. What the hell are you doing here?

BARBARA

Jude is living out here now. Can we talk? Please? It’s been so long...

SHEILA

BARBARA! Everyone is waiting for Philip.

BARBARA

I hoped you'd come home for my mom's funeral.

PHILIP

Grace never did learn how to put out a cigarette, did she?

SHEILA

C'mon, Philip.

Barbara takes a jar of olives and a Twinkie from her purse, and holds them out to Philip.

PHILIP

...I can't.

We hear Veronica's voice, dim and ghostly.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Now Phillie, you be nice to that little girl who just moved in next door. You know how you feel when the other kids say mean things and won't play with you. She doesn't know anybody here. She's five years old, like you, and she needs a friend. You go next door, apologize for what you said, and invite her to come and watch "Lucy" with you. I'll make lunch. Her name is Barbie.

We see Phillie and Barbie, laughing together, as Barbara continues to hold out the olives and Twinkies. She and Philip stare at each other as the lights fade.

END OF PLAY